

The Impact of Excessive Gadget Use on the Character and Achievement of Elementary School Students

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Article Info	Abstract
Keywords: Character, Gadgets, Learning Achievement	The development of digital technology has had a major influence on children's lives, especially in terms of using gadgets. This study aims to find out how too much gadget use affects the attitude and learning outcomes of grade VI children at SD Negeri 1 Tanjunganom. This research uses a descriptive qualitative method, by directly interviewing the teacher. The results showed that using gadgets too often can make students' attitudes worse, such as lack of discipline, lack of care for friends, difficulty controlling emotions, and not being good at socializing. In addition, uncontrolled use of gadgets also makes academic grades decline, difficulty concentrating, and lack of enthusiasm for learning. Family environment factors, parenting and parental supervision play an important role in shaping children's behavior towards gadget use. Teachers and parents must help each other so that children use technology wisely. Digital education, limiting the time of gadget use, and integrating educational technology in learning are recommended as solutions to overcome the negative impact of gadgets on elementary school students.

INTRODUCTION

The development of children attending elementary school, aged 6-12 years, represents a highly crucial period in child development. During this stage, children experience numerous changes, such as physical growth and the development of cognitive capacity, emotions, and socialization skills. Every child develops differently, depending on the environment at home, school, and among peers. Consequently, teachers and parents share the vital responsibility of accompanying and instructing children to enable them to distinguish between right and wrong. Children also begin to demonstrate rapid motor and language development. However, technological advancements bring new challenges. Gadgets, which were initially utilized for learning purposes, are now more frequently used for excessive entertainment, such as games and videos. If left unrestricted, this can disrupt learning, reduce physical activity, and affect character formation (Sinta Zakiyah et al., 2024).

Excessive gadget use causes children to rarely converse or play with their peers because they prefer using their devices. Occasionally, they also become addicted to gaming to the extent of neglecting studying or helping their parents, as well as other essential activities such as learning or socializing (Rismala et al., 2021). Children tend to disregard school assignments, experience a decline in academic grades, suffer from concentration difficulties, and prefer playing in the online world rather than playing and interacting directly with peers around them. Another emerging behavioral shift includes irritability, impulsivity, and difficulty managing emotions, particularly when gadget usage is restricted. This also impacts the quality of their learning and social skills (Afrahima & Mislana, 2025). Furthermore, a high intensity of gadget use also influences students' learning achievement. Dependency on gadgets can disrupt concentration, lower productivity, and reduce study time, thereby resulting in a decline in academic achievement (Rismala et al., 2021). On the other hand, gadgets offer benefits such as ease of access to information and learning resources; however, these advantages are often outweighed by the emerging risks if usage remains uncontrolled (Novitasari, 2023).

Family environmental factors, parenting styles, and parental supervision play a pivotal role in guiding gadget use among elementary school students. Recent research indicates that active parental involvement whether through time restrictions, content selection, or parental guidance while the child uses a gadget is highly influential in preventing negative impacts on the child's character and learning achievement (Sari et al., 2022). Moreover, consistent supervision and guidance from the family are essential to support child development. With proper attention and direction, parents can transform the home into a peaceful, comfortable, and pleasant environment so that children can learn effectively, socialize, and develop positive attitudes and habits. A positive family environment also helps children differentiate between beneficial and detrimental gadget use (Sihombing, 2021). Furthermore, the importance of education regarding the risks of gadget use and the establishment of healthy habits through open communication and clear rules also serve as keys to supporting the optimal development of students in the digital era (Masuk et al., 2024). This scientific article will present findings on the Impact of Excessive Gadget Use on the Character and Achievement of Elementary School Students. The focus of this study is on students aged 6–12 years, who are in a significant developmental period where their physical bodies, cognitive processes, social interactions, and emotions are concurrently evolving. At this age, children are growing and learning many essential things, beginning to demonstrate more complex reasoning abilities, developing social skills, and starting to shape their self-character.

METHODS

This study employs a descriptive qualitative method, conducted through direct interviews with the teacher. The study aims to determine the impact of excessive gadget use on the attitudes and learning outcomes of sixth-grade students at SD Negeri 1 Tanjunganom. The interviewee was the sixth-grade homeroom teacher, as the teacher has frequently observed and monitored how the students behave and learn in the classroom.

In this study, two primary variables were examined. The first is excessive gadget use (referred to as the cause), and the second is students' attitudes and learning achievement (referred to as the effect). The teacher was interviewed using a predetermined list of questions, which encompassed aspects such as student diligence, responsibility, politeness, and academic grades. The interviews were conducted directly to ensure greater clarity in the results. Additionally, the teacher provided notes regarding students' behavior during classroom learning to serve as supplementary data.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

From direct conversations with the sixth-grade homeroom teacher at SD Negeri 1 Tanjunganom, a general overview of the students' character conditions in the classroom was obtained. Student character was assessed to be heavily influenced by both home and school environments, including habits regarding gadget usage. In practice, student characters are quite diverse. Some demonstrate good discipline and a strong sense of responsibility, whereas others are easily distracted, lack focus, and are vulnerable to influences from their surroundings or digital media. The teacher observed that character development is closely intertwined with how students utilize gadgets daily, both for learning purposes and for entertainment, such as gaming or watching videos. Furthermore, a striking difference was identified between students who utilize gadgets wisely and those who tend to use them excessively. Students who are capable of utilizing gadgets for productive purposes, such as searching for learning materials or communicating in a proper and healthy manner, are generally more independent, possess critical thinking skills, and manage their emotions well. Conversely, students who use gadgets too frequently without supervision exhibit several negative symptoms, such as a lack of focus in learning, emotional instability, and a decline in interest toward social and physical activities. This underscores the importance of parental and teacher guidance in fostering healthy digital literacy among children.

Character issues arising from excessive gadget use have also become a serious concern. Several students display signs of addiction, such as being unable to detach from screens, frequently feeling drowsy in class, and showing no interest in interacting with peers. Their behavior tends to be passive during the learning process, and they frequently exhibit excessive emotional reactions when reprimanded. In the social aspect, students who play with gadgets too frequently become less sensitive to their surrounding environment and tend to isolate themselves. This lack of social interaction impacts the decline of communication skills as well as empathy toward peers. Negative traits that frequently emerge due to gadget use include low empathy, weak emotional control, a lack of discipline, and an increased individualistic attitude. Not infrequently, students are found to prefer seeking instant answers from the internet rather than understanding concepts deeply, which leads to a decline in memory retention and logical thinking skills. Additionally, there are distinct patterns in gadget usage between male and female students. Boys tend to use them more frequently for playing games, whereas female students access social media or watch videos more often. This difference affects their behavior in class, where male students are more active but difficult to manage, while female students tend to be passive and easily anxious.

The adverse effects of gadget use are also reflected in school grades. Many students experience a decline in learning motivation and concentration because they play with gadgets too frequently at home. They become less enthusiastic about completing assignments, face difficulties in understanding lessons, and demonstrate a decline in academic performance. Socially, the habit of isolating oneself with gadgets hinders students' socialization skills. They prefer being in the virtual world rather than interacting directly. Consequently, difficulties arise in building relationships with peers and teachers, and conflicts not infrequently occur due to a lack of ability to manage emotions and accept criticism healthily. To address this situation, the teacher has undertaken various efforts, ranging from providing personal approaches to gadget-addicted students, conveying the negative impacts directly, to establishing communication with parents to restrict gadget use at home. The school has also implemented a policy prohibiting students from bringing gadgets into the school environment. Furthermore, alternative activities have been provided to encourage social interaction and student creativity. Nonetheless, the enforcement of this policy is frequently confronted with challenges, particularly regarding parental involvement.

Not all parents possess sufficient awareness or time to supervise their children in using technology wisely. As a solution, it is recommended that the school take a more active role in providing education about gadget use to both students and parents. A strategy deemed effective

includes integrating technology into learning activities productively and purposely, rather than solely as a means of entertainment. Technology-based learning remains necessary, but its usage must be limited so that students do not rely on it excessively. A peer-group-based approach is also considered vital, as students tend to be influenced by their friends. A positive social environment can help shape healthy habits in utilizing technology. Great expectations are directed toward parents to be capable of guiding their children in daily gadget use. The role of parents is extremely vital in regulating screen time, selecting appropriate content, and setting an example in responsible technology use. Technology is fundamentally a beneficial tool in education; however, if not accompanied by proper guidance, gadgets can instead exert a negative impact on a child's character formation. Therefore, synergy among teachers, schools, and families serves as a crucial key to building a positive and resilient student character in this digital era.

CONCLUSION

Based on the results of the conversation with the sixth-grade homeroom teacher and supported by various studies, it can be concluded that excessive gadget use among elementary school students exerts a significant influence on character development and learning achievement. Students who do not utilize gadgets wisely tend to experience a decline in focus, learning motivation, and socialization skills, while demonstrating a lack of discipline, individualistic behavior, and difficulty managing emotions. Gadget addiction also causes students to easily become drowsy in class, less active in physical activities, and suffer a decline in academic achievement due to concentration difficulties and frequently forgetting the lesson materials. Furthermore, there are behavioral differences between male and female students regarding gadget use, where boys tend to be more aggressive and girls are more passive and easily anxious. Efforts undertaken by teachers and schools, such as digital education, gadget use restrictions, and collaboration with parents, are highly crucial to minimize the negative impacts of gadgets. Managing gadget use wisely and collaboratively among schools, teachers, and parents plays a primary role in supporting the growth of character and achievement of elementary school students in the digital era.

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