



1<sup>st</sup> Pelita International Conference  
Volume 01 No 01 September 2023  
E-ISSN: 3026-4235

<https://jurnal.pelitabangsa.ac.id/index.php/pic>

## Social Interaction of Down Syndrome Children Through Social Media in the Digital Era

Rini Setyowati<sup>1</sup>, Sarwo Edy<sup>2</sup>, Djoko Nugroho<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1,2,3</sup>Universitas Pelita Bangsa, Indonesia

### Abstract

This research discusses the social interactions of children with Down syndrome through social media in the digital era. Down syndrome is a genetic disorder that causes sufferers to have a low level of intelligence and distinctive physical abnormalities. The aim of this research is to find out how social interactions of children with Down syndrome occur through social media in the digital era. This research uses a qualitative approach with case studies. The methods used to collect data include observation, interviews, and documentation. Four stages of qualitative data analysis were carried out, namely data collection, data reduction, data presentation and the final step was drawing conclusions and verification. The population of this study were children with Down syndrome in Pacitan and Wonogiri Regency. The sample from this study was 10 children with Down syndrome and their parents. The results of this research show that children with Down syndrome can interact with other people more intensely with technology, namely through laptops and cellphones. Children with Down syndrome can send written messages via social media, namely WhatsApp, Facebook, and TikTok. This research provides new information because many previous studies only focused on studying the use of social media in normal children. In fact, children with Down syndrome also use social media as a means of interacting with other people. Further research needs to be done to determine the consequences of this interaction.

**Keywords:** Social Interaction, Down Syndrome, Technology

### INTRODUCTION

Down syndrome is a genetic disorder that causes sufferers to experience developmental delays, both physically and mentally. People with Down syndrome are often the center of attention of the people around them because they are considered different. Their different physical appearances and developmental delays make people often give a negative stigma when they see them in public. This developmental delay makes other people/peers 'reluctant' to play. Therefore, people with Down Syndrome have difficulty mingling with general society.

As technology develops, people with disabilities/Down Syndrome have the opportunity to be accepted by others through social media. It is progress and goodness, when many people with Down syndrome can actively communicate with others, even if only through social media. If communicating directly doesn't go well because they often find it difficult to express what they think, through social media they can easily convey what they think. This happens because social media features help children with Down Syndrome more easily express their thoughts and emotions to others.

In the past, people with Down Syndrome who were born in unsupportive families and environments found it difficult to interact with other people and tended to be loners. This is different from the current era where technology has developed as it is today. Nowadays, many people with Down Syndrome are found to be active on social media on Twitter, Tik-Tok, Facebook, Instagram and WhatsApp. This is a good start for them to make it easier to interact with other people. Through social media, they try to express their thoughts and emotions in the form of statuses, stories, vents, dances, songs, poetry, or in other forms. The existence of people with Down syndrome is now recognized by society.



## RESEARCH METHOD

This study describes the social interaction of children with Down syndrome through social media in the digital era. The sources are children with Down syndrome aged 14-22 years. This is because that age allows them to already use smartphones. The method that will be implemented in this study is a descriptive research method with a qualitative approach. Qualitative research is methods for exploring and understanding the meaning that a number of individuals or groups of people ascribe to social or humanitarian issues (Creswell, 2013).

In accordance with the intent and purpose of the researcher, which is to describe how the social interaction of children with Down syndrome through social media in the digital era, the researcher observed the research object using the direct observation method at the research location. Considering that the object of research is disability, to obtain data sources the researcher includes parties related to the object under study.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

This research shows that most children with Down syndrome use gadgets as a means of playing and communicating. The types of devices used are smartphones and laptops. Gadgets are deliberately given by parents to children because of two interests, namely because of the request of the child and the interests of the parents. The interests of the child because children with Down syndrome also have the same will as other children. Furthermore, it is the parents' interest because with the device they can do their daily work because their children are engrossed in playing the device.

This is in line with Nurrachmawati's opinion (in Pebriana, 2017), parents like this think that using gadgets for early childhood can expand their friendship network because they can easily and quickly join the social media that has been provided. Strengthened by the opinion of Widiawati & Sugiman (in Pebriana, 2017), sometimes parents can also use gadgets to divert children from disturbing their parents' work, so parents provide facilities in the form of gadgets for their children who are still at an early age (Widiawati & Sugiman, 2014).

The form of social interaction for children with Down syndrome uses several media, namely:

### Whatsapp

With smartphones, children with Down syndrome can easily communicate with their parents and family. Interaction between statuses between children and parents is easily established with the help of the WhatsApp application on their smartphones. Whatsapp makes it easy to communicate by telephone and send messages when they have difficulty writing or reading difficult and rarely used words.

In the WhatsApp feature, they prefer telephone or video calls when communicating with their parents or family, even if they just see their parents. Video call applications are easier to use because parents can set numbers that are considered close to their children on the front screen feature. Often, children with Down syndrome are more active in using WhatsApp to communicate with distant relatives whose numbers are stored on their cellphones. It was also found that children with Down syndrome more often saw other people's WhatsApp status on their cellphones. From here, the trigger for social interaction between the two. Often, after seeing the status, they respond with certain emojis. For example, emojis that depict the emotions of laughing, angry, liking, crying, etc. Even though they have difficulty expressing their feelings through writing and speech, they can communicate via emojis on WhatsApp.



### **Facebook**

Apart from WhatsApp, children with Down syndrome are used to using Facebook to communicate with other people. The form of interaction that occurs is interaction between families. The Facebook application is one of the application features on smartphones that is easy to find. The ease of accessing Facebook makes children with Down syndrome active on this social media. Initially, they asked someone close to them to create an account. After having an account, they start looking at the information on Facebook.

Down syndrome children have the same abilities as other people, namely being able to imitate what people around them do. They start observing other people's statuses on their homepage. From there, they became friends with each other by giving emojis of liking or disliking the post. Occasionally a child with Down syndrome wants to communicate with other people by making a status on Facebook, even if it's only in the form of a photo/picture of themselves without writing. It was one way for him to open up to other people. Often a favorable response from other people makes them happy. However, it is not uncommon for them to be very sad when they find out that someone's response does not match their expectations.

### **Tik-Tok**

Not much different from other people, children with Down syndrome also follow technological developments. Recently they participated in an application that is currently viral in cyberspace, namely tik-tok. Of all the social media, tik-tok is the most popular because it is packaged attractively, namely predominantly containing songs and dances. The song and dance features on Tik-Tok provoke the emotions of children with Down syndrome to be more active in using them. Not infrequently, they record their daily activities in the form of videos, songs or dances. Even though they don't really focus on who's watching, based on their findings, it's just because they like being able to make videos that have a tick-tock feature. Compared to WhatsApp and Facebook, Down syndrome children make more friends. Therefore, indirectly the community is close and starting to get to know their daily lives.

Based on the research results, it was found that several types of interactions occurred through these three media, namely:

#### **Interaction between states**

The interactions that occur between children with Down syndrome and other people are interactions between statuses, namely between children and parents, and between teachers and students.

#### **Interaction between families**

The interactions found from the observations were interactions between families. This is because most Down syndrome children are closer to their immediate family/nuclear family than other people. They have high trust in their family members. So, it was found that children with Down syndrome really love family members who often show attention to them. So, children with Down syndrome also try to pay attention to other people too. For example, when a child with Down syndrome is sent a message by his aunt because he wants to send food. Innocently, the child answered "Just make Ate.". Short answer, it does not mean an ordinary refusal but as a form of affection for his aunt so that the food is eaten by his aunt rather than for him. This is in the form of a simple interaction carried out as a form of their interaction with other people.



### **Interaction between friendships**

Not only family, since the existence of social media, children with Down syndrome have many friends compared to before. They are known and recognize others more easily. Finally, communication and interaction are established more easily.

### **CONCLUSION**

Technology is a means that provides the necessary tools for the continuity and comfort of human life. One of the most influential technological developments for humans is gadgets/smartphones. Gadgets are media that are used as modern communication tools. Hp is one of the gadgets that facilitate human communication activities. Communication has grown progressively more advanced with the advent of gadgets.

Based on the results of collection, data processing and research results, it is known that social interactions between children with Down syndrome and other people run easily. They can express what they feel through social media. In addition, they try to interact in order to get lots of friends. The social media that they often use are whatsapp, facebook, and tik-tok. That's because the three types of social media are easy to use and interesting.

### **References**

- Ayuningrum, D., & Afif, N. (2020). Interaksi Sosial Anak Down Syndrome di TK Nusa Indah Jakarta. *IQ (Ilmu Al-qur'an): Jurnal Pendidikan Islam* , 152.
- Creswell, J. W. (2013). *Research Design Pendekatan Kualitatif, Kuantitatif, dan Mixed*. Jakarta: Depkes RI.
- Dewi, A. C. (2019). PERILAKU PROSOSIAL ANAK USIA 5-6 TAHUN . *Al-wardah: Jurnal Kajian Perempuan, Gender dan Agama* , 36.
- Fahri, L. M., & Qusyairi, L. A. (2019). INTERAKSI SOSIAL DALAM PROSES PEMBELAJARAN. *PALAPA : Jurnal Studi Keislaman dan Ilmu Pendidikan* , 153.
- Kosasih, E. (2012). *Cara Bijak Memahami Anak Berkebutuhan Khusus*. Bandung: Yrama Widya.
- Nasdian, F. T. (2015). *Sosiologi Umum*. Jakarta: Buku Obor.
- Nasrullah, R. (2015). *Media Sosial; Perspektif Komunikasi, Budaya, dan Sosioteknologi*. Bandung: Simbiosis Rekatama Media.
- Pebriana, P. H. (2017). Analisis Penggunaan Gadget terhadap Kemampuan Interaksi Sosial . *Jurnal Pendidikan Anak Usia Dini* , 7.
- Pitoewas, B. (2018). PENGARUH LINGKUNGAN SOSIAL DAN SIKAP REMAJA TERHADAP PERUBAHAN TATA NILAI. *Jurnal Pancasila dan Kewarganegaraan* , 10.
- Pristinella, D., & Vienlentina, R. (2018). HUBUNGAN ANTARA SELF-ESTEEMDENGAN TINGKAT DEPRESI PADA IBU YANG MEMILIKI ANAK DOWN SYNDROME. *Jurnal Ilmiah Psikologi MANASA* , 18.
- Purba, J. (2002). *Pengelolaan Lingkungan Sosial*. Jakarta: Yayasan Obor.
- Soekanto, S. (2012). *Sosiologi Suatu Pengantar*. Jakarta: PT Raja Grafindo Persada.