Control of Gadget Addiction Among Children: Analysis from an Islamic Perspective in the Digital Age

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Abstract:

In the era of globalization, the issue of gadgets has become a hot topic everywhere, even across the globe. Gadgets have become a very common possession for everyone regardless of age. This research will focus on the effects of gadget usage on children and identify ways to control gadget usage among children in Malaysia from an Islamic perspective. The research methodology employs a descriptive qualitative approach, referring to books, journals, and newspaper articles as primary references. Additionally, the secondary data for this study includes a questionnaire related to gadget addiction among children, which was answered by 325 respondents. The study found that the highest percentage of children playing with gadgets is 2 to 3 hours per day. Furthermore, it revealed that YouTube is the most frequently viewed social media platform among children. In terms of time distribution, 39 percent reported having no time control when using gadgets. The research also found that gadgets cannot strengthen family relationships, as indicated by 86.5 percent of the respondents. This issue should be taken seriously by all parties in regulating children's gadget use. It is crucial to address this matter early on to prevent adverse effects on children in the future.

Keywords: Gadgets, technological development, Impact of gadgets, Children

Abstrak:

Dalam era globalisasi, isu gajet menjadi perbualan hangat di merata tempat malahan di seluruh pelusuk dunia. Gajet telah menjadi perkara yang sangat umum bagi semua orang untuk memilikinya tanpa melihat lapisan umur. Penelitian ini akan menumpukan kepada kesan penggunaan gajet terhadap kanak-kanak sera mengenalpasti cara mengawal penggunaan gajet dalam kalangan kanak-kanak di Malaysia. Metodologi kajian ini nenggunakan pendekatan kualitatif deskriptif. Penelitian ini merujuk kepada penulisan buku, jurnal, keratan akhbar sebagai rujukan primer. Selain itu, data sekunder kajian ini menggunakan soal selidik berkaitan ketagihan gajet dalam kalangan kanak-kanak yang telah dijawab oleh 325 responden. Kajian ini mendapati bahawa peratusan tertinggi kanak-kanak bermain gajet adalah 2 sehingga 3 jam dalam sehari. Selain itu, kajian ini juga mendedahkan bahawa Youtube merupakan platform media sosial yang paling kerap ditonton kanak-kanak. Dari sudut taburan

masa pula, sebanyak 39 peratus memaklumkan tiada kawalan masa dalam menggunakan gajet. Kajian ini turut mendapati bahawa gajet tidak dapat mengeratkan hubungan kekeluargaan sebagaimana maklumat responden sebanyak 86.5 peratus. Perihal ini perlu diambil berat oleh semua pihak dalam mengawal kanak-kanak bermain gajet. Perkara ini perlu dibendung lebih awal bagi mengelakkan kesan buruk kepada kanak-kanak pada masa hadapan.

Kata Kunci: *Gajet, Perkembangan Teknologi, Kesan gadget, Kanak-kanak*

Introduction

In this era of globalization, the issue of gadgets has become a widely discussed topic everywhere, and even across the globe. Technological advancements in Malaysia have experienced rapid progress due to developments in technology and information.[1] Based on common understanding, gadgets refer to electronic devices that allow individuals to seek and gather information, as well as serve as communication tools. There are various types of gadgets available in the market, such as computers, laptops, video games, televisions, and smartphones.

The use of technology among children indeed has an impact on them. The dissemination of information through the internet knows no distance, time, or age. Hence, not only adults but also children can directly utilize the internet. It is evident that the internet presents a contradictory notion, as it has positive impacts on one hand, yet its negative effects on another aspect cannot be avoided. Therefore, parents should provide careful supervision of their children when using technological devices so that they can be directed towards a more positive direction and steer clear of negative influences. Children, as defined in the Malaysian Constitution, are individuals below the age of 18, as stipulated in the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Child Act of 2001.[2]

Hence, it is highly concerning if there is gadget misuse among children who are just beginning to explore new aspects of their lives. Furthermore, many issues are raised by society regarding cyberbullying, which does not consider a person's age, including cyberbullying that occurs among children.[3] This is particularly worrisome because such matters can damage the thought processes and mental well-being of developing children. As a concerned society, we need to be aware of our surroundings and question whether it is appropriate for children to have their gadgets or whether it has a positive impact on their growth.

This study was conducted to achieve the following objectives: (1) Examine the effects of gadget use on children in their daily lives, (2) Identify ways to control gadget usage among children.

Literature Review

The world is advancing rapidly with the continuous growth of the economy. This progress has gradually transformed human lifestyles from simple to more complex ways of living. It has also led to drastic changes in human life, in tandem with the development of information and communication technology. It is undeniable that this development has somewhat altered things to facilitate virtual connections without any hindrance. The majority of society finds it easy to own gadgets, regardless of age, gadget prices, economic status, or ethnicity. Furthermore, the widespread availability of wireless internet services today makes it convenient for users to access the internet for

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various purposes, such as seeking information, reading online newspapers, watching videos, and more.

In connection with this, not only adults surf the internet but also children. Children are now more inclined to use gadgets and spend hours browsing the internet every day.[4] This behavior is highly unhealthy and causes concern among parents about their children's lifestyle. Many negative effects can occur if children use gadgets without parental control[5] or supervision from other family members, such as imitating dangerous and inappropriate actions. Additionally, issues like eye strain[6], addiction to gadget use, cyberbullying, and identity theft on social media are some of the worrying negative effects for parents if they happen to their children.

In this era, the use of gadgets is widespread among society, including children. This is because parents increasingly use gadgets and applications to expose their children to educational content. According to the Deputy Minister of Women, Family, and Community Development, Hannah Heo, a survey conducted by the National Population and Family Development Board (LPPKN) in the Klang Valley found that 78.3 percent of parents allow their children to own gadgets.[7]

Dailymail reported that children are exposed to gadgets at a very young age, with almost one-third of them using the internet and gadget devices as early as one year old in 2013. 70% of them were capable of fully mastering the use of these gadgets during their primary school years. This has led children to view gadgets as companions or friends during their leisure time. Tamayo and Dela Cruz (2004) stated that contemporary children would choose gadgets as their companions, especially if they have internet connectivity linked to their devices.[8]

Hence, it will capture the interest of these children to play with gadgets, diverting them to easily downloadable gaming applications. Prolonged use of gadgets can adversely affect a child's growth rate, as explained by (Ebbeck et al., 2016) these children are susceptible to risks in physical development and their health[9]. As we know, focusing for too long on phone screens, laptops, iPads, and other gadgets can lead to diminishing eyesight. As creatures created by Allah SWT, we must be grateful for the blessings bestowed upon us and use them towards goodness rather than negligence.

However, gadgets also bring benefits to children, but if misused by children[10] without the guidance of adults such as parents, older siblings, or brothers, it hurts the children's lives.

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Method

This study employs the method of descriptive statistical analysis. This method is utilized to analyze the frequency and percentage involved in this study to achieve the stated research objectives. The study respondents are students from Universiti Tun Hussein Onn Malaysia (UTHM). The instrument or tool used to distribute the questionnaire is social media platforms such as WhatsApp. The study sample consists of 325 individuals randomly selected by the researcher to respond to the online questionnaire.

Approximately 10 questions need to be answered by the respondents in the virtual questionnaire. The researcher uses Google Forms as a medium to analyze the respondents, and the results are recorded in the form of pie charts.

Results and Discussion

Data Distribution Analysis

Gender

A total of 56 male respondents, comprised 17.2 percent, while 269 female respondents, made up 82.8 percent. The distribution of respondents based on gender is presented in Table 1.

Table 1

Gender	Frequency	Percent (%)	Accumulated Percent (%)
Men	56	17.2	17.2
Woman	269	82.8	100
Total	**325**	**100**	

Age of Respondent

A total of 236 respondents, or 72.6 percent, are aged between 18 and 20 years old. For respondents aged 21 to 25 years old, there are 74 individuals, representing 22.8 percent. There is only one respondent aged 26 to 30 years old, making up 0.3 percent, while respondents aged 31 to 40 years old are 5 individuals, accounting for 2.76 percent. Additionally, there are 9 individuals, or 2.76 percent, as mentioned. The distribution of respondents based on age is shown in table 2.

Table 2

Age	Frequency	Percent (%)	Accumulated Percent (%)
18-20 Years	236	72.6	72.6
21-25 Years	74	22.8	95.4
26-30 Years	1	0.3	95.7
31-40 Years	5	1.54	97.24
Others	9	2.76	100
Total	**325**	**100**	

People Who Introduce Gadgets to Children

Based on respondents' answers, a total of 272 individuals, or 83.7 percent, indicated that it was their parents who introduced gadgets to them. Meanwhile, siblings who introduced gadgets were mentioned by 30 individuals, including 9.2 percent. In the category of friends, there were 19 individuals, representing 5.8 percent. Teachers, on the other hand, accounted for only 1 person,

making up 0.33 percent, which is the same as those in the cousin and acquaintances categories. For the self-introduction category, there was one respondent, accounting for 0.31 percent. The distribution of respondents based on who introduced gadgets to them is illustrated in Table 3.

Table 3

Respondent	Frequency	Percent (%)	Accumulated Percent (%)
Parents	272	83.7	83.7
Siblings	30	9.2	92.9
Friends	19	5.8	98.7
Teacher	1	0.33	99.03
Cousin	1	0.33	99.36
People around	1	0.33	99.69
Own self	1	0.31	100
Total	**325**	**100**	

Time Used to Play Gadgets

A total of 46 respondents, or 14.2 percent, voted for spending 1 hour. For the duration of 2 to 3 hours, 121 respondents, or 37.2 percent, selected that time range. Meanwhile, 68 respondents, or 20.9 percent, chose 4 to 5 hours. Furthermore, for 6 hours or more, a total of 90 respondents, or 27.7 percent, opted for that timeframe. The distribution of respondents based on the number of hours spent on gadgets is presented in Table 4.

Table 4

Number of Hours	Frequency	Percent (%)	Accumulated percent (%)
1 hour	46	14.2	14.2
2-3 hours	121	37.2	51.4
4-5 hours	68	20.9	72.3
6 hours more	90	27.7	100
Total	**325**	**100**	

Gadget Owner

A total of 264 respondents, or 81.2 percent, own gadgets belonging to their parents. For siblings, only 7 individuals, or 2.2 percent, reported ownership, while in the category of self-ownership, there were only 54 individuals, representing 16.6 percent. The distribution of respondents according to gadget ownership is shown in Table 5.

Table 5

Gadget owner	Frequency	Percent (%)	Accumulated percent (%)
Parent	264	81.2	81.2
Siblings	7	2.2	83.4
Own self	54	16.6	100
Total	**325**	**100**	

Browsed Applications

The YouTube application was selected by 240 respondents or 73.8 percent. A total of 13 respondents, or 4 percent, opted for social media. Next, for the TikTok application, there were 4 respondents, or 1.2 percent, who chose this application. Game applications accounted for 60 respondents or 18.5 percent. Additionally, 8 respondents, or 2.5 percent, chose educational applications. The distribution of respondents based on the applications accessed through gadgets is shown in Table 6.

Table 6

Application Type	Frequency	Percent (%)	Accumulated percent (%)
Youtube	240	73.8	73.8
Social Media	13	4	77.8
Tiktok	4	1.2	79
Game application	60	18.5	97.5
Learning	8	2.5	100
Total	**325**	**100**	

Setting Time Limits

A total of 198 respondents, or 60.9 percent, are in favor of setting daily time limits for gadget usage, while 127 respondents, comprising 39.1 percent, hold an opposing view. The distribution of respondents based on the setting of time limits is shown in Table 7.

Table 7

Yes/No	Frequency	Percent (%)	Accumulated percent (%)
Yes	198	60.9	60.9
No	127	39.1	100
Total	**325**	**100**	

Surveillance

215 respondents, or 66.2 percent, answered yes, while 110 answered no. Table 8 shows the distribution of respondents to parental supervision in the use of gadgets for children.

Table 8

Yes/No	Frequency	Percent (%)	Accumulated percent (%)
Yes	215	66.2	66.2
No	110	33.8	100
Total	**325**	**100**	

Strengthening Family Relationships

A total of 44 respondents, or 13.5 percent, believe that gadgets can strengthen familial relationships among individuals, while 281 respondents, equivalent to 86.5 percent, think otherwise. The distribution of respondents based on the level of strengthening family relationships is shown in Table 9.

Table 9

Yes/No	Frequency	Percent (%)	Accumulated percent (%)
Yes	44	13.5	13.5
No	281	86.5	100
Total	**325**	**100**	

Influenced by Gadgets

A total of 321 respondents, or 98.8 percent, believe that gadgets have the potential to influence children's thinking in their daily behavior, while only a small number of respondents deny this statement. The number of respondents who disagreed was recorded as 4, equivalent to 1.2 percent. The distribution of respondents based on the level of gadget influence on children's thinking is shown in Table 10.

Table 10

Yes/No	Frequency	Percent (%)	Accumulated percent (%)
Yes	321	98.8	98.8
No	4	1.2	100
Total	**325**	**100**	

Controlling Gadget Addiction Among Children

Excessive addiction to gadgets among children can make them more aggressive[11]. Therefore, parents need to play a crucial role by being proactive in curbing or reducing this addiction. However, using violence or scolding children when they are still young is not a wise step[12] to reduce their exposure to gadgets. As adults, it is important to understand the nature and mindset of a child. Here are some gentler approaches that parents can use:

The first step that can be taken is not letting them use gadgets alone[13]. The main mistake parents make is allowing children to use gadgets without supervision. Gadgets are often used by parents to keep children occupied[14] and not disturb them. Allowing children to use gadgets individually causes them to be engrossed in their own world and likely exposes them to inappropriate content for their age. Such a situation encourages addiction. In addition to physical supervision, teach children about Islamic values relevant to gadget use[15]. Explain concepts such as internet etiquette, respecting others' privacy, and the importance of filtering received information.

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Furthermore, parents can limit and set specific times and places for their children's smartphone use. During childhood, children are more susceptible to imitating their parents' behavior. Prophet Muhammad (SAW) said:

> "No child is born but that he is upon instinct. His parents make him a Jew, or a Christian, or Magian" (Hadith narrated by Bukhari, No. 1385).

Therefore, at this stage, parents should introduce the laws of gadget usage, and they should set an example for their children[16]. For instance, parents should avoid using gadgets while enjoying meals with the family. Islam teaches the importance of managing time[17]. Set a reasonable time limit for gadget usage so that children do not become overly attached to it. This provides them with the opportunity to engage in other quality activities, such as reading books or physical play.

Furthermore, parents can engage in various activities with their children, either at home or outdoors[18]. Young children naturally enjoy activities that stimulate their minds, fine and gross motor skills, language skills, cognitive development, and emotional needs. There is no excuse for parents not to spend time with their children, no matter how busy they are with work[19]. Many activities can test the intelligence of young children without incurring high expenses. Some of these activities include playing jigsaw puzzles, working with colors, storytelling, pretend play, playing with clay, gardening, and more. These simple and easy activities can help parents brighten and diversify activities with their children at home, simultaneously diverting their interest from gadgets alone. The relationship between parents and children is also strengthened and becomes more affectionate.

Finally, and most importantly, parents must monitor how their children use gadgets from time to time to ensure they do not misuse the functions available on each gadget. Many parents underestimate this matter; however, without their awareness, children can navigate inappropriate websites, especially pornography[20], which is increasingly prevalent and easily accessible on the internet due to various factors such as peer influence. This is the most concerning for parents because everything is just a click away. Nevertheless, the world has become aware of this situation and has created parental control applications available on Google Play Store and Apple Store to better monitor children's gadget usage[21]. Additionally, parents need to set limits on the use of certain websites and block sites that contain explicit content and actions that pose threats to children's emotions and mental well-being. This way, children are protected from exposure to inappropriate content.

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Build Awareness

After conducting the study, it was found that many children are easily influenced by gadgets from a very young age. This is because contemporary children are more inclined to play with gadgets compared to engaging in other activities such as coloring, writing, and so on. In Islam, the concept of controlled exposure is highly emphasized[22]. Parents need to ensure that their children are only exposed to content that aligns with Islamic values and ethics. Provide applications and games that are educational and suitable for their age. Therefore, we must raise awareness in the community about the use of gadgets on children[23]. To build this awareness, community involvement is crucial in reducing gadget usage among children. One way the community can contribute to building awareness is by organizing awareness campaigns[24]. From there, questionnaires are distributed regarding gadget usage among children to gauge the respondents' reactions. This allows us to see the percentage of children who use gadgets. How can this campaign be executed?

This campaign can be carried out by setting up booths in open areas such as shopping centers[25]. Additionally, templates on awareness of gadget usage among children can be provided to parents or guardians for them to read and enhance their knowledge on the subject.

Conclusion

Overall, this study confirms that gadgets have an impact on the lives of children in Malaysia. However, various ways and initiatives can be undertaken to improve this situation. As a country with diverse ethnicities and religions, it is the collective responsibility of the citizens to safeguard the children who represent the nation's hope. If measures to control children's gadget usage are implemented effectively, it can protect them from negative influences and contribute to the development of their minds towards forming a morally upright and virtuous generation, capable of ensuring the nation's continuity in the post-modernization era.

Therefore, parents must monitor their children's gadget usage. It is hoped that all parties can benefit from this study, and perhaps in the future, further research will be conducted to ensure that gadgets do not cause harm but instead aid in the development of children.

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