



THE EXPERIENCES OF USING TIKTOK AS A SOURCE OF PARENTING KNOWLEDGE

Niken Dwi Widyastuti*¹, Ali Formen²

^{1,2}Early Childhood Education Teacher Training, Faculty of Education and Psychology,
Universitas Negeri Semarang

* Corresponding Author: nikendw28@students.unnes.ac.id

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ABSTRACT

This paper aims to explore and analyze young mothers' experiences of using TikTok as a source of parenting knowledge. Using a mixed method approach, data was collected through google forms consisting of closed and open-ended questions. A total of 92 respondent mothers with young children participated in this study. Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, while qualitative data were analyzed using a thematic analysis approach and presented in a descriptive narrative. The results showed that most respondents found parenting content on TikTok helpful, and accessed it at flexible times to suit their daily routines. TikTok is considered superior to other social media because it presents information in a concise, practical and easy-to-

understand style. Despite the high level of trust in influencers, the majority of mothers still verify information through other sources, reflecting active digital literacy. Some respondents stated that there has been a significant change in parenting. These results suggest that TikTok is not just an entertainment platform, but also serves as a relevant and adaptive informal learning space for young mothers. This research provides a snapshot of the shifting ways parents access and internalize parenting information in the digital age.

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INTRODUCTION

The digital era has transformed how society accesses information, including regarding child-rearing. The Indonesian Internet Service Providers Association (APJII, 2024) indicates that 79.5% of Indonesia's population is already connected to the internet, and the majority use it to seek entertainment and information (Reynaldy, 2024). Social media has thus become a vital space for people to learn, interact, and gain knowledge.

Among various social media platforms, TikTok has emerged as a key source of information. According to Rizaty (2025), the number of TikTok users in Indonesia reached

165.13 million as of October 2024. TikTok's rapid growth as a social media platform not only delivers entertainment content but has also become a popular educational platform across all demographics. Education on TikTok constitutes informal education, where the knowledge presented within the app is either general or specific, depending on the content shared by a user (Firamadhina & Krisnani, 2021). This phenomenon becomes increasingly evident as mothers actively seek child-rearing information through this short-video-based platform. One educational content area that has garnered significant attention from mothers is parenting styles. This shift indicates that social media is starting to replace the traditional role of parents or experienced figures in providing parenting guidance (Khiyaroh, 2024; Fadlilah & Vera, 2023). This is evident from the hashtag #parenting, which has three million posts, followed by #parentingtips with 822,000 posts. This allows mothers to search for various information and advice on child-rearing with just a few clicks (Sugitanata, 2024).

From the perspective of symbolic interactionism proposed by George Herbert Mead, an individual's identity and behavior are shaped through social interaction and the use of symbols (Aryani & Reniati, 2023; Zanki, 2020). Mead divided the self into two parts: the "I," representing the individual's spontaneous response, and the "Me," reflecting internalized social values and norms acquired through the socialization process (Ladan & Yabo, 2023). This process occurs within two primary social contexts: significant others and generalized others (Aliah & Nurfazri, 2023; Nungesser, 2020). In the context of digital media, parenting influencers on TikTok can act as significant others who influence the formation of young mothers' self-concepts regarding child-rearing. Interactions occurring through video content, comments, and online discussions create a new form of "digital society," where mothers mutually construct symbolic meanings regarding parenting (Khaerul Kholidi & Faizun, 2022; Husin dkk., 2021).

The practice of influencer parenting illustrates how digital media can shape new narratives and perspectives on child-rearing. This phenomenon becomes even more intriguing when examining several viral cases on TikTok, such as the case of Mega Kenichiro, which recently went viral. In her contents, she was seen on multiple occasions "teasing" her daughter until she cried. Accounts like @suaradotcom and @clozhiw discussed Mega Kenichiro's parenting style, which sparked a complex debate. A similar phenomenon can be seen on the accounts @tap.foryourparenting, @0_aisyh, and @pakguruswasta, which recently posted clips from a television broadcast featuring Ara, a child who asked a speaker about religious questions, prompting various critical responses

from the public regarding her parents' parenting style. Similarly, a short video uploaded by psychologist @litagading5 featured a clip of Baim Wong interacting with his son by cracking an egg on his forehead, which generated diverse interpretations in the digital public sphere. These cases demonstrate that TikTok is not merely an entertainment space but a forum for discussion and the formation of public opinion regarding child-rearing practices. This phenomenon reveals a new dynamic in which perceptions of "good parenting" are shaped through digital interactions.

Previous research indicates that Khiyaroh's (2024) study outlines the positive and negative impacts of social media on parenting styles. Another study by Anisa et al. (2023) shows that TikTok has become an effective platform for providing modern parenting information in Malang City. This platform successfully meets parents' need for information on parenting styles that align with the development of times. Similarly, a study by Aprilyaningrum & Vina Wulandari (2024) reveals that the TikTok account @dailyjour has a significant influence on parenting knowledge among young married couples, although the effect is relatively small (14.9%). Meanwhile, according to Sari & Nurjanah (2023), there is a significant influence of TikTok content on meeting the need for child-rearing information, falling into the moderate category (48.7%). Among these studies, there is a research gap: no study has examined the process of knowledge construction regarding parenting among young mothers in utilizing parenting contents on TikTok as a primary source of knowledge for child-rearing. In fact, social media platforms like TikTok have now become a fast and easily accessible alternative source of information, creating an urgency to understand how TikTok can influence young mothers' critical decisions regarding child-rearing methods. Based on this background, this study aims to explore young mothers' experiences in utilizing TikTok as a source of parenting knowledge. Specifically, this study seeks to answer the question: What are young mothers' experiences in using TikTok as a source of child-rearing knowledge?.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employs a mixed-methods approach with a concurrent triangulation design, involving the simultaneous collection of quantitative and qualitative data with equal consideration given to both. This approach was chosen because the research problem requires an understanding that is not only descriptive-statistical but also interpretive. Quantitative data is needed to map general trends in young mothers' behavior when using TikTok as a source of parenting knowledge, while qualitative data

provides a deep understanding of the meanings, experiences, and reflective processes that mothers undergo when interacting with parenting contents. Thus, the combination of these two approaches enables more comprehensive and contextual research findings (Nasution dkk., 2024; Habibullah dkk., 2025).

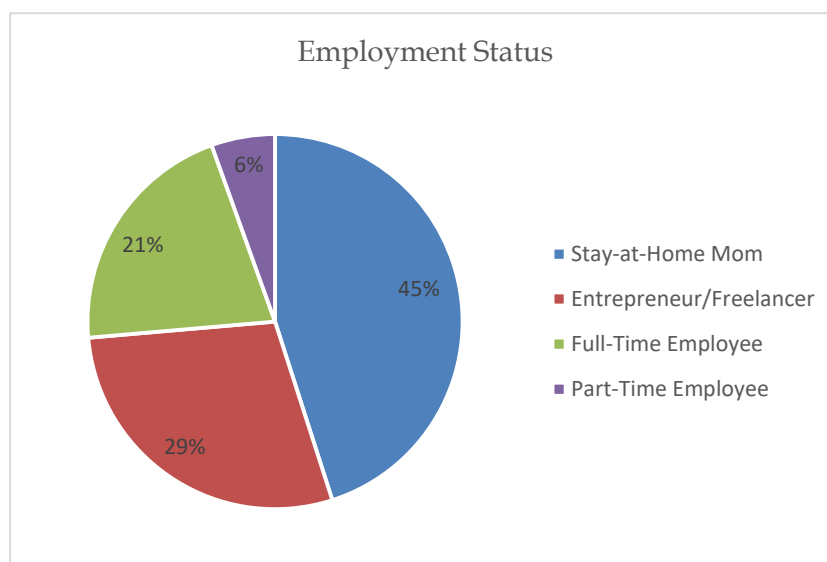
Data were collected via Google Forms containing both closed-ended and open-ended questions. The sample was selected using purposive sampling. The sampling criteria included: (a) Women aged 19–35 years, (b) Having children aged 0–6 years, (c) Actively using the TikTok app, (d) Following at least one parenting account on TikTok.

Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, while qualitative data were analyzed using thematic analysis to identify patterns of meaning in participants' responses. Thematic analysis was developed by Braun and Clarke as a qualitative research method to identify, analyze, and report patterns or themes emerging from collected data, such as interviews or observations (Sitasari, 2022; Rozali, 2022). The thematic analysis process involves deeply understanding the data, coding (assigning labels), grouping codes into themes, evaluating relationships between themes, and drawing conclusions based on how these themes relate to the research focus. Qualitative data is presented in a descriptive narrative format, featuring direct quotes from respondents that are considered representative.

This research approach is also integrated with digital ethnography to strengthen understanding of the social and cultural context of TikTok users. According to Paoli and D'Auria (2021), digital ethnography enables researchers to trace human communication practices in digital spaces through observation of interactions, symbols, and narratives that emerge online. Meanwhile, Rosaliza, Asriwandari, and Indrawati (2023) emphasize that this method helps researchers understand how individuals interact and construct social meaning in virtual environments that transcend spatial and temporal boundaries. In this study, the researcher conducted non-participant observation of several popular parenting accounts such as @dailyjour, @rensiasavira, @doktermesty, and other parenting influencers. This process yielded digital field notes in the form of comment patterns, engagement forms, and dominant narratives within the parenting discourse on TikTok. As explained by Effendi and Purwanto (2021), the digital ethnography approach allows researchers to narrate informants' experiences in detail and within their context. Thus, the use of digital ethnography in this study helps interpret the dynamics of symbolic interaction between young mothers and parenting influencers as part of the construction of parenting meaning in the digital space.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Based on the results of data collection via Google Forms, a total of 92 respondents were successfully collected and analyzed. This discussion begins by examining the relationship between respondents' employment status and the time they spend accessing parenting content on TikTok.



Source: Processed by the researcher, 2025

Figure 1. Diagram of Employment Status of Young Mothers

Employment Status and Patterns of Parenting Content Consumption on TikTok

According to the chart, the majority of respondents are stay-at-home mothers (45%), followed by entrepreneurs/freelancers (29%), full-time workers (21%), and part-time workers (6%). These results indicate that the majority of respondents have relatively high flexibility in accessing content on TikTok. This flexibility allows mothers to choose times that fit their routines when seeking parenting information. In this context, advancements in communication technology have also provided mothers with greater freedom to learn and discuss parenting through social media. TikTok, as one of the most popular platforms, allows parenting information to be accessed quickly and conveniently, without being constrained by time or location (Fajrur & Febriana, 2022).

Following a thematic analysis, open-ended responses from mothers indicated that they tend to watch parenting content at flexible times, such as in the evening, during the child's nap, or when they feel the need for parenting guidance. This applies equally to stay-at-home mothers and working mothers; the majority of mothers expressed the same preference. For example, Mrs. Sari, who works as an entrepreneur/freelancer, stated that

she usually watches parenting content on TikTok at night after her child has gone to sleep.

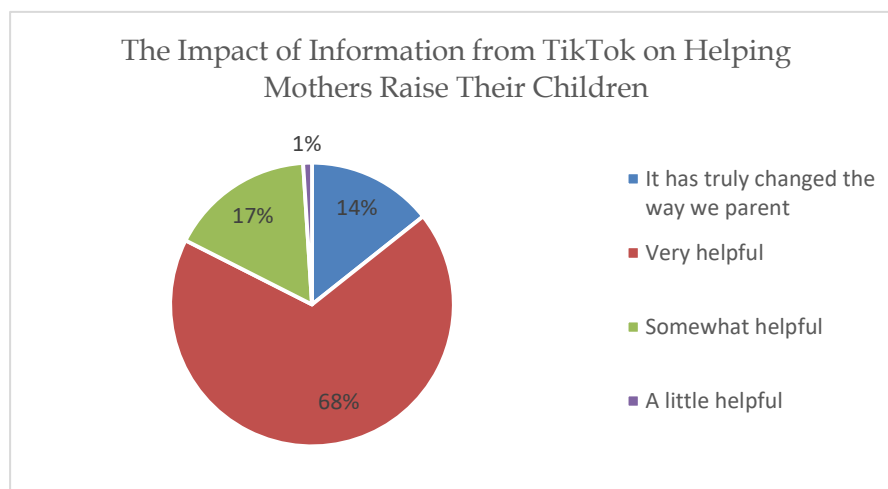
"I usually watch TikTok parenting content in the evening when I'm relaxing, after all my business matters are finished and the kids are asleep. I use that time to absorb knowledge and motivation."

Meanwhile, Mrs. Ade, a stay-at-home mom, shared:

"When I want to play or learn with my child, I look for fun and beneficial activities to do together."

The patterns in these two statements reflect that consuming parenting content on TikTok is not done randomly, but rather it becomes part of a daily parenting strategy, where mothers utilize quiet moments to learn and reflect on their children's needs. This habit indicates that using TikTok is not merely for entertainment but also part of a conscious effort to equip oneself with parenting insights. Fajrur and Febriana (2022) emphasize that time spent with children is a crucial moment that parents should utilize reflectively, whether for direct interaction or as a learning opportunity in supporting their child's development. What mothers do while watching TikTok can be understood as part of a reflective thinking process, as explained in George Herbert Mead's theory of symbolic interactionism. Within this framework, such activities reflect the "mind" process, that is, when individuals use symbolic meaning to guide their actions. Mothers' interactions with content serve as a reflective tool that shapes their interpretations of their children's needs and their responsibilities as caregivers. Thus, watching TikTok is not merely a pastime during free time but also a form of preparation for addressing daily parenting challenges.

The Influence and Benefits of Parenting Information on TikTok



Source: Compiled by the researcher, 2025

Figure 2. Diagram of the Influence of Information from TikTok in Helping Mothers Care for Their Children

A total of 68% of respondents stated that parenting content on TikTok is very helpful in their parenting, and 14% even reported experiencing tangible changes in their parenting methods. This data indicates that TikTok has become an integral part of mothers' daily lives as a source of information and entertainment. A significant shift has occurred, where today's young mothers increasingly access parenting knowledge through social media (Fadlilah & Vera, 2023). Further open-ended responses revealed that TikTok is considered superior to other information sources due to its practical, concise nature and its direct demonstration of real-life applications. There are various reasons why these mothers choose TikTok to seek *parenting* information. One respondent, Mrs. Kusuma (28 years old), mentioned that the short and easy-to-understand video format is the main advantage.

"The advantage of looking for parenting information on TikTok is its short and easy-to-digest format. I can get quick and practical tips in a short time, as well as see real-life examples from other people's experiences."

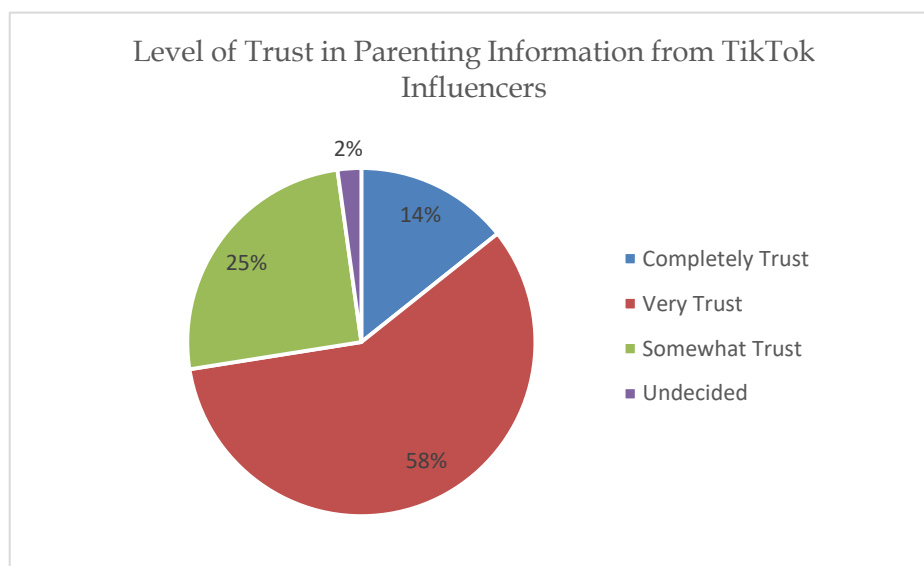
In line with this, Mrs. Dewi (24), a mother of one, noted that TikTok's visual presentation makes the messages conveyed easier to grasp.

"Thanks to the engaging video editing and the short video duration, I can quickly grasp the parenting information provided and don't get bored easily."

This reflects TikTok's advantage over other information sources, reinforcing the platform's role not only as entertainment but also as a learning tool aligned with the lifestyles of today's young mothers. This aligns with Romaito et al. (2024), who state that the use of TikTok as an information medium is driven by the ease of absorbing information quickly and enjoyably. The short video content available allows them to access information in a more engaging way compared to traditional media. This indicates that the visual, concise, and engaging presentation of content is the primary draw for mothers when consuming parenting information on TikTok, while also underscoring that practicality is a key factor in the selection of digital information media today. When mothers not only consume information but also begin to adjust their parenting practices based on the content, a process of value internalization begins. This is crucial given that parents, particularly mothers, play a central role in children's education, where the processes of parenting, guidance, and education are inseparable from various challenges (Hanum & Hanum, 2024). In Mead's view, this process is part of the formation of the "self", which is the concept of oneself that is formed through the internalization of symbolic experiences from the social environment. When mothers absorb parenting

content and compare it with their reality, they are shaping the “Me” as part of their social self, aligning societal expectations with their actual actions in parenting.

Level of Trust in Parenting Information from TikTok Influencers



Source: Compiled by the researcher, 2025

Figure 3. Level of Trust in Parenting Information from TikTok Influencers

A total of 58% of respondents said they strongly trust parenting information from TikTok influencers, 25% said they somewhat trust it, 14% said they fully trust it, and only 2% expressed doubts about parenting information from TikTok influencers. This indicates a fairly high level of trust. However, this trust is not blind; it is based on a process of personal consideration. Open responses from mothers indicate that they employ various strategies to ensure the accuracy of information before applying it. They engage in active verification as a form of digital literacy. Digital literacy is the ability to use technology effectively and responsibly, including in finding, evaluating, and communicating digital information. This ability encompasses not only technical skills but also critical thinking and ethics in interacting within a digital environment (Redhana, 2024; Naufal, 2021). Digital literacy enables mothers to be more selective in absorbing information from social media, as well as to avoid parenting practices that are incorrect or unsuitable for their children’s needs. Mrs. Dini (27), a mother of a toddler, explains that she usually checks the comments or looks for additional references right away.

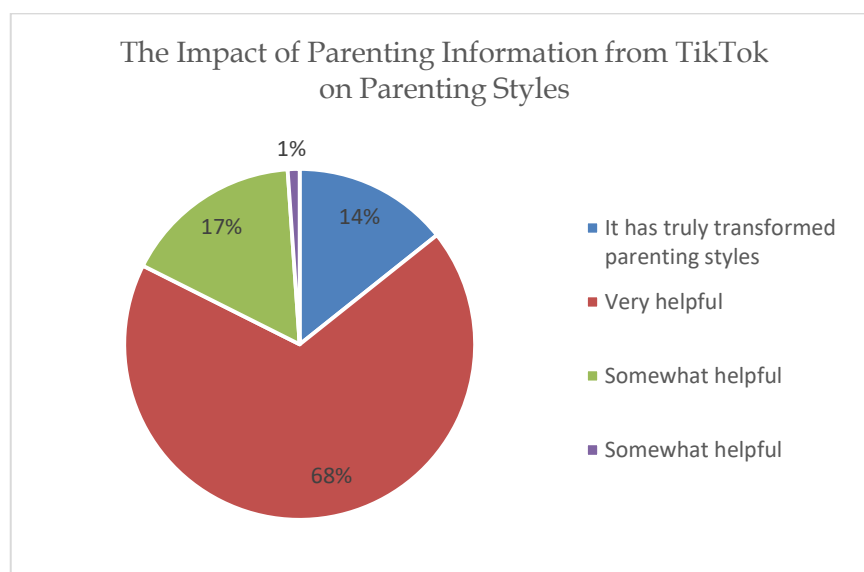
“When I see tips from an influencer, I usually check the comments right away to see if many people agree or not. Sometimes I also look for more information from other sources.”

Similarly, Mrs. Kumala (24), a new mother, mentioned that she immediately looks for other references through other digital media.

“After seeing parenting tips, I immediately search on Google to see if this is the best solution and look for other references on YouTube.”

These findings indicate that mothers have their own strategies for verifying the accuracy of the parenting information they receive. Trust levels reflect the audience’s assessment of information, which determines whether the information will be accepted and influence their perceptions and behaviors (Marsanda et al. 2024). This indicates the presence of “self-reflection” as part of the dynamics of the self, according to Mead, where the “I” acts spontaneously but is then balanced by the “Me” as a representation of internalized social norms. Influencers act as significant others, influencing perceptions and decisions; however, mothers remain as active agents in determining their own attitudes. This reinforces the assertion that trust does not automatically lead to uncritical acceptance but still involves personal evaluation of the information’s validity.

The Benefits of Parenting Information from TikTok on Child-Rearing



Source: Compiled by the researcher, 2025

Figure 4. Benefits of Parenting Information from TikTok on Parenting Styles

The majority of respondents felt that parenting content on TikTok was very helpful in child-rearing (68%), while 17% found it somewhat helpful, 14% felt it had completely changed their parenting approach, and the rest felt it was slightly helpful for child-rearing.

These findings reinforce indications of a shift in parenting information sources. Whereas parents once relied on experts or family, information from influencers is now considered credible enough to follow, as noted by Khosibah (2024), who states that parenting influencers have taken on the role of validators and trendsetters in parenting practices. This also highlights TikTok's significant role as an informal learning platform for mothers, as TikTok's use has expanded beyond mere entertainment to serve as an accessible source of information and informal learning anytime and anywhere (Frizka dkk., 2023).

Following a thematic analysis, many mothers reported experiencing changes in their thinking and behavior regarding parenting after accessing parenting content on TikTok. They consistently mentioned shifts in their attitudes, behaviors, approaches, or parenting methods. TikTok serves as the primary catalyst in the process of evaluating and adopting new parenting styles. Mrs. Nisa (26 years old), a stay-at-home mom, stated:

"Before watching parenting content on TikTok, I always told my child 'No' or 'Don't.' But after learning from TikTok parenting content that this approach is not recommended, I started using fewer prohibitive words with my child."

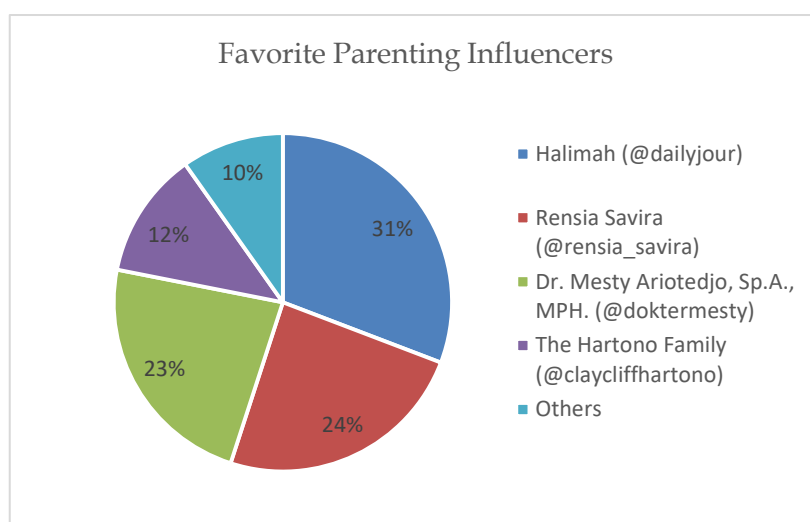
Another response came from Mrs. Qolbi (24), a young mother of one who works full-time. She shared that after watching parenting content, she gained a better understanding of child psychology and adjusted her parenting style. She said:

"I'm still new to the world of parenting since I'm a first-time mom. But after watching parenting content, I better understand children's psychology and how to parent more effectively. I used to think that sensory-motor exercises for children weren't very necessary, but it turns out they're important to teach children from an early age."

This finding aligns with Khosibah's (2024) study, which shows that parenting influencers act as teachers and role models in child-rearing and contribute to the emergence of new parenting styles that emphasize children's independence and mental health. This indicates a shift in parenting practices that no longer rely solely on traditional values but are also influenced by narratives shaped through digital content. Content shared by influencers and fellow parents on TikTok fosters new understandings of parenting shaped through users' collective interactions and experiences. Changes in parenting practices observed after watching TikTok demonstrate that social media has become a new social space facilitating the formation of more flexible and emotionally aware interpretations of parenting. Within Mead's framework, this process is part of "society," where individuals interact within a social environment and use symbols (digital

content, language, expressions) to form a shared understanding. TikTok, as a digital social environment, plays a role in shaping collective and individual views on ideal parenting practices.

Favorite Parenting Influencers and Reasons for Their Selection



Source: Compiled by the researcher, 2025

Figure 5. Favorite Parenting Influencers Among Young Mothers

The most favorite parenting influencer among young mothers is Halimah (31%), followed by Rensia Savira (24%), Dr. Mesty (23%), and The Hartono’s Family (12%). This popularity stems from their easy-to-understand communication style, as explained by a respondent who chose Halimah (@dailyjour) as her favorite influencer:

“I often watch Halimah’s content because she usually starts with a reenactment of common parenting issues.”

“Halimah, because she often shares personal experiences and points that are easy to understand.”

Meanwhile, another mother chose The Hartono’s Family because she felt she shared the same experience as the influencer:

“I like The Hartono Family’s content because it really resonates with my life. I have two sons who sometimes fight.”

The alignment of experiences and a relatable delivery style are key factors in building trust and interest in parenting influencers. This statement is supported by Maulida & Sumanto (2025), who note that a person’s awareness or opinions can be influenced when they feel a sense of commonality with another person or group, thereby fostering a sense of closeness and emotional connection. In this context, mothers do not merely passively consume information but also become emotionally engaged with the influencers they follow, as if forming a personal connection that shapes their parenting

preferences and decisions. Mothers often follow trends promoted by parenting influencers, which can indirectly influence their daily parenting decisions (Sugitata, 2024). This closeness makes them more open to the advice and guidance provided, even adopting it as a reference in their daily lives. The tendency of young mothers to choose relatable influencers illustrates the importance of significant others in shaping their self-concept as parents. In Mead's theory, the presence of parenting influencers as public figures representing certain values shapes the process of internalizing norms. When mothers feel a connection or see themselves reflected in the content, their concept of "Me" is shaped by the social expectations they absorb through these figures.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study shows that TikTok serves as an important source of parenting knowledge for young mothers. The platform is flexibly utilized to seek practical information relevant to daily parenting needs. Short, clear, and easy-to-understand video content enables mothers to internalize messages more quickly and apply them in their parenting practices.

The findings confirm that parenting influencers act as significant others who shape new understandings of parenting styles, while interactions in digital spaces serve as a socialization arena for mothers to negotiate parenting values and practices. Although trust level in influencers is quite high, mothers still demonstrate active digital literacy by verifying information before applying it.

Overall, young mothers' experiences of using TikTok as a source of parenting knowledge are not only informative but also transformative. TikTok shapes how mothers understand, evaluate, and practice parenting in the digital age, while also highlighting the need for critical thinking skills to filter the ever-evolving flow of parenting information.

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