

**THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PARENT-CHILD COMMUNICATION
AND GADGET ADDICTION**
(A PSYCHOLOGICAL AND DA'WAH COMMUNICATION STUDY)

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Received: 2025-10-27; Accepted: 2025-11-15; Published: 2025-12-25

Abstrak : This study aims to analyze the relationship between parent-child communication patterns and the impact of gadget use on adolescents' mental health and behavior. The research method employed is qualitative with a literature review approach, analyzing various relevant sources related to the research topic. The findings indicate that communication patterns between parents and children regarding gadget use are not linear or one-directional but rather conflicting. Gadget use can negatively affect children's mental health, leading to increased anxiety, stress, and gadget addiction. Tensions often arise due to differing perspectives between parents and children, reflecting authoritarian, permissive, and authoritative communication patterns. As a result, conflict becomes an inevitable outcome of excessive or uncontrolled gadget use. Conflict resolution involves providing understanding, effective communication from parents, and education for children so that they can use gadgets more wisely and responsibly.

Keywords: *Parent Child Communication, Gadget Addiction, Adolescent Behavior, Negative Impacts*

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.47453/>

Introduction

In today's rapidly advancing digital era, gadget addiction among children has emerged as a serious global mental health concern. The World Health Organization (WHO), in its latest report (2023), classified gadget addiction as a behavioral disorder requiring systematic intervention. Data indicate a 67% increase in gadget dependency among children aged 6 to 18 in Southeast Asia over the past five years, with Indonesia ranking third after Thailand and the Philippines. At the national level, Indonesia's Ministry of Health (2022) reported that 82% of school-aged children in urban areas exhibit symptoms of gadget addiction. These symptoms include declining academic performance, sleep disturbances, and difficulties in social interaction. The situation is increasingly alarming given that children's average screen time now reaches 7.5 hours per day, far exceeding the expert-recommended limit of 2 hours.

The impact of gadget addiction is multidimensional and systemic. From a neurological standpoint, a recent study published in the *Journal of Pediatric Neuroscience* (Zhang et al., 2023) revealed that excessive screen exposure may impair the development of the prefrontal cortex, which governs executive function and self-regulation. Psychosocially, children who are heavy gadget users demonstrate up to 300% more symptoms of anxiety and depression compared to control groups. Religiously, a study by the Center for Da'wah Studies found that 68% of gadget-addicted children experience a significant decline in religious practice and enthusiasm for faith-based activities. These findings confirm that gadget addiction affects not only mental health but also weakens the spiritual foundation of the younger generation (American Psychological Association, 2023).

Within Bronfenbrenner's ecological framework, the family represents the most influential microsystem in shaping a child's behavior. A secure attachment and strong parent-child relationship can serve as a protective factor against various forms of addiction, including digital dependency. However, a national survey by the Indonesian Child Protection Commission (KPAI) revealed that 72% of parents in Indonesia lack effective communication strategies to address gadget-related issues. Many parents rely on authoritarian approaches, which often provoke resistance, or adopt permissive attitudes due to a lack of knowledge about the risks. Research has shown that family communication interventions, when implemented effectively, can reduce gadget addiction symptoms by up to 58% within six months.

This study holds both theoretical and practical significance. Theoretically, it contributes to the development of an evidence-based family communication model that integrates developmental psychology with Islamic values. The findings are expected to enrich the field of Islamic communication, especially in the context of family da'wah in the digital age. Practically, this study may serve as a foundation for developing Islamic parenting modules to prevent gadget addiction, to be disseminated through *majelis taklim* and Islamic schools. It can also inform the creation of effective communication training programs for parents by da'wah institutions, and support the formulation of mosque-based family education policies that are holistic and culturally relevant.

This research is designed to explore the relationship between parent-child communication patterns and the level of gadget addiction among adolescents. It also aims to identify the most effective communication strategies from the perspective of communication psychology and Islamic da'wah. Moreover, the study seeks to

formulate an ideal model of family da'wah intervention to address gadget addiction comprehensively.

Research Methodology

This study employs a qualitative method with a literature review as the primary approach. The literature-based research, titled "*Parent-Child Communication and Gadget Addiction: A Study of Communication Psychology and Da'wah*", was conducted through several methodological stages, including data collection, selection and classification of sources, data analysis, and the preparation of the research report.

In the initial stage, the researcher defined the topic and research objectives (Sugiyono, 2018), which focus on exploring the impact of gadget use on children's mental health and behavior, as well as examining parent-child communication patterns and offering possible solutions or recommendations to mitigate negative effects. Data were then collected from various relevant literature sources, such as academic journals, books, articles, and other publications related to the research topic.

Following data collection, the researcher conducted a selection and classification process to identify the most relevant sources and evaluate their quality and reliability. In the analysis stage, key information was identified, extracted, summarized, and compared across references to integrate findings from multiple sources. After the analytical process was completed, a report was compiled that presented the findings, conclusions, and recommendations concerning parent-child communication and the impact of gadget use on children's mental health and behavior.

Although this study does not involve primary data collection through observation or experimentation, all data are drawn from written sources. Therefore, the analytical process was conducted by gathering and filtering relevant information from existing literature to develop a comprehensive understanding of the issue.

Results and Discussion

Technological advancements today have enabled humans to interact widely on a global scale. The use of gadgets has become an integral and commonplace aspect of everyday life. Gadgets are electronic devices that facilitate access to information, enable communication, and assist in completing various tasks efficiently and quickly. The most commonly used gadgets include smartphones, tablets, laptops, and desktop computers. Although gadgets offer numerous benefits such as improving communication and easing access to information excessive use may have adverse effects on an individual's physical and mental health (Hidayat, 2021).

The Negative Impacts of Gadget Use (Mulyani, 2022)

Sleep Disorders. Excessive gadget use can lead to sleep disturbances due to the blue light emitted by gadget screens, which interferes with the body's circadian rhythm. This condition results in decreased sleep quality, leading to fatigue and drowsiness during the day.

Gadget Addiction. Overuse of gadgets has the potential to cause addiction, a condition also referred to as *nomophobia* (the fear of being without a mobile phone). This can disrupt an individual's psychological and social balance, reduce productivity, and lower overall quality of life.

Mental Health Effects. Frequent gadget use increases the risk of mental health problems such as stress, anxiety, and depression. These issues often arise from social

pressures and concerns related to gadget use, such as the fear of losing or damaging the device.

Physical Health Effects. Excessive gadget use can also result in physical problems, including headaches, vision disturbances, and pain in the neck and back. These symptoms are typically caused by poor ergonomic posture while using gadgets.

Therefore, it is important to limit gadget usage to protect both physical and mental health. Some strategies that can be implemented include setting time limits for gadget use, activating night mode on screens, and regularly taking breaks to engage in physical activity (Sya'diyah, 2021).

In addition to the aforementioned negative impacts, excessive gadget use may also reduce the quality of social interactions. While gadgets enable us to connect with others easily, overuse can diminish the quality of interpersonal relationships with those around us. Furthermore, gadgets can impair an individual's ability to concentrate and stay focused on tasks due to distractions from social media notifications or incoming messages (Tirtayanti, 2021).

The negative effects of gadget use are particularly concerning among children and adolescents. Overuse among these age groups may hinder psychological and social development and increase the risk of mental health issues such as anxiety and depression (Utami, 2022). This also affects the interaction between parents and children, especially in terms of communication patterns.

Parental involvement is crucial in this context. Parents need to actively provide guidance, supervision, and serve as role models for their children. For example, they should firmly discourage excessive online gaming and offer appropriate advice. Effective communication is a key factor in proper child-rearing. However, gadget addiction often makes it difficult for teenagers to be controlled and can disrupt communication between parents and children. Thus, parents must take an active role in guiding their children toward more positive and beneficial behaviors.

This study focuses on three aspects of communication: interpersonal communication, communication patterns, and the relational dialectics theory proposed by Leslie Baxter and W.K. Rawlins (2004).

Openness. In parent-child relationships, openness fosters more honest and trusting communication. Parents who are open to listening and understanding their children's experiences and feelings without judgment can create a safe environment for children to discuss personal issues, such as online game addiction. Research indicates varying levels of openness in interpersonal communication, showing that each child responds differently to such openness regarding gadget addiction. This variation highlights the importance of a flexible and continuous communication approach. Despite these differences, parents should strive to initiate dialogue to help children overcome their addictions and grow positively.

Empathy. Empathy encourages parents to understand situations from their child's perspective, thereby offering support that aligns with the child's actual needs. This is particularly important when addressing problems such as gadget addiction, where a deep understanding of the child's emotions is essential for providing effective guidance. For instance, empathy helps parents understand their child's character and establish effective communication. By putting themselves in their child's shoes, parents can deliver instructions that are more easily understood and accepted, thus strengthening the parent-child bond.

The quality of communication between parents and gadget-addicted teenagers is highly influenced by the nature of their relationship. A healthy relationship facilitates harmonious communication, even when the child spends little time at home. Parents are advised to offer guidance calmly without forcing the child to change. Their role is vital in resolving conflicts and maintaining a positive relationship.

According to the relational dialectics theory developed by Leslie Baxter and Barbara Montgomery, communication is an interaction that involves various voices and perspectives. Within communication, individuals navigate tensions between their desires and needs in an open dialogue referred to as “the dialogic life.” Maintaining a healthy relationship requires ongoing attention and effort.

Relationships Are Not Linear

The relationship between parents and children is highly complex and influenced by various factors, such as affection, attention, and communication. Each family has its own unique dynamics, which may shift and evolve over time. Strong relationships are built on mutual understanding and open communication.

When parents prohibit their children from using gadgets, it is usually intended to encourage them to engage in more positive and productive activities. Such restrictions tend to be more effective when the child understands that the parents’ intentions are grounded in care and a desire for the child’s well-being. Life within relationships is inherently marked by change.

The Influence of Parental Reactions on Children's Behavior

Based on interviews analyzed through the lens of relational dialectics theory, parental reactions to children’s gadget habits significantly influence their behavior. When parents fail to understand these behavioral changes and do not attempt to seek solutions, the effects may be negative. Some parents choose to be patient and wait for the right moment for their children to return to more balanced behavior. Children often respond positively such as voluntarily reducing their gadget use once they become aware of the changes occurring in themselves. However, such behavioral changes can also lead to emotional distance between parents and children, ultimately affecting the quality of their relationship. Children may become more reserved, communicate less frequently, and focus more on gaming or spending time with friends. Their desire to maintain privacy may inhibit openness within the relationship, which aligns with the dialectical tensions described in relational dialectics theory. Children often feel closer to their peers than to their parents, leading to contradictions within the relationship. Parents may struggle to understand their children's interests in gadgets, causing children to rarely share what they enjoy openly.

Contradictions as a Fundamental Reality in Relationships

Research indicates that contradictions or tensions in parent–child relationships are natural due to differing perspectives. While such contradictions are inevitable, the crucial factor lies in how parents manage and minimize them. This dynamic is comparable to a permissive communication pattern, in which parents grant children complete freedom including in gadget use without setting clear boundaries.

The Role of Communication in Managing Contradictions

Negotiation through communication plays a crucial role in parent-child relationships. One way to address contradictions is by clearly conveying the dangers of excessive gadget use. Parents need to provide explanations in ways that are easily understood by their children so that the information is well-received. Effective communication is expected to help address deviant behaviors, such as gaming addiction among adolescents. These findings affirm that communication is a key element in managing and negotiating contradictions within family relationships.

The Role of Communication in Managing Contradictions

Negotiation through communication plays a critical role in parent-child relationships. One effective way to manage contradictions is by clearly communicating the dangers of excessive gadget use. Parents need to convey this information in a manner that is easily understood by children so that the message can be properly received. Effective communication is expected to help address deviant behaviors, such as gaming addiction among adolescents. These findings affirm that communication is a key factor in managing and negotiating contradictions within family relationships.

According to Baxter (2004), Relational Dialectics Theory explains that individuals within society are continually influenced by opposing dialectical forces within their relationships. Society itself is a network filled with contradictions. Dissatisfaction with earlier research on family or interpersonal communication arose due to an overemphasis on aspects such as openness, certainty, and connectedness, while neglecting the role of uncertainty. Relational dialectics theory emerged as a response to this gap.

The theory highlights three primary dialectics that influence interpersonal relationships. The first is connection and separation, which reflects the tension between the need for closeness and the desire for independence. Every relationship experiences this paradox, as each individual brings unique needs and identities. The second is certainty and uncertainty; people seek variety and spontaneity in their relationships, and emotional excitement often arises from mystery and surprise. Relationships that lack these elements often become monotonous, fragile, and emotionally disengaged. The third is openness and closedness, where individuals may wish to share everything yet also feel the need to maintain personal privacy. While ideal relationships are often seen as open, this paradox highlights the importance of protecting personal information in communication.

This study involved parents of children who are addicted to gadgets. One of the main sources of conflict is the child's tendency to ignore responsibilities or parental calls due to their excessive focus on gadgets. This situation demonstrates the necessity of interdependence in the personal relationship between parent and child, despite differences in experiences, motivations, and personalities. Relational Dialectics Theory emphasizes the ongoing tensions between individuals within a group, who must negotiate and compromise between their personal desires and those of others—in this case, between parents and their children who use gadgets excessively. Understanding how to resolve parent-child communication patterns becomes essential, as every relationship contains opposing forces. Therefore, meaningful dialogue is crucial for managing, shaping, and resolving such tensions.

The influence of gadgets on children's behavioral development is diverse. In the context of education in Indonesia, the impact of gadget use can generally be categorized into two types: **positive** and **negative** effects.

Positive Impacts of Gadgets on Early Childhood Development

Gadgets can enhance children's knowledge by providing quick and easy access to a wide range of information. Through the use of advanced technology, children can obtain necessary resources for their school assignments efficiently. For example, they can explore the internet anytime and anywhere to search for topics that interest them. This fosters the development of broader insights and knowledge.

In addition, gadgets help expand social relationships by enabling children to easily connect through social media platforms. This accessibility allows them to share experiences and interact with peers more frequently, thereby strengthening their sense of connection and social belonging.

Gadgets also simplify communication. Equipped with advanced features, these devices allow users to interact seamlessly with people around the world. Children can stay in touch with family members, friends, and even educators, regardless of geographical boundaries.

Moreover, gadgets can stimulate children's imagination. The development of technology has led to the creation of various creative and challenging games. Many children, particularly those diagnosed with ADHD, benefit from such games due to their engaging content and high levels of stimulation, which encourage creativity and cognitive growth (Baihaqi & Sugiarmun, 2006).

Negative Impacts of Gadgets on Early Childhood Development

Gadgets can have detrimental effects on children's health due to the radiation emitted by advanced technological devices. This is especially concerning for children under the age of 12, as excessive exposure to such radiation may increase the risk of serious health conditions, including cancer.

The development of children may also be hindered by the advanced features available on gadgets, such as cameras, videos, and games. These features often become distractions that interfere with the learning process at school. For instance, while a teacher is explaining a lesson at the front of the class, a student might be more interested in playing with a gadget at the back, thereby missing valuable educational content.

Increased gadget use also poses security risks. The constant tendency to update personal information in real-time creates opportunities for malicious individuals to access such data and exploit it for criminal purposes. This makes young children especially vulnerable to online threats.

Furthermore, gadgets may negatively influence children's behavior and moral development. The convenience and immediacy of information available online can lead children to feel prematurely satisfied with their knowledge. As a result, they may perceive the information found on the internet as complete and definitive (Ratih Ibrahim, 2012). In reality, many aspects of knowledge require deeper exploration through traditional learning methods, which digital platforms cannot fully replicate (Kusuma, 2011).

Conclusion

Based on the analysis of gadget use and its impact on children's behavior, excessive use of gadgets can lead to various negative consequences, including gadget addiction and reduced social interaction. A lack of parental attention, supervision, and guidance is a major factor contributing to children's dependence on gadgets. Therefore, it is essential for parents to monitor and limit their children's gadget use.

The quality of communication between parents and children plays a significant role in both preventing and addressing gadget addiction. Parents often face resistance from children when implementing rules, although some children eventually come to accept them. The success of parents in managing this tension largely depends on effective communication, openness, and empathy.

This study also highlights three parenting communication styles: authoritarian, permissive, and democratic. Among these, the democratic approach has been found to be the most effective in reaching agreements regarding gadget use duration. Relational Dialectics Theory further provides a useful framework for understanding the dynamics of agreement and negotiation in parent-child relationships, particularly in managing tensions and resolving conflicts related to gadget use.

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