PROMOTING MEDIA LITERACY AMONG EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION:
A CASE STUDY IN DELI SERDANG REGENCY, INDONESIA

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ABSTRACT

Objective: This study investigates the media literacy competencies of early childhood education teachers in Deli Serdang Regency, Indonesia focusing on their understanding of media literacy concepts, integration into the curriculum, and implementation in schools, as well as the availability of relevant teacher development programs.

Method: Utilizing a qualitative descriptive methodology, the research gathered data through interviews and observations conducted over a three-month period.

Results and Discussion: Findings indicate that while teachers are adept at employing digital technologies within the framework of the TIAR Model, they exhibit a significant lack of deep conceptual understanding of media literacy. This deficiency is primarily attributed to the limited professional development opportunities specifically tailored to media literacy education. The results underscore the necessity for designing and implementing specialized training and support programs that enhance the media literacy competencies of early childhood educators.

Research Implications: Policymakers should consider establishing guidelines and standards for media literacy education in early childhood settings. These policies could mandate regular professional development in media literacy for educators and allocate resources for such initiatives.

Originality/Value: The study identifies a significant gap between the use of digital technologies and the conceptual understanding of media literacy among teachers. This finding is crucial for developing targeted interventions and underscores the need for a balanced approach to technology integration and conceptual education.

Keywords: Curriculum Integration, Early Childhood Education, Media Literacy Competence, Teacher Development.

PROMOVENDO A LITERACIA MEDIATICA ENTRE A EDUCAÇÃO INFANTIL: UM ESTUDO DE CASO NA REGÊNCIA DE DELI SERDANG, INDONÉSIA

RESUMO

Objetivo: Este estudo investiga as competências de literacia mediática de professores de educação infantil na região de Deli Serdang, Indonésia, centrando-se na sua compreensão dos conceitos de literacia mediática, integração no currículo e implementação nas escolas, bem como na disponibilidade de programas relevantes de desenvolvimento de professores.
Método: Utilizando metodología descriptiva cualitativa, la pesquisa coletou dados por meio de entrevistas e observações realizadas durante um período de três meses.

Resultados e discussão: Os resultados indicam que, embora os professores sejam adeptos da utilização de tecnologias digitais no âmbito do modelo TIAR, apresentam uma falta significativa de compreensão conceptual profunda da literacia mediática. Esta deficiência é atribuída principalmente às oportunidades limitadas de desenvolvimento profissional especificamente adaptadas à educação para a literacia mediática. Os resultados sublinham a necessidade de conceber e implementar programas de formação e apoio especializados que melhorem as competências de literacia mediática dos educadores da primeira infância.

Implicações para a investigação: Os decisores políticos devem considerar o estabelecimento de diretrizes e padrões para a educação para a literacia mediática em contextos de primeira infância. Estas políticas poderiam exigir o desenvolvimento profissional regular em literacia mediática para educadores e atribuir recursos para tais iniciativas.

Originalidade/Valor: O estudo identifica uma lacuna significativa entre o uso de tecnologias digitais e a compreensão conceptual da literacia mediática entre os professores. Esta conclusão é crucial para o desenvolvimento de intervenções específicas e sublinha a necessidade de uma abordagem equilibrada à integração tecnológica e à educação conceptual.

1 INTRODUCTION

In the contemporary media landscape, characterized by technological sophistication and the omnipresence of media platforms, the impact of media expansion has carved a significant mark on the fabric of 21st-century civilization (Chalkiadaki, 2018 and Jolls & Johnsen, 2018). The proliferation of new media has brought about remarkable changes in the communication landscape, significantly affecting nearly every aspect of human life, including the lives of children, both at school and at home. This situation has prompted discourse on the necessity of equipping children with an understanding of healthy, ethical, critical, and wise use of new media, particularly digital media, to support their academic and societal lives. The rapid advancement of technology has also influenced the economic, social, and cultural aspects of society, inevitably shaping the lives of children and impacting their perceptions of themselves, others, and the world they inhabit.

Children today are active users of digital devices, spending considerable amounts of time interacting with digital technology connected to the internet. This interaction extends beyond mere usage to ownership of digital devices and increased engagement with social media platforms. The phenomenon is evident not only in the time spent using digital devices but also in the preference for online gaming over traditional outdoor activities among children. The portrayal of information and communication technology as an integral part of children's lives in Sumatera Utara can be traced through various studies, reflecting how children interact virtually through online gaming and how such activities have become their preferred choice for psychological and social fulfilment. However, alongside the opportunities presented by digital media, there are concerning trends, such as the exposure of children to inappropriate content, including pornography and violence, which can have detrimental effects on their well-being and development. In light of these challenges, media literacy education emerges as a pivotal tool in enhancing communication competencies in media and technology use. It plays a crucial role in empowering individuals, including students, educators, and parents, to navigate the complexities of media and technology use in both educational and domestic settings. Despite the increasing recognition of the importance of media literacy, particularly for children, there remains a gap in understanding and implementing media literacy initiatives, especially in early childhood education.

This study aims to explore the promotion and integration of media literacy in early childhood education in Kabupaten Deli Serdang. The significance of this research lies in its potential to contribute to the enhancement of media literacy among young learners, thereby
fostering responsible and informed media consumption habits from an early age. By examining the experiences and perspectives of educators in promoting media literacy in early childhood education, this study seeks to shed light on effective strategies and challenges in integrating media literacy into daily classroom practices. Moreover, the launch of the Merdeka Curriculum in 2022 presents a unique opportunity for educators to introduce media literacy to young children in schools. However, there is limited empirical evidence on how educators promote and integrate media literacy into daily teaching practices in early childhood education settings. Therefore, this study seeks to address this gap by investigating the experiences and practices of educators in promoting media literacy in early childhood education in Kabupaten Deli Serdang. Through a qualitative research approach, this study aims to provide insights into the implementation of media literacy education in early childhood education settings and offer recommendations for enhancing media literacy practices in schools.

According to researchers, educators must also be able to make media literacy education a movement that can positively and participatively transform the school culture by involving the entire educational ecosystem as change agents in the media environment. This includes involving parents and the community as partners who are equally committed to building children's character in the digital era. However, the success of promoting media literacy to early childhood also has an important intersection with teacher competencies, so that strategies for inoculating media literacy into early childhood entities can proceed optimally (Ferrés & Piscitelli, 2012 and Fry, 2015). Certainly, teachers need to have a set of competencies that are not only dominated by personal competence aspects but also pedagogical competence aspects (Gebru, 2020; Simons et al., 2017; Verniers & Tilleul, 2014) related to the teacher's ability to plan media literacy reinforcement strategies starting from developing lesson plans, implementing adaptive teaching strategies that are suitable for the learning capacities of early childhood, and being able to optimize the potential of all school stakeholders, including parents and the community, who potentially have strong supportive capabilities in promoting children's critical thinking abilities in the digital era.

This study revolves around the understanding and implementation of media literacy initiatives in early childhood education settings, particularly in Kabupaten Deli Serdang. Despite the increasing recognition of the importance of media literacy, especially for children, there remains a lack of empirical evidence and understanding of how educators promote and integrate media literacy into daily teaching practices in this specific context. The article points out that there is limited empirical evidence on how educators promote and integrate media literacy into daily teaching practices in early childhood education settings, specifically in

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Kabupaten Deli Serdang. This indicates a gap in research regarding the actual practices and experiences of educators in this context. Despite the growing recognition of the importance of media literacy, there is still a gap in understanding how media literacy initiatives are implemented in early childhood education. Understanding the challenges and effective strategies for integrating media literacy into daily classroom practices is crucial for enhancing media literacy among young learners. The launch of the Merdeka Curriculum in 2022 presents a unique opportunity for educators to introduce media literacy to young children in schools. However, there is limited empirical evidence on how educators are utilizing this curriculum to promote media literacy. This highlights a gap in research regarding the implementation of media literacy initiatives within the framework of the Merdeka Curriculum. In summary, the research gap identified in the article pertains to the lack of empirical evidence and understanding of how educators promote and integrate media literacy into daily teaching practices in early childhood education settings, particularly in Kabupaten Deli Serdang. Closing this gap is essential for enhancing media literacy practices and fostering responsible and informed media consumption habits among young learners from an early age.

2 MATERIAL AND METHOD

The study employs a multiple case study method to provide a robust understanding of the topic. Multiple case studies allow for cross-analysis and the drawing of conclusions across different cases. Baskarada (2014) defines a case study as an intensive study of a unit aimed at understanding a broader class of similar units, enabling researchers to gain a holistic view of an issue and helping them to depict, understand, and explain the situation under investigation. The study adopts a qualitative approach, focusing on understanding the phenomenon of media literacy among early childhood education (PAUD) teachers in Deli Serdang Regency, Indonesia. Qualitative research involves positioning researchers as observers of a phenomenon in the world, comprising a set of interpretive and material practices that transform the world, thus making it visible. The practices of qualitative research transform the world into a series of representations such as field notes, interviews, conversations, photographs, recordings, and memos (9). Barbour (2007) explains that qualitative research is intended to understand the world outside "the world out there" and to understand, describe, and sometimes even explain social phenomena from the inside "from the inside" in a variety of ways such as analyzing individual or group experiences, interactions and communications that occur, and analyzing various documents.
Key informants play a crucial role in providing emic perspectives to researchers, especially in situations where knowledge from other parties is limited (11). In this study, key informants are early childhood education (PAUD) teachers in Deli Serdang Regency, while supporting informants include school principals, parents of students, and other stakeholders.

The subjects of the study were selected using purposive sampling, which involves identifying individuals who have rich information about the phenomena under investigation (12). Informants provide informed consent as an agreement to participate in the research. Data gathered from PAUD teachers include their interpretation of media literacy, the content of media literacy in the school curriculum, and how media literacy content is constructed in learning activities. Meanwhile, data from supporting informants, such as school principals and parents, focus on strengthening teacher competencies and the potential for media literacy strengthening activities in schools.

The study utilized two main data collection methods: in-depth interviews and participant observation. In-depth interviews, conducted with teachers, school principals, and parents, aimed to explore perceptions of media literacy's importance, its integration into the curriculum, and efforts to strengthen it. Participant observation, using the "participant as observer" approach, involved direct observation of classroom activities, learning materials, and media literacy promotion events. Overall, data collection focused on understanding media literacy reinforcement in classrooms, examining curriculum design, and observing supportive facilities in schools.

3 RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The research process began in the third semester, around October 2022, with the researcher immersed in literature review, exploring various sources related to media literacy. This eventually led to the decision to focus on media literacy issues in early childhood education. In January 2023, the topic was refined to media literacy in early childhood education in Deli Serdang Regency. After receiving guidance from mentors and refining the research title, the researcher gained approval to conduct the study from both academic and local government authorities. Fieldwork, conducted from July to September 2023, presented various experiences ranging from joyous moments to challenges testing resilience and patience. Observations in PAUD institutions in Deli Serdang provided rich insights into children's learning activities and interactions with teachers. Challenges included time constraints for interviews due to teachers' busy schedules and occasional reluctance from some teachers. However, the researcher
managed time efficiently, optimizing interview and observation schedules to overcome these challenges. Overall, the research process was likened to an intellectual battleground, requiring patience and perseverance to achieve its objectives. Despite challenges, each obstacle presented an opportunity for growth and development. The researcher navigated through these challenges with determination, reflecting on the significance of each experience in advancing the research goals.

the role of media literacy among early childhood education (ECE) teachers in the context of digital technology integration in schools aligns with John Dewey's notion that schools should reflect real-life situations to facilitate constructive learning activities. With the rapid development of digital technology, educators are urged to break barriers hindering teaching practices, enhancing knowledge and competencies to provide engaging learning approaches for young children in the digital era. Government policies worldwide emphasize public access to digital technology, aiming to enhance digital literacy and human resource development. In Indonesia, initiatives like the Digital Transformation Roadmap prioritize building digital skills among educators, with programs like the "Schools as Drivers" initiative focusing on digitalizing schools. Teachers' media literacy competency is vital, as it influences their practices in using digital technology for personal and professional purposes. Scholars define media literacy as the ability to access, analyze, evaluate, communicate, and contribute to media content. Field research in Deli Serdang district, North Sumatra, reveals that ECE teachers possess these competencies.

They access various digital technologies for personal and professional use, from smartphones for communication and accessing educational materials to utilizing learning platforms mandated by the school. The significant internet penetration in the region reflects the community's adaptability to digital technology, including ECE teachers. Moreover, teachers demonstrate the ability to analyze and evaluate digital content critically. They cross-reference information from multiple sources, ensuring the accuracy and reliability of the information they consume and share, thereby promoting digital literacy among their peers and students. Their communication skills using digital platforms foster collaboration between teachers, parents, and the community. Through platforms like WhatsApp, teachers engage in discussions, share educational content, and coordinate learning activities, strengthening the school-home partnership. Additionally, teachers contribute positively to the digital ecosystem by creating and sharing educational content on social media platforms. They leverage digital tools for teaching, recording classroom activities, editing videos, and disseminating educational content, fostering a culture of learning and collaboration in the digital age. However, challenges remain,
with discrepancies in teachers’ media literacy competencies and access to digital resources. Some teachers lack access to laptops, limiting their ability to explore more engaging teaching methods. Nonetheless, there is optimism that collective efforts to enhance media literacy among ECE teachers will lead to improved educational quality and effectiveness in the digital era.

3.1 TEACHER’S UNDERSTANDING OF MEDIA LITERACY

a) Conceptual Understanding

Preschool educators show practical media literacy skills but lack a solid understanding of media literacy concepts. Bridging this gap between skills and knowledge is crucial for effectively integrating media literacy into teaching practices. Educators with strong media literacy knowledge are more confident in leveraging technology for student development. Balancing practical skills with theoretical understanding empowers educators to navigate the digital landscape effectively and support student learning.

b) Reflective Understanding

Digital technology plays a vital role in shaping our digital society, offering both new opportunities and significant challenges in education. Teachers are not only educators but also facilitators in creating relevant learning experiences for students in this digital era. Despite weak theoretical understanding, preschool teachers in Deli Serdang Regency show reflective views on media literacy, emphasizing its urgency in today’s information age. They recognize the need for individuals, from teenagers to adults, to develop media literacy skills for effective interaction with digital technology. Similarly, they acknowledge the importance of media literacy for young children, emphasizing skills such as recognizing digital technology, understanding its benefits, and selecting good information. This reflective thinking underscores the importance of integrating media literacy education into the curriculum, preparing students for the complexities of the interconnected world.

3.2 THE INTEGRATION OF DIGITAL TECHNOLOGY IN LEARNING AT PIONEER SCHOOLS

The integration of digital technology in early childhood education often sparks debates, but teachers in pioneering preschools have a reflective understanding of its potential benefits. They actively use technology in classrooms, recognizing its role in enriching learning and
empowering students. This aligns with the need for teachers to prepare students for the digital age by promoting media literacy. Teachers' readiness to integrate technology into education hinges on their own media literacy competencies and pedagogical skills. By using digital tools, teachers create a culture of media convergence in schools, promoting critical thinking and early childhood media literacy. This approach involves using subject-specific content and various teaching strategies to enhance media literacy skills among young children.

3.3 MEDIA LITERACY LEARNING STRATEGY THROUGH THE T-I-A-R MODEL

Promoting media literacy, especially for young children, is crucial in today's digital age. Early childhood educators play a vital role in integrating digital technology into classrooms to enhance learning. In Deli Serdang, Indonesia, PAUD (early childhood education) teachers are using laptops and projectors to show educational videos, fostering digital literacy and environmental awareness. Through a structured approach called TIAR (Watch, Identify, Act, Reflect), they engage children in watching videos, identifying key information, taking actions like drawing or discussion, and reflecting on their learning. This approach not only promotes media literacy but also enhances critical thinking and social awareness among young learners. Ultimately, TIAR serves as a valuable framework for promoting media literacy in early childhood education.

Figure 1

*T-I-A-R model*

The implementation of digital technology in education has become imperative, especially with the rise of initiatives like the School Movement Program. Teachers participating in this program are expected to optimize digital technology to enhance pedagogical competencies. They utilize platforms like Merdeka Mengajar and engage in online training.
sessions via Google Meet. Additionally, schools receive support in the form of laptops, projectors, and projector screens. This intensive interaction with digital technology has prompted teachers to innovate in their teaching methods, incorporating laptops and projectors into classroom learning. Collaboration among teachers, both within learning communities and with school administrators, is fostered to ensure effective teaching practices. This collaboration extends to engaging parents to maintain continuity between school and home learning environments. The modern educational system emphasizes the importance of partnerships between schools and parents to support children's academic progress.

Teachers collaborate with parents through platforms like WhatsApp to share information about students' academic development and involve parents in classroom activities. Efforts to strengthen media literacy include initiatives like parenting classes organized by schools. These classes aim to empower parents with knowledge and skills to support children's media literacy development at home. Teachers and parents are seen as key players in fostering media literacy among children, with collective efforts contributing to a positive digital culture both at home and in schools. Training sessions play a crucial role in enhancing teachers' media literacy competencies. However, there is a need for more comprehensive support and training from the Ministry of Education to equip early childhood educators with the necessary knowledge and skills in media literacy. Recognizing the reality of today's digital age, where children are active participants in digital society, it's essential for the government to champion the movement for media literacy across all age groups.

4 CONCLUSION

PAUD teachers demonstrate proficiency in media literacy application, yet they lack a deep conceptual understanding due to limited socialization opportunities. They perceive media literacy as essential for young children, emphasizing fundamental digital skills and critical discernment. Within the curriculum, media literacy is integrated, with teachers actively shaping learning objectives and incorporating it into teaching modules. The TIAR model serves as a framework for digital technology-based activities in the classroom. Although principals conduct training sessions, the focus primarily revolves around instructional improvement rather than enhancing media literacy skills among teachers. For theoretical considerations, further exploration of models for teaching media literacy to young children is recommended. Academically, there's a need to offer training and resources for integrating media literacy into education, alongside facilitating the adoption of effective media learning models. Lastly, in
practical terms, it's suggested to prioritize "parenting in the digital age" as a key topic in school parenting programs.

REFERENCES


