

An Analysis of the Impact of TikTok Content on the Behavior of Children Aged 5–6 Years at TK IT Baitusshalihin Banda Aceh

Cut Syarah¹, Fitriah Hayati², Raudha Meutia³

¹²³Universitas Bina Bangsa Getsempena

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Abstract

The rapid development of digital technology has influenced various aspects of life, including the behavior of early childhood children. One of the social media platforms widely used today is TikTok, which provides a variety of engaging audio-visual content that is easily accessible to different age groups, including children. This study aims to analyze the impact of TikTok content on the social and emotional behavior of children aged 5–6 years at TK IT Baitusshalihin Banda Aceh and to examine the role of teachers and parents in supervising children's use of digital media. This study employed a descriptive qualitative approach involving 8 children aged 5–6 years, 2 classroom teachers, and 3 parents as research participants. Data were collected through observation, interviews, and documentation. The data obtained were analyzed using the Miles and Huberman model, which includes data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. The results of the study indicate that most children are familiar with TikTok content and tend to imitate various videos they watch, such as songs, dance movements, facial expressions, and speaking styles. TikTok content has an impact on children's social behavior, particularly in the way they interact and communicate with their peers. In addition, TikTok content also influences children's emotional behavior through changes in how they express themselves and respond to certain situations. The effects are not always negative. TikTok can enhance children's creativity, confidence in self-expression, and social interaction when used appropriately. However, excessive use without proper supervision may lead children to imitate behaviors that are not suitable for their age and developmental stage. Therefore, the roles of teachers and parents are crucial in providing supervision, guidance, and the selection of appropriate content so that the use of digital media can optimally support children's social and emotional development.

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Corresponding Author:

Cut Syarah

¹²³Universitas Bina Bangsa Getsempena

Email : cutsyarah04@gmail.com

1. INTRODUCTION

According to Amini and Aisyah (2014), children of various ages and with different behaviors usually attract the attention of adults. The world of children is a world full of laughter and joy, so adults are often entertained simply by observing their behavior. Early childhood refers to individuals aged 0–6 years who are experiencing very rapid growth and development. This period is an important stage in the formation of various aspects of development, such as cognitive, language, social-emotional, and moral development. At this stage, children are highly sensitive to various forms of

stimulation from their environment, so the experiences they gain will influence their development in subsequent stages (Kahar, 2025). Therefore, children require an environment that can provide positive stimulation to support their optimal development.

This is in line with the opinion of Pratama (2022), who states that the importance of early childhood is explained by various perspectives indicating that early childhood children experience the most rapid physical and mental development. Brain development, as the center of intelligence, occurs very rapidly because the brain development of early childhood children has reached approximately 80 percent of that of adults; therefore, this period is referred to as the golden age. Consequently, this stage is considered the most appropriate phase for introducing character education to early childhood children. During this period, appropriate stimulation is essential to support children's physical, social, emotional, language, and cognitive development. Cognitive development is one of the important aspects that enables children to think, remember, understand, and solve simple problems encountered in everyday life.

According to Cholik (2021), information technology is an important factor in the advancement of an era. Several sectors are key determinants of technological progress and influence the level of development within a country, including education, economics, health, government, and socio-cultural sectors. The increasingly rapid development of technology has influenced various fields of life, including education. Children today are very familiar with digital devices, animated content, colorful images, and various forms of audiovisual stimulation. Therefore, technology-based learning media such as animated videos have great potential to attract children's attention and improve their learning outcomes. Animated videos combine moving images, sound, text, and attractive visual elements, making the learning process more enjoyable and meaningful for early childhood children.

According to Priyanto (2014), creativity is one of the potentials of children that must be developed from an early age. Every child possesses creative talent, and from an educational perspective, creative talent can be developed; therefore, it needs to be nurtured from early childhood. Through systematic play activities adjusted to children's age groups, growth, and development, children's creative potential can develop optimally. Play is very important for children and is essential for their growth and development. This is in line with the opinion of Farikhah, Mar'atin, Afifah, and Safitri (2022), who state that creativity has the ability to develop all of a child's potential, express emotions, and accept new experiences related to learning. Empowering the environment as a medium for exploration allows children to play an important role in developing their creativity if their potential is properly nurtured through creative and exploratory learning designs, supported by research findings. Creativity is one of the potentials that must be developed from an early age. Every child has creative talent, and from an educational perspective, this talent can be developed; therefore, it needs to be fostered from early childhood.

The development of digital technology has brought major changes to people's lives, including parenting patterns. The presence of digital devices and increasingly easy internet access has caused early childhood children to become closer to various forms of digital media from a very young age. This phenomenon makes digital media one of the factors influencing children's development and behavior in everyday life (Mannell et al., 2024).

In addition to providing benefits, uncontrolled use of TikTok also has the potential to generate various impacts on children's development and behavior. Sofyan and Kurniawan (2021)

found that the use of TikTok social media influences children's behavior, indicating the need for parental supervision and guidance in its use. Other studies have shown that excessive exposure to TikTok can affect the concentration and attention of early childhood children. Children who frequently access short-form videos tend to become more easily distracted and have difficulty maintaining focus during learning activities, whereas children who receive supervision and limitations on digital media use demonstrate better attention skills (Maulania & Samad, 2025).

Furthermore, the use of TikTok is also related to the development of children's cognitive behavior. Attractive audiovisual media can provide stimulation for children's thinking abilities and information-processing skills; however, its use should still be adjusted to children's age and developmental needs so that the benefits obtained can be optimized.

The development of social media has had a considerable influence on the lives of early childhood children. One application that is widely used and recognized by society today is TikTok. This application not only functions as an entertainment medium but can also be utilized as a learning tool and a means of developing children's creativity when used appropriately. Research by Munasti et al. (2022) shows that TikTok can serve as an alternative medium that supports the social-emotional development of early childhood children through various creative activities available within the application.

One of the social media platforms that has experienced rapid growth in recent years is TikTok. This application allows users to create, watch, and share short videos containing various types of content, ranging from entertainment to education. The increasing popularity of TikTok has resulted in the platform being used not only by adolescents and adults but also becoming known and accessed by children through digital devices available within the family environment. Information regarding parenting and digital media use that is widely distributed through social media indicates that digital platforms play an increasingly significant role in modern family life (Mertens et al., 2024).

The use of digital media can provide benefits for children when utilized appropriately and accompanied by adequate guidance. Various educational contents available can help children acquire new knowledge, enhance creativity, and support a more engaging learning process. However, these benefits largely depend on parental involvement in directing and supervising children's use of digital media (Choy et al., 2024).

On the other hand, uncontrolled use of social media can cause various negative impacts on the behavior of early childhood children. Children tend to imitate behaviors observed in their surrounding environment, including behaviors displayed through digital media. Exposure to content that is inappropriate for children's age has the potential to influence their social and emotional behavior as well as their daily habits. In addition, excessive use of digital media may reduce opportunities for children to interact directly with peers and family members (Kahar, 2025).

In responding to the development of digital technology, the role of parents becomes very important. Parents are not only responsible for limiting children's gadget use but also need to implement appropriate digital parenting practices so that children can utilize technology in a healthy and safe manner. Research shows that good digital parenting practices can help minimize various risks associated with digital media use while simultaneously supporting children's optimal development (Hasanati, 2024). Furthermore, digital assistance programs for parents have been proven to improve

families' ability to supervise children's digital activities and create more positive media use (Cooper et al., 2024).

In addition, various studies also emphasize the importance of parental intervention and guidance in children's use of digital technology. Appropriate parenting approaches can help parents understand children's needs within the digital environment while reducing the negative impacts that may arise from excessive social media use (Jäggi et al., 2025).

Based on the results of a preliminary observation conducted at TK IT Baitusshalihin Banda Aceh, it was found that several children aged 5–6 years were familiar with various trends popular on TikTok and demonstrated imitative behaviors such as copying movements, songs, and expressions they observed through the social media platform. This phenomenon indicates that TikTok has become one of the media platforms with the potential to influence the behavior of early childhood children. Therefore, this study is important to conduct in order to analyze the impact of TikTok content on the behavior of children aged 5–6 years at TK IT Baitusshalihin Banda Aceh, thereby providing an overview of the influence of social media on children's behavior and serving as a consideration for parents and teachers in guiding children's use of digital media.

2. METHOD

This study employed a descriptive qualitative approach to analyze the impact of TikTok content on the behavior of children aged 5–6 years at TK IT Baitusshalihin Banda Aceh. A qualitative approach was chosen because it enables researchers to obtain an in-depth understanding of social phenomena based on real conditions occurring in the field. According to Sugiyono (2021), qualitative research is conducted under natural conditions, with the researcher serving as the primary instrument in the process of data collection and analysis.

The study was conducted at TK IT Baitusshalihin Banda Aceh in June 2026. The research participants consisted of 13 individuals, including 8 children aged 5–6 years, 2 classroom teachers, and 3 parents of the students. The participants were selected using a purposive sampling technique because they were considered capable of providing relevant information regarding the use of TikTok and its impact on children's behavior.

The data collection techniques used in this study included observation, interviews, and documentation. Observation was conducted to examine children's social and emotional behaviors related to exposure to TikTok content. Interviews were conducted with teachers and parents to obtain information regarding changes in children's behavior, children's habits in watching TikTok, and the forms of supervision provided regarding the use of digital media. Documentation was used as supporting data to strengthen the findings obtained through observation and interviews.

Data analysis was carried out using the interactive model of Miles and Huberman, which consists of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. Data reduction was conducted by selecting and focusing on data relevant to the research objectives. The reduced data were then presented in the form of descriptive narratives to facilitate the interpretation process. Furthermore, conclusions were drawn based on the patterns and findings obtained throughout the research process.

To ensure the trustworthiness of the data, this study employed source triangulation and technique triangulation. Source triangulation was conducted by comparing information obtained from teachers, parents, and the results of observations of the children. Meanwhile, technique triangulation

was conducted by comparing data obtained through observation, interviews, and documentation, thereby producing data that were more valid and reliable.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The research findings were obtained through observations of eight children aged 5–6 years, interviews with two teachers, and interviews with three parents at TK IT Baitusshalihin Banda Aceh. The results of the study indicate that most children are familiar with TikTok content and frequently imitate songs, dance movements, facial expressions, and speaking styles that they observe through social media.

The observation results show that most children are able to interact well with their peers and participate in various group activities. However, several children frequently discussed TikTok content while playing and imitated trends that were currently viral. In addition, some children also demonstrated a strong interest in repeating songs, expressions, and movements obtained from TikTok content. From the aspect of emotional behavior, most children were able to control their emotions well, although there were several children who became easily disappointed or angry when their wishes were not fulfilled.

The results of interviews with teachers indicate that TikTok has both positive and negative impacts on children's behavior. The teachers explained that children often imitate viral movements and songs, which can encourage creativity and increase children's confidence in expressing themselves. However, the teachers also expressed concerns regarding children's tendency to imitate language, behaviors, and expressions that are not appropriate for their age. Therefore, the teachers emphasized the importance of parental supervision and guidance in the use of digital media so that children are exposed to content that is appropriate for their developmental stage.

Meanwhile, the results of interviews with parents revealed different findings. Most parents stated that their children were not given direct access to the TikTok application and that the use of digital media was always supervised at home. Parents preferred to provide educational content through child-friendly platforms and generally did not observe any behavioral changes directly caused by the use of TikTok. These differing findings indicate that children may still be exposed to TikTok-related content through their peers or other digital environments beyond the direct supervision of their parents.

Discussion

The results of the study indicate that TikTok content influences children's social and emotional behavior, particularly through imitative behavior. Children often imitate songs, dance movements, facial expressions, and speech patterns that they observe in TikTok videos. These findings are consistent with Bandura's Social Learning Theory, which explains that children learn through processes of observation, imitation, and behavioral modeling. When children repeatedly observe content that attracts their attention, they tend to imitate and apply such behaviors in their daily lives.

The findings of this study also support Hurlock's view that early childhood children have a strong tendency to imitate behaviors they observe in their surrounding environment. At this age, children do not yet possess the optimal ability to evaluate whether a behavior is appropriate or inappropriate to imitate. Therefore, various forms of content consumed by children through digital media have the potential to directly influence their behavior.

In terms of social behavior, TikTok content influences the way children interact with their peers. Some children use TikTok content as a topic of conversation and encourage their friends to follow popular trends. These findings are consistent with Erik Erikson's psychosocial development theory, particularly the stage of initiative versus guilt, in which children actively explore their environment and attempt to express themselves through various social interactions.

Regarding emotional behavior, some children demonstrated emotional expressions influenced by digital content, such as changes in speaking style and certain emotional responses. However, these influences vary among children depending on the type of content viewed, the intensity of use, and the level of adult supervision. These findings support Piaget's cognitive development theory, which explains that children aged 5–6 years are in the preoperational stage and are therefore highly influenced by concrete visual experiences and are not yet fully capable of distinguishing between behaviors that are appropriate and inappropriate to imitate.

This study also demonstrates the importance of the roles of teachers and parents in guiding children's use of digital media. Teachers provide supervision within the school environment by limiting the use of mobile phones and maintaining communication with parents regarding children's development. On the other hand, parents provide guidance by monitoring the duration of digital media use, selecting content appropriate to the child's age, and accompanying children while using digital devices. These findings support previous studies emphasizing that digital parenting practices and cooperation between schools and families are essential in minimizing negative impacts while maximizing the benefits of digital media for children.

Overall, TikTok content was found to have both positive and negative impacts on children aged 5–6 years. The positive impacts identified include increased creativity, greater confidence in self-expression, and enhanced social interaction through activities with peers. Meanwhile, the negative impacts identified include a tendency to imitate inappropriate behaviors, reduced attention to direct social interactions, and the emergence of emotional responses that are not yet consistent with the child's developmental stage. Therefore, consistent supervision and guidance from teachers and parents are required so that the use of digital media can provide optimal benefits for children's development.

4. CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of the study, it can be concluded that TikTok content has an impact on the social and emotional behavior of children aged 5–6 years at TK IT Baitusshalihin Banda Aceh. This impact is reflected in the imitative behaviors demonstrated by the children, such as imitating songs, dance movements, facial expressions, and speaking styles obtained from TikTok content. In addition, TikTok content also influences children's social interactions with their peers and affects the way children express their emotions in their daily lives.

This study shows that the impact of TikTok is not always negative. TikTok content can enhance children's creativity, confidence in self-expression, and social interaction when used appropriately. However, uncontrolled use has the potential to cause children to imitate behaviors that are not appropriate for their age and developmental stage. Therefore, the roles of teachers and parents are very important in providing supervision, guidance, and selecting appropriate content so that digital media can be utilized positively to support children's social and emotional development.

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