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Utilization of Covid-19 Digital Media Literacy Through the Online Game of Marbel “New Habit” Theme in Early Childhood

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ABSTRACT

The rapidly developing Communication and Information Technology has made government agencies have to adapt by disseminating information or educating the public through digital media. MARBEL online games with the theme of new habits provide a means of disseminating education related to the importance of maintaining a clean and healthy body, especially for early childhood. This study aims to analyze the content of the game using Philip Mayring's qualitative content analysis method regarding categorized interpretations based on characteristics in a reality, which in this study is a game for early childhood MARBEL New Habits. This is in line with government policies and efforts to harmonize community activities in the new normal era. In addition, it is also supported by the optimization of the use of Digital Media Literacy as a theoretical framework that is presented to understand the importance of technological advances in the midst of the COVID-19 Pandemic, this conceptual dimension that is comprehensively discussed also functions as a cognitive construction tool for early childhood related to a new hygiene culture known as a protocol. health. The results of this study show that the ability to play online which is close to the child's environment can have a significant positive effect, especially on new habits of early childhood, as well as show that technological advances provide opportunities for policymakers to disseminate information and education to the community.

Keywords

Content analysis, Mayring, MARBEL online game, COVID-19, digital media literacy

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INTRODUCTION

As World Health Organization (WHO) has declared COVID-19 disease as a global pandemic and the vaccines have been discovered, 2.3 million have died (News, 2021) with the highest number of both cases and fatalities are recorded in the United States (Kompas.com, 2021). Until February 2021, this novel coronavirus is still in the tracing stage to determine the accurate origin spread of this virus. Different countries have carried out various efforts to prevent the spread of the COVID-19 disease depending on their respective needs and conditions (Prasetyo et al., 2020), such as

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providing handwashing facilities outside the home, temperature checks on public places, reducing crowd levels, maintaining a physical distance between individuals, and even reducing outdoor activities (Bappenas, 2017). Still, many people are not well-educated about this virus; even some consider this virus to be either very deadly or do not believe in the virus's existence itself. In these challenging conditions, the government slowly responds to emerging problems from various sectors such as tourism, social economy, education crisis, etc. Each region's quarantine policy sometimes experiences turmoil due to not having 100% accuracy in preventing the spread of COVID-19. Social security from the state has begun to be used by some affected groups, and every choice made by policymakers goes through the screening stage and does not escape from various weaknesses, even losses to some of the community. Many people are starting to look for other activities. People's behavior started to change due to COVID-19-affected limitations (Sari, 2020). However, the limitation itself does not rule out various creativities carried out by the community, such as virtual traveling, webinars, opening online businesses, online learning, and many more.

The openness of people's thinking is difficult for the government to reach (Prasetyo et al., 2020), so the government currently uses various technology and media assistance as an extension or socialization medium for the community (Marta, Prasetya, et al., 2020), such as conventional media broadcasts on television (Kurniawati & Wahjudi, 2019) with attributes according to Health Protocol, appeals through social media to diligently wash hands, and public service advertisements on local and state-owned radios on how to correctly use a face mask and keep avoiding crowds (Sandy et al., 2020). In addition to people over 60 years of age, children with an age range of 0 to 12 years (Kiky, 2020), as individuals who are quite at risk of being exposed to the COVID-19 disease, also need to be provided with proper education regarding new habits driven by the pandemic (Saputra, 2019). Social inequality starts to emerge amid this pandemic, both at the macro and micro levels. Even the government stated that this pandemic caused a financial crisis more severe than the previous crisis due to restrictions on the activities of public facilities such as malls, hotels, tourist attractions, and restaurants. The termination of some public facilities has resulted in millions of individuals experiencing decreased income and even losing their jobs for an indefinite time. Directly, the state's income is also reduced, especially tax collection also provides relief for the community. Prevention efforts that are expected to reduce the spread of COVID-19 have raised various other problems. However, people are now beginning to understand the importance of preventing this virus's spread.

Culture can be developed in supporting the economic sector of a group or area by preserving it through entertainment and creativity (Intyaswono et al., 2016). This study is the most important in communication (Kriyantono & Sa'diyah, 2018). Dissanayake stated that there must be continuity between culture and communication from various aspects of life. Even Hall (Gudykunst & Lee, 2002) in (Kriyantono & Sa'diyah, 2018) said that "communication is culture, culture is communication." Understanding the communicant and creating a common background to the interlocutor is a communication strategy and process (Sandy et al., 2020). 175.4 million Indonesian, or around 64% of the country's total population, already have active access to cyberspace. Likewise, there are 338.2 million people or 124% of the total population of Indonesians who use gadgets as a means of internet access (which means some people owns more than one gadget), and 160 million people or 59% of them are active users of social media (Christian, 2019). The majority of Indonesian active social media users are from Generation Y (Millennials) and Z (Supratman, 2018). However, one of the downsides of the internet is that there are many issues regarding the negative impact of using devices on children, one of them (Damayanti et al., 2020) is online games, so it is unsurprising that Indonesian parents limit their children's access to online games. But, in fact, if its use is adequately controlled, the online game itself can be a learning process for children (Warsita, 2014).

Most Indonesians have used Internet technology. Even though both negative and positive impacts are visible, this technology has become a necessity that cannot be avoided (Ratnaya, 2011), including online games. There are many issues regarding the negative impact of using gadgets on children, one of which (Damayanti et al., 2020) is the impact of online games. The process of introducing culture, providing entertainment, adding creativity and insight to children can be introduced through the education sector, one of which is the school or formal education (Triastuti et al., 2017). Children are actively given creativity, which later creates responses to their cognitive

skills, namely adding insight and psychomotor with online games that become entertainment for children. Educational Technology has a scientific discipline in providing effective and efficient learning facilities (Kristanto, 2016). Its development has been studied through the learning paradigm and is considered a skill made by a professional as a profession, both groups and individuals (Pratama & Haryanto, 2018).

Advances in educational technology have disciplines that provide attractive methods for children's learning so that they can be accepted effectively and happily (Pratama & Haryanto, 2018). Along with the development of the times, even toddlers have entered a period where they are familiar with the technology. This is reflected by their technology-related activities such as playing online games, watching YouTube videos, using social media in the context of self-existence, and taking selfies (Supratman, 2018). Besides being able to please children, online games provide opportunities for capital holders to market their products. Online game users in Indonesia are also growing and cover all ages, especially people from age ranges known as Generation Y (Millennials) and Z who have natural literacy towards media, along with the increasing number of internet users. Games in virtual forms (e.g., video games) are the advantages of online games (Triastuti et al., 2017), and the players are not limited by geographic location (Hanum, 2015). The development of a game idea is a learning strategy for children that aims to build healthy habits in an orderly manner and observing Health Protocol and also as a support for increasing children's competence, especially at an early age because it increases children's knowledge and provides stimuli to children's brains to imitate movements and games that are practiced virtually (Burhaein, 2017). This competition is also in the spotlight of online media with various perspectives that provide feedback in the community. The combination of the internet and information advancement has become a new color shade compared to the conventional media (Han & goleman, daniel; boyatzis, Richard; Mckee, 2019).

The Indonesian Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy (Indonesian acronym: Kemenparekraf) is no exception in providing opportunities for locally-made online games to innovate and educate new habits such as compliance with Health Protocol in the new normal era in the form of children's games (I. Azis, 2020). One of the local online gaming companies, Educa Studio, participates in the GELORA 2020 competition held by the ministry as an embodiment of learning strategies for early childhood through the use of technology or known as fun learning strategies as well as warding off negative perceptions of most online games. As one of the ten selected winners (ANWARI, 2020), MARBEL and Shoot Empire of Erica Studio, who were the first winners of the Game Competition 2008, decided to be more professional on April 1, 2012, by forming a legal company that focuses only on Edu PC games. Then, at the end of 2012, Educa Studio expanded its wings by entering into mobile applications and games and quickly in 2013 expanded to wider mobile platforms such as Windows Phone and Apple Store (iOS). Products that are widely distributed throughout Indonesia are as follows: MARBEL for children's educational games, Riri for interactive storybooks, Kabi for Muslim children, and Kolak for interactive children songs. In 2017, Educa Studio had multiple platforms for building quality content and extends the company into merchandising, board games, interactive animation, and teacher's platform. This company also offers educational-based games, kids games, storybooks, Islamic children's books, kids songs, entertainment games, and board games. The target age in this game is children aged 2 to 9. The learning provided in this online game, which has 220 game products, is expected to provide learning to children so that they have extensive knowledge, are diligent in reading, and can entertain and think creatively. MARBEL is equipped with pictures, animation, interesting music, and even useful guides for children who are not fluent in reading (STUDIO, 2011).

METHOD

This research uses a qualitative research pattern (Marta et al., 2019), which is expected to describe the development of educational technology that has become a culture and even the needs of children in cognitive and psychomotor development (Nugraha, 2015), especially in the current pandemic situation. The method in this study uses Philip Mayring's perspective (Andini, 2014), regarding content analysis with categorization and formulation of research questions with a theoretical and conceptual framework, namely sequential development with qualitative content analysis in several stages: 1) having research questions; 2) determining the definition of categories,

abstraction; 3) formulating on data consideration based on the specified categories; 4) checking formative forms based on reality; 5) summatively finalizing; 6) conducting the final interpretation. MARBEL's online game about new habits released in 2020 provided an idea regarding fun learning and explained using digital media literacy theory with a constructivist paradigm (Ayu Indah Puspita, 2013) viewing phenomena that occur as products and as a result of the creation of the human mind. This study also discusses the use of technology in education through MARBEL. This research's data collection technique was through a qualitative approach, which is collecting literature studies from trusted internet sources and combined with journals (Foley et al., 2019) regarding child psychomotor, and the delivery and process of receiving information in children. In the selection of data in the study, it was taken from the release of the new custom MARBEL game on September 1, 2020 to January 2021, related to the latest game updates as well as feedback obtained from both users and the government.

FINDINGS

In the digital era, people depend on technology, which continues to develop, either directly or indirectly (Tri & Atika, 2018). Smartphones in each individual's hands can make life easier in many aspects of life, such as making payments, fulfilling the need for the latest information, learning something, connecting with new communities, talking with relatives, and many more (Tatminingsih, 2017).

The support of digital media, especially online games, is a manifestation of Digital Media Literacy, with social media enabling social organizations that interact through electronic information networks, which later becomes a form of indirect social change. The era of economic and cultural globalization creates new ways of doing business or earning income through digital communication (Anwar & Rusmana, 2017). A simple understanding of media literacy itself is the ability to filter or select what the audience does for messages conveyed by the media. Good and bad information for the public can be filtered actively and critically. These characteristics are able to function, understand, and produce new digital media, according to (Novianti & Fatonah, 2018). It can be concluded that digital media literacy is the ability of social media users to critically and creatively filter any circulating information according to the background elements.

Eight essential elements for developing media literacy, according to Belshaw (2012), are culture (understanding of various digital user contexts), cognitive (way of thinking to assess certain content), construction (rebuilding something actual or real), communicative (things that can complement the digital world network), confidence (providing solutions to minimize negative impacts), creative (focus on providing new things), critical (way to respond to digital content as part of life), and social responsibility (something that must be owned socially) (Silvana & Darmawan, 2018). These eight elements mentioned above indicators are emerging due to media's technology advancement, specifically in online gaming. Therefore, it is expected that the users can critically understand the content and knowledge capacity to create a media with digital technology. (Novianti & Fatonah, 2018)

Since its initial development in 1883, along with the development of science and technology, the distance education model can be classified by several generation phases until today, which entering the fifth generation (T. N. Azis, 2019). The success of educational technology depends on the ability of the makers of the learning program and the strategies provided by the production system to meet requirements such as challenges for students to complete a mission, alignment of goals for each individual, the emergence of a competitive spirit, regular monitoring of processes, and stimulation of individuals towards their own responsibility (Hidayat, 2018). Some of these elements were also carried out in Educa Studio's game, MARBEL (acronym of "Mari Belajar" (lit. Let's Learn)), with its new theme of "new habits" released on September 1, 2020, and with the latest update on September 13, 2020. The game that won Kemenparenkraf's GELORA competition can be downloaded via the Google Play Store or App Store (ANWARI, 2020). This online game has become a media for distributing information used by the government as an educational tool for early childhood regarding the pandemic situation, which requires everyone to maintain health and avoid places or habits at risk of being exposed to COVID-19 (TANO NAZOEAGGI, 2011). Digital games provide an open learning process for children. Ifenthaler, Eseryel, and Ge (2012) summarize

experts' views that lead to the pros and cons of it. Online games are considered to have great competence to prepare children to face challenges and competency needs. This argument is based on technological facilities that can meet children's innovation, creativity, and adaptation abilities so that they are mentally prepared to face distance learning demands. In addition, online games change educational life practice into the subject of play or fun learning. Enthusiasm for digital media is expected to bring positive things, both social and moral values owned by individuals (Hidayat, 2018).

Digital Media Literacy provides the media's position as an influence on society regarding beliefs and experiences through delivered messages (Silvana & Darmawan, 2018). The media is also considered to carry values, economy, politics, and culture. However, it also includes contributions from the audience who participate in fulfilling each individual's needs based on the information to be obtained.



Figure 1
Source: (STUDIO, 2020)

MARBEL has at least three main characters: Bebe, mangosteen in an orange costume, the curious owl Owi, and the lively little rabbit Kaci. This game is delivered with properly-suited language and visualization, so it makes the game easy for children to play. Figure 1 shows this game's purpose, which is to provide new insights related to new habits for maintaining health together with the characters who use masks.



Figure 2
Source: (STUDIO, 2020)

The home page of MARBEL with the "new habit" theme is filled with the main character that previously did not exist in MARBEL, namely Bebe, mangosteen who likes to learn and play and also seems to spray disinfectant before entering the game menu, as well as wearing a face mask. There are three game selections in the game menu, such as Sewing Mask, Washing Hands, and New Normal, which can train children's psychomotor and train their habits to follow Health Protocol.



Figure 3
Source: (STUDIO, 2020)

On the Mask Sewing game, the children were asked to cut, sew, and choose the material and pattern they wanted to be used as masks. By knowing the process, children are expected to know how to make face masks and various types of masks that also attract children to want to use masks, especially when doing outdoor activities.



Figure 4
Source: (STUDIO, 2020)

The New Habit game aims to provide education to children about the correct steps for washing hands, even refute the perception of hands that look clean, but in fact, bacteria or viruses are not visible, so children are required to rub hands with soap and rinse with water.



Figure 5
Source: (STUDIO, 2020)

Children like doing outdoor activities in various places, some of which are in this game, such as zoos, stations, malls, shops, and bus stops. At each place, the children are asked to check visitors' body temperature who will enter the area. This practice expects the children can understand what kind of body temperature is considered healthy and allowed to play outside.



Figure 6
Source: (STUDIO, 2020)

In this game, children are asked to check visitors who enter public places whether they observe Health Protocol, such as using a face mask, washing hands, and having body temperature within normal limits. The distance between visitors was limited, and the children were asked to maintain order in this game. With this play, children are expected to be able to make it happen in everyday life, especially during the current pandemic situation.

DISCUSSION

The virus's rapid spread gives the government concern for its people, especially parents concerned about their children (Evelina, 2020). Kemenparkraf's support through GELORA 2020 competition provides an opportunity for Indonesians to be more creative in developing their ideas while helping the government in channeling education for children through games that attract attention both visual and stages of play, which are expected to produce new insights (Indonesia, 2013) for children about the importance of maintaining health through cleanliness of the body and the environment.

This online game, owned by Educa Studio, is expected to influence the culture of cleanliness and create new habits in children regarding cognitive awareness of the importance of maintaining health and paying attention to health protocols. This game medium actively provides audio and visual directions that are easily accepted by early childhood, specifically aged 2 to 9. Themes from the game also emerge from everyday life, which is realized through online games and help children quickly adapt to MARBEL games, making it easier for active players to improve their cognitive, practical, motivational, social, and physiological skills simultaneously in understanding the game's situation.

The belief in MARBEL games to influence children's habits is reflected through the messages conveyed from the early stages, namely children's visual interest through colors, game characters, and audio in games. Culture digital products are given to children with the characteristics of images and characters' colors that are made bright and attractive. Audio, with children's grammar characteristics, makes it easy for early childhood to play while enhancing children's cognitive skills related to the importance of adhering to Health Protocol.

Providing educational, cultural, and economic values in a game to children is not easy to do in the construction of perception, especially for critically-thinking children (Damayanti et al., 2020). By providing insight into the importance of washing hands and complying with Health Protocol, cultivating a clean life and maintaining a healthy body, and not being afraid to go to public places such as malls, zoos, bus stops, train stations, and other public places.

Communication aspect in MARBEL's "new habit" theme is evident through text and voice about how to play, the importance of washing hands, how to sew face masks, determining the right body temperature, and knowing safety when doing activity outdoor. Everything is inserted creatively in the form of questions, as well as praise for children, which can give children confidence in playing. This creativity is made in such a way so that children feel that playing while learning is fun. Children are also expected to think critically about the consequences of not maintaining a healthy body and environmental hygiene or not following proper Health Protocol. This encouragement is made so that children can become individuals who impact the family or the surrounding environment regarding maintaining cleanliness and body health.

Digital media literacy in this game enables children to think critically regarding the health information needed (Senova, 2016), as well as how to prevent the virus, and, at the same time, children become “social responsible” medium for their surrounding environment, related to the prevention of COVID-19. Marying’s analysis at the final stage, regarding the interpretation of this research, is by giving advice to the closest siblings about this game, playing together, sharing the results of playing on their social media, and telling their parents about their playing experiences (Marta, Fernando, et al., 2020).

Educational games not only able to strengthen core learning but also can provide learning motivation for children (Arifin et al., 2020), which have several related features, including narration, music, and other sounds. Information in the form of text or images and the whole feature has the same purpose for the user: to activate physiological reactions in the sensory form. Audio features such as game’s instructions can be the subject of learning, and character image features can activate visual or multiple sensory responses. Compared to conventional learning, the most relevant thing, which the active grouping of any conveyed information, has already passed the selection stage.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

Conclusion

The development of technology in education is currently experiencing rapid progress in Indonesia (Silvana & Darmawan, 2018), boosted by supporting situations and conditions that can make children heavily dependent on the use of technology (Anisah, 2011) and make parents or teaching staffs worried about the negative impacts that may arise (David et al., 2017). It is possible that this technological advancement can have a positive effect depending on the user’s ability to use it. Educa Studio provides a new breath and solutions with fun learning on the game products offered. In the midst of many children’s complaints due to boredom experienced through online learning (CNN Indonesia, 2020) or limited playing with friends and their environment (Samiudin, 2017), MARBEL with “new habits” theme can creatively encourage children to do fun learning with games that can stimulate their cognitive abilities namely through the development of insights gained regarding the new normal era, practical skills which are important things that can be done in adjusting new habits, motivation namely interests or what goals must be maintained, social skills namely to build children’s awareness of the surrounding environment, and physiological skills which includes children’s mental readiness to receive the education. This game can give children an insight into the importance of maintaining health and complying with the Health Protocol recommended by the government. Playing while providing insight to children about the importance of maintaining health and following the new normal era in an orderly manner in the health protocol recommended by the government. Even children will critically think about cleanliness for their bodies and invite other friends to play this game. The results of this study are expected to be a reference for further research on technological advances in the education sector and its use through online early childhood games, especially in other Educa Studio’s MARBEL, which can become a communication tool for government policy makers with children.

Recommendations

From several conclusions that can be drawn, the suggestions of this study are aimed at people who have early childhood who are encouraged to use the online game application MARBEL; besides being able to add insight to children, this MARBEL with “new habit” theme trains new habits that must be obeyed for every community.

The accuracy of government’s decisions by utilizing and prioritizing advances in locally-sourced information and communication technology by providing extraordinary opportunities can produce good and exemplary products made by Indonesian (Viona et al., 2021). The community should also be able to support the movement carried out by the government towards efforts to prosper the community through their creativity.

For Educa Studio, this utilization is expected to be an encouragement for further products and more games related to education for children so that Indonesian children become smarter in using gadgets.

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