

Child Data Privacy in Rural Areas: Implementation and Challenges in Hulu Sungai Utara

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Abstract: The rapid growth of digital technology has enabled minors in rural areas, such as Hulu Sungai Utara, to access smartphones without adequate parental supervision. While the Indonesian Personal Data Protection (PDP) Law grants privacy rights, its implementation among minors often creates a "privacy paradox." In these rural communities, children utilize privacy features like passwords and encryption to evade parental oversight, inadvertently increasing their vulnerability to cyber-enabled crimes, including sexual abuse and harassment. This study employs a legal-empirical approach to analyze the gap between data privacy regulations and the reality of child protection in Hulu Sungai Utara. The findings suggest that the lack of digital literacy among parents and the misinterpretation of privacy rights by minors hinder the effective enforcement of the law. This paper concludes that a more localized and collaborative legal framework is essential to bridge the gap between digital autonomy and the safety of minors.

Keywords: Data Privacy, Minors, Hulu Sungai Utara, Parental Supervision, Digital Safety.

INTRODUCTION

The rapid advancement of digital technology and internet accessibility has significantly reshaped the social landscape of rural communities in Indonesia, including Hulu Sungai Utara (HSU) Regency. Smartphones and various software applications have become ubiquitous tools deeply embedded in the lives of minors, granting them unprecedented and unrestricted access to the digital world. However, this rapid technological shift has not been accompanied by adequate parental oversight, thereby creating a highly precarious and vulnerable digital environment for children. This phenomenon has triggered serious concern from the local government (Lazuardiansyah & Indriati, 2023a). As a concrete response, the Education Office of Hulu Sungai Utara Regency implemented a localized policy known as the "17:21 Movement" (*Gerakan 17:21*), a regional directive urging families to restrict smartphone usage and television viewing between 17:00 WITA and 21:00 WITA to restore the function of family supervision and prioritize children's study hours. Although this local policy is designed to reinforce parental control, and Law No. 27 of 2022 on Personal Data Protection (UU PDP) conversely guarantees digital privacy rights, its practical implementation on the ground reveals a profound socio-legal disconnect (*legal gap*). Minors in Hulu Sungai Utara frequently circumvent these restrictions by utilizing device privacy features such as passcodes, application locks, and encrypted messaging—not to secure their data from external cyber threats, but rather to shield their online activities from parental surveillance both during and outside the restriction hours. Consequently, this isolated digital autonomy directly correlates with the rising risks of cyber-enabled crimes, including grooming, harassment, and juvenile sexual abuse within the HSU region. Previous scholarly works have extensively examined child data privacy and digital safety from various formal legal perspectives (Ministry of Communication and Informatics, Jakarta, Republic of Indonesia. et al., 2024). For instance, global legal frameworks such as the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) in Europe and the Children's Online Privacy Protection Act (COPPA) in the United States place significant emphasis on stringent age-verification systems and mandatory parental consent. In the Indonesian context, recent studies generally evaluate the standard mechanisms of the UU PDP, focusing primarily on the corporate liability of platform developers in managing user data. However, the existing literature heavily generalizes urban demographics and overlooks the unique socio-legal dynamics within rural societies that operate under localized policy interventions like those in HSU. Prior research often assumes that data privacy laws operate in a vacuum without considering how

regional restriction policies (such as the 17:21 Movement) interact with the digital resistance of minors. Consequently, there is a distinct void in empirical legal research addressing how intergenerational technical disparities and localized misinterpretations of privacy rights effectively paralyze the efficacy of both regional policies and national data protection laws. This study addresses this critical gap by shifting the focus to a specific regional locus in Hulu Sungai Utara, analyzing the effectiveness of domestic restriction policies amidst the pervasive global discourse on digital privacy rights (Lazuardiansyah & Indriati, 2023b). The urgency of this research lies in the escalating threat of digital victimization among minors due to the absence of substantive oversight; treating a child's privacy as an absolute right detached from parental guardianship—even when local governments have restricted screen time inadvertently transforms a legal shield into a vulnerability. Therefore, this study aims to analyze the implementation gaps of data privacy laws within the rural communities of Hulu Sungai Utara and to examine the legal tension between a minor's digital autonomy, the local 17:21 Movement policy, and the statutory duty of parents to provide general legal protection. By identifying these barriers, this paper attempts to formulate a more synchronized and localized legal approach capable of bridging national regulations and regional policies with the practical realities of child safety in rural Indonesia (Novira et al., 2024).

METHODS

This study employs an empirical legal (socio-legal) research method utilizing a qualitative approach. The qualitative approach was intentionally selected to explore, comprehend, and delineate in depth the digital privacy paradox among children and the efficacy of the 17:21 Movement policy in Hulu Sungai Utara (HSU) Regency. Through this qualitative lens, the researcher can unearth the underlying meanings and motives of minors utilizing device privacy features, as well as understand how parents and local authorities respond to these challenges in fulfilling their statutory obligations for child protection. The data sources in this study are divided into two categories: primary data and secondary data. Primary data were obtained directly through field studies in Hulu Sungai Utara Regency using two primary techniques: direct observation of children's digital behavior within the domestic environment and in-depth interviews with key informants (Verdoodt et al., 2024). A total of 11 key informants were selected using a purposive sampling technique, comprising four minor children (aged 10 to 15 years) who are active smartphone users, four rural parents representing diverse socio-economic backgrounds and digital literacy levels, two community leaders, and one official representative from the HSU Education Office as the executor of the 17:21 Movement policy. Crucially, given that this study involved a vulnerable population (minors), strict ethical procedures were enforced to safeguard their rights and psychological well-being. Prior to data collection, written or verbal informed consent was secured from the children's legal parents or guardians, alongside obtaining voluntary child assent tailored to the minors' cognitive maturity. Furthermore, to uphold complete data privacy and anonymity, pseudonymization was rigorously implemented across all field notes, interview transcripts, and manuscript text, replacing real identities with randomized initials (e.g., Mrs. SR, Mrs. A, NF, M, B). Meanwhile, secondary data were gathered through document studies of primary legal materials, such as Law No. 27 of 2022 on Personal Data Protection (UU PDP) and the Child Protection Law, as well as secondary legal materials including scientific journals, textbooks, and local cybercrime reports involving minors. The mechanism of data analysis was conducted descriptively and qualitatively by adopting an interactive analysis model, which comprises three simultaneous flows of activity: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification (Edwards & Rodrigues, 2008). First, data obtained from field interviews and observations were transcribed and subsequently sorted (reduced) to focus specifically on the issues of data privacy, supervision patterns, and their impact on harassment risks. Second, the reduced data were displayed in a logical and systematic narrative structure. Third, the researcher conducted a critical interpretation by synchronizing the qualitative field findings with a juridical analysis of the prevailing positive legal instruments. Through this integrated process, this manuscript offers a comprehensive understanding of the stark disconnect between data privacy regulations on paper and the actual safety of minors on the ground in HSU (Blecher-Prigat, 2023).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The 17:21 Movement Policy and the Reality of Parental Supervision in Hulu Sungai Utara

The implementation of the localized "17:21 Movement" policy launched by the Education Office of Hulu Sungai Utara (HSU) Regency encounters a highly diverse array of domestic realities across rural households. Qualitative fieldwork indicates that the successful enforcement of device restrictions between 17:00 and 21:00 WITA relies heavily on internal family solidarity and distinct parental supervision typologies rather than the mere existence of the regional directive. To present these empirical findings systematically, Table 1 categorizes the observed domestic supervision patterns, operational mechanisms, and failure factors across the interviewed households.

Informant Code	Target Minor / Age	Supervision Typology	Operational Mechanism & Failure Factors	Supervisory Outcome
Mrs. SR	11 years old (5th Grade)	Successful Authoritative	Strict physical device confiscation post-Maghrib prayer; redirection to non-digital study activities.	Successful screen time restriction under 17:21 guidelines.
Mrs. A	10 years old (4th Grade)	Co-Parenting Conflict	Maternal restriction undermined by a lack of paternal alignment and shared parenting support.	Policy failure; child continues late-night device usage.
Mrs. MG	4 years old	Domestic Neglect	Father's grueling work schedule combined with maternal apathy toward domestic oversight.	Severe regulatory collapse; acute device usage until dawn.
Mr. P	School-age minor	Algorithmic Distraction	Physical time boundaries overwhelmed by addictive social media architectures and UI design.	Partial failure; structural rules bypassed by digital addiction.

When examined through Parental Supervision Theory, the efficacy of legal norms within the domestic sphere requires three simultaneous core elements: monitoring, clear rules, and consistency. As demonstrated in Table 1, localized legal mandates like the 17:21 Movement instantly become obsolete when domestic monitoring systems collapse due to parental disagreement, digital literacy gaps, or overlapping economic burdens. Furthermore, Mr. P's experience provides empirical evidence that conventional physical supervision now faces a novel challenge in the form of "digital architectures" built into software designed to foster user addiction, thereby driving children's resistance to parental protective rules (Rao & Tannaya Rout, 2025). Juridically, these supervision dynamics connect directly to child protection principles in Indonesian positive law. Under Article 26 Paragraph (1) of Law No. 35 of 2014 amending Law No. 23 of 2002 on Child Protection, parents hold an absolute statutory obligation to nurture, maintain, educate, and protect the child (Kraljić & Mensah, 2025). The supervisory failure observed in Mr. MG's household normatively constitutes neglect of the child's right to healthy growth and development. Moreover, when analyzed alongside Law No. 27 of 2022 on Personal Data Protection (UU PDP), Article 30 mandates that the processing of children's personal data requires explicit consent from parents or guardians. This reveals a critical legal gap in rural HSU: it is practically impossible for parents to filter, verify, or approve the processing of personal data accessed by their children as mandated by Article 30 of the UU PDP if they have already lost domestic control over basic physical screen time restrictions under the 17:21 Movement. Consequently, the 17:21 Movement policy functions primarily as a moral exhortation (*soft law*) operating without formal sanctions or substitutive facilitation. Regional policies cannot succeed by merely banning technology without offering structural alternatives, such as village reading gardens or scheduled community youth activities. Future interventions must move beyond linear school-level directives and integrate community-based digital parenting education to strengthen parental capacity across technological, economic, and perceptual divides (Putri et al., 2024).

The Digital Privacy Paradox: Misuse of Protection Features by Minors

Field findings regarding the dynamics of device security feature usage among children in Hulu Sungai Utara (HSU) Regency reveal a "privacy paradox" heavily influenced by parenting styles and parents' level of digital literacy. The contextual conceptualization of privacy is sharply divided between children under rigorous supervision and those operating within a permissive domestic space. To systematically illustrate

how device security mechanisms are operationalized across different domestic environments, Table 2 summarizes the case data of minor informants in HSU (Sari et al., 2023).

Informant Code	Parental Digital Literacy & Style	Device Security (Passcode)	Primary Motivation / Behavioral Driver	Juridical & Behavioral Implication
NF (11 years old).	Tech-savvy; authoritative oversight.	No passcode (Open Access)	Views device as parental property; accustomed to open domestic oversight.	Aligned with parental guardianship mandate under legal frameworks.
Minor (10 years old)	Tech-illiterate; punitive discipline.	Passcode Enabled	Fear of exposing physical romantic relationship and evading corporal punishment.	Passcode weaponized as a defensive shield against parental intervention.
M (14 years old).	Tech-illiterate; focused solely on academic achievement.	Passcode Enabled	Concealing an unmonitored "virtual relationship" in cyberspace to fill emotional gaps.	Exploitation of digital anonymity; vulnerability to online grooming (Sari et al., 2023).
B (15 years old)	Tech-illiterate; highly permissive.	Passcode Enabled	Exercising absolute personal freedom; supported by parents without normative bounds.	Complete statutory distortion; parental guardianship mandate nullified.

As delineated in Table 2, the majority of children who choose to lock their devices with passcodes in rural HSU articulate a uniform narrative that they possess an absolute right over their phones—an argument reinforced by their parents' limited understanding of electronic technology (*digital illiteracy*). When analyzed under Law No. 27 of 2022 on Personal Data Protection (UU PDP), these unilateral claims regarding "privacy rights" over their devices represent a misguided legal distortion (Smyr & Ulianova, 2022). Under the statutory architecture of the UU PDP, particularly concerning data subjects, the privacy rights of minors are not independent or autonomous. Article 30 of the UU PDP explicitly stipulates that the processing of children's personal data requires explicit consent from parents or guardians. This indicates that within Indonesian positive law, minors are not yet considered to possess full legal capacity (*legal capacity*) to independently manage digital privacy risks, thereby placing the legal mandate of guardianship (*guardianship*) squarely in the hands of parents. The cases of the 10-year-old minor, M (14 years old), and B (15 years old) prove that the conceptualization of privacy rights at the grassroots level has shifted into a defensive mechanism to reject domestic intervention (Anggraeni et al., 2024). Passcode features, which were originally engineered by data protection laws to insulate users from external threats (such as hacking or identity theft), are reduced by children into isolated strongholds to conceal high-risk behaviors—such as early-age dating and virtual dating—from the family's radar. The permissive attitude of B's parents, the digital obliviousness of M's parents, and the fear of the 10-year-old child combine to generate massive digital vulnerability gaps. The electronic literacy disparity where parents do not comprehend their child's device renders the mandates of Article 30 of the UU PDP regarding parental duties to screen and approve children's digital activities impossible to implement (Valença et al., 2022). Without parental access to the child's device due to passcode barriers, the privacy rights glorified by children in HSU no longer serve as a personal shield, but rather transform into a dark space that amplifies the risk of child victimization against cyber threats.

Implications of Data Privacy Law Gaps on the Risks of Cyber-Enabled Sexual Violence and Child Marriage

The permissive attitude of parents and the misinterpretation of digital privacy rights by children through device locking ultimately bring complex, real-world implications to the social lives of minors in Hulu Sungai Utara Regency. When the function of parental supervision is completely paralyzed by passcode barriers, children enter the digital space without a protective filter, rendering them highly vulnerable targets for cyber-enabled sexual violence, psychological manipulation (*cyber-grooming*), and promiscuity. Historically, one of the primary outcomes of this lost domestic control over device activity is the occurrence of early-age child marriage or applications for marriage dispensation due to relationships built via social media (Faculty of Law, Brawijaya University, Indonesia & Sihabudin, 2023). To map this reality

objectively, data regarding the number of child marriages in Hulu Sungai Utara Regency, officially published by the Department of Women's Empowerment and Child Protection (DPPPA) through the HSU Satu Data portal, can be observed in Table 1 below.

Year	Number of Child Marriages	Data Source	Publication Status
2020	69	DPPPA HSU Regency	<i>Published (March 08, 2026)</i>
2021	85	DPPPA HSU Regency	<i>Published (March 08, 2026)</i>
2022	55	DPPPA HSU Regency	<i>Published (March 08, 2026)</i>
2023	33	DPPPA HSU Regency	<i>Published (March 08, 2026)</i>
2024	18	DPPPA HSU Regency	<i>Published (March 08, 2026)</i>
2025	8	DPPPA HSU Regency	<i>Published (March 08, 2026)</i>

When critically analyzed based on the official document, the data in Table 1 illustrates a highly significant administrative decline in child marriage rates over the last three years, plummeting from 55 cases in 2022 to a mere 8 cases in 2025. This formal reduction represents a positive achievement in terms of downstream policies aimed at suppressing marriage dispensation numbers. However, through the prism of empirical legal studies and digital criminology, this statistical decline harbors a novel paradox that demands caution (University of Tartu, Tartu, Estonia et al., 2023). The success in reducing physical marriage numbers on paper does not automatically indicate that minors in rural HSU are safe from cyber threats or unhealthy digital interactions. Based on the qualitative findings in the previous subsection regarding the prevalence of children aged 10 to 15 protecting their devices with passcodes to conceal "virtual dating" activities, it is evident that risky interaction patterns have migrated into an isolated digital space, hidden from the radar of parental supervision and public institutional records. This condition reflects a multi-layered disconnect (*gap*) between normative law and sociological reality. The Child Protection Law mandates the absolute responsibility of parents in upbringing, while the UU PDP requires parental control over children's data processing. As child marriage numbers decrease administratively, the loopholes in data privacy protection exploited by children (as a fortress to hide device activity) potentially conceal an iceberg phenomenon of cyber-enabled sexual violence, digital harassment, and child exploitation cases that have not yet reached the formal marriage stage. Therefore, general legal protection frameworks must not prematurely rest on their laurels with the decline of formal child marriage statistics. The Government of Hulu Sungai Utara Regency, through synergy between the DPPPA and the Education Office, must reorient its protective policies from focusing on downstream administrative prevention in the physical world toward upstream interventions (Ladinda Daffa Arnetta et al., 2023), namely strengthening family digital privacy literacy to mitigate the dark cyber spaces threatening the safety of minors.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that a significant disconnect exists between national positive regulations on personal data protection and the sociological reality of child protection in rural Hulu Sungai Utara (HSU) Regency. The localized 17:21 Movement policy—designed to restrict minors' evening screen time—struggles to achieve efficacy due to inconsistent domestic monitoring, co-parenting conflicts, and parental digital literacy gaps. This structural vulnerability is further complicated by a "privacy paradox," wherein minors misinterpret the data protection principles reflected in Article 30 of Law No. 27 of 2022 (UU PDP), viewing device passcodes as an absolute autonomous right to isolate their digital activities rather than as a protective feature managed under parental guardianship. Importantly, while official data from the DPPPA of HSU Regency shows a marked decline in formal child marriage statistics through 2025, this administrative trend does not automatically signify a total elimination of juvenile risk. Rather, it highlights a complex landscape where risky interpersonal interactions can migrate to unmonitored digital spheres beyond immediate parental oversight. Consequently, legal and policy frameworks for child protection cannot rely solely on downstream statistical tracking or passive legal mandates. State institutions must pivot toward an upstream, community-based policy reorientation—specifically by institutionalizing digital parenting education—to bridge the technological disparity among rural parents and ensure that data privacy functions as a protective shield rather than a barrier to child safety (Ritvo, 2016).

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