

Digital Parenting Awareness as a Stronger Predictor of Children's Screen Time than Digital Literacy

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ARMADA
JURNAL PENELITIAN MULTIDISIPLIN

e-ISSN: 2964-2981

ARMADA : Jurnal Penelitian Multidisiplin

<https://ejournal.45mataram.ac.id/index.php/armada>

Vol. 04, No. 09 September, 2026

Page: 4635-4644

DOI:

<https://doi.org/10.55681/armada.v4i9.3117>

Article History:

Received: Juli 06, 2026

Revised: Agustus 11, 2026

Accepted: September 19, 2026

Abstract : Excessive screen time among school-aged children has become a growing concern due to its potential effects on physical, cognitive, social, and psychological development. This study aimed to examine the effects of maternal digital literacy and digital parenting awareness on children's screen time. An explanatory study with a cross-sectional design was conducted involving 525 mothers of children aged 7–9 years (grades 1–3 of elementary school) in Indonesia. Data were collected through voluntary online sampling from March to May 2026 and analysed using descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation, and multiple linear regression. The regression model explained 30.5% of the variance in children's screen time ($F = 115.814$, $p < 0.001$). Digital parenting awareness had a significant negative effect on children's screen time ($\beta = -0.469$, $p < 0.001$), while maternal digital literacy showed no significant association ($\beta = -0.090$, $p = 0.418$). These findings indicate that parental awareness in implementing digital parenting practices plays a more important role than digital literacy alone in reducing children's screen time. Strengthening digital parenting awareness is essential for promoting healthy digital media use among school-aged children..

Keywords: Children, Digital Literacy, Digital Parenting Awareness, Screen Time, Technology

Abstrak : Paparan waktu layar yang berlebihan pada anak usia sekolah menjadi perhatian yang semakin meningkat karena berpotensi memengaruhi perkembangan fisik, kognitif, sosial, dan psikologis anak. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis pengaruh literasi digital ibu dan kesadaran pengasuhan digital terhadap waktu layar anak. Penelitian eksplanatori dengan desain *cross-sectional* dilakukan terhadap 525 ibu yang memiliki anak usia 7–9 tahun (kelas 1–3 sekolah dasar) di Indonesia. Data dikumpulkan melalui metode *voluntary online sampling* pada periode Maret hingga Mei 2026 dan dianalisis menggunakan statistik deskriptif, korelasi Pearson, serta regresi linier berganda. Model regresi menjelaskan 30,5% variasi waktu layar anak ($F = 115,814$, $p < 0,001$). Kesadaran pengasuhan digital menunjukkan pengaruh negatif yang signifikan terhadap waktu layar anak ($\beta = -0,469$, $p < 0,001$), sedangkan literasi digital ibu tidak memiliki hubungan yang signifikan ($\beta = -0,090$, $p = 0,418$). Temuan ini

menunjukkan bahwa kesadaran orang tua dalam menerapkan praktik pengasuhan digital memiliki peran lebih penting dibandingkan literasi digital saja dalam mengurangi waktu layar anak. Penguatan kesadaran pengasuhan digital diperlukan untuk mendukung penggunaan media digital yang sehat pada anak usia sekolah.

Kata Kunci: Anak, Literasi Digital, Pengasuhan Digital, Teknologi, Waktu Layar

INTRODUCTION

The development of digital technology has fundamentally transformed how children learn, play, communicate, and interact in daily life. The increasing accessibility of digital devices such as smartphones, tablets, computers, and the internet has led children to encounter technology from an early age. Digital technology offers numerous benefits, including supporting the learning process, enhancing creativity, and broadening access to information. However, uncontrolled use of digital media carries potential negative consequences, including exposure to age-inappropriate content, reduced physical activity, sleep disturbances, decreased academic concentration, and an elevated risk of behavioral problems and mental health issues in children (Pranawati et al., 2025). A systematic review by Stiglic and Viner (2019) further demonstrated that excessive screen time is associated with a range of problems related to physical health, psychological well-being, and children's cognitive and social development. Accordingly, children's digital media use requires thoughtful management to harness the benefits of technology without compromising developmental outcomes.

One widely used indicator of the intensity of children's digital media use is screen time, defined as the total duration of time spent using screen-based devices. The duration of screen time is a critical concern because it is associated with multiple dimensions of child development, from physical health to socio-emotional competence. The World Health Organization (WHO, 2019) recommends limiting screen time according to children's developmental stage as part of efforts to support optimal growth. Consistent with this, the American Academy of Pediatrics (2016) emphasizes that parents should not only limit the duration of digital media use but also ensure the quality of content accessed and provide accompaniment during device use. Thus, managing screen time is not solely about limiting usage duration but also about the quality of children's interactions with digital media.

This study is grounded in Bronfenbrenner's (1979) Ecological Systems Theory, which explains that child development is shaped by the interaction between the individual and multiple environmental systems, spanning the microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, macrosystem, and chronosystem. Among these systems, the family as part of the microsystem constitutes the environment that most directly influences children's development and behavior. In the context of digital media use, parents play a central role in shaping technology habits through the establishment of rules, provision of guidance, communication, and monitoring of children's digital activities. Therefore, parental characteristics such as digital literacy and awareness in implementing digital parenting are expected to contribute to screen time behavior among elementary school-aged children.

The family serves as the primary environment for shaping children's digital media habits. In the context of parenting, mothers typically have higher interaction intensity with children and thus play a significant role in guiding daily digital media use. The extent to which mothers are able to fulfill this role is influenced by various factors, one of which is digital literacy. Ribble (2011) defines digital literacy as the ability to use technology effectively, critically, safely, and responsibly through the capacity to access, understand, evaluate, and utilize digital information. In the family context, digital literacy serves as an important competency enabling parents to understand the benefits, risks, and strategies for mediating children's digital media use. UNICEF (2021) asserts that enhancing parents' digital literacy is a key step toward creating a safe digital environment and protecting children from various risks in the digital space. Similarly, Irzalinda and Latifah (2023)

explain that digital literacy supports parents in adopting more adaptive parenting approaches responsive to technological developments, thereby promoting healthier and more responsible digital media use among children.

Beyond digital literacy, successful management of children's digital media use is also influenced by digital parenting awareness, defined as parents' awareness of the importance of accompaniment, monitoring, communication, and rule-setting regarding children's digital media use (Hasanati, 2024). Parents with high digital parenting awareness not only restrict device use but also engage in dialogue about children's digital activities, accompany them during digital media use, and model healthy technology use. This concept aligns with the parental mediation theory advanced by Livingstone and Helsper (2008), which posits that active parental involvement through rule-setting, communication, accompaniment, and monitoring of digital media use can maximize the benefits of technology while minimizing potential risks for children. Consequently, digital parenting is not solely oriented toward controlling usage duration but also toward cultivating positive digital behaviors consistent with children's developmental stage.

Prior research consistently demonstrates a close relationship between digital literacy and digital parenting practices. Akman et al. (2023) found that parental digital literacy is positively associated with the ability to implement digital parenting practices. Research by Pranawati et al. (2025) similarly indicates that enhancing family digital literacy is an important strategy for protecting children from various risks associated with digital media use. Furthermore, Livingstone et al. (2020) affirm that children's digital well-being is strongly influenced by active parental engagement in mediating daily digital media use. These findings collectively suggest that parental digital competence and digital parenting practices are mutually reinforcing in creating a safe digital environment that supports children's development.

Nevertheless, the majority of prior studies have examined digital literacy, digital parenting, or screen time separately. Research simultaneously analyzing the influence of maternal digital literacy and digital parenting awareness on screen time among elementary school-aged children, particularly within the Indonesian family context, remains relatively limited. Moreover, few studies have compared the respective contributions of both variables in explaining children's digital media use behavior. Yet, understanding this relationship is essential as a basis for developing parent education programs that not only enhance digital competence but also strengthen awareness in implementing effective digital parenting practices. Accordingly, this study aims to address the existing research gap regarding factors that influence screen time among elementary school-aged children.

Based on the foregoing, this study aims to analyze the influence of maternal digital literacy and digital parenting awareness on screen time among elementary school-aged children. The findings are expected to provide empirical contributions to the development of digital parenting scholarship and serve as a basis for designing parent education programs aimed at enhancing digital literacy and digital parenting awareness in efforts to create a safe, healthy, and developmentally supportive digital environment for children. Such findings are also expected to support the implementation of Government Regulation No. 17 of 2025 on Child Protection in the Digital Space by providing an empirical basis for family-level interventions.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employed a quantitative approach with an explanatory research design and a cross-sectional framework. This design was selected because the study aimed to examine the influence of maternal digital literacy and digital parenting awareness on children's screen time among elementary school-aged children at a specific point in time. Data collection was conducted online from March to May 2026 using an electronic questionnaire distributed through Google Forms. The questionnaire link was disseminated through elementary school networks, parenting communities, and various social media platforms, including WhatsApp, Instagram, Facebook, and Telegram. Before completing the questionnaire, all participants were provided with information regarding the objectives and procedures of the study and were required to provide informed consent to confirm their voluntary participation.

The study population consisted of mothers with children aged 7–9 years or children enrolled in grades 1–3 of elementary school in Indonesia. The sampling process employed a voluntary sampling technique, in which respondents participated voluntarily after meeting the established inclusion criteria. The inclusion criteria included: (1) mothers living in the same household as their children, (2) having children aged 7–9 years who were currently enrolled in grades 1–3 of elementary school, and (3) being actively involved in daily childcare activities. A total of 525 mothers fulfilled these criteria and participated in the study. Respondents were recruited from various regions across Indonesia, with the highest proportions coming from West Java (50.3%), DKI Jakarta (22.9%), and Banten (15.2%). This sample size was considered adequate for multiple linear regression analysis, as it provided sufficient statistical power to examine relationships among the study variables.

This study utilised three instruments that had previously undergone validity and reliability testing. Maternal digital literacy was measured using the *Instant Digital Competence Assessment* (iDCA) developed by Lestari et al. (2018), consisting of 12 items covering three dimensions: technical skills, critical literacy, and online safety awareness. Digital parenting awareness was assessed using the *Digital Parenting Awareness Scale* developed by Inan-Kaya et al. (2018), comprising 20 items that measure parental awareness in accompanying, monitoring, communicating about, and managing children's digital media use. Children's screen time was assessed using the *ScreenQ Parent-report* instrument developed by Rideout (2017), which evaluates the duration of children's daily digital device use.

All instruments employed a five-point Likert scale. Scores for each variable were calculated by summing individual item responses and transforming the results into an index ranging from 0 to 100 to facilitate interpretation. Higher index scores represented higher levels of maternal digital literacy, digital parenting awareness, or children's screen time, respectively. Data analysis was conducted using IBM SPSS Statistics version 26. The analysis process began with data cleaning to ensure the completeness and consistency of the collected data. Subsequently, descriptive statistical analysis was performed to describe respondent characteristics and the distribution of each research variable through frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations.

Before conducting inferential analysis, instrument validity was examined using item-total correlation, while reliability was assessed using Cronbach's Alpha coefficient. Classical assumption tests were subsequently conducted, including normality, multicollinearity, heteroscedasticity, and linearity tests, to ensure that the data fulfilled the requirements for linear regression analysis. The relationships between maternal digital literacy, digital parenting awareness, and children's screen time were examined using Pearson correlation analysis. Furthermore, the influence of maternal digital literacy and digital parenting awareness on children's screen time was analysed using multiple linear regression with a significance level of 5% ($\alpha = 0.05$).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Respondent Characteristics

A total of 525 mothers with children aged 7–9 years participated in this study. The majority of respondents were aged 20–39 years (74.9%), held a bachelor's degree (53.1%), worked as private sector employees (32.4%) or were homemakers (32.0%), and reported a monthly household income of IDR 5,000,000–10,000,000 (40.2%). Most families had two children (49.5%). Regarding children's characteristics, the majority were 8 years old (43.8%), female (53.0%), attending grade 2 of elementary school (42.9%), and were the firstborn child in the family (53.0%).

These characteristics indicate that the majority of respondents were in the young adult to middle adulthood age group, typically characterized by active parenting roles and familiarity with digital technology in various aspects of daily life. In this age group, internet and digital media use extends beyond work and communication to encompass parenting information, education, and child development resources. This context provides mothers with broader access to information on digital parenting strategies, potentially enhancing their capacity to guide children's digital media use responsibly.

The predominance of bachelor's degree holders among respondents further suggests that most mothers possess a relatively strong capacity to access, understand, evaluate, and utilize digital information. According to Hargittai and Hinnant (2008), individuals with higher educational attainment tend to demonstrate stronger digital literacy skills, as they are more accustomed to information retrieval, source credibility evaluation, and critical technology use. Such competencies serve as an important asset for parents navigating the challenges of digital-age parenting, including selecting age-appropriate content, identifying potential risks of digital media use, and providing appropriate guidance during children's digital activities.

The variation in employment status and household income levels indicates that respondents came from diverse socioeconomic backgrounds. This diversity may produce differences in digital device ownership, internet access quality, and digital media use patterns within the family environment. Moreover, maternal employment status may influence the intensity of interaction and accompaniment provided to children during digital device use. Employed and non-employed mothers may employ different monitoring strategies based on time availability and role distribution within the family. Accordingly, family socioeconomic characteristics constitute an aspect warranting consideration in understanding variations in digital parenting practices across respondents. Overall, respondents' demographic characteristics provide important contextual information about the family environment as the primary setting for shaping children's digital media use behavior.

Description of Research Variables

Descriptive analysis results of the research variables are presented in Table 1. In general, mothers demonstrated high levels of digital literacy and digital parenting awareness, while children's screen time fell in the low category.

Table 1. Descriptive Overview of Research Variables (n = 525)

Variable	Dominant Category	Percentage (%)	Mean Index
Maternal Digital Literacy	Very High	67,4	77,66 ± 18,10
Digital Parenting Awareness	Very High	77,0	77,83 ± 18,11
Children's Screen Time	Very Low	37,0	35,87 ± 22,86

Digital parenting awareness was similarly categorized as very high (77.0%), with a mean index of 77.83 ± 18.11 . This result demonstrates that most mothers have strong awareness of the importance of establishing digital media use rules, providing accompaniment, and monitoring children's digital activities. High digital parenting awareness reflects increasing parental attention to the benefits and risks of technology use among children. It also indicates that parents are not only providers of technology access but also active guides in shaping healthy digital media habits.

Children's screen time was predominantly categorized as very low (37.0%), with a mean index of 35.87 ± 22.86 . This finding suggests that most children maintained relatively controlled digital device usage. The low screen time among children is likely associated with the high levels of maternal digital literacy and digital parenting awareness among respondents, enabling parents to apply digital media use rules more consistently. Nevertheless, a portion of children still fell within higher screen time categories, underscoring the continued need for ongoing accompaniment and monitoring of children's digital media use.

These findings are consistent with Pranawati et al. (2025), who demonstrated that parents' digital literacy capabilities play an important role in creating a safe digital environment for children through appropriate monitoring and guidance. Similarly, Akman et al. (2023) reported that parents with higher digital literacy tend to implement better digital parenting practices, including regulating children's device use. The convergence of these findings with prior research reinforces the view that digital competence and parenting awareness are complementary aspects in supporting healthy management of children's digital media use. Accordingly, the high levels of digital literacy and digital parenting awareness found among respondents in this study may function as protective factors in maintaining children's screen time at healthy levels.

Relationship Between Maternal Digital Literacy and Digital Parenting Awareness with Children's Screen Time

Prior to regression analysis, Pearson correlation tests were conducted to examine the direction and strength of relationships between variables. Correlation results are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Pearson Correlation Test Results Between Variables (n = 525)

Variabel		r	p	Direction
Maternal Digital Literacy → Screen Time	Digital Screen	-0,293	<0,001	Negative
Digital Parenting Awareness → Screen Time	Digital Screen	-0,549	<0,001	Negative
Maternal Digital Literacy → Digital Parenting Awareness	Digital Digital	0,617	<0,001	Positive

Correlation analysis revealed that maternal digital literacy had a significant negative relationship with children's screen time ($r = -0.293$; $p < 0.001$). This correlation coefficient reflects a low-to-moderate association, indicating that higher levels of maternal digital literacy are associated with lower duration of children's digital device use. This finding suggests that a mother's ability to understand and utilize digital technology may support more judicious management of children's digital media use.

A stronger relationship was found between digital parenting awareness and children's screen time ($r = -0.549$; $p < 0.001$). This coefficient reflects a moderate negative association, meaning that higher maternal awareness in implementing digital parenting practices is associated with lower screen time in children. This finding indicates that the awareness dimension, encompassing accompaniment, monitoring, communication, and rule-setting regarding children's digital media use, is more closely linked to children's digital media use behavior than the digital competence possessed by mothers.

Furthermore, maternal digital literacy was positively and significantly correlated with digital parenting awareness ($r = 0.617$; $p < 0.001$). This strong positive coefficient indicates that mothers with higher digital literacy tend to demonstrate stronger digital parenting awareness. This finding suggests that enhancing mothers' capacity to access, understand, and evaluate digital information may promote more optimal digital parenting practices..

Influence of Maternal Digital Literacy and Digital Parenting Awareness on Children's Screen Time

Multiple linear regression analysis was conducted to test the simultaneous influence of maternal digital literacy and digital parenting awareness on children's screen time. Results are presented in Tables 3 and 4.

Table 3. Multiple Linear Regression Analysis Results – Coefficients (n = 525)

Variabel	B	β	t	p
Constant	74,464	–	27,420	<0,001
Maternal Digital Literacy	-0,132	-0,090	-0,810	0,418
Digital Parenting Awareness	-0,434	-0,469	-4,229	<0,001

Table 4. Regression Model Summary

R	R ²	Adjusted R ²	F	p
0,554	0,307	0,305	115,814	<0,001

The overall regression model was significant ($F = 115.814$; $p < 0.001$). The coefficient of determination ($R^2 = 0.307$) indicates that maternal digital literacy and digital parenting awareness jointly explain 30.7% of the variance in children's screen time, while the remaining 69.3% is attributable to other factors not examined in this study, such as child characteristics, paternal parenting practices, or social environmental factors. At the partial level, digital parenting awareness had a significant negative effect on children's screen time ($\beta = -0.469$; $p < 0.001$), indicating that higher maternal awareness in implementing digital parenting is associated with lower duration of children's device use. In contrast, maternal digital literacy did not significantly influence children's screen time ($\beta = -0.090$; $p = 0.418$). This finding suggests that a mother's ability to access, understand, and evaluate digital information does not necessarily translate into effective parenting strategies capable of controlling children's digital device use.

The non-significant direct effect of maternal digital literacy on children's screen time may be attributable to mediation by other variables. High digital literacy may exert a stronger indirect effect, operating through the enhancement of digital parenting awareness, as evidenced by the strong correlation between these two variables ($r = 0.617$). In other words, digitally literate mothers tend to be more aware of the importance of digital parenting, and it is this awareness that ultimately reduces children's screen time. This finding underscores that knowledge alone is insufficient; active awareness and intentionality in applying that knowledge to daily parenting practices are also essential.

These findings demonstrate that digital parenting awareness is a stronger predictor than maternal digital literacy in influencing children's screen time. This result is consistent with Akman *et al.* (2023), who found that digital parenting practices play an important role in shaping children's digital media use behavior. Additionally, Hasanati (2024) affirms that success in digital-age parenting is not solely determined by parents' ability to use technology, but also by the awareness to establish rules, provide accompaniment, and build positive communication around digital media use. Parent education programs should therefore not only focus on enhancing digital technical skills but also on strengthening awareness and motivation to implement consistent and purposeful digital parenting practices.

Discussion

This study aimed to analyze the influence of maternal digital literacy and digital parenting awareness on screen time among elementary school-aged children. The results indicate that digital parenting awareness has a significant negative effect on children's screen time, whereas maternal digital literacy does not exert a direct significant effect. Furthermore, both variables jointly explain 30.7% of the variance in children's screen time. These findings demonstrate that the management of children's digital media use is more strongly influenced by how parents implement digital parenting practices than by their technical ability to use technology. These findings can be explained through Bronfenbrenner's (1979) Ecological Systems Theory, subsequently extended into the Bioecological Theory by Bronfenbrenner and Morris (2006). This theory posits that child development is shaped by continuous interactions, termed proximal processes, between the child and their immediate environment, particularly the family as part of the microsystem. In the context of digital media use, parents serve as the primary agents shaping children's digital behavior through rule-setting, accompaniment, communication, and monitoring of daily digital activities (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006).

The non-significant influence of maternal digital literacy on children's screen time indicates that mastery of digital technology does not necessarily translate into effective management of digital media use in daily life. Digital literacy more accurately describes an individual's capacity to access, understand, evaluate, and critically utilize digital information (Ribble, 2011). However, this capacity does not automatically manifest in the form of device use rules, accompaniment during children's digital media use, or communication about children's digital activities. In other words, a mother may possess high digital literacy while still not applying effective digital parenting practices to control the duration of children's device use. From the perspective of Bioecological Theory, parental competence does not necessarily influence children's behavior unless it is realized through consistent interactions within the family environment, known as proximal processes (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006).

This study's results support the findings of Irzalinda and Latifah (2023), who argued that digital literacy constitutes an important asset in digital-age parenting but whose effectiveness depends critically on how that competence is applied in daily parenting practices. This study demonstrates that digital literacy does not automatically reduce children's screen time unless accompanied by parental awareness to monitor, guide, and direct digital media use. Accordingly, digital literacy may be understood as a foundational competency that must be translated into concrete parenting behaviors. Conversely, digital parenting awareness proved to be a stronger predictor of children's screen time. Parents with high awareness of the importance of digital parenting tend to establish device use rules, limit the duration of digital device use, accompany children during digital media access, and engage in communication about the benefits and risks of technology use. These practices enable children to use digital media in a more guided manner, maintaining screen time within healthy limits. This finding reinforces the Ecological Systems Theory, which positions the family as the environment with the most direct influence on children's development. Parental awareness in implementing digital parenting practices constitutes a form of microsystem interaction that directly shapes children's digital media use behavior. Thus, the quality of parenting practices is more determinative than digital competence held by parents alone (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006).

These findings are consistent with Akman et al. (2023), who demonstrated that digital parenting practices play an important role in shaping children's digital media use behavior. Similarly, Hasanati (2024), through a systematic review, concluded that effective digital parenting extends beyond restricting device use to encompass active parental involvement in accompanying children's digital activities. These results are also consistent with Livingstone et al. (2020), who affirm that children's digital well-being is more strongly influenced by active parental engagement in digital media use than by mere technical ability to use technology. This approach helps children develop healthy technology habits while reducing the risk of excessive digital media use.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

This study demonstrates that digital parenting awareness has a significant negative effect on children's screen time, whereas maternal digital literacy does not exert a direct significant effect. These results indicate that a mother's ability to use and understand digital technology does not necessarily translate into parenting practices capable of effectively controlling children's digital media use. In contrast, maternal awareness in implementing digital parenting, including providing accompaniment, monitoring, building communication, and establishing digital media use rules, is demonstrated to play a greater role in reducing children's screen time. When considered together, maternal digital literacy and digital parenting awareness explain 30.7% of the variance in children's screen time. Although both variables contribute to the research model, digital parenting awareness emerges as the more dominant factor influencing children's digital media use behavior. This study therefore provides empirical evidence that successful management of children's screen time depends not only on parental digital competence but also on parents' ability to translate that competence into concrete daily parenting practices.

Based on these findings, parent education programs should be developed not only to enhance digital literacy but also to strengthen digital parenting awareness. Such programs may focus on building parents' capacity to establish digital media use rules, engage in active accompaniment, foster open communication about children's digital activities, and apply monitoring appropriate to children's age and developmental needs. Schools, government agencies, and family-oriented institutions are encouraged to collaborate in delivering digital parenting education as part of broader efforts to create a healthy digital environment for children. For future researchers, it is recommended to expand the research model by incorporating additional variables that may influence children's screen time, such as parenting style, parental self-efficacy in digital parenting, child characteristics, family environment, socioeconomic status, or parental co-engagement in shared media activities. Longitudinal studies as well as the use of mediation or moderation models are also encouraged to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the mechanisms underlying the relationships between digital literacy, digital parenting awareness, and children's digital media use behavior.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The authors express sincere gratitude to all mothers who took the time to participate as respondents in this study. Their willingness and openness in completing the questionnaire provided invaluable contributions to the successful conduct of this research. Appreciation is also extended to the Master Program in Family and Child Development, Faculty of Social Sciences and Human Ecology, IPB University, for the academic support provided throughout the research process. The authors also extend their thanks to the supervising lecturers for their guidance, feedback, and mentorship during the preparation of this research and the writing of this article. It is hoped that the findings of this study will contribute to the development of family science and child development scholarship in the digital age and serve as a reference for future research and for stakeholders in developing digital parenting education programs.

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