



The Influence of Digital Technology on Children's Behavior in Cirebon Regency: A Study from the Perspective of Criminology Law for Preventing Deviant Behavior

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Abstract. Background. The development of digital technology in recent years has had a significant impact on children's behavior, including in Cirebon Regency. Although digital technology offers various benefits, such as easy access to information and entertainment, its negative impacts, especially on children's behavior, are increasingly felt. Cases of child exploitation through social media, the increase in violence involving teenagers, and the influence of violent content on digital platforms have become major concerns. **Aim.** This research aims to examine the influence of digital technology on children's behavior in Cirebon Regency between 2020 and 2025. **Methods.** The research method used is a mixed methods approach, which combines qualitative and quantitative approaches. Data were obtained through interviews with the police, the Education Office, the Regional Indonesian Child Protection Commission (KPAID), as well as parents and affected children. In addition, a questionnaire survey was conducted to obtain data on the patterns of technology use by children and teenagers. **Result.** The research results show that the lack of parental supervision, low digital literacy, and exposure to violent and exploitative content in cyberspace are the main factors causing deviant behavior in children. **Conclusion.** This research recommends the creation of regulations governing the use of digital technology by children, including restrictions on the duration of mobile phone use and monitoring of accessible content. **Implication.** Efforts to improve digital literacy and cooperation between the government, society, and families have also been identified as important steps in preventing the negative impact of digital technology on children's behavior.

Keywords: Digital technology, children's behavior, child exploitation, digital literacy, parental supervision, Cirebon Regency.

INTRODUCTION

The creation of learning objectives is the first step in shaping educational programs regardless of the age group, subject area, or organizational form of education. Without appropriately defined didactic objectives, it is impossible to achieve goals that build the ability to function in the modern world (Łukasz Tomczyk, Natalia Edisherashvili, 2024). The

internet's ubiquitous nature contributes to the digital market's creation. Some main characteristics that differentiate the digital market from the conventional market are the use of big data and the emergence of multi-sided platforms. These digital markets present challenges to traditional competition law frameworks, particularly in the context of abuse of dominant position. This paper aims to address a critical gap in the current understanding of how existing competition laws, specifically in Indonesia, can effectively regulate anticompetitive practices in the digital economy (Setyawati et al, 2024).

The advancement of digital technology has brought various benefits to daily life, including education, communication, and entertainment for children. However, on the other hand, uncontrolled use of digital technology can also negatively impact children's behavior. Cirebon Regency, as one of the regions with significant internet user growth, faces various challenges in addressing these negative impacts. According to data from the Indonesian Internet Service Providers Association (APJII) in 2023, 68.5% of children and teenagers in Indonesia already have access to the internet through personal devices, such as applications and Informatics. Cirebon Regency (2024) shows that around 72% of children aged 10–17 spend more than 4 hours a day using the internet, whether for social media, playing games, or watching videos.

Although digital technology provides ease of access to information and learning, several cases show a correlation between uncontrolled internet use and deviant behavior in children and adolescents. Based on the Polresta Cirebon report (2024–2025), there are several criminal cases involving children, such as child exploitation through social media, teenage involvement in acts of violence, and online gaming addiction that affects their mental and social health.

The case of child exploitation on social media that occurred in 2024 in Cirebon Regency serves as a concrete example of how technology can be exploited by criminals to target children who do not yet have adequate digital literacy. Additionally, the murder case of Vina and Muhammad Rizky in the same year highlights how interactions in the virtual world can trigger conflicts that lead to criminal acts in the real world.

From a criminological perspective, this phenomenon can be linked to Edwin Sutherland's Differential Association theory, which states that criminal behavior can be learned through social interactions, including in the digital world. Exposure to violent content, cyberbullying, and the influence of online groups can shape the mindset and actions of children and teenagers involved in deviant behavior.

In an effort to address this issue, the Cirebon Regency Government has taken strategic steps, such as the establishment of the Regional Technical Implementation Unit for the Protection of Women and Children (UPTD PPA), collaboration with the police, and digital literacy programs in schools. However, challenges remain, especially in terms of parental supervision, the limited regulations governing children's use of technology, and the lack of public awareness regarding the risks of the digital world.

Based on this background, this research aims to analyze the influence of digital technology on children's behavior in Cirebon Regency, identify the factors causing deviant behavior due to technology use, and formulate more effective prevention and intervention strategies. One of the main proposed solutions is the creation of regulations that limit mobile phone usage for children according to their age and developmental level.

By comprehensively understanding this phenomenon, it is hoped that more effective policies can be formulated to protect children from the risks of the digital world, while also wisely utilizing technology to support their positive development.

METHOD

In this study, a systematic method was used to analyze the influence of digital technology on children's behavior in Cirebon Regency. This method includes the research approach, research specifications, types of research, data sources, and analysis techniques used to interpret the research results.

A. Research Approach

The approach used in this research is a qualitative and quantitative approach (mixed methods approach).

1. The qualitative approach is used to deeply explore social phenomena that occur, such as cases of child exploitation through social media, the impact of online games on children's behavior, and the role of parental supervision in the use of digital technology.
2. The quantitative approach is used to obtain statistical data related to internet usage among children, the number of criminal cases involving teenagers, and the level of digital literacy in Cirebon Regency.

This approach allows research to provide a more comprehensive picture of the phenomenon being studied and offers more accurate data-driven solutions.

B. Research Specifications

The specifications of this research are descriptive-analytical, namely:

1. Descriptive: Describing facts and data regarding the impact of digital technology on children's behavior in Cirebon Regency.
2. Analytical: Analyzing the relationship between the use of digital technology and various factors, such as the level of parental supervision, digital literacy, and the tendency for deviant behavior that arises from exposure to digital content.

C. Type of Research

This research falls into the category of empirical research because it uses real data from various sources, such as government agencies, the police, and interviews with relevant parties. This type of research is also of a sociological-legal nature, as it highlights how existing regulations are able or unable to address the negative impacts of digital technology on children.

D. Data Source

This research uses two types of data sources, namely:

1. Primary Data

- a. Interviews with the police, the Education Office, the Regional Indonesian Child Protection Commission (KPAID) of Cirebon Regency, as well as affected parents and children.
- b. Direct observation of internet usage patterns among children and teenagers in Cirebon Regency.

2. Secondary Data

- a. Report from Polresta Cirebon and the Women and Children Protection Unit (PPA) of Polres Cirebon Kota (2024–2025) regarding cases of child exploitation, youth violence, and cybercrime involving children.
- b. Data from the Cirebon Regency Communication and Information Office (2024) regarding the level of internet and social media usage among children in Cirebon.
- c. Literature review from scientific journals, books, and research reports related to the impact of digital technology on children's behavior.

E. Data Collection Techniques

The data collection technique in this research was carried out through:

1. In-depth interviews with relevant sources, such as law enforcement officers, academics, and parents.

2. The questionnaire distributed to children and teenagers to understand the patterns of digital technology use and its impact on their behavior.
3. Documentation and literature study to obtain secondary data that supports the research results.

F. Data Analysis Techniques

The data analysis techniques in this study use qualitative and quantitative analysis methods:

1. Qualitative Analysis

- a. Data obtained from interviews and observations were analyzed using the Miles and Huberman (1984) approach, which includes data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing.
- b. The research also uses criminological theory analysis, such as Differential Association Theory (Sutherland), Imitation Theory (Tarde), and Social Control Theory (Hirschi) to explain children's behavior patterns related to digital technology.

2. Quantitative Analysis

- a. Data from the questionnaire and statistical reports were analyzed using descriptive statistical methods to observe patterns of digital technology usage and its correlation with deviant behavior.
- b. The results of the analysis are presented in the form of tables, graphs, and diagrams to provide a clearer picture.

With this comprehensive research method, it is hoped that the study can provide appropriate recommendations in formulating regulations related to the use of digital technology for children in Cirebon Regency, as well as strategies for preventing and addressing the negative impacts of digital technology on children's behavior.

DISCUSSION

A. Real Case Study on the Influence of Digital Technology on Children's Behavior in Cirebon Regency (2020-2025)

In the period from 2020 to 2025, Cirebon Regency faced various cases that showed the negative impact of digital technology on children's behavior. Several prominent cases include:

1. Child Exploitation through Social Media (2024)

The Women's and Children's Protection Unit (PPA) of the Cirebon City Police Criminal Investigation Unit successfully uncovered a child exploitation case carried out through social media platforms. The perpetrator exploited social media to approach and manipulate children for certain interests¹. The lack of digital literacy and parental supervision makes children more vulnerable to becoming victims of online exploitation.

Examples of Online Child Exploitation:

a. Children Exploitation in the Digital World

- Children are forced or persuaded to engage in actions that harm themselves, such as online sexual exploitation (online grooming).
- Exploitation of children to produce digital content without consent or fair compensation.

b. Exploitation of Personal Data

- Companies or individuals collect, sell, or use personal data without permission for commercial purposes.
- Phishing and identity theft to access the victim's personal and financial accounts.

c. Exploitation of Digital Economy

- Hiring someone with inadequate pay in a digital economy system like the gig economy or freelance work that does not provide labor protection.
- Online investment scheme scams that trap victims into handing over their money or resources.

d. Exploitation in Game Online

- Players are forced or deceived into giving digital assets such as accounts, game items, or virtual currency to others.
- A game system deliberately designed to encourage microtransactions that harm young players.

2. The Vina Murder Case (2024)

The murder case of Vina and Muhammad Rizky (the late eki) has attracted public attention, especially among the younger generation in Cirebon². This incident

¹ Cirebon City Police, "Report on Child Exploitation Cases through Social Media," 2024.

² National Media, "The Vina Murder Case and Its Impact on Generation Z," 2024.

highlights how interactions in the digital world can influence criminal actions in the real world. Factors such as communication on social media, involvement in online groups, and exposure to negative content are aspects that need to be considered in the analysis of this case.

3. Disclosure of Criminal Cases by Polresta Cirebon (2025)

At the beginning of 2025, Polresta Cirebon uncovered seven criminal cases, including robbery with violence and assault³. Although not all cases involve children, some cases show the involvement of teenagers influenced by violent content in digital media.

Based on the results of an interview with one of the village babins in Pegagan Lor Village, namely Mr. Tedi NTD, who is recorded as a member of the Kapetakan Police Station, he revealed that:

"We often find middle school children becoming victims of bullying on social media, scams, and unauthorized data theft, but cases like this are difficult to uncover because children are afraid to report it and parents often do not realize it."

The police face challenges in handling cases like this due to the lack of reports from the community. Most parents are unaware of their children's online activities or do not know where to report them.

B. Criminological Analysis of Those Cases

The above cases can be analyzed using several relevant criminological theories:

1. Differential Association Theory (Edwin H. Sutherland)

This theory explains that criminal behavior is learned through social interaction with groups that have deviant norms⁴. In the digital context, children who are frequently exposed to violent content or involved in negative online communities are more susceptible to imitating such behavior.

2. Strain Theory (Robert K. Merton – Strain Theory)

Merton explains that individuals who experience social pressure due to the gap between expectations and reality may be driven to commit criminal acts⁵.

3. Social Control Theory (Travis Hirschi)

³ Polresta Cirebon, "Recapitulation of Criminal Cases for the Year 2025," 2025.

⁴ Sutherland, E.H. (1947). "Principles of Criminology."

⁵ Merton, R.K. (1938). "Social Structure and Anomie."

Hirschi argues that individuals tend to avoid criminal behavior if they have strong social bonds, such as good relationships with family, school, and community⁶.

4. Labeling Theory (Howard Becker)

This theory states that individuals labeled negatively by society tend to maintain and internalize that label⁷.

C. Prevention and Handling Efforts

In response to this phenomenon, various measures have been taken by the government and related institutions in Cirebon Regency:

1. Formation of the UPTD for the Protection of Women and Children (PPA)

In 2024, the Cirebon Regency Government established the Regional Technical Implementation Unit (UPTD) for the Protection of Women and Children (PPA) to provide protection for women and children from violence and exploitation⁸.

2. Synergy with the Police

The Regional Indonesian Child Protection Commission (KPAID) of Cirebon Regency is collaborating with the police to enhance the effectiveness of handling cases of violence against children⁹.

3. Digital Education and Literacy

Efforts to improve digital literacy continue to be promoted through educational programs in schools and communities¹⁰.

4. The creation of regulations governing the use of mobile phones for children

This regulation aims to set age limits, usage duration, and supervision of internet access for children. For example, age limits for mobile phone use, restrictions on social media access, and mobile phone use in schools.

D. Challenges Faced

Although various efforts have been made, there are still several challenges in preventing and addressing deviant behavior caused by digital technology:

1. Rapid Technological Development

⁶ Hirschi, T. (1969). "Causes of Delinquency."

⁷ Becker, H. (1963). "Outsiders: Studies in the Sociology of Deviance."

⁸ Cirebon Regency Government, "Regional Regulation on the Protection of Women and Children," 2024.

⁹ KPAID Cirebon Regency, "Report on Cooperation with the Police in Handling Child Cases," 2024.

¹⁰ Cirebon Education Office, "Digital Literacy Program for Students," 2023.

The rapid development of technology often leaves regulations and preventive measures behind¹¹.

2. Resource Limitations

Both in terms of expert personnel and funding, there are still limitations in the implementation of prevention and case handling programs¹².

3. Culture and Stigma

The stigma against victims of digital violence and a culture that is reluctant to report cases make many cases of child exploitation in the digital world go unreported¹³.

4. Lack of Human Resources and Budget

- The relevant agencies still face limitations in terms of expert personnel, infrastructure, and funding to implement prevention programs to the fullest extent.
- Collaboration with the private sector and non-governmental organizations is needed to strengthen policy implementation.

CONCLUSION

This research shows that the development of digital technology has a significant impact on children's behavior in Cirebon Regency during the period 2020–2025. Although digital technology provides many benefits, such as access to information and educational tools, its negative impacts cannot be overlooked. Several cases, such as child exploitation through social media, the influence of violent content, and the involvement of teenagers in criminal activities, show that uncontrolled use of technology can trigger deviant behavior in children and adolescents.

The main factors contributing to this issue include minimal parental supervision, low digital literacy, and a lack of regulations limiting the use of digital technology by children. Prevention and handling efforts have been undertaken, such as the establishment of the Regional Technical Implementation Unit (UPTD) for the Protection of Women and Children (PPA), increased cooperation with the police, and digital literacy education. However,

¹¹ Ministry of Communication and Information, “Regulatory Challenges in the Digital Era,” 2024.

¹² Bappeda Cirebon, “Analysis of Child Protection Budget in Cirebon Regency,” 2025.

¹³ Child Protection NGO, “Study on Social Stigma Against Victims of Digital Violence,” 2024.

various challenges are still faced, such as the rapid development of technology, limited resources, and the still low public awareness of the risks of the digital world.

Therefore, a more comprehensive strategy is needed to ensure that children can use digital technology safely and responsibly, with support from the government, schools, parents, and the community.

SUGGESTION

Based on the results of this study, several suggestions that can be given to reduce the negative impact of digital technology on children's behavior are as follows:

A. Creation of Stricter Regulations

1. Local and central governments need to draft specific laws regarding the use of digital technology for children, including age restrictions for social media use, limitations on the time spent using electronic devices, and monitoring of digital content accessible to children.
2. Internet service providers and social media platforms need to be closely monitored to implement child protection policies in their services, such as age verification systems and parental control features.

B. Improvement of Digital Literacy in Schools and Families

1. Schools must provide a digital literacy curriculum that includes awareness of online dangers, social media ethics, and ways to protect oneself from digital crimes.
2. Parents need to be educated about the importance of monitoring their children's digital activities, using parental control applications, and building good communication with their children so that they feel comfortable discussing their digital experiences.

C. Optimization of the Role of Child Protection Institutions

1. KPAID and UPTD PPA must be more proactive in addressing cases of child exploitation in the digital world, including by enhancing digital awareness campaigns for the community.
2. The police need to be strengthened with a special cybercrime unit that focuses on preventing and addressing digital crimes involving children.

D. Massive Digital Awareness Campaign

1. A national and local campaign involving the government, media, influencers, and communities is needed to promote the importance of using technology in a healthy and responsible manner.
2. Establishing an online help center that can be accessed by children and parents to report cases of digital exploitation and receive assistance quickly.

With the implementation of this strategy, it is hoped that children in Cirebon Regency and throughout Indonesia can utilize digital technology positively while being protected from the risks and negative impacts it may cause.

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