The Impact of Excessive Gadget Usage Intensity on Student Social Interactions

Dandi Fhadillah Ritonga[1], Ira Wirtati[1]

[1]Universitas Islam Negeri Sumatera Utara, Indonesia

✉ dandi0102202066@uinsu.ac.id *

Abstract

The development of technology, especially gadgets, has changed the pattern of social interaction among adolescents, especially school students. The phenomenon of gadget dependence is increasing, which can reduce the intensity of direct interaction and face-to-face communication skills. This study aims to examine the impact of gadget use on students' social interactions. This research uses a qualitative method with a case study approach. This study involved students as research subjects. Data were collected through observation and in-depth interviews. The collected data were then analyzed to identify the impact of gadget use. The results showed that excessive gadget use can reduce social interaction with family and friends, social isolation, and decreased face-to-face communication skills. As an effort to overcome this, the school supervises the use of gadgets, educates the use of gadgets wisely by teachers, and some students try to manage gadget use by participating in social and sports activities. The study emphasizes the importance of managing gadget use wisely and balancing digital activities with face-to-face social interactions.

INTRODUCTION

The development of information and communication technology has brought significant changes in various aspects of human life, including in education (Boestam & Derivanti, 2022; Danuri, 2019; Dewi et al., 2023; Setiawan, 2018). One of the most popular technological devices among students is gadgets. The presence of gadgets has become the main need of many people ranging from children, teenagers and even adults Gadgets, such as smartphones, tablets and laptops, have become an integral part of students' daily lives. The use of these gadgets brings various impacts, both positive and negative, to students' social interactions. Gadgets are used by many people in their daily activities (Diana et al., 2022). Gadgets are not only a tool for communication but can also help facilitate other activities. Then, gadgets are also used as a tool to obtain various information quickly and easily or browse what humans need (Razi et al., 2021).

The positive impact of these gadgets provides great benefits in helping students access information, communicate with friends and support learning activities. Through gadgets, students can participate in online discussions, work on assignments together, and communicate with friends and teachers outside of school hours. In addition, various educational applications are also available to improve students' skills and knowledge (Fitriana et al., 2021; Harsela & Qalbi, 2020; Putri et al., 2021; Setyaningsih & Setyowatie, 2023).

While the negative impact is that students spend time using gadgets to play online games, watch animations, view social media and so on (Andriyani et al., 2021; Aviva et al., 2022; Damayanti et al., 2020; Janah & Diana, 2023; Sari et al., 2020; Sholeh et al., 2022). Gadgets are also used as a process of learning and teaching and getting the knowledge that children need (Kurniawan et al., 2021). Because many students spend a lot of time using gadgets, it is necessary to have parenting patterns that can control the use of gadgets. Children who use gadgets need direction, guidance or control by parents (Hidayatuladkia et al., 2021). In daily life, parents must accompany children, provide early education, provide control, discipline and provide protection until behavior is formed in accordance with the rules and norms in social life (Yustina & Setyowati, 2021). Excessive use of gadgets can have a negative impact on students' social interactions. Students who use gadgets too often tend to spend more time in their world than interacting directly with peers and family. This can lead to a decrease in the quality of interpersonal relationships and reduce face-to-face communication skills. Sadly, uncontrolled gadget use can lead to social isolation and negatively impact students' emotional and social development.

For students, it also has a bad impact, namely being lazy to study, difficult to divide time because they are too focused on their gadgets. Moreover, today's students are more up to date with their gadgets, automatically more students will use gadgets (Nasution et al., 2022). If students have used gadgets too often or are addicted to gadgets, it will be very difficult for these students to give up their addiction. As a result, students today are more cool with their gadgets than with their parents or friends. There are also students who are more happy or interested in confiding or expressing their hearts on social networks using gadgets than talking to their parents. Not a few students also use the gadget as a tool to search for information that should not be.

Students also spend a lot of time playing games on their gadgets. Many students now we see on the street or in public places are more concerned with their gadgets than with their surroundings. Even though the teenager is with his family or friends, his hands are holding his gadget. Sometimes we also see a family that is only busy with their respective gadgets. Sometimes we also like to see people who are driving a vehicle but their hands continue to hold cell phones or other gadgets, some may be while calling or chatting. The use of gadgets must have both positive and negative impacts, especially when it affects students' social interactions. The impact caused by it is more negative, such as it can make students more individualistic because over time it causes them to forget to communicate and interact with the surrounding environment. It can also cause social interaction between students and the community, the surrounding environment to decrease, even further decline.

As many as 80 percent of gadget users in Indonesia have such behavior in all circles, especially in students who are going through puberty. They cannot stand to part with their gadgets for long. That way a child will rarely behave socially with friends and even with the surrounding community, such as rarely having direct interpersonal interactions. But behind the negative impact caused by the gadget itself, gadgets also have a positive impact on adults or teenagers.

One of them is that with gadgets we can easily communicate with many people out there who are far away from us (Hidayat, 2023; Wahyuningtias et al., 2025).

Today's gadgets already have sophisticated applications or features that make it easier for us to communicate, both for calling, for sending letters or chatting and for video calls. There are also many applications in the gadget that make it easy for us to find out the latest information that occurs both domestically and abroad. The gadget itself also makes it easier for us because the gadget is easy to carry anywhere and is also more practical to use anywhere and anytime. Make it easy for us to do assignments online or to find information about these assignments (Sisbintari & Setiawati, 2021).

Mobile phones are very influential on the thinking patterns of adolescents. Technological advances create new values, norms, cultures, lifestyles and ideologies for teenagers and rural communities. They become lazy to socialize, the fading of the social spirit, changes in interaction patterns so that there is no difference between rural communities and urban communities. Shifting their identity which has norms and noble character even moral decline so as to create new patterns of thought in terms of their daily life and religious aspects, this is the result of the existence of new consumption tools, one of which is a cellphone (Hasibuan & Wirtati, 2024).

Cell phone use does not affect teenagers' face-to-face interactions. Teenagers' use of cell phones does tend to be high. However, in terms of face-to-face interaction between teenagers and their social environment, it still tends to be lacking. It can be concluded that, the interaction of teenagers is not only caused by the high level of cell phone use. There are many other factors in the characteristics of adolescents, such as the higher academic load, starting to consume mass media or technology at a high rate and tending to be separated from their family's social environment. Therefore, it can be seen that the adolescent age group tends to have less face-to-face interaction with their social environment.

The positive and negative impacts of gadget use on students. The positive impacts of using gadgets include making it easier for students to establish communication with distant people, and making it easier for students to obtain lecture information quickly. The negative impacts of gadget use include, students experience social dysfunction, the intensity of direct interaction with other students decreases, students are less sensitive to the surrounding environment, the quality of direct interaction is very low, students rarely communicate directly and students become consumptive. This study aims to explore the impact of gadget use on students' social interactions. In addition, this study will also discuss the role of parents and teachers in supervising the use of gadgets among students and efforts that can be made to minimize the negative impact.

METHODS

This research uses a qualitative approach with a case study method to understand the impact of gadget use on students' social interactions at SMA Negeri 1 Silangkitang. This research delves deeply into students' experiences and perceptions of gadget use and how it affects their social interactions. The case study was conducted at school, focusing on students who actively use gadgets in their daily lives (Agusti et al., 2018; Hariani et al., 2020; Kaputra et al., 2021; Pasya & Wirtati, 2025) A total of 10 students were purposively selected as research informants to represent the variety of their experiences related to gadget use. In addition, teachers and principals were also involved as additional informants to gain a more comprehensive perspective. Data

analysis was conducted using the Miles and Huberman approach involving three main stages: data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing (Miles & Huberman, 1994). In the reduction stage, data obtained from interviews, observations and documentation were grouped based on themes. Then the data was presented in the form of tables and descriptive narratives related to the pattern of gadget use and its impact on students' social interactions. In the last stage, conclusions were drawn about the data that had been reduced and presented.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION
Impact of gadget use on student social interaction

The study was conducted at Senior High School 1 Silangkitang, with a sample of 10 students. Observation and in-depth interviews were conducted to collect data regarding the use of gadgets and their impact on social interaction. From the interview results, it was found that 90% of students use gadgets for more than 5 hours a day. The gadget use is dominated by activities on social media (80%), playing online games (60%), and watching videos on streaming platforms (50%). As many as 70% of students reported that they communicate with friends through social media more often than meeting in person. This data is reinforced by the following table.

Tabel 1. Informant interview results

| No | Informant | Length of gadged use | | Use of gadged | | | |
		<5 hours	>5 hours	Social media	Games online	Watch streaming video	Communicate through social media
1	I-1		√	√	√		√
2	I-2		√	√	√	√	√
3	I-3		√	√	√		√
4	I-4		√		√	√	
5	I-5		√	√		√	
6	I-1		√			√	
7	I-2	√		√		√	√
8	I-3		√	√			√
9	I-4		√	√	√		
10	I-5		√	√	√		√

The results of interviews with several students as informants provide additional insight into how gadgets affect their lives. This is as stated by the informants as follows:

Gadgets have caused me to communicate less with my family at home. The effect is addictive because there are many interesting features. However, I try to overcome the negative effects by exercising, such as playing volleyball (informant 1)

This statement reflects that excessive use of gadgets can cause distance between students and their families. The interesting features in the gadget become an attraction that is difficult to avoid, so the time to interact with the family becomes limited. This is in line with what was expressed by another informant below.

I often watch interesting videos on TikTok and interact with my friends through social media, but rarely communicate with my family at home (informant 2)

Informant 2's statement shows that social media does provide space for students to expand their social networks, but this virtual interaction indirectly leads to less time and interaction with family. In addition, other informants mentioned that gadgets are used for productive activities, this was conveyed by the informants as follows:

I use WhatsApp to interact with my girlfriend and Facebook to buy and sell online at the Marketplace. But I also watch learning videos on YouTube (informant 3)

The interview excerpt shows that although gadgets have positive aspects, students still acknowledge the negative impacts, such as dependence and decreased quality of relationships with family. This was further conveyed by the informant as follows:

Pengaruh gadget terhadap saya itu cukup tinggi, karena saya sering menggunakan WhatsApp untuk berinteraksi dengan pacar saya, serta jual beli online di Facebook. Hal itu menyebabkan kedekatan saya dengan keluarga di rumah menurun (informan 4)

A similar impact was also felt by another informant who stated that gadgets made him dependent, which resulted in less interaction with his family. This statement was conveyed by the informant as follows:

The effect of gadgets on me is addiction and dependence on gadgets. Gadgets also cause me to rarely interact with my family (informant 5)

Furthermore, other informants also stated the same thing. Because he spends too much time with gadgets (5-8 hours), he rarely interacts with his family. This was conveyed by the informant as follows:

I spend time with gadgets 5-8 hours a day. And that results in me rarely interacting with my family (informant 1)

Prolonged gadget use shows a direct impact on decreasing the intensity of students' interactions with their families. This suggests that timing of gadget use is crucial to mitigate the prolonged negative effects on social relationships. Appropriate gadget use can improve students' digital communication skills, but it can also reduce face-to-face communication skills. This suggests that social media can be an effective tool for communication, but it can also replace face-to-face interaction.

Excessive gadget use can lead to social isolation, where students are more comfortable interacting in cyberspace rather than the real world (Septia & Retnasary, 2024). This was expressed by the informant as follows:

I find it easier to communicate with friends through chat than meeting in person, because it is more practical and less awkward (informant 2)

The results of this study show that students who overuse gadgets tend to experience social isolation. The findings suggest that excessive gadget use can lead to decreased social interaction and increased feelings of loneliness among adolescents. Excessive gadget use can make individuals feel more comfortable interacting online than in person, which can ultimately lead to social isolation. Basically, the quality of social relationships is also negatively affected by gadget use.

This research shows that students who spend more time with gadgets tend to have less harmonious relationships with their family and friends. This

research emphasizes the importance of maintaining a balance between gadget use and direct social interaction. Students need to be directed to use gadgets wisely and remain active in social activities that can improve their interpersonal skills. Gadget use reduces the opportunity to develop verbal and non-verbal communication skills. This was conveyed by the informants as follows:

> *Students are now harder to talk to face-to-face, they would rather text than talk face-to-face* (informant 3)

Efforts to overcome the impact of gadget use on students' social interactions

To deal with the impact of gadget influence on students, this was conveyed by the informant as follows:

> *We supervise the use of student gadgets, by checking what applications are on student cellphones, usually done after the ceremony, checking gadgets on students is done to prevent bad things on their gadgets. The inspection is done only occasionally and as needed. In addition, we encourage students to be more active in extracurricular activities and reduce the time they use gadgets outside of academic purposes* (informant 4)

From the results of the interview above, it is illustrated that the school supervises students in the use of gadgets, by checking what applications are on students' cellphones. This activity is carried out impromptu after the apple ceremony, checking gadgets on students is carried out to prevent bad things such as applications that can damage and interfere with students' learning activities. them. Checks are carried out occasionally as needed. Besides, the school encourages students to be more active in extracurricular activities and reduce the time of gadget use outside of academic purposes.

A teacher also emphasized the importance of supervision and education in the use of gadgets by students. This was conveyed by the informant as follows:

> *I provide education and supervision to students so that they can be wiser in using gadgets. By not only following their own wishes but also realizing the negative effects if they use gadgets excessively, I also sometimes have to coordinate with parents in controlling students' use of gadgets. As well as encouraging students to take part in extra-curricular activities such as art sports and other activities* (informant 5)

Based on the results of interviews with teachers, teachers provide education to students about healthy gadget use, including balanced gadget use time, and provide education regarding the negative impacts of excessive gadget use, such as sleep disturbances, decreased academic achievement, and other social problems. Some of the efforts that can be made to address the negative impacts of screen time include setting limits on screen time and encouraging participation in real-world social activities. To overcome these negative impacts, it is important for students to find a balance in gadget use.

Some students themselves have started to look for ways to reduce their dependence on technology. As conveyed by the informant as follows:

> *As a student, I always try to use it wisely, taking the positives and discarding the negatives. I also overcome the influence of gadgets by exercising, such as playing volleyball and running in the morning* (informant 1)

The statement shows that students are starting to realize the importance of maintaining balance when using gadgets and trying to reduce the negative effects through exercise, which can improve their social skills and mental health. This similar point was also expressed by the informant as follows:

> *I always try to use it only as needed, and organize my sleeping hours regularly* (informant 2)

Students' efforts to manage their time are essential to reduce distractions caused by gadgets, including sleep problems that are often caused by excessive

gadget use. This was conveyed by the informant as follows:

> *I overcome the negative influence of gadgets by playing and hanging out with my friends in the village and also exercising with them* (informant 3)

According to the quote, students increasingly realize that interacting directly with peers can help them reduce dependence on electronic devices and improve their relationship with their social environment. A similar point was also expressed by the informant as follows:

> *I overcome the negative influence of gadgets by playing with friends, and organizing my sleeping hours to be more regular* (informant 4)

The above statement shows that having a good time plan and doing physical activities can help you maintain balance when using devices. This was conveyed by the informant as follows:

> *By always doing positive things such as praying in congregation at the mosque, exercising, and participating in mosque youth activities* (informant 5)

These efforts show that students not only rely on technology but also participate in social and religious activities, which can strengthen their social relationships with friends and family. All these efforts show that although gadget use can have negative impacts, schools and students are trying to compensate by increasing participation in hands-on social activities and using gadgets wisely. suggested that limiting gadget use and increasing participation in social activities can help students develop better social skills.

In addition to providing education, teachers also need to supervise and assist students in using gadgets at school. For example, ensuring that students do not use gadgets for activities that are not related to learning during school hours. In addition, teachers also play a role in teaching digital literacy, which includes understanding how to use the internet and digital media safely, ethically and effectively. This includes learning about online safety and how to identify true information and hoaxes.

Teachers can collaborate with parents to control and guide gadget use at home. Regular meetings with parents to discuss their child's digital habits and their impact can be very helpful. The active role of parents and teachers in supervising the use of gadgets is very important to minimize the negative impact. This emphasizes the importance of parental supervision in the use of media by children and adolescents. This is in accordance with the teachings of Islam found in Alquran Surah Al-Hajj verse 78:

وَجَاهِدُوا فِي اللَّهِ حَقَّ جِهَادِهِ هُوَ اجْتَبَاكُمْ وَمَا جَعَلَ عَلَيْكُمْ فِي الدِّينِ مِنْ حَرَجٍ مِلَّةَ أَبِيكُمْ إِبْرَاهِيمَ هُوَ سَمَّاكُمُ الْمُسْلِمِينَ مِنْ قَبْلُ وَفِي هَذَا لِيَكُونَ الرَّسُولُ شَهِيدًا عَلَيْكُمْ وَتَكُونُوا شُهَدَاءَ عَلَى النَّاسِ فَأَقِيمُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَءَاتُوا الزَّكَاةَ وَاعْتَصِمُوا بِاللَّهِ هُوَ مَوْلَاكُمْ فَنِعْمَ الْمَوْلَى وَنِعْمَ النَّصِيرُ

Meaning: *Strive ye in the cause of Allah with truth. He has chosen you and made no hardship for you in religion. (Follow the religion of your fathers, Abraham. He (Allah) has named you Muslims long ago and (likewise) in this (book) (the Quran) so that the Messenger (Prophet Muhammad) may bear witness against you and that you may all bear witness against all mankind. So, establish prayer, pay the zakat, and hold fast to the teachings of Allah. He is your protector. He is the best of protectors and the best of helpers.*

Then, teachers can provide and encourage alternative activities that do not involve gadgets, such as sports, arts, or other social activities, which can help students develop interests and skills outside the digital world. In addition, teachers can also be role models in the use of gadgets. For example, by showing how to use technology productively and wisely in daily activities, including in the classroom. By playing these roles, teachers can help students develop healthy screen time habits and reduce the negative impact on their

development and academic performance.

CONCLUSION

This research shows that students' use of gadgets has a significant impact on their social interactions. These include social isolation, decreased communication skills, and decreased quality of relationships with family. Some students reported that they use their gadgets more for entertainment, such as watching videos or playing games, rather than doing social activities with family or friends in the real world. Therefore, it is important for students to manage their gadget use wisely and actively participate in social activities in the real world to maintain the quality of their social interactions. This study also revealed some efforts from some students, such as exercising, organizing sleep time, or joining extracurricular activities to reduce gadget dependence.

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