

Analysis of the Impact of YouTube and TikTok

Addiction on Early Childhood: A Literature Review

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to analyze the impact of addiction to YouTube and TikTok platforms on early childhood. Using a qualitative literature review method, this research examines various literature related to the influence of social media on children's cognitive, social-emotional, and psychological development. The results show that unsupervised usage may lead to vocabulary decline, disrupted social interaction, sleep disorders, and behavioral problems. On the other hand, when used with parental guidance, these platforms also have the potential to enhance children's creativity, language comprehension, and curiosity. Data from APJII and Common Sense Media indicate high internet usage among early childhood children in Indonesia. Therefore, active parental involvement in regulating the duration and content accessed by children is crucial to avoid negative impacts and optimize the educational potential of these media.

Introduction

Early childhood goes through several distinct developmental phases, including exploration, imitation, sensitivity, play, and early rebellion. During this period, children also show high levels of curiosity and enthusiasm. According to studies by Keith Osborn (University of

Georgia), Burton L. White (Harvard Preschool Project), and Benjamin S. Bloom (University of Chicago), about 50% of human intelligence develops between ages 0–4, 80% by age 8, and 100% by age 18 (Audy & Nofianti, 2024). Thus, the ages of 0–8 are often considered a child's "golden age."

This phenomenon includes various issues such as behavioral changes, increased use of profanity, learning disruptions, and a loss of healthy social interaction skills (Oktasari et al., 2024). Young children are now exposed to other forms of media, including online games, WhatsApp, and particularly YouTube and TikTok (Utami et al., 2022). Both adults and even very young children have easy access to social media, raising concerns among parents, educators, and researchers regarding its overuse.

Digital advancements have transformed communication and information technology, with social media becoming a key feature of this development—connecting people regardless of physical distance (Ardi & Sukmawati, 2020). Unfortunately, electronic devices are now ubiquitous—even among children who ideally should not be using them (Munisa, 2020).

Addiction in early childhood is often associated with technology use, especially with apps like YouTube and TikTok. Young children tend to become aggressive or irritable when denied access, affecting their social relationships (Uhriyah & Eka Dheasari, 2024). Studies show that around 30% of Indonesian adolescents use electronic devices, with

usage starting as early as age 0–4 (Maulusi & Rahagia, 2022). This digital era has seen a dramatic rise in gadget addiction among children, affecting their social-emotional functioning, academic performance, and sleep quality. Conversely, these platforms can promote creativity through educational content, provided parental supervision is present (Zulfadhli & Hilal, 2023).

According to the Indonesian Internet Service Providers Association (APJII, 2023), 66.7% of children aged 5–9 have used the internet, mostly via smartphones or tablets belonging to parents. Similarly, Common Sense Media (2022) found that children aged 0–8 spend an average of 2 hours and 19 minutes daily on screens, with 35% watching videos on platforms like YouTube and TikTok.

Technological advancement can foster creativity if combined with play and nature exploration. However, leaving children unsupervised can result in poor social skills, lack of physical activity, attention issues, and even vision problems from prolonged screen exposure.

Symptoms of addiction may include withdrawal from social activities, increased irritability when devices are removed, and poor focus. Children increasingly prefer screen time over social interaction, potentially leading to isolation and reduced empathy (Widya, 2020).

Technology addiction in children has been linked to cognitive, emotional, and psychological problems (Septiana, 2021). This includes compulsive internet use and difficulty managing self-control, known as "information technology addiction" (Lestary & Winingsih, 2020).

Therefore, this study aims to advocate for the monitored use of YouTube and TikTok. Screen time should not exceed 30 minutes per day, and video content must be age-appropriate. When parents are busy, children are often handed devices as a distraction, which may foster addiction.

Observations indicate that children frequently develop an attachment to watching YouTube. While it may stimulate cognitive development through age-appropriate content, this benefit depends entirely on parental involvement.

TikTok is also commonly used, and due to children's imitative nature, they absorb surrounding behavior quickly. Their mentality and cognitive abilities are shaped by what they mimic, making it essential for parents to limit exposure and guide children toward being polite, energetic, intelligent, and socially skilled individuals (Rozana et al., 2019).

Methods

This study uses a qualitative literature review methodology. It draws conclusions based on previous research with similar contexts (Fiantika et al., 2022). The analysis highlights both positive and negative effects of addiction to video-sharing platforms like YouTube and TikTok on early childhood development. Ten journals were reviewed and analyzed, selected via Google Scholar, focusing on the cognitive implications of these platforms on young children.

Results and Discussions

Studies on the effects of video-sharing platforms such as YouTube and TikTok on children have revealed both positive and negative outcomes depending on the presence or absence of parental supervision.

No	Author & Year	Focus of Study	Key Findings	Recommendation
1	Marlina & Syafwandi (2023)	The influence of YouTube & TikTok on early childhood development	Social media has both positive and negative impacts; children are vulnerable to inappropriate content	Parental supervision and access restriction
2	Safrudiningsih & Gurning (2023)	Education on the effects of social media on children	Education is essential to increase awareness of the negative effects of social media	Digital literacy for parents and teachers
3	Yunia (2022)	The impact of YouTube	Passive use of YouTube	Choose interactive and

		on children's cognitive development	decreases concentration and imagination	educational content
4	Putri et al. (2024)	Impact of short videos on children's cognitive and language skills	Short videos encourage instant stimulation, reduce focus and language mastery	Limit screen time and balance with verbal activities
5	Ismanto et al. (2025)	Relationship between screen time (TikTok, YouTube, games) and children's socio-emotional development	High intensity leads to impulsive and isolative behavior	Screen time control and emotional education
6	Utami & Ikhwana (2022)	The impact of TikTok on children's	TikTok content may shape identity and	Early guidance and value reinforcement

		personality	negative imitative behaviors	
7	Tana et al. (2024)	Social media's influence on character development in early childhood	Social media can shape character but is prone to negative values	Character education through digital platforms
8	Rizkiyah & Safitri (2025)	YouTube Shorts and their effect on mindset and behavior	Encourages instant and consumptive thinking	Media literacy from an early age
9	Nabillah et al. (2025)	TikTok background music and speaking fluency	Helps with pronunciation, but lacks comprehension	Guidance during music content access
10	Nurjannatin et al. (2025)	Impact of TikTok content on children's	Children imitate behaviors from videos,	Content filtering and strict parental/teacher supervision

		social behavior	potentially negative	
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Based on the analysis of the ten articles, it can be concluded that social media such as YouTube and TikTok significantly affects various aspects of early childhood development, including cognitive, language, social-emotional, and character development. Generally, children exposed to intensive and unsupervised content tend to show decreased concentration, uncontrolled imitative behavior, and a tendency to think instantly. This phenomenon suggests that social media, if not carefully monitored, can replace more meaningful and natural learning experiences.

On the other hand, some articles also emphasize that social media does not always have a negative impact. Educational, interactive, and age-appropriate content can actually serve as alternative tools to stimulate language development and shape positive character in children—especially in today’s digital context. However, these benefits can only be realized with the active involvement of parents and teachers in selecting appropriate content and guiding children's interaction with media. Therefore, digital literacy for educators and parents becomes an urgent need to ensure that children are not left to access social media freely.

The implications of these findings highlight the importance of strengthening the role of adults in accompanying children while using social media, as well as the need for institutional policies that emphasize

the importance of media education from an early age. Additionally, collaboration among schools, families, and the government is necessary to provide resources, training, and regulations that support healthy and responsible digital media use. With the right approach, social media can be transformed into an effective educational tool rather than a threat to children's development.

Conclusion

From the study above, it is clearly evident that children's behavior and mental health are adversely affected when parents are not involved in their children's use of platforms like YouTube and TikTok. It is critically important for parents to closely monitor their children's use of YouTube and TikTok. This can help prevent negative impacts and promote their overall development and growth.

When deciding whether to allow their children to use platforms such as YouTube and TikTok, parents must consider the prevalence of various mental health conditions. As children grow older, these issues may significantly impact their lives. To better understand the consequences of social media, parents need access to accurate information. Therefore, it is recommended that social media be used wisely and responsibly.

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