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EVALUATING A SCHOOL–HOME SCREEN-TIME POLICY: A MIXED-METHODS PILOT STUDY AT TK ISLAM ALAM NUSANTARA, INDONESIA

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Abstract

Young children's screen use occurs primarily within the home, limiting the ability of schools to align family media routines with classroom learning demands. This pilot study evaluated the feasibility of an initial school-developed Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) for screen-time management at TK Islam Alam Nusantara in Bandung, Indonesia. The study employed an embedded mixed-methods design in which qualitative policy evaluation constituted the primary component, supported by a 30-day single-group pretest–posttest assessment. Five children with relatively high screen exposure and marked classroom attention or behavioral difficulties were selected through purposive extreme-case sampling. Data were collected through parent and teacher questionnaires, post-simulation interviews, structured classroom observations, and textual analysis of the initial SOP. The findings identified three operational weaknesses in the initial policy: ambiguous instructions, limited practical support for families, and the absence of a follow-up consultation mechanism. Three patterns of parental adaptation also emerged: substantive compliance, formal compliance, and regulatory evasion. Consistent implementation was associated with greater apparent improvements in children's attentional focus, emotional regulation, and contextual verbal communication, whereas limited family time, commuting pressures, and parenting fatigue constrained implementation. Based on these findings, the initial SOP was reconstructed into a more supportive school–home partnership guideline incorporating explicit procedures, school-supported content curation, accessible home-based activities, and psychological consultation. Because the study involved only five children, lasted 30 days, and lacked a comparison group, the behavioral findings should be interpreted as preliminary indications rather than evidence of causal effectiveness. The study demonstrates that school-based screen-time guidance is more feasible when it combines operational clarity, practical assistance, and sensitivity to diverse family conditions.

Keywords: *Early Childhood; Parental Mediation; School–Home Partnership; Screen Time; Policy Evaluation*

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A. Introduction

The rapid development of digital media and algorithm-based content platforms has transformed communication practices within contemporary households. For young children, digital media function not only as entertainment but also as informal agents of learning and socialization. However, prolonged and poorly mediated screen exposure has been associated with concerns regarding attention, emotional regulation, and participation

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in physical and social activities (Bal et al., 2024; Beyens et al., 2018; Radesky et al., 2014; Santos et al., 2022). Concerns have also been reported regarding children's sleep patterns and language development (Kostyrka-Allchorne et al., 2017; Massaroni et al., 2024; Merín et al., 2024; World Health Organization [WHO], 2019). These effects are not uniform because they are influenced by children's age, media content, family routines, parental mediation, and the social context in which devices are used (Bal et al., 2024; Lee et al., 2024).

From a communication policy perspective, children's media consumption within the home lies partly beyond the direct reach of formal state regulation. Macro-level media policy can regulate content production, distribution, and public access, but it has limited authority over everyday media practices within families (van Cuilenburg & McQuail, 2003). Responsibility for managing children's screen use therefore falls largely on parents, who determine the duration, content, context, and supervision of media use (Fitzpatrick et al., 2023; Lee et al., 2024). In practice, however, this responsibility is often constrained by work demands, limited time, parental fatigue, and the need to manage children's emotional resistance (Khalsa et al., 2024; Lopes Almeida et al., 2023). Under such conditions, digital devices may be used as an immediate calming strategy or "electronic babysitter," even when parents understand the importance of limiting screen exposure.

This issue presents a practical challenge at TK Islam Alam Nusantara in Bandung, an early childhood institution that applies an active, exploratory, and nature-based learning approach. The school curriculum requires children to engage in outdoor activities, physical movement, direct observation, peer interaction, and hands-on learning. Preliminary teacher observations indicated that several children with relatively high screen exposure at home experienced short attention spans, fluctuating emotional control, morning fatigue, and the repetitive use of expressions derived from digital content. Similar concerns regarding attention, sleep, and language development have been reported in previous research (Massaroni et al., 2024; Merín et al., 2024; Santos et al., 2022). These observations do not establish screen exposure as the sole cause of the behaviors, but they indicate a possible inconsistency between children's passive digital routines at home and the active learning demands of the school environment.

Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological systems theory explains that child development is shaped by interactions among interconnected environments, particularly the home and school microsystems. The relationship between these environments forms part of the mesosystem. When routines and expectations at home differ substantially from those at school, children may experience discontinuity across their developmental settings. Epstein's (2011) theory of overlapping spheres of influence similarly emphasizes that children's educational development is strengthened through structured cooperation among schools, families, and communities. Accordingly, managing young children's screen use cannot be treated solely as a private parental responsibility; it also requires communication, coordination, and support from educational institutions (Zulauf-McCurdy et al., 2024).

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In response to this challenge, TK Islam Alam Nusantara developed an initial Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) to guide parents in restricting and mediating children's screen use. In this study, the SOP is understood as a micro-level communication policy: a localized institutional instrument containing messages, expectations, procedures, and support mechanisms intended to coordinate practices between the school and families. However, a policy cannot be considered feasible merely because its objectives are normatively desirable. Its implementation depends on the clarity of its provisions, the consistency of communication, the availability of supporting resources, the disposition of participating families, and the practicality of its procedures (Dunn, 2018; Edwards, 1980). A pilot evaluation is therefore necessary to identify operational weaknesses and implementation barriers before the SOP is formally adopted (Rico-González et al., 2025).

Previous studies have extensively examined the relationship between children's screen exposure and developmental outcomes, as well as parental strategies for mediating young children's media use (Bal et al., 2024; Beyens et al., 2018; Fitzpatrick et al., 2023; Lee et al., 2024; Massaroni et al., 2024; Merín et al., 2024; Nikken & Schols, 2015; Radesky et al., 2014; Santos et al., 2022). Nevertheless, limited attention has been given to how a school-developed screen-time policy is interpreted, negotiated, and revised during its initial implementation across families with different social and parenting conditions. This study therefore aims to: (1) analyze the textual formulation of the initial Screen Time SOP and identify its operational gaps; (2) evaluate patterns of parental adaptation and the sociological constraints affecting its implementation at home; and (3) identify preliminary changes in children's classroom behavior following a 30-day simulation. The contribution of this study lies in developing a collaborative school–home communication model that emphasizes education, facilitation, and shared responsibility rather than coercive monitoring of domestic practices.

B. Methods

This study employed an embedded mixed-methods pilot evaluation in which qualitative data served as the primary source of analysis, while quantitative data were used to support the assessment of preliminary behavioral changes. The qualitative component examined the formulation, implementation barriers, and revision of the initial Screen Time SOP through a formative policy-evaluation approach (Dunn, 2018). The quantitative component used a single-group pretest–posttest design conducted over 30 days in April 2026. Because the study involved only five children and did not include a control group, the quantitative findings were interpreted as preliminary indications rather than evidence of causal effectiveness.

The study was conducted at TK Islam Alam Nusantara in Bandung, West Java. Participants were selected through purposive extreme-case sampling. One child was selected from each class, resulting in five participating children, coded as Children A, B, C, D, and E. Selection was based on teachers' preliminary assessments indicating relatively high daily screen exposure and marked difficulties in classroom attention or

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behavioral regulation. The qualitative informants included the school principal, curriculum team, school psychologist, five classroom teachers, and the parents of the five participating children.

Data were collected through questionnaires, interviews, and structured classroom observations. Two questionnaires were administered before and after the 30-day simulation. The parent questionnaire contained 13 items rated on a five-point Likert scale, with a possible score range of 13–65. It assessed the consistency of screen-time restrictions, parental supervision, and the provision of alternative activities at home. The teacher questionnaire contained 10 items, with a possible score range of 10–50, and assessed three classroom indicators: attentional focus, emotional regulation, and contextual verbal communication. Higher scores indicated more positive conditions. The instruments were reviewed by a child development psychologist to assess the relevance, clarity, and alignment of the items with the measured dimensions. Post-simulation interviews were conducted to examine the social, psychological, and practical conditions affecting parental implementation of the SOP. Classroom teachers also maintained structured anecdotal records throughout the simulation to document changes in attention, emotional responses, verbal behavior, and participation in learning activities.

The quantitative data were analyzed descriptively by comparing pretest and posttest scores and calculating individual gain scores. No inferential statistical tests were conducted because of the limited sample size and the absence of a comparison group. Qualitative data from interviews, observation notes, and the initial SOP document were analyzed through data reduction, coding, comparison, and thematic interpretation. The analysis focused on operational weaknesses in the initial policy text, barriers to implementation, and patterns of parental response.

Parental adaptation was classified into three analytical categories. Substantive compliance referred to consistent improvement in parent-reported practices accompanied by corresponding behavioral improvement at school and supported by interview evidence of sustained implementation. Formal compliance referred to an increase in parent-reported scores that was not fully consistent with teacher observations or interview evidence, indicating possible reporting bias or incomplete implementation. Regulatory evasion referred to limited change across home and school indicators because the family was unable to implement the policy consistently due to time, psychological, or structural constraints. These categories were used as interpretive classifications rather than standardized diagnostic measures.

Ethical procedures were applied because the study involved young children and family-related data. Parents received information about the study and provided written informed consent before participation. Children's identities were anonymized using letter codes, and personal information was kept confidential. The school psychologist monitored the children throughout the simulation. When a child showed substantial emotional difficulty during screen reduction, the procedure allowed for parental consultation, adaptive adjustment, and gradual reduction. The intervention was

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implemented as a supportive school–home partnership rather than as a punitive or coercive program.

C. Results and Discussion

1. Results

1) Operational Gaps in the Initial Screen Time SOP

The textual analysis showed that the initial Screen Time SOP was dominated by general recommendations and did not provide sufficiently clear implementation procedures. For example, the first clause stated that parents should take an "active role" in limiting children's screen time to 30–45 minutes per day. However, the phrase "active role" did not specify how parents should apply the restriction, divide the permitted duration, respond to children's resistance, or obtain support from the school.

The initial draft also focused primarily on parental obligations. It recommended appropriate content, physical courses, and storybook reading but did not account for differences in family time, economic resources, or parenting capacity. In addition, the document contained no follow-up procedure for families experiencing difficulty implementing the recommendations. These findings indicated three main operational weaknesses: ambiguous instructions, limited practical support, and the absence of an individual consultation mechanism.

Based on these findings, the SOP was revised from an appeal-based document into a school–home partnership guideline. The revised clauses introduced explicit screen-time procedures, school-supported content curation, accessible alternative activities, and consultation with the school psychologist.

Table 1. Revision of the Initial Screen Time SOP

Initial SOP component	Revised SOP clause	Basis for revision
Parents should take an active role in limiting screen time to 30–45 minutes per day.	Parents are advised to limit screen use to a maximum of 30 minutes per day on school days, divided into two sessions. Screen use is discouraged during the two hours before bedtime.	The initial wording was ambiguous and did not provide clear implementation guidance.
Parents should select appropriate content and channels.	Direct parental mediation is recommended, and the school provides a monthly list of selected educational channels curated by the curriculum team.	Parents required practical support in selecting appropriate content.
Parents should provide physical courses or storybook activities.	The school provides the PEAR home activity program, which uses accessible and environmentally friendly materials available at home.	Some families faced time and financial constraints in providing alternative activities.

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No follow-up procedure was included.	Parents experiencing implementation difficulties are invited to consult the school psychologist and develop an individualized parenting strategy.	Families required supportive consultation rather than punitive monitoring.

Source: Developed by the authors based on research data, 2026

2) Patterns of Parental Adaptation and Implementation Constraints

The comparison of parent and teacher questionnaire scores, supported by interviews and teacher observations, identified three patterns of parental adaptation: substantive compliance, formal compliance, and regulatory evasion.

Table 2. Parent and Teacher Questionnaire Scores Before and After the Simulation

Child	Parent score, pre–post (gain)	Teacher score, pre–post (gain)	Adaptation category
Child A	22–58 (+36)	18–46 (+28)	Substantive compliance
Child B	26–51 (+25)	20–42 (+22)	Substantive compliance
Child C	19–28 (+9)	15–18 (+3)	Regulatory evasion
Child D	24–62 (+38)	19–48 (+29)	Substantive compliance
Child E	21–44 (+23)	16–32 (+16)	Formal compliance

Source: Research data, 2026

Children A, B, and D were classified as cases of substantive compliance because improvements in parent-reported practices were accompanied by corresponding changes in teacher observations. In the case of Child D, the parent reported that the initial reduction in device use caused resistance, but consistent substitution with bedtime story reading helped the child adjust. The teacher's Week 4 record similarly noted that Child D was able to participate in a 15-minute circle-time session without disturbing peers and showed sustained concentration during a seed-planting activity.

Child C represented regulatory evasion. Both parent and teacher scores showed only limited change. The parents explained that long working hours, traffic congestion, and exhaustion made it difficult to manage the child's resistance to device reduction. As one parent stated:

> "Both of us work late and get stuck in traffic. By the time we arrive home, we are too exhausted to deal with a fussy child. Ultimately, handing over the device becomes the quickest option to keep the house quiet, even though we know it violates the draft SOP."

The teacher's observations were consistent with this account. Child C frequently appeared drowsy, maintained attention on independent tasks for only two to three minutes, and repeatedly used expressions derived from digital video content. This case indicated that limited time and parental exhaustion were major barriers to implementation.

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Child E was classified as formal compliance because the increase in the parent-reported score was not fully consistent with the pattern described in the parent interview and teacher observations. The parent acknowledged completing the questionnaire in a manner that would appear consistent with the school program, while device use was only partially reduced in practice. The teacher recorded some improvement in emotional control, but attentional focus remained inconsistent, and the child frequently appeared tired in the morning. This case showed that questionnaire improvement alone did not necessarily indicate consistent implementation at home.

3) Preliminary Changes in Children's Classroom Behavior

Teacher questionnaire data showed varying changes across the three observed behavioral dimensions: attentional focus, emotional regulation, and contextual verbal communication.

Table 3. Changes in Classroom Behavioral Indicators

Child	Attentional focus, pre–post	Emotional regulation, pre–post	Contextual verbal communication, pre–post	Total teacher score, pre–post
Child A	7–18	6–14	5–14	18–46
Child B	8–16	6–13	6–13	20–42
Child C	6–7	5–6	4–5	15–18
Child D	7–19	6–15	6–14	19–48
Child E	6–12	5–10	5–10	16–32

Source: Research data, 2026

The largest improvements were observed in Children A, B, and D. Their scores increased across all three dimensions, indicating more sustained classroom attention, improved emotional regulation, and more contextual verbal responses. Teacher anecdotal records also indicated that children in these cases became more able to participate in circle time and hands-on learning activities.

Child C showed only minimal improvement across all indicators, consistent with the limited implementation reported by the parents. Child E showed moderate numerical improvement, particularly in emotional regulation and verbal communication, but teacher observations indicated that attention remained inconsistent. Therefore, the change in Child E was interpreted cautiously because the school-based improvement did not fully correspond with the parent-reported level of compliance. The findings showed preliminary behavioral improvements in cases where screen-time restrictions were implemented more consistently and accompanied by alternative activities and parental mediation. However, the observed changes varied substantially across children and were treated as descriptive indications rather than evidence of causal effectiveness.

2. Discussion

The findings show that the feasibility of the Screen Time SOP depended not only on the normative value of its objectives but also on the clarity of its provisions and the

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support available to families (Raj et al., 2022; Rico-González et al., 2025). The initial draft relied heavily on general appeals, particularly the expectation that parents should take an "active role" in limiting children's screen use. Such wording expressed the intended direction of the policy but did not provide sufficiently operational guidance. From a policy-evaluation perspective, this weakness is important because implementation requires clear procedures, practicable expectations, and mechanisms that help participants respond to difficulties (Dunn, 2018). The revised SOP therefore shifted from a primarily instructive document toward a more supportive school–home partnership instrument (Raj et al., 2022; Rico-González et al., 2025).

The communication dimension was particularly visible in the cases of Children A, B, and D. In these families, the policy was not interpreted merely as an institutional demand but as a shared effort to support the children's learning and behavioral adjustment. The corresponding increases in parent and teacher scores suggest that implementation was more consistent when parents understood the educational rationale and received practical guidance from the school. This pattern is consistent with evidence that parental mediation and repeated parent-focused guidance can support young children's adherence to screen-time recommendations, although the effectiveness of particular strategies may vary across children and family contexts (Fitzpatrick et al., 2023; Rico-González et al., 2025). This finding is consistent with Edwards's (1980) argument that policy messages must be clearly communicated and understood by those responsible for implementation. It also supports Epstein's (2011) view that cooperation between schools and families is more effective when responsibilities are shared rather than imposed unilaterally.

The findings also demonstrate that parental compliance was strongly influenced by available resources. Child C's case showed that awareness of the policy did not automatically lead to implementation. The parents acknowledged the importance of limiting screen use but faced long working hours, commuting pressures, and parenting exhaustion. Under these conditions, the device remained the most immediately available strategy for calming the child. This case indicates that noncompliance should not be interpreted simply as parental resistance or lack of concern. It may instead reflect limited time, psychological capacity, and access to feasible alternative activities (Jusienė et al., 2025; Khalsa et al., 2024; Lopes Almeida et al., 2023). This pattern is consistent with evidence that parental distress may increase reliance on digital media as an immediate coping strategy for managing children's emotional reactivity (Jusienė et al., 2025). In Edwards's (1980) framework, such limitations represent resource constraints that can weaken implementation even when policy communication is adequate.

The reconstruction of the SOP responded directly to this problem by replacing relatively demanding recommendations, such as enrolling children in additional physical activities, with more accessible home-based alternatives. The PEAR home activity program was intended to reduce the practical burden on families by using simple materials available in the home environment. This adjustment is significant because a policy that requires resources beyond the capacity of its participants may produce only formal

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agreement rather than sustained behavioral change (Raj et al., 2022; Rico-González et al., 2025). The feasibility of the SOP therefore depends on whether its recommendations can be integrated into diverse household routines (Lee et al., 2024).

Child E's case further illustrates the limitations of relying on a single source of self-reported data. The increase in the parent-reported score suggested substantial improvement, but interviews and teacher observations indicated that implementation remained partial and inconsistent. This discrepancy may reflect social desirability bias, in which respondents report their behavior in ways that conform to perceived institutional expectations (Krumpal, 2013). However, the divergence should not automatically be interpreted as intentional misrepresentation. It may also reflect differences between home and school contexts or variation in the child's behavior across settings. Low agreement between parent and teacher ratings is common in preschool behavioral assessment because the two informants observe children under different routines, expectations, and social demands (Carneiro et al., 2021). The divergence in Child E's case should therefore be treated as analytically meaningful rather than as evidence that one source was necessarily inaccurate. The use of dual-perspective data was important because it allowed parent reports to be compared with teacher observations and interview evidence.

The preliminary behavioral changes also varied according to the consistency of implementation. Children A, B, and D showed the most visible improvement in attentional focus, emotional regulation, and contextual communication. In these cases, screen-time restriction was accompanied by parental mediation and alternative activities, both of which have been identified as relevant components of interventions designed to reduce screen use among preschool children (Fitzpatrick et al., 2023; Raj et al., 2022; Rico-González et al., 2025). By contrast, Child C showed only limited change, while Child E displayed moderate but inconsistent improvement. These patterns are broadly compatible with Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological systems theory, which emphasizes the importance of continuity between the home and school environments. When routines and expectations were more consistent across both settings, children appeared to adapt more positively to classroom demands.

Nevertheless, the findings should be interpreted cautiously. The study involved only five children, lasted for 30 days, and did not include a comparison group. The observed changes cannot therefore be attributed exclusively to the SOP. They may also have been influenced by natural developmental changes, variations in family routines, increased teacher attention, or other unmeasured factors. In addition, the adaptation categories were developed as analytical classifications for this pilot study and should not be treated as standardized measures of parental behavior.

The study indicates that a school-developed screen-time guideline is more feasible when it combines clear communication, practical support, family-sensitive procedures, and opportunities for consultation. The findings support a shift from a compliance-oriented approach toward a collaborative model in which the school and parents jointly manage children's screen-use routines. In this sense, the main contribution of the revised

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SOP lies not in enforcing domestic control but in strengthening coordination between the home and school environments.

D. Conclusion

This pilot study shows that the initial Screen Time SOP at TK Islam Alam Nusantara required revision because several provisions remained general, insufficiently operational, and inadequately responsive to differences in family conditions. The evaluation identified three patterns of parental adaptation: substantive compliance, formal compliance, and regulatory evasion. These patterns were influenced not only by parental understanding but also by work demands, parenting fatigue, available time, and access to practical alternatives to screen use. Preliminary improvements in attentional focus, emotional regulation, and contextual verbal communication were more apparent among children whose families implemented the recommendations more consistently and combined screen-time restrictions with parental mediation and alternative activities.

Based on these findings, the initial SOP was reconstructed into a more supportive school–home partnership guideline. The revised model emphasizes clearer time-use procedures, school-supported content curation, accessible home-based activities, and consultation for families experiencing implementation difficulties. Its principal contribution lies in reframing screen-time regulation as a collaborative communication process rather than a coercive mechanism for monitoring domestic behavior.

The findings should be interpreted within the limitations of a five-child sample, a 30-day implementation period, and the absence of a comparison group. The observed behavioral changes therefore cannot be attributed exclusively to the SOP. Further studies should examine the revised model using a larger and more diverse sample, a longer implementation period, repeated measurements, and a comparison group. Within these limitations, the study provides an initial basis for the school to consider adopting the revised SOP as a flexible and educational partnership guideline, subject to continued evaluation and adaptation.

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