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Knowledge Sharing in Peer Group: An Alternative of Internet Literacy Education Media for Children

M Setiansah¹, W Novianti², A Rahmawati³, L Agustina⁴

¹. Lecturer, Jenderal Soedirman University

². Lecturer, Jenderal Soedirman University

³. University Student, Jenderal Soedirman University

⁴. University Student, Jenderal Soedirman University

mite.setiansah@unsoed.ac.id

Abstract. The data of the Indonesian Internet Service Provider Association in 2018 mentioned that children and teenagers aged 15-19 years old are the majority internet users in Indonesia. The first time the children access to the internet is also getting earlier from year to year. In that context, parents' role to guide and protect their children from the online risk is getting stronger. The problem is that the parents' internet literacy level is often lower than the children. Such a condition then push the children to search other source of information when having difficulties in accessing to the internet. The previous research mentioned that elder brothers or sisters and friends often become the reference for children related to the digital media usage. Departed from this condition, the research is conducted to explore the opportunity of utilizing peer group in literacy internet education for children. This research has been conducted in eight months involving 40 students of SMPN 2 and 40 students of SMP Al Irsyad Purwokerto as respondents. The data are collected via the survey, FGD, and indepth interview. Data analysis is conducted using descriptive and interactive analysis. The result of research shows that 61.4% of respondents admit that they prefer to choose their friends to ask and to do the knowledge sharing when having difficulties in accessing to the internet. Some reasons appearing are because the parents' technical skill are lower than the children's, uncommunicative talk with parents, high level of parents' busy activities, and children's need to socialize with their friends as amusement especially in the middle of pandemic.

Keywords: Internet Literacy, Children, Peer Group

1. Preface

Based on the report of the Indonesian Internet Service Provider Association (APJII) in 2019, it is noted that in 2018 the number of internet users in Indonesia has reached 171.17 people. If compared with the total number of Indonesian population, it means that 64.8% of the total population are the internet users. Since 2017 the number has increased 27.91 millions and it is predicted to keep increasing year by year.

The increasing trend of internet users in Indonesia does not only seem from the number side, but also from the side that the users' age is getting earlier year by year. From the similar report data, 25.2% of the group of 5-9 years old children have become the internet users.

The similar condition is also found in Sweden. The recommendation of Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Council in 2012 stated that in 2000 the Sweden children accessed to the internet for the first time in thirteen years old, and it decreased drastically to be four years old in 2009. In 2009, 74% of the 5-7 years old children in England also have accessed to the internet. Such fact shows that the children's age knowing the internet for the first time is getting earlier, and even it occurs when they have not been able to know yet the risk and danger hidden behind the tool.

Discussion on the impact of internet for children have been talked a lot. Many efforts to anticipate it have also been conducted by many parties from countries to non-governmental organizations. However, many cases involving children and online media still occur. Child complaint cases based on child protection cluster in pornography and cybercrime in KPAI in 2011-2018 kept increasing (Maradewa, 2019). The data of the Indonesian Child Protection Commission (KPAI) has noted that the total complaints of pornography and cybercrime or online crime ensnaring the children are as follows: 322 cases in 2014, 463 cases in 2015, increased to be 587 cases in 2016, to be 608 cases in 2017 and reached 679 cases in 2018.

Besides being the cause of violent action to children, internet technology also brings other impact that is no less concerning, which is related to the impact of online game. Merdeka.com on 11th October 2018 launched the news about ten children in Banyumas diagnosed to have a mental breakdown due to addiction to playing online game during the whole 2018. They got therapy in RSUD Banyumas. Seven of those ten children are the students ⁴ of Elementary School and Junior High School.

In such a condition, the role of family as the first base of child protection against the online risk should be more optimal. The problem is that some parents do not realize how big the hidden risk is in child's relation to online media. Moreover, it frequently occurs that although parents realize the risk of media online recognition for early age children, they have difficulties in avoiding their children from the media. It even more often occurs that the children master the online media much better than their parents. Based on a research of Setiansah, et.al. (2013), it is noted that 36.9% of respondents who are the cadres of PKK activators in Banyumas Regency state that internet is the main information source. But a research entitled *Development of Child Protection Model against Online Risk through Family Based Media Literacy Education* (Setiansah, et.al, 2019) states that the majority of children (78-100%) have never got media literacy education especially the internet from their parents. On the other hand, parents even ask more questions or help to their children in using the online media. The same research

also states that 53-68% of children get more information about the internet usage from their friends or elder brothers/sisters rather than from their parents.

Departed from the condition above, in particular, this research is conducted in order to get comprehensive description on the opportunity of developing internet literacy education for children through peer group establishment. Peer selection as the agent of knowledge sharing on internet literacy is taken with consideration that in fact children access to the internet more frequently with their friends or elder brothers/sisters. By selecting children's peer, an effort of internet literacy education will also be easier because millennial aged children are the digital native ones who will absorb either knowledge or skill of mastering internet based technology more easily.

2. Methodology

The research is conducted in two Junior High School in Purwokerto, Banyumas Regency, Central Java, in SMPN 2 Purwokerto and SMPIT Al Irsyad Islamic Purwokerto. Both schools are chosen with consideration that high school students belong to millennial group category that nowadays are the majority users of internet in Indonesia. The data collecting is conducted using the survey and Focus Group Discussion (FGD). The survey via google form is aimed at getting the initial data related to identity, literacy level, and media behavior of the children, which is deepened through FGD by involving 40 students from each school. To get indepth discussion result, the FGD is conducted in some sessions. The participants are divided into eight groups, four groups of students from SMPN 2 Purwokerto and four groups of students from SMPIT Al Irsyad. Considering the Covid-19 pandemic situation, FGD is conducted in online way via zoom meeting. Data analysis of the reasearch is conducted using descriptive data analysis, by grouping the data into two those are qualitative data in the form of words or sentences and qualitative data in the form of numbers.

3. Result and Discussion

3.1 Usage Behavior and Internet Literacy Level in Children

After going through some discussions and data analysis, it is noted that the students as respondents of this research have high internet usage behavior. 45-46% of them use the internet more than 3-5 hours a day and 39-40% of them use the internet media more than 5 hours a day. The increase in internet usage by the children especially occur during the period of Covid-10 pandemic where the learning process is fully conducted via online network. Their social relationship becomes limited so that the internet based media also becomes their main means to get information, entertainment, and to communicate with their peers.

The high level of internet usage in children is probably because the facilities provided by their parents are very high. More than 90% of students admit that they have had media tools to access to the internet either by using their own smartphone or laptop. They also have allocation for special fund to buy the internet data package or the internet quota. 83.5% of students in SMPN 2 Purwokerto admit that they get fund for the internet quota about 25,000-85,000 rupiahs a month. While 54.5% students of SMP IT Al Irsyad admit that they get fund to buy the internet quota from their parents about 20,000-200,000 rupiahs a month. The variation of total fund and number of receiving the quota fund are various because they admit that there is the WiFi facility as another alternative. For example, one student of Al Irsyad says that he does not need any fund to buy the quota because there is the WiFi at home that can meet all his needs to surf the internet. When he has to go outside, he can also get the internet connection at the food court or at school.

Although the quota purchase fund provided by the parents are various, in fact such condition is not a hindrance for the children to access to the internet. The internet usage behavior of students in both schools either the state or private school still have more or less the same duration and intensity, which is majority more than three hours a day. From the duration of three until more than five hours a day in using the internet, 90% are used by the students to follow the online school learning process, and 90% use the internet to get entertainment especially via Youtube.

The high internet usage by the students at home especially during the pandemic gives hope that they will get more guidance from their parents. They will also get better media literacy education especially the internet literacy because they often get accompanied by their parents. But the facts on the ground are not like that. Only 15% of students who admit that they are often and always accompanied by their parents when accessing to the internet. While the rest, 85% of them, admit that they are only sometimes and even never accompanied by their parents when accessing to the internet media.

A number of factors appear as the reasons why children rarely access to the internet accompanied by their parents. Besides due to the parents' busy activities, children also tend to feel comfortable to access to the internet independently or with friends. Parents' technical skill also seems to be not capable to meet the children's need in accessing to the internet. Moreover, the junior high school students sometimes have to tell their parents how to use the internet to make the email account, to use the social media, to edit the content, and many others. The children admit that they learn more from their friends, or ask their friends when having difficulties in accessing to or using the internet. The parents' mastering internet technology that is less capable also becomes one reason why children feel less comfortable to have a discussion or a chat with their parents. But they admit that parents become their first choice when they want to confirm the truth of news or information they get from the internet, which they consider as hoax.

The willingness of the students to confirm the truth of news with their parents or by searching information about the similar news from different sources in the internet is one indicator of the internet literacy ability they have. However, when they are asked whether they understand the media literacy especially the internet literacy, most of them do not know it well. Some students from SMPN 2 Purwokerto admit that they know about literacy because there is a literacy program conducted in their school. When being asked about the program, they explain that school literacy activity is a habit to read any book for ten minutes before the learning process is started in the morning. Thus, it can be concluded that school literacy program is still understood as being literate, whereas media literacy especially internet literacy needs a competence much further than just reading ability but it covers technical skill and social skill consisting of critical skill and evaluation skill. In relation to this matter, Livingstone (2008) in his research entitled *Internet Literacy: Young People's Negotiation of New Online Opportunities* concludes the significance of sharpening the concept of internet literacy if being compared with print literacy. In internet literacy, besides being able to read and write, the user also should have critical thinking due to the waning of limitation between virtual and real, between work and leisure, and between public and private.

Thus, in the context of internet literacy, the literacy competence that the students should have is not only a competence to access and evaluate the content but also includes the content production skill considering many media platforms have user generated content character or a media in which the user becomes the content supplier, as seen in many social media including Youtube. The adequate internet literacy level is supposed to be able to protect the children from the online risk when they become the users or when they become the media content producers. Do not let them make any content that even put them in risky situation, like when they do not realize that they have published their private data or make them the violence perpetrator when their content contains cyberbullying, hoax, and some kinds of that.

Silverblatt (in Baran, 2010: 24) states that there are seven basic elements of media literacy. Baran adds one more characteristic to make it eight. The eight basic elements of media literacy are as follows:

1. A critical thinking skill enabling audience members to develop independent judgements about media content
2. An understanding of the process of mass communication
3. An awareness of the impact of the media on the individual and society
4. Strategies for analyzing and discussing media message
5. An understanding of media content as a text that provide insight into our culture and our lives.
6. The ability to enjoy, understand, and appreciate media content

7. Development of effective and responsible production skills

8. An understanding of the ethical and moral obligations of media practitioners.

The eight characteristics of media literacy above seem comprehensive enough and still relevant to be applied in this digital era. Media literacy does not only focus on the skill to access to the media anymore but also to understand the process, production, and also the ethics and moral of media actors so that they are able to be alert to any hidden risks behind the online media. Up to this level, it can be concluded that although the internet media usage behavior of the students is high enough and the facilities provided by parents are adequate, the internet literacy level of the Junior High School students is still low. They just still master the basic skill that is the technical skill in using the internet.

3.2 Knowledge Sharing Behavior in Children

As presented in the previous part of this writing, children like choosing their friends better than coming to their parents to ask and discuss. Parents' limited mastery of technology is the reason of most students, in which 32.6% of respondents prefer to choose their friends when having difficulties.

They admit that they can do the knowledge sharing with friends more freely. Not only about how to access to technology, but they can also see the trending newest apps or features, like knowing Tiktok, knowing the inspiring Youtube accounts, knowing many apps of photo and video editing, and many others. Sharing the information that is conducted by the students is in line with the definition of knowledge sharing given by Ahmad and Karim (2019) who state that *knowledge sharing is defined as the exchange of task-related information, advice, and expertise to help others and to collaborate with others to carry out daily tasks, solve problems and develop new ideas.*

Beyond the matters directly related to the internet usage, the respondents also admit that they prefer to choose their friends to discuss the school subjects they haven't understood yet. Aiming at discussing the school subjects, then no wonder if 86.3% of respondents say that the friends they mean and choose as the partner of discussion are their school mates either at the same school or at the same class. As the rest, they make their friends in the course place and in their neighborhood as the partner of discussion. The knowledge they discuss with their friends are usually about the technical problems of using the internet, certain news, and school subjects. Through the information they share with friends, they can study more easily, they become more creative in making contents, and they have more confidence because they can follow the current information circulating in their peer environment. Thus, the knowledge sharing they do certainly has given implication on their personal level including the effect on the level of individual performance, learning and creativity, and psychology, as said by Ahmad and Karim.

The interesting finding from this research is the facts that although these children have adequate technical mastering in producing contents, either photos or videos, evidently most of them from both

schools, 83.5% students of SMPN 2 Purwokerto and 90.9% students of SMP Al Irsyad Purwokerto, prefer to use WhatsApp for communicating. They use Youtube for entertainment and Instagram to know their friends' activities. It is different from the social media culture on more adult group, in which that group is more productive than the children. Even the children comment that the activity to post many contents in social media like Instagram is their parents' habit. They also admit that they do not like to make vlog to be uploaded to Youtube or any other social media. After being traced, evidently the internet users in Junior High School age group share the same culture in using the internet, one of which is limiting to post in media social like Instagram. According to them, to have the cool Instagram account does not require many posts, but having many followers will bring positive response to the post sent. So although a few and rarely posted, each post will get good reaction from the followers. The peer's role in sharing culture is explained by Handel, Cahill & Elkin, 2007 (in Lim, 2019) as follows, *these peer groups play the critical socializing functions which imbue in children a sense of their peers' norms, values and behavioral patterns.*

On the other side, although they rarely even never make posts in social media by themselves, they admit that they often tell their parents how to use the social media. Some even admit that they have the best and the most expensive smartphone in their family because they are considered to have the best mastery in technology. Children who state that also say that they are often used as a reference in the family and they often tell what they master to the other members of family either father, mother, younger brother or sister, and even grandfather and grandmother who live at the same house. Some also say that besides themselves, their elder brother or sister also becomes the reference in the family.

3.3. Peer Group as Literacy Education Media for Children

Peers, either they get from school environment, neighborhood, or from other activity environment like course place and others, become a group that has a very important role in developing and establishing the students' literacy on media especially the internet. They get knowledge sharing mostly from friends, either related to the direct usage of media or related to the news and school subject. From their friends they also get more knowledge about any features to protect themselves from any dangerous media contents, such as knowing how to block the contacts, how to use search feature safely, and others.

Based on the result of FGD, it is noted that the students have about 3 to 5 close friends who meet each other intensively. Most of them say that their close friends are their classmates at school, but some others say that in the pandemic situation right now they also make friends with their neighborhood despite from different school. The needs to socialize and keep having relationship with friends make the internet becomes their choice in communicating as said by Lim (2013) that *these communication processes are of more than instrumental value, and serve to fortify the socio-emotional aspects of relationship-building amongst young people.*

The children's interaction with their friends and their potential to be the agent of media literacy in the family makes peer group strategic in the media literacy education. When the peer group is managed well and is provided with the program of adequate media literacy education, thus the agents of literacy education will appear, which can respread the knowledge they get in group to their own family environment.

The presence of school friends as the main partner for children in joining the internet media also gives big opportunity for the peer development more easily. Media literacy education, especially the internet, may become one part of school curriculum or extracurricular activity at school, so that it can be the integrated source of information for children and also give more freely space for them to do the material deepening with their peers at the same school.

The school selection as the center of media literacy information is also in line with the research finding, in which besides choosing friends as a reference, in the second position they choose teacher as someone to ask and as a reference in their using media. Teacher is considered to be more capable to explain and give knowledge as they need compared to their parents at home. Therefore, the peer group development as a media literacy education becomes an alternative that is relevant to do nowadays.

4. Conclusion

Based on the analysis result of this research finding, it can be concluded that the respondents who are the students of Junior High School have high enough access to the ownership of online media tools either gadget or quota. So no wonder if they have also used the internet with high intensity, on average more than 5 hours a day. The respondents have high internet literacy level, especially related to the technical skill. Most of the respondents choose friends to ask when having difficulties either related to the technical skill of internet usage or the sharing of school subject. They can also do the knowledge sharing in a balanced manner by sharing the role to tell or learn from friends and also to be the reference in the family. Peer establishment gives good opportunity to develop as establishing the agents of literacy internet education for children. Hopefully by making the children as the agents of media literacy education, they can also share the knowledge to their own families, considering that commonly they even become the source of reference at home.

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