

Implementation of Child Device Supervision Through Google Family Link: A Study of Families Using Google Family Link in Sukarami District, Palembang

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Abstract

This study aims to analyze the implementation of parental supervision through Google Family Link, examine children's responses to technology-assisted digital parenting, and identify the supporting and inhibiting factors affecting its implementation among families in Sukarami District, Palembang. Responding to growing concerns about children's smartphone use, excessive screen time, digital addiction, and exposure to inappropriate online content, this study employed a qualitative case study design. Data were collected through non-participant observation, semi-structured interviews with parents, children, and other family members, and documentation. The data were analyzed using an interactive model consisting of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification. The findings show that Google Family Link was implemented through screen-time management, application approval and restriction, activity monitoring, location tracking, and remote device control. Children's responses varied from initial resistance to gradual acceptance as parents explained the purpose of digital supervision and involved them in establishing family digital rules. The study also found that parents' digital literacy, family communication, consistency, and application usability supported effective implementation, whereas children's resistance, technical limitations, unstable connectivity, and parents' occupational demands constrained supervision. These findings indicate that Google Family Link functions not merely as a parental control application but as a social medium through which parents construct digital discipline, strengthen supervision, and foster responsible gadget use. However, the qualitative and context-specific design limits generalization; future studies should examine long-term outcomes across broader family, cultural, and socioeconomic settings.

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Introduction

The rapid advancement of digital technology in the era of Society 5.0 has fundamentally transformed the way children interact, communicate, and access information. Smartphones, which were initially developed as communication devices, have evolved into multifunctional technologies that provide entertainment, educational resources, social networking, and unlimited internet access. Consequently, children are becoming active digital users at increasingly younger ages. While digital technology offers numerous educational opportunities, it also exposes children to various risks, including excessive screen time, digital addiction, inappropriate online content, cyberbullying, and declining face-to-face social interaction. Considering that children are still in the process of cognitive, emotional, and social development, unrestricted access to digital technology may negatively influence their well-being and behavior. Therefore, parental supervision has become an increasingly

important component of contemporary parenting practices in the digital era (Sugiarti & Andyanto, 2022; Enstein, 2023; Fajria et al., 2025).

Recent evidence indicates that children's digital engagement continues to increase significantly. UNICEF reported that approximately 9.17% of internet users in Indonesia are children under the age of twelve, and this proportion continues to grow every year. Children no longer use smartphones merely for entertainment but actively access digital platforms such as YouTube, TikTok, Instagram, online games, and various educational applications. Although digital technology has become inseparable from children's daily lives, excessive gadget use has been associated with numerous physical, psychological, and social consequences. Long-term exposure to digital devices may contribute to vision problems, decreased concentration, emotional instability, reduced social interaction, and dependency on virtual environments. Previous studies also demonstrate that excessive smartphone use among children is positively associated with aggressive behavior, emotional dysregulation, and increased vulnerability to cyberbullying and digital violence (Pramesti et al., 2024). These findings indicate that technology itself is not inherently harmful; rather, inadequate parental supervision and ineffective digital literacy practices constitute the primary challenges faced by modern families (Enstein, 2023; Pramesti et al., 2024; Sugiarti & Andyanto, 2022).

The increasing complexity of children's digital activities has encouraged the emergence of digital parenting, a parenting approach that integrates technological tools into parental supervision while maintaining healthy parent-child relationships. Digital parenting extends beyond simply restricting children's gadget use; instead, it emphasizes guiding children toward responsible, balanced, and safe digital behavior. According to Fajria et al. (2025), digital parenting involves parents' active participation in regulating children's online activities, monitoring digital behavior, establishing screen-time boundaries, and fostering responsible digital citizenship. Rather than prohibiting technology use, digital parenting encourages parents to utilize technology itself as a supportive instrument for monitoring children's digital experiences. Such an approach enables parents to minimize children's exposure to online risks while simultaneously promoting healthy digital habits that support children's academic achievement, psychological well-being, and social development (Fajria et al., 2025).

One of the most widely implemented digital parenting technologies is Google Family Link, a parental control application introduced by Google in 2017 to assist parents in remotely supervising their children's Android devices. The application provides comprehensive parental control features, including screen-time management, application approval, website filtering, activity monitoring, location tracking, and remote device locking. These features enable parents to regulate children's digital activities without requiring continuous physical presence. Consequently, Google Family Link represents a significant shift from conventional face-to-face parental supervision toward technology-mediated parenting practices. In this context, technology no longer functions merely as a communication tool but becomes an active mediator through which parental authority, discipline, and digital responsibility are exercised. Such transformation reflects the growing process of mediatization within family interactions, where technological systems increasingly shape everyday parenting practices and reconstruct relationships between parents and children (Puspitasari, 2023; Livingstone & Lunt, 2015; Fajria et al., 2025).

The transformation of parental supervision through Google Family Link can be understood from the perspective of the Social Construction of Reality proposed by Berger and Luckmann. This theory explains that social reality is continuously constructed through the dialectical processes of externalization, objectivation, and internalization. In the context of digital parenting, parents initially externalize their concerns regarding children's digital risks by adopting Google Family Link as a technological solution for monitoring gadget use. Over time, the application becomes objectified as a legitimate and trustworthy standard for regulating children's digital behavior. Eventually, children internalize these digital rules, accepting screen-time limitations, application restrictions, and parental monitoring as normal aspects of everyday life. Consequently, Google Family Link functions not merely as a technological application but also as a social institution that shapes family norms, parental authority, and children's perceptions of responsible technology use. Simultaneously, mass media and digital platforms contribute to constructing parents' understanding of digital risks, thereby influencing parenting practices in contemporary society (Kadewandana, 2008; Fajria et al., 2025).

Previous studies have demonstrated the importance of parental supervision in minimizing the negative impacts of children's gadget use. Hayati (2021) found that Google Family Link facilitates parental monitoring through features such as screen-time control, remote device locking, and real-time location tracking. Wahyudi (2020) reported that parental social control plays a significant role in preventing smartphone addiction among adolescents through guidance, supervision, and behavioral regulation. Likewise, Wulandari et al. (2021) emphasized that effective gadget supervision requires active parental involvement, although many parents still have limited understanding of digital parenting practices. Other studies have also highlighted the potential of Google Family Link as an effective strategy for reducing gadget dependency among children, despite several technical limitations that affect its optimal implementation (Mahardika et al., 2020; Hidayatullah et al., 2023). Furthermore, studies conducted by Lubis (2024), Ardiva and Wirdanengsih (2022), Pertiwi et al. (2022), and Sari and Widiansyah (2023) consistently indicate that inadequate parental supervision contributes to children's excessive smartphone use, behavioral problems, declining academic performance, and weakened social interaction. These findings collectively confirm that parental involvement remains a decisive factor in fostering healthy digital behavior among children.

Although previous studies have extensively discussed parental control, smartphone addiction, and the technical functions of Google Family Link, several research gaps remain. Existing studies primarily focus on evaluating the effectiveness of parental control applications or examining the negative impacts of smartphone use. Relatively little attention has been devoted to understanding how Google Family Link is socially implemented within everyday family life and how the application reconstructs parental authority, children's responses, and family interaction patterns through digital supervision. Moreover, previous studies rarely integrate the perspective of social construction to explain how parents and children negotiate technological control and gradually construct new norms regarding digital discipline. Therefore, this study offers novelty by combining the concepts of digital parenting and the Social Construction of Reality to analyze the implementation of Google Family Link among families in Sukarami District, Palembang. Rather than evaluating the application solely as a technological innovation, this research examines Google Family Link as a medium through which

parental supervision, digital discipline, and family relationships are continuously constructed in everyday social practice.

Based on these considerations, this study aims to analyze the implementation of parental supervision through Google Family Link among families in Sukarami District, Palembang, to examine children's responses toward digital parenting practices, and to identify the supporting and inhibiting factors influencing its implementation. The findings are expected to contribute theoretically to the development of digital parenting studies by enriching the application of the Social Construction of Reality in family communication research. Practically, the study is expected to provide valuable insights for parents, educators, and policymakers regarding effective strategies for promoting responsible technology use, strengthening digital literacy, and fostering healthier parent–child relationships in an increasingly digital society.

Method

This study employed a qualitative research approach using a case study design to obtain an in-depth understanding of the implementation of digital parenting through Google Family Link among families in Sukarami District, Palembang. A qualitative approach was selected because it enables researchers to explore participants' experiences, perceptions, interactions, and meanings within their natural social settings. Rather than measuring causal relationships statistically, this study sought to understand how parents construct digital supervision practices, how children respond to these practices, and how technology mediates parent–child relationships in everyday life. The case study design was considered appropriate because it allows comprehensive exploration of a contemporary social phenomenon within its real-life context.

The research was conducted in Sukarami District, Palembang, South Sumatra, Indonesia. This location was purposively selected because many families have introduced smartphones to their children at an early age and have begun utilizing parental control applications, particularly Google Family Link, as part of their digital parenting practices. The participants consisted of parents who actively used Google Family Link to supervise their children's smartphone use, children whose devices were connected to the application, and several supporting informants who provided complementary information regarding the implementation of digital parenting within the family environment. Participants were selected using purposive sampling based on predetermined criteria, including active use of Google Family Link, willingness to participate, and experience in implementing digital supervision for at least six months. Purposive sampling enables researchers to obtain rich and relevant information from participants who directly experience the phenomenon under investigation.

Data were collected through non-participant observation, semi-structured interviews, and documentation. Non-participant observation was conducted to examine parents' supervision practices and children's responses during everyday gadget use without interfering with participants' daily activities. Semi-structured interviews were carried out with parents, children, and supporting informants to explore their perceptions, experiences, challenges, and expectations regarding the implementation of Google Family Link. Documentation included photographs, screenshots of Google Family Link features, family digital regulations, and other supporting documents that strengthened the credibility of the findings. The combination of these three techniques enabled comprehensive data triangulation and enhanced the trustworthiness of the research findings.

The primary research instrument was the researcher, who was responsible for planning the study, collecting data, conducting interviews, making field observations, interpreting findings, and drawing conclusions. To support systematic data collection, the researcher also utilized interview guidelines, observation sheets, field notes, audio recordings, and documentation checklists. Throughout the research process, the researcher maintained prolonged engagement with participants to establish trust, obtain authentic information, and minimize researcher bias. This approach is consistent with the characteristics of qualitative inquiry, where the researcher functions as the principal instrument for interpreting social reality.

Data analysis followed the interactive model developed by Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña, consisting of three interrelated stages: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification. During data reduction, interview transcripts, observation notes, and documentation were organized, coded, and categorized according to the research objectives. Subsequently, the organized data were presented in narrative descriptions and thematic matrices to facilitate interpretation of patterns related to parental supervision, children's responses, and factors influencing the implementation of Google Family Link. Finally, conclusions were continuously verified throughout the research process by comparing findings across multiple data sources to ensure consistency and credibility. This interactive analytical process enabled the researcher to develop comprehensive interpretations regarding digital parenting practices within the participating families.

To ensure the trustworthiness of the findings, this study applied credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability criteria. Credibility was established through source triangulation, technique triangulation, prolonged observation, and member checking with selected participants. Transferability was supported by providing detailed descriptions of the research context and participants, allowing readers to evaluate the applicability of the findings to similar settings. Dependability was maintained through systematic documentation of the research procedures, while confirmability was achieved by ensuring that interpretations were grounded in empirical data obtained from observations, interviews, and documentation rather than the researcher's personal assumptions. These procedures enhanced the rigor and reliability of the qualitative findings while ensuring that the interpretation accurately reflected participants' lived experiences regarding digital parenting through Google Family Link.

Result and Discussion

Implementation of Google Family Link in Digital Parenting

The findings revealed that the implementation of Google Family Link has become an integral component of digital parenting practices among participating families in Sukarami District, Palembang. Parents no longer relied solely on conventional supervision, such as directly observing children's smartphone activities or imposing verbal restrictions. Instead, they integrated technological supervision into their daily parenting practices by utilizing Google Family Link as a medium for monitoring, regulating, and evaluating children's digital activities. This technological integration enabled parents to supervise their children more consistently despite work commitments and other daily responsibilities. The findings demonstrate that digital parenting has evolved from traditional face-to-face supervision toward technology-assisted parenting that balances children's autonomy with parental guidance (Fajria et al., 2025; Puspitasari, 2023).

Based on interviews with participating parents, the implementation of Google Family Link generally began with discussions between parents and children regarding the purpose of installing the application. Parents explained that the application was intended not to restrict children's freedom but to ensure safe, responsible, and healthy smartphone use. Such communication reduced children's anxiety and facilitated greater acceptance of digital supervision. Most parents emphasized that openness and mutual understanding were essential components of successful digital parenting because technological control alone could not effectively regulate children's digital behavior without supportive communication within the family. This finding indicates that digital parenting is fundamentally a collaborative parenting strategy rather than merely a technological intervention (Fajria et al., 2025; Livingstone & Lunt, 2015).

One of the most frequently utilized features was screen-time management. Parents established daily limits for smartphone use according to children's age, school schedules, and household routines. On school days, children were generally allowed to use smartphones for educational purposes and limited entertainment after completing homework and household responsibilities. When the predetermined screen-time limit had been reached, Google Family Link automatically locked the device, preventing children from accessing entertainment applications unless parents extended the usage time remotely. Parents reported that this feature significantly reduced prolonged smartphone use and encouraged children to allocate more time to studying, interacting with family members, and engaging in outdoor activities. These findings support previous research indicating that structured screen-time regulation contributes to healthier digital habits among children (Hayati, 2021; Pramesti et al., 2024).

The findings also demonstrated that parents actively utilized the application management feature to determine which applications could be downloaded and accessed by their children. Every application installation required parental approval through Google Family Link, enabling parents to evaluate whether an application was appropriate for their children's developmental stage. Applications containing violent content, online gambling, or age-inappropriate material were consistently rejected. Meanwhile, educational applications, digital learning platforms, dictionaries, and productivity tools were generally approved because parents perceived them as supporting children's academic development. This selective supervision illustrates that parents viewed technology not only as a potential source of risk but also as a valuable educational resource when appropriately managed (Fajria et al., 2025; Hidayatullah et al., 2023).

Another important finding concerns the implementation of activity monitoring. Parents regularly reviewed reports generated by Google Family Link, which provided detailed information regarding children's daily application usage, total screen time, and the frequency of application access. These reports enabled parents to identify behavioral changes, detect excessive smartphone use, and initiate discussions whenever unusual usage patterns emerged. Rather than immediately imposing punishment, most parents preferred to communicate with their children regarding the reasons behind increased smartphone use and collaboratively establish more appropriate digital routines. Such findings indicate that digital supervision functions not merely as a mechanism of control but also as an instrument for strengthening communication and fostering mutual understanding between parents and children (Livingstone & Lunt, 2015; Wahyudi, 2020).

The device location feature also played a significant role in enhancing parental confidence regarding children's safety. Parents frequently used this feature when children attended school,

extracurricular activities, or visited relatives without direct parental accompaniment. Knowing their children's real-time location reduced parental anxiety and enabled them to respond promptly if unexpected situations occurred. Nevertheless, most participating parents emphasized that location tracking was utilized primarily for safety purposes rather than continuous surveillance. They believed that excessive monitoring could undermine children's trust and independence. Therefore, technological supervision was consistently balanced with communication, trust-building, and gradual development of children's personal responsibility (Hayati, 2021; Puspitasari, 2023).

An additional finding revealed that Google Family Link gradually became integrated into families' daily routines. Parents established regular schedules for reviewing children's digital activities, discussing online experiences, and evaluating compliance with agreed digital rules. Weekly family discussions became common among participating families, allowing children to express opinions regarding screen-time policies while parents explained the rationale behind digital restrictions. Such collaborative practices fostered shared responsibility for maintaining healthy digital behavior and transformed digital parenting into an ongoing educational process rather than a series of disciplinary actions. These findings are consistent with previous studies suggesting that successful digital parenting requires continuous interaction, mutual respect, and consistent parental involvement rather than reliance on technological applications alone (Fajria et al., 2025; Wahyudi, 2020).

Overall, the findings indicate that Google Family Link functions beyond its technical role as a parental control application. Within participating families, the application has become an important medium for reconstructing parental authority, establishing new norms of digital discipline, and promoting healthier patterns of technology use. Through screen-time management, application approval, activity monitoring, and remote supervision, parents were able to balance children's opportunities to benefit from digital technology with appropriate protection against its potential risks. These findings reinforce the perspective that digital parenting is not characterized by technological restriction alone but by the integration of technology, communication, education, and parental guidance into a comprehensive parenting strategy capable of supporting children's holistic development in the digital era (Kadewandana, 2008; Fajria et al., 2025; Livingstone & Lunt, 2015).

Children's Responses toward the Implementation of Google Family Link

The findings indicate that children's responses to the implementation of Google Family Link varied according to their age, previous smartphone habits, and the quality of communication established within the family. During the initial stage of implementation, several children expressed discomfort because they perceived the application as limiting their freedom to use smartphones. They reported frustration when their devices were automatically locked after reaching the predetermined screen-time limit or when parents declined requests to install certain entertainment applications. However, these negative responses gradually diminished as parents consistently explained the purpose of digital supervision and involved children in establishing mutually agreed-upon rules regarding smartphone use. This finding suggests that children's acceptance of digital parenting is strongly influenced by transparent communication and collaborative decision-making rather than technological control alone (Fajria et al., 2025; Livingstone & Lunt, 2015).

Interview data revealed that younger children generally demonstrated greater acceptance of Google Family Link than older children. Elementary school students tended to regard parental supervision as a normal component of everyday family life because parents had introduced digital

rules from the beginning of smartphone ownership. In contrast, older children initially questioned the necessity of continuous monitoring, particularly regarding application restrictions and screen-time limitations. Nevertheless, after participating in regular discussions with their parents, many adolescents gradually recognized that digital supervision was intended to protect them from excessive gadget use and harmful online content rather than to reduce their independence. This finding illustrates that children's understanding of parental authority develops through continuous interaction and negotiation within the family environment (Kadewandana, 2008; Wahyudi, 2020).

Another significant finding concerns changes in children's daily digital behavior following the implementation of Google Family Link. Parents consistently reported that children became more aware of the amount of time they spent using smartphones because they could monitor the remaining screen time displayed by the application. Consequently, children gradually learned to prioritize educational activities, homework, and household responsibilities before accessing entertainment applications. Several parents also observed that children became more selective when downloading new applications because they understood that every installation required parental approval. These behavioral changes indicate that Google Family Link contributes not only to external supervision but also to the development of children's self-regulation and digital responsibility (Hayati, 2021; Hidayatullah et al., 2023).

The findings further demonstrate that the implementation of Google Family Link encouraged more frequent communication between parents and children regarding digital activities. Rather than imposing unilateral restrictions, parents regularly discussed the reasons for limiting screen time, explained potential online risks, and encouraged children to share their digital experiences. Children reported feeling more comfortable discussing inappropriate online content, suspicious messages, or difficulties encountered while using digital platforms because they perceived their parents as supportive rather than punitive. Such interactions strengthened mutual trust and transformed digital parenting into a collaborative learning process within the family. These findings reinforce previous studies emphasizing that effective digital parenting combines technological supervision with open communication and emotional support (Livingstone & Lunt, 2015; Fajria et al., 2025).

Although the majority of children gradually accepted Google Family Link, the study also identified several adaptive responses aimed at negotiating parental supervision. Some children requested additional screen time during weekends, school holidays, or after completing academic assignments. Others actively discussed application requests with their parents by explaining the educational or social benefits of certain digital platforms. Parents generally responded positively to these negotiations by evaluating children's responsibilities, academic performance, and previous compliance with family rules before making decisions. Such findings indicate that digital parenting is characterized by continuous negotiation rather than rigid control, allowing children to participate in decision-making while respecting parental authority (Puspitasari, 2023; Wahyudi, 2020).

The findings additionally revealed improvements in children's offline behavior following the consistent implementation of Google Family Link. Parents observed that children spent more time interacting with family members, participating in outdoor activities, reading books, and completing school assignments. Several children also reported experiencing improved concentration during learning activities because they were less distracted by smartphone notifications and entertainment applications. Furthermore, parents noticed reductions in emotional outbursts associated with prolonged gadget use, particularly among younger children. These findings support previous

research indicating that balanced smartphone use contributes positively to children's cognitive, emotional, and social development while reducing the negative consequences of excessive screen exposure (Pramesti et al., 2024; Sugiarti & Andyanto, 2022).

From the perspective of the Social Construction of Reality, children's responses illustrate the process through which digital discipline becomes gradually internalized within everyday family life. Initially, parental regulations represented external controls imposed through technological supervision. Over time, repeated interactions, explanations, and shared experiences enabled children to perceive these regulations as reasonable and beneficial. Eventually, many children developed self-awareness regarding responsible smartphone use even when parents were not directly monitoring their activities. This process reflects Berger and Luckmann's concept of internalization, in which externally constructed social norms become integrated into individuals' personal values and everyday behavior. Consequently, Google Family Link functions not merely as a technological application but also as a social medium through which responsible digital citizenship is cultivated within the family (Kadewandana, 2008; Fajria et al., 2025).

Overall, the findings demonstrate that children's responses toward Google Family Link evolved from initial resistance to gradual acceptance and active participation in digital parenting practices. The success of the implementation was influenced not only by the technological capabilities of the application but also by parents' consistency, communication strategies, and willingness to involve children in establishing digital rules. Therefore, effective digital parenting should be understood as a dynamic process that integrates technological supervision, emotional support, mutual trust, and continuous dialogue to foster responsible and independent digital behavior among children in the contemporary digital environment (Livingstone & Lunt, 2015; Fajria et al., 2025; Hayati, 2021).

Supporting and Inhibiting Factors in the Implementation of Google Family Link

The findings revealed that the successful implementation of Google Family Link in digital parenting was influenced by various supporting and inhibiting factors originating from parents, children, technological infrastructure, and the surrounding social environment. Although all participating families shared the same objective of promoting healthy digital habits among their children, differences in parenting styles, technological competence, family communication, and children's behavioral characteristics contributed to varying levels of implementation effectiveness. These findings indicate that digital parenting cannot be understood solely as the use of parental control technology but rather as a comprehensive parenting process shaped by multiple interconnected social and technological factors (Fajria et al., 2025; Livingstone & Lunt, 2015).

One of the most significant supporting factors identified in this study was parents' digital literacy. Parents who possessed sufficient knowledge of smartphone technology and Google Family Link features were more capable of utilizing the application effectively. They understood how to configure screen-time limits, approve or reject application requests, monitor children's digital activities, and adjust parental control settings according to their children's developmental needs. Furthermore, digitally literate parents were more confident in discussing online risks, digital ethics, and responsible technology use with their children. These findings suggest that parents' technological competence significantly influences the quality of digital parenting practices and enhances the effectiveness of parental supervision in the digital era (Fajria et al., 2025; Hayati, 2021).

Another important supporting factor was consistent communication within the family. Families who regularly discussed digital rules, smartphone usage, and online experiences demonstrated higher levels of children's compliance with Google Family Link policies. Parents who explained the rationale behind digital restrictions and encouraged children to express their opinions created an atmosphere of mutual trust rather than coercion. Consequently, children perceived digital supervision as a form of parental care instead of excessive control. These findings reinforce previous studies emphasizing that technological supervision should be accompanied by open communication and emotional support to establish sustainable digital parenting practices (Livingstone & Lunt, 2015; Wahyudi, 2020).

The study also identified family commitment and consistency as essential determinants of implementation success. Parents who consistently enforced agreed-upon digital rules, regardless of children's complaints or requests for additional screen time, observed more positive behavioral changes than those who applied inconsistent supervision. Consistency enabled children to develop predictable digital routines and gradually internalize responsible smartphone habits. Moreover, collaboration between fathers and mothers in implementing Google Family Link strengthened the effectiveness of parental supervision because children received consistent expectations from both parents. This finding highlights that successful digital parenting requires not only technological tools but also shared parental commitment and coordinated parenting strategies (Fajria et al., 2025; Puspitasari, 2023).

Despite these supporting factors, several obstacles limited the effectiveness of Google Family Link implementation. The most frequently reported challenge was children's resistance during the early stages of implementation. Some children perceived screen-time restrictions as unfair and attempted to negotiate for additional smartphone access, particularly during weekends or holidays. A few children also expressed disappointment when parents rejected requests to install entertainment applications. Although such resistance gradually decreased through continuous communication, parents acknowledged that adapting children to new digital rules required patience, consistency, and ongoing dialogue. This finding demonstrates that implementing digital parenting involves behavioral adaptation rather than immediate behavioral change (Wahyudi, 2020; Kadewandana, 2008).

Another inhibiting factor concerned technical limitations of the application and digital devices. Several parents reported occasional synchronization delays between parent and child devices, unstable internet connections, and software update issues that temporarily affected the accuracy of activity reports or delayed the execution of parental commands. Parents also noted that Google Family Link functions optimally only on compatible Android devices, limiting its flexibility for families using multiple operating systems. Although these technical issues did not fundamentally reduce the usefulness of the application, they occasionally created practical challenges in everyday implementation and required parents to complement technological supervision with direct communication and observation (Hayati, 2021; Hidayatullah et al., 2023).

The findings additionally revealed that parents' occupational responsibilities constituted another significant barrier. Several working parents experienced difficulty monitoring activity reports consistently because of demanding work schedules and limited opportunities to review their children's daily smartphone usage. As a result, digital supervision occasionally became less consistent, particularly during busy working periods. Nevertheless, parents attempted to overcome

these constraints by allocating specific times during evenings or weekends to review children's digital activities and discuss smartphone use with family members. These findings indicate that technological applications cannot entirely replace parental involvement but instead function as supportive tools that complement active parenting practices (Puspitasari, 2023; Fajria et al., 2025).

From the perspective of the Social Construction of Reality, the identified supporting and inhibiting factors illustrate the dynamic process through which digital parenting practices are continuously negotiated and reconstructed within family life. Parents externalize their concerns regarding children's digital safety by adopting Google Family Link, while technological features become objectified as accepted mechanisms of supervision. Through repeated interactions, communication, and shared experiences, both parents and children gradually internalize new digital norms emphasizing responsibility, self-control, and balanced technology use. Therefore, the effectiveness of Google Family Link depends not only on technological functionality but also on the social processes through which families construct shared meanings regarding digital discipline and responsible smartphone use (Kadewandana, 2008; Livingstone & Lunt, 2015).

Overall, the findings demonstrate that the implementation of Google Family Link is supported by parents' digital literacy, effective family communication, consistent parenting practices, and collaborative parental commitment. Conversely, children's initial resistance, technological limitations, inconsistent parental supervision, and occupational demands remain important challenges that require continuous adaptation. These findings suggest that digital parenting should be viewed as an ongoing educational and social process in which technology serves as an enabling instrument rather than a substitute for parental guidance. Consequently, the successful implementation of Google Family Link depends upon the balanced integration of technological supervision, interpersonal communication, family collaboration, and sustained parental engagement in nurturing children's responsible digital behavior (Fajria et al., 2025; Hayati, 2021; Wahyudi, 2020).

Discussion

The findings of this study demonstrate that Google Family Link has transformed parental supervision from conventional face-to-face monitoring into a technology-assisted form of digital parenting. Parents no longer depend exclusively on verbal reminders, direct observation, or informal household rules to regulate children's smartphone use; instead, they use application-based features to control screen time, approve or restrict applications, review online activities, and maintain children's digital safety. The most significant finding is not merely that parents use a parental-control tool, but that such a tool becomes meaningful when embedded in communication, consistency, and shared family rules. Children initially perceived supervision as restrictive, yet their resistance decreased when parents explained that monitoring was intended for protection and education rather than punishment. Behavioral changes were also reported, including greater awareness of screen time, reduced excessive smartphone use, stronger prioritization of academic responsibilities, and increased participation in family and offline activities. These findings answer the study's central objective by showing that Google Family Link functions not only as a technical monitoring application but also as a mediated social practice through which parents reconstruct authority, discipline, and digital responsibility within everyday family life.

These results are consistent with global scholarship showing that parental-control technologies are ambivalent: they can support online safety, yet they may also weaken trust and autonomy when used primarily as surveillance. Feal et al. (2020) demonstrated that mobile parental-

control apps raise privacy and regulatory concerns, while Wang et al. (2021) showed that the design of parental-control apps may be perceived either as protection or punishment depending on how control, communication, and autonomy are configured. Badillo-Urquiola et al. (2020) similarly argued that adolescent online-safety tools should move beyond parental control toward cooperation, privacy, and youth agency. More recent work by Atashpanjeh et al. (2025) is especially relevant because it specifically discusses Google Family Link as an example of parental-control technology and proposes that design should move from restriction toward reasoning. These studies align with the present finding that Google Family Link is most effective when parents use it as an educational support rather than as a coercive device. The contribution of this study is therefore consistent with a broader shift in international literature: parental-control applications should not be understood simply as instruments of restriction, but as tools that require relational explanation, negotiated rules, and child-centered guidance. (Petsymposium)

The findings also correspond with international studies on parental mediation and adolescent digital behavior. Huang et al. (2023) found that parental media mediation does not produce uniform effects across all contexts, but depends on the form of mediation and the quality of parent-child interaction. Bradt et al. (2024) similarly showed that the way parents communicate gaming limits matters, particularly when restrictive mediation is combined with autonomy-supportive or controlling styles. These findings support the present study's interpretation that the effectiveness of Google Family Link cannot be attributed solely to technical features such as time limits or app blocking. Rather, the application becomes effective when monitoring is accompanied by dialogue, explanation, and family agreement. This interpretation is further strengthened by research on parental phubbing and problematic smartphone use, which shows that weakened relational attention can intensify adolescents' problematic digital behaviors and emotional difficulties (Geng et al., 2021; Wang et al., 2022; Xiao & Zheng, 2022; Wu et al., 2022). Thus, the present study reinforces a relational view of digital parenting: children's responsible technology use is shaped not only by external controls but also by the perceived legitimacy, warmth, and consistency of parental guidance. (ScienceDirect)

The behavioral improvements observed in this study also resonate with global research on digital well-being and family-based intervention. She et al. (2022) found that family factors predicted subsequent symptoms of Internet gaming disorder among high-school students, while Hwang et al. (2020) showed associations between family relationship quality and reward-related brain activity among adolescents with Internet gaming disorder. Nielsen et al. (2021) further demonstrated that multidimensional family therapy reduced problematic gaming, indicating that digital-behavior problems require relational and family-based responses. At the same time, the findings should not be interpreted as evidence that all digital exposure is harmful. Reviews by Odgers and Jensen (2020), Beyens et al. (2020), and Valkenburg et al. (2022) caution that the relationship between digital media use and adolescent well-being is heterogeneous and context-dependent. This is important for interpreting Google Family Link: its purpose should not be to eliminate children's digital engagement, but to help families regulate access, strengthen self-control, and support healthier digital habits. Therefore, the findings support a balanced model of digital parenting that combines technological safeguards with children's gradual development of self-regulation. (PubMed)

Within the Indonesian and Islamic educational context, the findings are also supported by studies emphasizing family involvement, digital literacy, value-based learning, and responsible

technology use. Purnama et al. (2022) found that digital literacy mediates the relationship between parenting, religious beliefs, and children's behavioral problems, suggesting that religiosity or parental concern alone is insufficient without practical digital competence. Studies involving Muhammad Sufian and colleagues provide additional local support for this interpretation. Sufian et al. (2024) emphasized the importance of family-based affective and spiritual engagement in children's learning, while Al Khansa et al. (2024) showed that integrated Islamic Religious Education strengthens student engagement by connecting religious values with real-life contexts. Koderi et al. (2023), Pribowo et al. (2024), and Rokhman et al. (2024) similarly demonstrate that educational technology, supervision, and digital resources become meaningful when they are supported by instructional design, user readiness, and systematic guidance. In relation to this study, these local findings suggest that Google Family Link should not be treated as an isolated application but as part of a broader educational ecology involving parental digital literacy, value-based communication, family discipline, and ethical technology use. (Wiseedu Journal)

Theoretically, pedagogically, and in policy terms, the findings offer several interconnected implications. Theoretically, the study extends Berger and Luckmann's Social Construction of Reality by showing that digital parenting is constructed through externalization, objectivation, and internalization: parents externalize concerns about children's smartphone use by adopting Google Family Link; the application becomes objectified as a legitimate family rule system; and children gradually internalize screen-time limits and app-approval procedures as normal aspects of daily life. The findings also support mediatization theory because digital media do not merely serve family communication; they reshape parental authority, discipline, and child behavior. Pedagogically, parents and educators should promote digital literacy, reflective family discussion, responsible app use, screen-time awareness, and children's self-regulation rather than relying on prohibition alone. Schools can support this process through parent workshops on digital parenting, child online safety, healthy screen habits, and ethical digital participation. In policy terms, the findings suggest the need for community-based digital parenting programs, accessible parental-control guidance, privacy-sensitive child protection policies, and collaboration between schools, families, and digital platforms. However, because this study did not clinically assess mental health or experimentally evaluate online-behavior interventions, recommendations concerning psychological treatment or social-media regulation should remain preventive and educational rather than diagnostic or punitive.

The novelty and contribution of this study lie in integrating Google Family Link, digital parenting, Social Construction of Reality, and mediatization theory to explain how parental authority is reconstructed through technology-assisted supervision. Previous studies have often examined parental-control applications, smartphone addiction, or digital literacy separately. In contrast, this study shows that the effectiveness of Google Family Link depends on the interaction between technological features, parental explanation, children's participation, family trust, and shared values. The study therefore shifts the discussion from "parental control" to "relational digital parenting." It argues that technological supervision becomes educationally meaningful only when it is accompanied by dialogue, emotional support, ethical reasoning, and consistent family routines. This contribution is especially relevant in Indonesian families, where children's digital behavior is closely connected to educational responsibility, family communication, moral development, and religious values.

Several limitations should be acknowledged. First, the study appears to focus on a particular family and social context, so its findings should be understood as analytically transferable rather than statistically generalizable. Second, the study relies substantially on parents' and children's reported experiences, which may be affected by social desirability, selective memory, or the desire to present family supervision positively. Third, the study examines Google Family Link as implemented in everyday family life, but it does not systematically compare it with other parental-control applications or with families that use no digital supervision tools. Fourth, behavioral change was interpreted through observed and reported patterns rather than long-term digital logs or standardized measures of children's self-regulation. Future research should therefore use longitudinal designs, compare different parental-control applications, include children's voices more systematically, and combine interviews with digital-use data, observation, or diary methods. Further studies should also examine how parental digital literacy, socioeconomic background, school support, children's age, and family communication style influence the success of digital parenting. Such research would help clarify whether Google Family Link promotes lasting digital responsibility or whether its effects depend primarily on the relational and educational practices surrounding its use.

Conclusion

This study concludes that Google Family Link has become a meaningful technology-assisted digital parenting strategy for supervising children's smartphone use among families in Sukarami District, Palembang. In response to the research objectives, the findings show that the application is implemented through screen-time management, application approval and restriction, activity monitoring, location tracking, and remote device control, enabling parents to strengthen supervision while encouraging healthier and more responsible gadget use. Children's responses initially reflected resistance to digital restrictions, but gradually shifted toward acceptance when parents combined technological monitoring with explanation, emotional support, collaborative rule-making, and consistent communication. The study further identifies parents' digital literacy, family commitment, communication quality, and application usability as key supporting factors, while children's resistance, technical limitations, unstable connectivity, and parents' occupational responsibilities remain important barriers to consistent implementation. Theoretically, this study contributes to the Social Construction of Reality by demonstrating how digital parenting practices are formed through the processes of externalization, objectivation, and internalization within everyday family interactions. It also extends mediatization perspectives by showing that digital technology not only facilitates communication but also reshapes parental authority, family discipline, and children's digital behavior. Practically, the findings suggest that parents, educators, and policymakers should not treat parental control applications as substitutes for parenting, but as supportive instruments that must be integrated with digital literacy, trust, dialogue, and value-based guidance. Nevertheless, this study is limited by its qualitative case study design, context-specific setting, and reliance on participants' lived experiences, which restrict broader generalization and do not capture long-term behavioral outcomes. Future research should employ longitudinal, comparative, or mixed-method approaches across diverse cultural and socioeconomic contexts to examine the sustained effectiveness of digital parenting applications. Overall, this study highlights that responsible digital parenting requires more than technological control; it demands relational presence, ethical guidance,

and adaptive family practices capable of preparing children for safe, balanced, and responsible participation in digital society.

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