

FAMILY COMMUNICATION WITH CHILDREN IN PREVENTING THE NEGATIVE IMPACTS OF GADGETS AT PESONA BATANG KUIS RESIDENCE HOUSING COMPLEX

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ABSTRACT

This research is motivated by the need to communicate in the family with the negative impact of using gadgets on children. Therefore, this study aims to determine the extent of parental understanding of the appropriate use of gadgets in children, also to find out the obstacles experienced by parents, and to find out the efforts made by people to prevent the negative impact of using gadgets on children. This type of research is a qualitative research with a case study method. The research subjects are families, especially parents and also the object of the research is family communication to children to prevent the negative impact of using gadgets on children. The data collection methods used observation, in-depth interviews and documentation. The results showed that family knowledge, especially parents, about family communication with children in preventing the negative impact of gadgets on children.

Keywords: Family Communication, Children, Negative Impact of Gadgets

1. INTRODUCTION

Communication is a fundamental human need for maintaining survival, and it is almost impossible for a person to live without communicating with others. Communication occurs everywhere, such as at home, school, offices, and in all places where socialization takes place, including communication with parents (Effendy & Onong Uchjana, 2002).

The deterioration of communication is caused by parents' indifference to their children's development, for example, when children play online games or watch YouTube content for hours at home. Poor or unhealthy relationships between parents and children are one of the factors that cause children to prefer spending hours using gadgets. Parental presence also has an impact; for instance, parents who are rarely at home result in limited communication and time spent together with their children, or even none at all (Bittner, 1985:10 in Wiryanto, 2004:32).

Communication within the family is formed when reciprocal relationships are continuously established among fathers, mothers, and children (Gunarsa, S. D., & Gunarsa, Y., 2000; Purnamasari, 2017). From a functional perspective, family communication does not differ significantly from communication functions in general. At a minimum, there are two functions of family communication: the function of social communication and the function of cultural communication. Communication that occurs between parents and children within a family bond reflects the parents' responsibility to educate their children. The relationship between parents and children is bidirectional and is accompanied by mutual understanding, in which both parents and children have the right to express opinions, thoughts, information, or advice. This effective communication relationship is established through openness, empathy, support, positive feelings, and shared understanding between parents and children.

Communication itself is a fundamental aspect that serves as the foundation for individuals in interacting with one another, both interpersonally and within groups. Every individual is required to possess good communication skills, as the communicants encountered have diverse backgrounds. For example, the way one communicates with older people is certainly different from communication with peers or younger individuals. This is particularly evident in family communication, which is continuously maintained between parents and children.

The family plays an important role in providing and generalizing values, norms, knowledge, attitudes, and expectations to children. Effective communication between parents and children needs to be developed and nurtured within the family. The most common form of communication between children and parents is interpersonal communication. Without interpersonal communication, individuals may feel isolated, lonely, unappreciated, and unaccepted. Interpersonal communication, as defined by DeVito in Suranto (2011, p. 5), is the process of transmitting messages between two people or among a small group of individuals, accompanied by certain effects and immediate feedback.

The rapid development of technology has made communication increasingly sophisticated, resulting in higher human demands for information. Humans use and are surrounded by technology in almost every aspect of their lives, from working throughout the day to moments before sleep. Consciously or unconsciously, people have become dependent on technology. In the morning, many individuals are awakened by alarm clocks and then immediately turn on the television, activate their mobile phones, or use computers to check email or social media (Morisan, M. A., 2015). Advances in technology, information, and communication have caused the world to no longer recognize boundaries of distance, space, and time. Various innovations continue to emerge, each aimed at facilitating and simplifying the scope of human life.

One of the negative impacts of children who frequently use gadgets is the potential for addiction to online games, developmental delays, mental health disorders, sleep disturbances, the influence of media content, and radiation hazards. From this discussion, the researcher found cases occurring in the residential area of Pesona Batang Kuis Residence, where preschool-aged children use gadgets intensively. This is often done by parents so that children do not continue crying and can stop crying after being shown a gadget. According to Wijanarko, Jarot, et al. (2016), in recent years many parents have assumed that gadgets can serve as safe play companions that are easy to supervise.

Consequently, the role of parents has increasingly been replaced by gadgets, which are perceived as children's playmates.

Therefore, it is important for parents to truly understand how to use gadgets wisely, so that children's usage can be limited and their developmental potential can grow properly, enabling them to become active (Placeholder1), intelligent, creative, and interactive children in their daily lives. Without adequate parental assistance or education regarding gadget use itself, children are vulnerable to experiencing the negative effects of gadgets.

The negative impacts of gadget use, according to Nurdianti S. R. (2014), can be described as follows. First, children tend to become reluctant to engage in physical activities. The wide variety of applications available on gadgets makes children more interested in playing with gadgets than participating in sports or physical exercise, which may increase their susceptibility to illness. Second, children may experience delays in understanding learning materials. During classroom activities, students often lose focus on the material delivered by teachers because they are distracted by searching for information on their gadgets.

In addition, continuous gadget use may cause children to forget how to play and interact with friends in the real world. According to Hidayati (2016), the negative impacts can be further explained as follows. First, children may become addicted to gadgets. Prolonged use can result in addiction, causing children to be indifferent when spoken to. Second, children may prioritize gadgets over parental instructions. When parents ask children to carry out simple tasks, such as buying something, children may ignore the request and continue playing with their gadgets.

Chronologically, early childhood refers to the developmental stage of children aged 5–6 years. At this stage, children primarily focus on relationships with their parents or family. Early childhood is characterized by increasing independence, the ability to exercise self-control, and a desire to expand social interactions through solitary play or play with peers. Play during early childhood is beneficial for personality development and for enhancing both fine and gross motor skills, as described in John Bowlby's theory.

As one of the earliest theories of social development, Bowlby's theory emphasizes that early relationships between children and their caregivers play a crucial role in development. These early relationships continue to influence social relationships throughout an individual's life. According to Bowlby, children are born with an inherent need for attachment or affection. This need explains why children seek closeness with their caregivers, which is then reciprocated through protection and affection.

Based on the background described above, the researcher is interested in examining "how family communication with children can prevent the occurrence of negative impacts of gadget use.

2. RESEARCH METHOD

In this study, a qualitative research approach is employed. Qualitative research is intended to understand social phenomena from the participants' perspectives (Sugiyono, 2005). Qualitative research is descriptive-analytic in nature, because the data obtained—such as experiences, interview results, photographic documentation, document analysis, and field notes—are organized by the researcher not in the form of numerical data (Ritonga et al., 2024).

As explained by Salim and Halidir in their book entitled Penelitian Pendidikan (2019:49), descriptive research is research that seeks to describe a symptom, event, or occurrence that takes place. The research location was conducted at the Pesona Batang Kuis Residence housing complex, located at Jl. Perhubungan, Bakaran Batu Village, Batang Kuis District, North Sumatra, Indonesia. In this location, many children spend their time only playing with gadgets, and some have even been affected by the negative impacts of gadget use due to parental neglect and busyness (Dalimunthe et al., 2025).

The research subjects are the individuals targeted to be studied by the researcher. The research object is the object that becomes the focus of a study. In this research, the subjects are families residing in the Pesona Batang Kuis Residence housing complex, consisting of a father, a mother, and children.

In this study, the selection of research subjects uses a purposive sampling technique. Regarding this matter, Arikunto explains that purposive sampling is conducted by selecting subjects not based on strata, randomness, or region, but based on specific objectives (Arikunto, 1998; Ritonga et al., 2024).

In this research, the research instrument is the researcher himself, because in qualitative research, humans serve as the main instrument. This is because humans are able to interact directly with respondents or research objects. In qualitative research, the success of the data collection process is highly dependent on the researcher as the primary instrument.

The data collection techniques used by the researcher include observation. Herdiansyah (2013:131) explains that observation is defined as a process of seeing, observing, examining, and "recording" behavior systematically for a particular purpose. Furthermore, when using the interview method, the researcher must pay close attention to attitude and timing when visiting the research site to conduct interviews. Politeness and proper manners must be carefully observed during the interview process.

The interactive analysis model can be illustrated as follows.

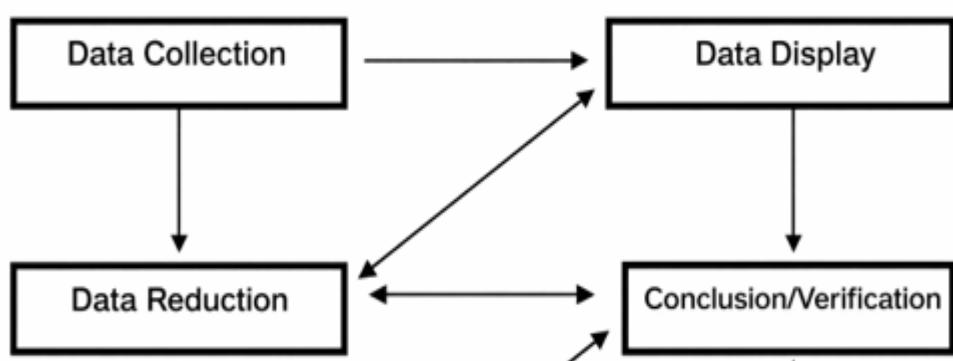


Figure (Interactive Analysis Model)
Source: Huberman and Miles (1994)

3. RESULT AND ANALYSIS

The When elaborated based on the concept of recognizing the negative impacts of gadgets according to Bill Gates and Melinda as cited in Diane Wulansari (2017), they include the following:

1. Children may be exposed to negative influences from the internet, become vulnerable to predators roaming online, and have the potential to become victims of bullying in the digital world.
2. Gadgets can influence children's brain development in a negative direction.
3. Gadget use can make children reluctant to engage in physical movement, causing their motor development to progress slowly.
4. Gadgets can affect children's mental and social development. Children who are addicted to the internet and gadgets are unable to socialize properly, resulting in a lack of playmates.
5. Gadgets can cause children to become dependent on them, making them unable to be independent in solving problems.
6. Children may become slow in thinking (Kurniawati et al., 2025; Purba et al., 2025).

Family Communication in Providing an Understanding of Appropriate Gadget Use for Children

Based on the research findings, it is explained that families communicate and provide several forms of understanding to children, namely:

- a. Establishing good communication and providing children with explanations regarding appropriate gadget use.
- b. Families act as supervisors of children and provide guidance regarding responsibility as a member of the family. For example, in terms of gadget use, children are guided, directed, and given the best possible understanding. When children violate the responsibilities that have been assigned, parents will impose consequences.

Parents, within family life, hold positions as heads of the family or household leaders. Parents serve as the first role models in a child's life; their personalities, attitudes, and ways of life constitute elements of indirect education that will naturally be internalized into the personality of the growing child (Humaizi et al., 2025; Dalimunthe et al., 2025).

The essence of a child is that, in their growth and development, they require guidance from both parents. Parents are the most responsible parties in developing the entirety of a child's existence, including physical and psychological needs, so that the child can grow and develop toward a harmonious and mature personality (Singgih, 1983:151).

Obstacles Experienced by Families in the Communication Process to Prevent the Negative Impacts of Gadgets on Children

Based on the research findings above, there are several obstacles experienced by families in communicating with children related to preventing the negative impacts of gadgets. These obstacles include:

- a. The busyness of each family member.
- b. Children's divided attention due to gadgets when they are being spoken to.

Busyness is often considered a trigger for the weakening of communication within the family. Some family members are busy working from morning until night, attending school, or even living far away in other cities. This condition usually becomes more severe when children in the family grow older and become more independent. Time for gathering together decreases because all family members are occupied with their respective affairs. Excessive gadget use also triggers communication barriers within the family, because each family member is not fully focused when at home. Some remain busy handling work, using entertainment media, or communicating with friends through gadgets. This phenomenon must be prevented as early as possible. Every family member should allocate time to gather together at home. Engaging in simple activities together with all family members can strengthen communication bonds, so that no family member feels neglected.

Communication activities are certainly inseparable from disturbances (noise) in the delivery process, which can reduce the smoothness of communication. Such disturbances or obstacles can be grouped into internal and external barriers (Zuhdi, 2011). Internal barriers are obstacles that originate from within the individual, related to physical and psychological conditions, while external barriers originate from outside the individual and are related to the physical, social, and cultural environment.

The Family Communication Process in Preventing the Negative Impacts of Gadget Use on Children

Accordingly, Based on the research findings above, it is stated that families make efforts to prevent the negative impacts of gadgets on children. These efforts include consistently supervising children when they use gadgets, providing religious education to children, and occasionally taking children on vacations. There are several ways that families can apply to reduce the negative impacts of gadgets:

- a. Open communication: Families should strive to establish honest and open communication with children regarding how they interact in the virtual world. Ensure that children understand that interactions in the virtual environment must also be conducted properly and politely. Encourage children to always share their experiences if they encounter negative situations. In addition, observe children's behavior and create rules together with children regarding how, when, and where they are allowed to use electronic devices.
- b. Utilizing technological features: Ensure that the devices used by children are equipped with the latest software and antivirus programs, with privacy settings activated. To keep children safe and ensure they access positive content, use family control features, including safe search functions.
- c. Supervising children when accessing the internet: In times such as the present, a sense of social connectedness is very important. This provides an opportunity for parents to model positive attitudes and empathy in virtual interactions. Assist children in recognizing and avoiding forms of misinformation as well as content that is not appropriate for their age.
- d. Monitoring consumed games and television programs: Families must be aware of the games or television programs consumed by children, in order to know whether such media are safe and appropriate according to children's age limitations.

Based on the several strategies that families can apply to reduce the negative impacts of gadgets as described above, it can be concluded that the efforts carried out by parents can be considered effective, although they have not yet been fully implemented consistently within the family.

4. CONCLUSION

Based on the results of the research and the discussion regarding family communication with children in preventing the negative impacts of gadget use, the following conclusions can be drawn:

1. Family Communication in Providing an Understanding of Appropriate Gadget Use for Children: Families communicate by establishing good communication and providing examples of how to communicate properly, as well as offering guidance on how gadgets can be used in more beneficial ways. Parents, within family life, hold positions as heads of the family or household leaders. Parents serve as the first role models in a child's life; their personalities, attitudes, and ways of life constitute elements of indirect education that will naturally be internalized into the personality of the growing child.
2. Obstacles Experienced by Families in Preventing the Negative Impacts of Gadgets on Children: There are several obstacles experienced by families, including the busyness of each family member and children's divided attention due to gadgets when they are being spoken to. Busyness is often considered a trigger for the weakening of communication within the family. Some family members are busy working from morning until night, attending school, or even living far away in other cities. This condition usually becomes more severe as children grow older and become more independent. As a result, time for gathering together decreases because all family members are occupied with their respective activities.
3. Efforts Made by Families to Prevent the Negative Impacts of Gadget Use on Children: There are several efforts undertaken by families to prevent the negative impacts of gadget use on children, namely supervising and accompanying children when using gadgets, allocating time for children, and inviting children to communicate and talk about the activities they carry out in their daily lives.

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