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ANALYSIS OF TIKTOK SOCIAL MEDIA USAGE AND ITS IMPACT ON THE SOCIO-EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT OF CHILDREN AGED 5-6 YEARS

ANALISIS PENGGUNAAN MEDIA SOSIAL TIKTOK DAN DAMPAKNYA TERHADAP PERKEMBANGAN SOSIAL-EMOSIONAL ANAK USIA 5-6 TAHUN

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Abstract

This study aims to analyze the impact of TikTok usage on the socio-emotional development of children aged 5–6 years at Nurul Islam Kindergarten. The study employs a qualitative approach using a descriptive research design. The subjects of this study are children aged 5–6 years at Nurul Islam Kindergarten. Data collection techniques include observation, interviews, and documentation. The results indicate that the use of TikTok influences the socio-emotional development of children aged 5–6 years at Nurul Islam Kindergarten. Therefore, supervision and guidance from teachers and parents are essential to ensure that children's use of social media yields positive benefits for their socio-emotional development.

Keywords : Early Childhood Socio-Emotional Development, Tiktok Social Media, Impact of Tiktok Social Media.

Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis dampak penggunaan TikTok terhadap perkembangan sosial-emosional anak usia 5–6 tahun di TK Nurul Islam. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan desain penelitian deskriptif. Subjek penelitian adalah anak-anak berusia 5–6 tahun di TK Nurul Islam. Teknik pengumpulan data meliputi observasi, wawancara, dan dokumentasi. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa penggunaan TikTok memengaruhi perkembangan sosial-emosional anak usia 5–6 tahun di TK Nurul Islam. Oleh karena itu, pengawasan dan bimbingan dari guru serta orang tua sangat diperlukan untuk memastikan bahwa penggunaan media sosial oleh anak memberikan manfaat positif bagi perkembangan sosial-emosional mereka.

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Kata Kunci : Perkembangan Sosio-Emosional Anak Usia Dini, Media Sosial TikTok, Dampak Media Sosial TikTok.

1. INTRODUCTION

The rapid development of digital technology has transformed children's everyday experiences, including the ways in which young children access information, entertainment, and social interaction. The increasing availability of smartphones and social media platforms has made digital media increasingly accessible to young children through their families. This development requires particular attention because early childhood is a critical period in which various aspects of development, including social-emotional development, require appropriate and balanced stimulation (Hurlock, 1978; Santrock, 2020).

Social-emotional development is a fundamental aspect of early childhood development because it involves children's ability to interact with others, cooperate, share, follow rules, express emotions, and regulate their emotional responses. At the age of 5–6 years, children increasingly develop the ability to establish relationships with peers, participate in cooperative activities, demonstrate empathy, and adapt to their social environment (Santrock, 2020). Hurlock (1978) similarly explains that social and emotional development involves children's ability to adjust their behavior to environmental expectations and develop appropriate patterns of social and emotional responses.

Children's social-emotional development is strongly influenced by their interactions with people and their surrounding environment. From a sociocultural perspective, Vygotsky (1978) emphasizes that children's psychological development occurs through social interaction and participation in their environment. Through interactions with parents, teachers, and peers, children have opportunities to communicate, share, cooperate, resolve conflicts, and develop emotional regulation. Therefore, direct social interaction is an essential component in developing children's social-emotional competencies.

At the same time, the development of digital technology has introduced new forms of interaction and experience through social media, including TikTok. TikTok is a short-video-based social media platform that provides various types of content, including entertainment, music, dancing, education, and creative activities. Its personalized content recommendation system enables users to receive videos based on their interests and previous usage patterns, which may increase user engagement and prolong platform use (Kaye et al., 2021; Montag et al., 2021).

Children's attraction to TikTok is closely associated with the visual, audiovisual, and easily imitated characteristics of its content. Bandura's Social Learning Theory explains that children can acquire behaviors by observing and imitating behaviors presented by others (Bandura, 1977). In the context of TikTok use, this observational process may encourage children to imitate movements, language, facial expressions, or other behaviors presented in videos. Consequently, the type of content consumed by children becomes an important consideration in understanding the relationship between TikTok use and children's development.

TikTok use does not necessarily produce exclusively negative outcomes. When digital media use is limited, age-appropriate, and accompanied by adult supervision, digital media may provide children with experiences that support creativity and learning (Rahmawati, 2022). However, excessive and unsupervised digital media use may reduce children's opportunities for direct social interaction. Hidayah (2022) found that digital media use is associated with children's social-emotional development, particularly their ability to interact socially and regulate emotions.

Kwon et al. (2024) further reported that higher levels of digital media exposure were associated with lower emotional regulation, increased behavioral problems, and poorer social functioning among young children. Similarly, Nurbani and Mashudi (2023) reported that unsupervised gadget use could affect children's social-emotional development. These findings suggest that the issue is not simply whether children use digital media, but rather how frequently they use it, how long they use it, what types of content they consume, and whether adults provide adequate supervision and guidance.

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Previous studies have also identified potential relationships between TikTok use and children's social and emotional behavior. Oktasari et al. (2024) found that children who demonstrated addictive tendencies toward TikTok were more likely to prefer playing with smartphones than interacting with peers, thereby reducing opportunities for direct social interaction. Syaidina et al. (2025) specifically examined the impact of TikTok on the social behavior of children aged 5–6 years, while Khoiriyati et al. (2025) investigated the impact of TikTok application use on the social-emotional development of young children.

Nevertheless, the relationship between TikTok use and children's social-emotional development remains complex. Children's development is influenced not only by the media they consume but also by parenting practices, family interaction, peer relationships, and the school environment. Aisyah (2021), for example, found that parenting practices and the intensity of children's social interaction influence their social-emotional development. Therefore, examining children's TikTok use requires consideration of the broader social environment in which digital media consumption occurs.

This issue is particularly relevant in early childhood education settings. At the age of 5–6 years, children are expected to develop the ability to interact with peers, cooperate, share, communicate effectively, demonstrate empathy, and regulate their emotions (Santrock, 2020). Excessive engagement with digital devices may potentially reduce children's opportunities to participate in direct play and social activities, which are important contexts for practicing these competencies.

Preliminary observations at TK Nurul Islam indicated that some children aged 5–6 years were already familiar with and using TikTok through smartphones available within their family environment. The children demonstrated interest in songs, dances, and entertainment videos and, in some cases, imitated movements or language encountered through TikTok. There were also indications that some children preferred using smartphones to interacting with peers, became easily upset when gadget use was restricted, and experienced difficulties in activities requiring interaction and cooperation. These conditions warrant further investigation because they may be related to children's opportunities to develop social and emotional competencies through direct interaction.

Based on these considerations, this study aims to analyze the use of TikTok social media and its relationship to the social-emotional development of children aged 5–6 years at TK Nurul Islam. The study focuses on the intensity and duration of TikTok use, types of content consumed, parental supervision, and children's social-emotional characteristics, including their ability to interact, cooperate, share, regulate emotions, and express emotions appropriately. The findings are expected to provide useful information for parents and early childhood educators regarding the importance of appropriate supervision and balanced digital media use, while ensuring that children's digital experiences do not replace essential opportunities for direct social interaction.

2. RESEARCH METHOD

This study employed a qualitative approach using a descriptive case study design to explore and describe the use of TikTok social media and its relationship to the social-emotional development of children aged 5–6 years at TK Nurul Islam. The qualitative approach was selected because the study sought to understand the phenomenon comprehensively and in depth within the children's natural environment rather than merely measuring observable behaviors. The case study design was used to examine the phenomenon intensively within its real-life context through information obtained from multiple sources.

The participants in this study were children aged 5–6 years at TK Nurul Islam, with teachers and parents serving as key informants. The children were observed directly to identify their social-emotional behaviors, while teachers and parents provided more detailed information regarding the children's TikTok use, including their usage patterns, duration of use, types of content accessed, and behavioral changes associated with digital media use. Primary data were obtained through direct observation and in-depth interviews, while secondary data consisted of relevant documentation,

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including photographs of children's activities, developmental records, school profiles, student data, and other documents related to the research.

Data collection was conducted through observation, semi-structured interviews, and documentation. Observation was carried out directly in the school environment to examine children's social-emotional behaviors during learning activities, play, and daily interactions. The observation focused particularly on children's interactions with peers, cooperation, sharing, emotional expression, emotional regulation, and responses that could be associated with their experiences with TikTok. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with teachers and parents to obtain deeper information concerning children's patterns of TikTok use and its perceived influence on their social and emotional development. The semi-structured format allowed the researcher to follow predetermined topics while providing participants with sufficient opportunity to explain their experiences and observations in greater detail. Documentation was used to complement the observation and interview findings and to provide supporting evidence concerning children's activities and developmental conditions.

The collected data were analyzed using an interactive qualitative data analysis process. Data analysis was conducted continuously throughout the research, beginning during data collection and continuing until the study was completed. The analysis involved three interconnected stages: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification. During data reduction, information obtained from observations, interviews, and documentation was selected, organized, and focused according to the research objectives. The reduced data were then displayed systematically in narrative form to facilitate the identification and interpretation of patterns concerning TikTok use and children's social-emotional development. Conclusions were subsequently drawn from the displayed data and continuously verified throughout the research process to ensure that the interpretations were supported by the collected evidence.

To establish the credibility of the findings, the study employed source triangulation by comparing information obtained from different informants. Information provided by teachers regarding children's social-emotional behavior at school was compared with information provided by parents concerning children's TikTok use, duration of use, behavioral changes, and social-emotional characteristics at home. This process was conducted to identify consistency among the different sources and strengthen the credibility of the research findings.

The research was conducted through several systematic stages, beginning with preparation before entering the field, followed by data collection, data analysis, data verification, and the preparation of the research report. During the fieldwork, the researcher observed children's activities, conducted interviews with teachers and parents, and collected relevant documentation. The collected information was subsequently organized and analyzed according to the research focus, followed by verification through source triangulation before the final conclusions were formulated.

3. RESULT AND DISCCUSSION

The findings of this study indicate that TikTok has become a familiar form of digital media among children aged 5–6 years at TK Nurul Islam. Based on observations, interviews with parents and teachers, and documentation, all 15 children involved in the study had been exposed to TikTok. Thus, 15 children (100%) had accessed or watched TikTok content, indicating a very high level of exposure among the participants. The most frequently accessed content included children's songs, dancing videos, entertainment, short stories, and currently popular videos. The duration of use varied among children and was influenced by the rules and supervision implemented within each family.

The findings further show that TikTok use among the children was relatively intensive. Eight children (53.3%) used TikTok for approximately 1–2 hours per day, five children (33.3%) used it for more than two hours per day, and only two children (13.3%) used it for less than one hour per day. This finding suggests that digital media had become an important part of the children's daily routines. However, the qualitative data indicate that the developmental consequences of TikTok use were not

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determined by duration alone. The type of content accessed and the extent of parental supervision also appeared to influence children's responses.

In terms of social interaction, the study found that excessive TikTok use was associated with reduced opportunities for direct interaction with peers. Some children showed a stronger preference for using gadgets than participating in play activities with friends. The observation instrument specifically examined children's ability to communicate and interact with peers, participate in cooperative play, and share toys or objects. The findings indicate that children who spent more time with gadgets tended to have fewer opportunities to practice these social skills directly. The study also found that some children preferred playing alone and were less likely to initiate conversations or invite peers to participate in play.

This finding can be understood from Vygotsky's sociocultural perspective, which emphasizes the importance of social interaction in children's development. Children develop communication, cooperation, empathy, and understanding of social norms through meaningful interactions with other people. The findings therefore suggest that when excessive digital media use replaces opportunities for direct interaction, children's opportunities to practice social competencies may also become more limited. The result is consistent with previous findings reported in the study, which indicate that excessive digital media consumption may reduce the quality of children's direct social interaction (Hidayah, 2022).

The second important finding concerns cooperation, sharing, and empathy. Some children demonstrated difficulties in cooperating and sharing with peers, particularly when they were accustomed to spending considerable time with gadgets. The study identified cooperation and empathy as important indicators of social-emotional development, including children's ability to work with others, share, help friends, and understand other people's feelings. The findings suggest that limited opportunities for collaborative play may influence children's opportunities to practice these behaviors. Nevertheless, these difficulties should not be interpreted as being caused exclusively by TikTok, because the study also identified family environment, parenting practices, peer interaction, and teacher support as factors influencing children's social-emotional development.

A particularly notable finding concerns emotional regulation. Several children experienced difficulties regulating their emotions when access to smartphones or TikTok was restricted. The reactions observed and reported by parents and teachers included anger, crying, tantrums, and resistance when children were prevented from continuing to watch TikTok. Some children also demonstrated impatience when waiting for their turn or when they did not immediately receive a response from the teacher. This tendency was interpreted in the study as potentially related to children's familiarity with the immediate stimulation and entertainment provided by digital media.

These findings are consistent with the previous research discussed in the study. Kwon et al. (2024) reported that higher levels of digital media exposure were associated with lower emotional regulation, increased behavioral problems, and poorer social functioning among young children. Similarly, Hidayah (2022) reported that excessive digital media consumption could be associated with difficulties in emotional regulation and reduced quality of direct peer interaction. The present findings therefore reinforce the importance of regulating children's access to digital media, particularly when children demonstrate strong emotional reactions when access is interrupted.

The study also identified evidence of behavioral imitation. Children sometimes imitated movements, language, songs, or behaviors observed in TikTok videos. Behavioral imitation was explicitly included as an indicator in the observation and teacher interview instruments. This finding is consistent with Bandura's Social Learning Theory, which explains that children can acquire behaviors through observation and imitation. In the context of TikTok, children may observe repeated audiovisual patterns and reproduce them in their everyday behavior. The findings therefore highlight the importance of considering not only how long children use TikTok but also what types of content they consume.

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Despite the predominantly negative tendencies identified in several social-emotional indicators, the study also found positive effects of TikTok use. Some children became more confident in singing, dancing, or performing movements they had learned from TikTok videos. Several children also demonstrated increased willingness to perform in front of others and engage in creative activities. The findings further indicate that children who received parental supervision could use TikTok as a source of inspiration for dancing, singing, and independent creative activities.

These positive findings suggest that TikTok should not be viewed exclusively as a harmful medium. Its potential benefits depend on the quality of the content, the duration of exposure, and the presence of adult supervision. Age-appropriate content may provide opportunities for children to acquire vocabulary, practice speaking, develop confidence, and express themselves. The findings therefore support the view that digital media can become a constructive learning resource when its use is appropriately managed.

The study also found an important relationship between parental supervision and children's social-emotional development. Children who received consistent attention, supervision, and guidance from their parents generally demonstrated better social-emotional development than children whose media use was less supervised. This finding indicates that parental involvement functions as an important contextual factor in determining whether TikTok use produces constructive or less desirable outcomes. The study therefore suggests that parental supervision should include not only limiting screen time but also selecting age-appropriate content, accompanying children while watching, discussing the content with them, and encouraging children to engage in direct social activities.

Overall, the findings demonstrate that the influence of TikTok on children's social-emotional development is multidimensional rather than exclusively positive or negative. The dominant negative tendencies identified in this study included reduced direct social interaction, weaker cooperation and sharing, difficulties in emotional regulation when access was restricted, impatience, and dependence on gadgets as a source of entertainment. At the same time, positive effects were observed in creativity, self-confidence, communication, and children's willingness to perform or express themselves when TikTok use was appropriately supervised.

Thus, the findings indicate that duration of use, content characteristics, and the quality of parental and teacher supervision are key factors shaping the consequences of TikTok exposure. Rather than eliminating children's access to digital media entirely, parents and teachers need to establish a balanced approach that combines appropriate digital use with sufficient opportunities for direct play, communication, cooperation, and emotional learning. Such collaboration between families and schools is essential to ensure that children's digital experiences complement, rather than replace, the social experiences necessary for healthy social-emotional development.

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study indicate that TikTok use has a multidimensional relationship with the social-emotional development of children aged 5–6 years. The effects identified in the study were not exclusively negative or positive but were influenced by the duration of use, the type of content accessed, and the extent of parental supervision. This finding suggests that TikTok itself cannot be regarded as the sole determinant of children's social-emotional development. Rather, the manner in which the platform is used and the social environment surrounding children play an important role in shaping its potential effects.

One of the most significant findings concerns children's social interaction. The study found that some children who spent considerable time using TikTok tended to show a preference for gadgets rather than direct interaction with peers. This condition potentially reduces opportunities for children to practice communication, cooperation, sharing, and other social skills through direct interaction. The finding is consistent with Hidayah (2022), who reported that excessive digital media consumption may reduce the quality of children's direct interaction with peers. From Vygotsky's sociocultural perspective, social interaction is an important context for children's development because children construct knowledge and develop social competencies through interaction with other people

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(Vygotsky, 1978). Therefore, when digital activities replace opportunities for collaborative play and face-to-face interaction, children may have fewer opportunities to practice essential social-emotional skills.

The findings regarding cooperation, sharing, and empathy further reinforce this interpretation. Some children demonstrated difficulties participating in cooperative activities and sharing with peers. These behaviors are particularly important at the age of 5–6 years because children are expected to increasingly understand social rules, cooperate with others, and respond appropriately to their peers' needs. The condition observed in this study may be related to the reduced amount of direct social experience among children who are highly engaged with digital devices. However, the findings do not establish that TikTok directly causes difficulties in cooperation or empathy. Rather, the results suggest a relationship that may be influenced by children's opportunities for social interaction, parenting practices, and the broader family and school environment. This interpretation is consistent with Aisyah (2021), who emphasized the importance of parenting and social interaction in children's social-emotional development.

Another important finding concerns emotional regulation. Several children showed anger, crying, tantrums, or resistance when their access to smartphones or TikTok was restricted. Such responses indicate that some children may experience difficulty managing frustration when their preferred digital activity is interrupted. The finding is in line with Kwon et al. (2024), who reported an association between higher digital media exposure, lower emotional regulation, and increased behavioral problems among young children. Hidayah (2022) similarly identified emotional regulation as one of the aspects potentially affected by excessive digital media use. This finding highlights the importance of helping children gradually develop the ability to tolerate frustration and transition from digital activities to other activities.

The tendency of children to imitate content encountered on TikTok can also be understood through Bandura's Social Learning Theory. Bandura (1977) explains that children can acquire behaviors through observation and imitation. In this study, children were observed imitating movements, songs, language, and other behaviors presented in TikTok videos. Imitation itself is not necessarily problematic because it can support learning and creative expression. However, the developmental significance depends on what children observe and reproduce. Age-inappropriate language or behavior may be imitated without children fully understanding its social meaning. Consequently, content selection and parental guidance become essential components of children's digital media experiences.

At the same time, the study identified positive contributions of TikTok use, particularly in children's confidence, creativity, communication, and willingness to perform. Some children used TikTok content as inspiration for singing, dancing, and creative activities. This finding demonstrates that digital media can provide meaningful stimulation when children encounter content that is appropriate to their developmental needs. Rather than treating TikTok solely as a source of developmental risk, it may be considered a potential complementary medium when its use is limited, purposeful, and supervised.

The role of parental supervision is therefore particularly important. The findings indicate that children who received consistent parental guidance generally demonstrated more positive patterns of digital media use. Effective supervision should not be limited to determining how long children may use TikTok. Parents also need to pay attention to the content children watch, accompany them during media use, explain inappropriate content, and encourage children to participate in direct play and social interaction. In this respect, parental involvement serves as a mediating context that can reduce potential negative effects while maximizing the educational and creative potential of digital media.

The findings also have implications for early childhood educators. Teachers need to recognize that children's behavior at school may be connected to experiences they encounter outside school, including their use of digital media. When children demonstrate difficulty waiting for their turn, cooperating, communicating with peers, or regulating emotions, teachers can provide structured

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opportunities for collaborative play, role play, storytelling, group activities, and emotional learning. These activities provide children with direct opportunities to practice the social-emotional competencies that may be less frequently practiced when children's leisure time is dominated by individual screen use.

Overall, this study confirms that the relationship between TikTok use and social-emotional development should be understood through a balanced perspective. Excessive and insufficiently supervised use may be associated with reduced social interaction, difficulties in emotional regulation, and behavioral imitation, whereas appropriately supervised use may support creativity, confidence, communication, and self-expression. Therefore, the primary concern is not simply whether children use TikTok, but how, how long, and under what conditions they use it. A balanced partnership between parents and teachers is needed to ensure that digital media experiences complement rather than replace children's essential opportunities for direct social interaction, play, communication, cooperation, and emotional development.

4. CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the use of TikTok among children aged 5–6 years at TK Nurul Islam has a multifaceted relationship with their social-emotional development. All children involved in the study had been exposed to TikTok, with differences in the duration of use, types of content accessed, and levels of parental supervision. The findings indicate that the effects of TikTok use cannot be viewed as entirely positive or negative because they are strongly influenced by how the platform is used and the social environment surrounding the child.

From the social-emotional perspective, excessive and insufficiently supervised TikTok use was associated with several concerns, particularly reduced opportunities for direct interaction with peers, difficulties in cooperation and sharing, emotional reactions when gadget access was restricted, and the tendency to imitate language, movements, or behaviors presented in videos. These findings indicate that excessive digital media use may limit children's opportunities to experience direct social interaction, which is essential for developing communication, cooperation, empathy, and emotional regulation.

Nevertheless, TikTok also demonstrated potential positive contributions. Age-appropriate and supervised content could provide children with opportunities to develop creativity, confidence, communication, and self-expression through activities such as singing and dancing. Therefore, TikTok should not be considered solely as a negative influence on early childhood development.

The study further concludes that duration of use, content consumed, and parental supervision are important factors in determining the potential effects of TikTok on children's social-emotional development. Effective parental supervision and collaboration between parents and teachers are needed to establish balanced digital media habits. Children should be provided with age-appropriate digital content while maintaining sufficient opportunities for direct play, communication, cooperation, and interaction with peers.

Thus, the appropriate approach is not necessarily to prohibit children's access to TikTok entirely, but to ensure that its use is limited, age-appropriate, supervised, and balanced with direct social experiences. This approach can help maximize the potential educational and creative benefits of digital media while minimizing its potential negative effects on children's social-emotional development.

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