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# ANALYSIS OF THE IMPACT OF GADGET USE ON PSYCHOLOGICAL, MORAL AND LEARNING MOTIVATION DEVELOPMENT IN EARLY CHILDHOOD

**Syafa'atul Ulya[1], Nurfadilah Utami[2], Khairani Hayat Situmorang[3]**

**[1,2,3]Pendidikan Anak Usia Dini Fakultas Tarbiyah,**
**Institut Agama Islam Daar Uluum Asahan**
Email: [1]syafa07112025@gmail.com, [2]nurfadhilautami0727@gmail.com,
[3]hayatkhairanisitumorang@gmail.com

**Keywords:**
*Gadget Use, Psychological Development, Early Childhood*

**Abstract**

Gadget use in early childhood has become a global phenomenon that has a significant impact on various aspects of development. This study aims to analyze the impact of gadget use on the psychological, moral, and learning motivation aspects of early childhood (age range 0-6 years). The method used in this writing is a literature study by reviewing various related scientific journals. The results of the analysis indicate that uncontrolled gadget use without parental supervision can trigger emotional instability (psychological), decreased values of manners and empathy (moral), and weakened concentration and interest in exploration (learning motivation). Neuroscientifically, excessive stimulation from digital screens causes children to become accustomed to instant gratification, which inhibits the struggle in the conventional learning process. This study concludes that although gadgets have educational potential, duration limits (screen time) and active mediation from parents are essential to maintain the balance of child growth and development in the digital era.

**Kata Kunci:**
*Penggunaan Gawai, Perkembangan Psikologis, Anak Usia Dini*

**Abstract**

*Penggunaan gawai pada anak usia dini telah menjadi fenomena global yang berdampak signifikan terhadap berbagai aspek perkembangan. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis dampak penggunaan gawai terhadap aspek psikologis, moral, dan motivasi belajar pada anak usia dini (rentang usia 0-6 tahun). Metode yang digunakan dalam penulisan ini adalah studi literatur dengan meninjau berbagai jurnal ilmiah terkait. Hasil analisis menunjukkan bahwa penggunaan gawai yang tidak terkontrol tanpa pengawasan orang tua dapat memicu ketidakstabilan emosi (psikologis), penurunan nilai sopan santun dan empati (moral), serta melemahkan konsentrasi dan minat eksplorasi (motivasi belajar). Secara neurosaintifik, stimulasi berlebihan dari layar digital menyebabkan anak terbiasa dengan kepuasan instan, yang menghambat ketekunan dalam*



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*proses pembelajaran konvensional. Penelitian ini menyimpulkan bahwa meskipun gawai memiliki potensi edukatif, pembatasan durasi (screen time) dan mediasi aktif dari orang tua sangat penting untuk menjaga keseimbangan tumbuh kembang anak di era digital.*

## INTRODUCTION

In the era of massive digital transformation, information technology has penetrated various aspects of human life, including the care and education of early childhood. Gadgets, which originally served as communication and productivity tools for adults, have now transformed into an integral part of children's daily lives. This phenomenon presents new challenges because early childhood (0-6 years) is the Golden Age, a crucial period during which brain plasticity is at its peak. Every stimulation a child receives, whether through physical interaction or digital exposure, permanently forms the foundation of neural networks and cognitive development. Although technology offers easy access to information and educational content, the reality on the ground shows a gap between technological accessibility and children's mental readiness to filter information. Uncontrolled gadget use during the early stages of development risks disrupting fundamental aspects of children's development, particularly their ability to regulate emotions and control focus. The instant stimulation offered by digital devices tends to overwhelm children's nervous systems, which in turn makes it difficult for them to maintain patience and often manifests in impulsive behavior and intense tantrums.

Furthermore, the impact of technology touches on moral and character dimensions. In a digital ecosystem with minimal filters, children are exposed to various behavioral standards that may conflict with real-world social norms. The decline in social empathy poses a serious threat because children spend more time interacting with screens than engaging in face-to-face communication that involves reading human emotional cues.

This problem also extends to the realm of learning motivation. The high standards of digital entertainment—full of color, sound, and instant gratification—create a standard of satisfaction that is difficult to meet with manual learning activities like reading and writing, which are procedural and require perseverance. Without proper intervention and supervision, dependence on technology will not only hinder academic achievement but also has the potential to undermine the fighting spirit and character integrity of future generations. Therefore, an in-depth analysis of the psychological, moral, and motivational aspects of learning is urgently needed to formulate adaptive parenting strategies amidst the onslaught of technology.

## Literature Review

### Background theory

The theoretical basis of this study stems from the understanding that early childhood is the Golden Age, a crucial period in which environmental stimulation forms the foundation of permanent brain development. Neuroscientifically, a child's brain at this stage is undergoing a rapid synapse formation process, so intensive exposure to



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gadgets can affect the brain's working mechanisms through the instant release of dopamine due to rapid visual and auditory stimuli. This increases a child's pleasure threshold, which in turn makes static learning activities like reading or writing less engaging because they don't provide the same surge of satisfaction. Furthermore, excessive gadget use risks inhibiting the development of the Prefrontal Cortex, the part of the brain responsible for concentration, self-control, and planning abilities.

**Previous studies**

Previous studies on psychological development have shown that using gadgets as instant calming devices during tantrums robs children of the opportunity to learn emotional adaptation strategies or natural self-soothing. This leads to anxiety or restlessness when children are not in front of a screen and a decrease in concentration due to overstimulation of the nervous system. In the realm of social interaction, the unidirectional use of digital devices results in children missing out on learning to read social cues through facial expressions and tone of voice, leading to a degradation of social empathy. From a moral perspective, referring to Albert Bandura's Social Learning Theory, children who are adept imitators tend to experience moral desensitization when repeatedly exposed to negative content or impolite language, thus viewing such bad behavior as normal.

**Conceptual framework (optional)**

The conceptual framework in this analysis positions gadget use as a factor that significantly influences learning motivation through the mechanism of instant gratification, or the search for instant gratification. This phenomenon creates a high standard of entertainment, causing children to lose mental resilience or grit when facing real-life tasks that require perseverance and a long process. This dependency shifts learning motivation from intrinsic to extrinsic, where children are only willing to learn if promised a reward in the form of gadget time. As a conceptual solution, this analysis emphasizes the importance of a dialogic mentoring model through active mediation, where parents are directly involved in transforming gadget use from passive to active-cognitive, in order to maintain children's moral and motivational aspects.

# Methodology

The methodology in this study was designed to provide a systematic and comprehensive framework for analyzing the impact of technology use on various dimensions of early childhood development. The primary data sources in this study come from an in-depth search of scientific literature and observations of children's behavioral phenomena during the Golden Age, where every form of stimulation received will form a permanent foundation for the brain's neural network. Data collected include identifying correlations between screen time and psychological stability, patterns of shifts in moral behavior triggered by unfiltered digital content consumption, and fluctuations in learning motivation in children intensively exposed to technology. The focus of data collection is directed at early childhood between the ages of zero and six, considering aspects of the parenting environment and the frequency of children's interactions with digital devices as key variables in assessing the resulting impact.

The method applied in this research is a qualitative descriptive analysis method


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using a multidisciplinary approach that integrates neuroscience and developmental psychology perspectives. The use of a neuroscience perspective aims to scientifically analyze the workings of the child's brain, specifically how excessive dopamine release due to digital stimulation can affect the development of the prefrontal cortex, the center of self-control, concentration, and planning. Furthermore, this study adopts Albert Bandura's Social Learning Theory as the foundation for analyzing children's identification and imitation of behavioral models they encounter in digital spaces. This method allows researchers to observe how children's moral and ethical values experience desensitization or buildup of sensitivity due to exposure to content that does not align with social norms in the real world.

The development of the model in this research focuses on formulating an adaptive intervention strategy for parents and educators, referred to as the Dialogic Assistance Model or Active Mediation. This model was developed as an antithesis to policies that prohibit total technology, which are often considered ineffective in today's digital age. The development of this model integrates two main approaches: restrictive mediation, which focuses on setting duration and gadget-free zones, and active mediation, which emphasizes parental cognitive engagement when children use devices. In this model, the interaction between children and gadgets is transformed from a passive, one-way communication pattern to an active-cognitive process through open-ended questions and critical dialogue about the content consumed. Through the development of this model, it is hoped that a digital parenting system can be created that can maintain psychological stability, strengthen moral integrity, and revitalize children's intrinsic learning motivation to stay aligned with their physical and social development.

## Results and Analysis

The analysis shows that gadget use in early childhood significantly impacts psychological stability, particularly emotional regulation. This phenomenon is often triggered by parenting styles that use gadgets as instant sedatives when children have tantrums, preventing them from learning emotional adaptation skills or natural self-soothing strategies. Consequently, dependence on digital stimulation creates a brain mechanism that always demands instant gratification, which manifests in emotional outbursts that are difficult to control when access to technology is cut off. Neuroscientifically, the dopamine surge from rapid digital interactions causes children to lose interest in slower, but important, stimulation, such as reading books or playing with blocks. This is exacerbated by the risk of stunted development of the prefrontal cortex, which is responsible for self-control and concentration. Furthermore, intensive gadget use creates a communication gap that leads to a degradation of empathy, where children lose valuable opportunities to learn to read social cues such as facial expressions and the tone of voice of the other person.

In terms of morality and character, young children, as adept imitators, tend to absorb values based on what they repeatedly see on screens. The presence of unfiltered digital content often acts as a moral teacher, presenting violent images or inappropriate language, leading to children's desensitization and accepting such bad behavior as normal. Excessive gadget use also erodes the development of disciplined character, as children often ignore parental instructions in favor of increased screen time. This impact


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extends to the emergence of manipulative behavior, such as lying about device usage time, which undermines the foundation of trust between children and parents. Without proper guidance, children's moral integrity will be distorted as they begin to blur the concepts of right and wrong, perhaps even viewing content that harms others as mere entertainment.

Regarding learning motivation, the phenomenon of instant gratification has been found, where the rapid dopamine rush from gadgets makes manual learning activities seem boring and less challenging. Children accustomed to the convenience of the "reset" feature in the digital world tend to have low resilience and give up quickly when faced with difficult schoolwork. Excessive focus on screens also weakens curiosity about the physical environment, which should be at the heart of basic science learning through sensory exploration. Furthermore, exposure to blue light and prolonged screen time disrupts sleep quality, leading children to arrive at school cognitively fatigued, reducing their ability to absorb new material. This triggers a shift in motivation from intrinsic to extrinsic, where children are only willing to learn if promised a reward in the form of screen time.

**Table 1.**
**Impact Evaluation Based on Development Classification**

| Dimensions | Causative factor | Profound Impact | Psychosocial Consequences |
|---|---|---|---|
| Psychological | Excessive visual stimulation | Sensory overload & addiction | Anxiety disorders and low self-control. |
| Moral | Unfiltered content | Degradation of ethical values | The emergence of aggressive behavior and reduced empathy. |
| Motivation | Instant gratification | Dulling of natural curiosity | Lack of effort and difficulty concentrating on schoolwork. |

As an intervention, this analysis emphasizes that the best solution is not a total ban, but rather the implementation of an active mediation model or dialogical support. Through restrictive mediation, parents can establish clear time limits, while through active mediation, parents engage directly by asking open-ended questions to transform passive gadget use into active-cognitive use. This approach is crucial for maintaining moral integrity and maintaining learning motivation. Furthermore, synergy between parents and educators in providing digital literacy and more interactive learning methods in schools is key to balancing the allure of technology with the needs of healthy child development.


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# Conclusions and Recommendations

Conclusion

Based on the analysis conducted, it can be concluded that uncontrolled gadget use in early childhood has a significant impact on three main domains of development. Psychologically, dependence on digital stimulation leads to a decline in emotional regulation because gadgets are often used as instant sedatives, robbing children of the opportunity to learn to calm themselves naturally. Morally, there is a degradation of manners and social empathy due to exposure to unfiltered content and a reduction in face-to-face interactions crucial for understanding human emotional cues. Meanwhile, in terms of learning motivation, the emergence of instant gratification and impaired concentration causes children to lose enthusiasm for procedural learning processes, leading to a decrease in fighting spirit and a shift in motivation from intrinsic to extrinsic.

Recommendations

Implementing solutions to address this issue requires active synergy from various parties through an appropriate mediation approach. Parents are strongly advised to enforce a maximum screen time limit of one hour per day and engage in dialogue through open-ended questions to transform passive gadget use into active, cognitive activities. Educators are expected to educate parents about digital literacy and design more interactive learning methods in schools to balance the appeal of technology with children's academic needs. Finally, children should be encouraged to engage in more physical activity and traditional games, which are highly effective in honing motor skills and rebuilding social empathy distorted by the virtual world.

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