

The Relationship between Peers and Parental Control on *Problematic Smartphone Use*

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Abstract

Smartphone is a communication tool designed to facilitate human connectivity via cellular networks. However, various impacts are found in smartphone use, such as compulsive behavior, covering decreased productivity and poor academic performance in students. The research in this papaer examined the relationship between peers and parental control on problematic smartphone use using a correlational design and involving a sample of 317 Madrasah Tsanawiyah (MTs) or Islamic junior high school students. In collecting the data, some instruments were used, namely the Smartphone Addiction Scale (SAS), Peer Relation Scale (PRS), and Parental Bonding Instrument (PBI) which previously have been tested for validity and reliability. Following the collection, the data were analyzed using a hierarchical regression analysis. Findings indicated that peers and parental control had a partial relationship with problematic smartphone use. This finding has confirmed that peers and parental control relationship jointly gives greater contributions on problematic smartphone use rather than peers and problematic smartphone use only. Further results and limitations are discussed in the discussion section.

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INTRODUCTION

Covid-19 somehow urged social restrictions in daily life, causing all activities carried out online, even in learning and teaching activities at all levels from kindergarten to university. Smartphone is a communication tool designed to facilitate human connectivity via cellular networks equipped with applications that support human life needs (Wolf, 2015) in (Mulawarman, 2020).

Based on the data obtained by the Indonesian Internet Service Providers Association (2022), Indonesia population was 272.7 million in January 2022 with the internet users of 210 million or almost 70% of the total population. Meanwhile, on the island of Java there were 43.92% of internet users, nominating it to be the largest number of internet users using smartphones and computers among other islands. Meanwhile, the age of 13-18 years became the ones who used computer media the most, namely 9.39% and 90.61% in daily life. Then, the data from the Central Java Province Statistics Indonesia (BPS) in 2021 in Kab. Semarang had 75.64% smartphone users while 24.36% did not use smartphones, greater than in 2019 when 65% were smartphone users while 35% did not.

Excessive use of smartphones on social networking sites can significantly reduce students' academic performance by inducing cognitive impairment. Another opinion explains that problematic smartphone use is a habit that happens because of dependence on gadgets, Lin & Zhou (2022). Aljomaa et al, (2016) argue that problematic smartphone users tend to ignore work and study, isolate themselves from friends and family and remain attached to their smartphones.

A research by Ihsan in 2021 regarding the relationship between peer attachment and smartphone addiction resulted ($b = -0.092$, < 0.05). The relationship between peer attachment and smartphone addiction is also moderated by need to belong ($b=0.011$, $p < 0.05$). Peer attachment mediated by self-esteem has a greater influence (18.1%) than the relationship between peer attachment with need to belong as a

moderator (7.4%). He concludes that peer attachment is an important variable in preventing smartphone addiction in adolescents.

Aside from the previous theories, parental social control influences the use of smartphones in adolescents. Parents play an important role in educating children, especially students at secondary school. Adolescents aged 12 to 18 years are easily influenced by the outside world, so there needs to be social control from parents to prevent any bad influence by the outside world. Preventive social control is an effort by parents to prevent deviant behavior caused by smartphones.

Palar, Onibala, and Oroh (2018) in their research concludes that there is a relationship between the family's role in avoiding the negative impact of gadget use on children and children's behavior in using gadgets. Markustianto(2017) has revealed that if the role of the family is good, the children behavior in using gadgets will also be good, due to the provision of of guidance by parents on how to use gadgets appropriately and well.

From a guidance and counseling perspective, peer relationships and parental control of smartphone use can have different impacts depending on the existing circumstances and situations. First, peer relationships can influence a person's smartphone use. Second, parental control over smartphone use can also have positive and negative impacts on children and adolescents.

In this case, the influence of peers can make someone feel the need to always use a smartphone so that they are not left out or feel marginalized from their circle. Like a double-edged sword, peers can also provide positive support to limit smartphone use and encourage more useful social activities.

On the other hand, parental influence is significant in shaping healthy and moderate smartphone usage patterns. However, if parental control is too strict and not selective, this can make children feel pressured and seemingly have no privacy to carry out other activities besides using a smartphone. On the other hand, if parents are too passive and do not provide clear boundaries, children may use smartphones

excessively, have mental, and physical health risks. Therefore, the purpose of this research was to analyze the relationship between peers and parental control on problematic smartphone use. It was expected that it can provide a meaningful contribution in guidance and counseling services towards efforts to counter students' maladaptive behavior, namely problematic smartphone use.

METHODS

This research used an ex post facto correlational design. Its population was all MTs students in Semarang Regency, totaling 3.295 students. This research uses an ex post facto correlational design. The population is all MTs students in Semarang Regency, totaling 3.295 students. while the research sample was 317. In details, these people were chosen using a cluster random sampling technique.

In collecting the data, three instruments were used. First, there was the Smartphone Addiction Scale (SAS) Kwon (2013), which consists of 48 items. It was assed using a 5 point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree). The reliability test results of this instrument obtained the alpha value of 0.952, while the item validity test ranged between 0.314 - 0.762. The second instrument was the Parental Bonding Instrument (PBI) scale Parker (2007), which consists of 25 items. It was assed using a 5 point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree). The reliability test results of this instrument obtained the alpha value of 0.924, while the item validity test ranged between 0.416 - 0.811. The last instrument was the Peer Relations Scale (PRS), which consists of 29 items. It was assed using a 5 point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree). The reliability test results of this instrument obtained the alpha value of 0.955, while the item validity test ranged between 0.310 - 0.795. Following the data collection, the hierarchical regression analysis was conducted with two models. The first model was the relationship between peers and problematic smartphone use, and the second model was the relationship between peers and parental control with problematic smartphone

use. This process was carried out with the help of IBM SPSS Statistics 26.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section starts with the description of the variables data following the data collection. First, the mean of problematic smartphone use was 127.50 (SD = 29.34). It showed that almost 50% of students experienced problematic smartphone use. Second, the mean of parental control was 75.06 (SD = 8.07), and peer control was 82.85 (SD = 11.68). A fairly high tendency for problematic smartphone use was found along with the low level of relationship between peers and parental control.

Tabel 1. Data Description

	N	M	SD
Problematic smartphone use	31 7	127.5 0	29.34
Parental control	31 7	75.06	8.07
Peers	31 7	82.85	11.68

Hierarchical regression analysis was carried out to determine the relationship between parental and peer control on problematic smartphone use. The complete results of the regression analysis are presented in the table 2.

The analysis results indicate a relationship between peer influence and parental control on problematic smartphone use ($R = .58, p < .01$). Furthermore, there is a relationship between peer influence and problematic smartphone use ($R = .55, p < .01$). Specifically, with regard to peer influence related to problematic smartphone use, it is related to the aspect of familiarity with problematic smartphone use ($\beta = .17, p < .01$). Next, it is related to the aspect of trust in problematic smartphone use ($\beta = .70, p < .01$). Therefore, trust and familiarity predict an increase in problematic smartphone use.

The next analysis results show a relationship between parental control and problematic smartphone use ($R = .03, p < .01$).

Specifically, the aspects of parental control related to problematic smartphone use include strict parental supervision, which has a negative correlation with problematic smartphone use ($\beta = -.10$, $p < 0.5$), and parental concern, which is negatively correlated with problematic smartphone use ($\beta = -.31$, $p < 0.05$).

Based on the data collected in this research, the level of problematic smartphone use was in the medium and high categories. These findings have confirmed and added to the list of

problematic phenomena in smartphone use (Su et al, 2022).

A phenomenon that often occurs with this problem is excessive use of smartphones, which in turn has an impact on other problems such as cyber-oriented relationships, lack of direct social relationships, disruption of daily activities, disturbed physical health, and changes in mood that cause problems. disturbed mental health problems (Li et al., 2019; Sitepu, 2019).

Tabel 2. Results Of Hierarchical Regression Analysis

Prediktor	Model 1			Model 2		
	β	t	p	β	t	p
Familiarity	.18	3.16	<.01	.178	3.15	<.01
Popularity	-.03	-.53	>.05	-.03	-.49	>.05
Trust	.42	6.70	<.01	.70	7.34	<.01
Insight	.49	.90	>.05	.081	1.52	>.05
Care						
Strict supervision				-.31	-3.39	<.01
				-.10	-2.05	<.05
ΔR					.03	
ΔR^2					.04	
ΔF					8.97	
p					<.01	
R	.55				.58	
R^2	.30				.34	
F	33.96				26.78	
p	<.01				<.01	

The problematic smartphone use found in the subjects was in line with previous research findings that the period that may risk for problematic smartphone use is adolescence (Son, 2022). Adolescents are the age group that attain the most impact because at adolescence, individuals are still at the stage of forming their identity and preparing for life towards adulthood.

It was also found that more than fifty percent of students reported low parental control. Similar to peers, almost fifty percent students reported low peer relationships. These two factors are inseparable from the source of the research findings regarding the identification of problematic smartphone use. Lack of parental

control and peer relationships ultimately triggers increased smartphone use (Cheng, 2022)..

The findings have showed that peers were significantly negatively related to problematic smartphone use. These results support a previous research which explains that peers contribute quite a lot to preventing smartphone use among students (Syarifuddin, 2021). This implies that students who have meaningful peer relationships tend to reduce smartphone use.

Several investigations state that the reasons of many students use smartphones excessively are due to the search for entertainment, or even as an outlet for the negative emotions they are experiencing (Aljomaa et al., 2016; Kim & Koh, 2018). The presence of peers with meaningful

relationships will divert students from using smartphones excessively, and choosing peers to express the negative emotions they are feeling. Conversely, when students perceive low competence in close friendships and/or intensively check their smartphones, they may be especially vulnerable to developing problematic smartphone use over time (Su, S., Larsen, H., Cousijn, J., Wiers, R. W., & Van Den Eijnden, R. J. J. M. 2022).

Another previous research has confirmed that trust is the most important indicator that influences smartphone use (Sitepu, 2019). It is then followed by familiarity. It was reported that familiarity had a significant negative relationship with problematic smartphone use (Li, C., Liu, D., & Dong, Y. 2019). The existence of good conditions in these two aspects among peers has a good influence on problems in using smartphones. The findings of this research implies that the better the relationship with friends, the lower the problematic smartphone use that students may experience. Oppositely, bad relationships with peers will trigger the possibility of problematic smartphone use.

This research identified the relationship between parental control and problematic smartphone use. It was found that there was a significant negative relationship between those two variables. It is in accordance with a previous research which concludes that when the relationship between parents and children increases, smartphone addiction will decrease (Lin et al., 2017). Even after controlling student's demographic factors, time of use, and friendship factors, a good relationship with parents serves the best control on reducing problematic smartphone use, especially smartphone addiction (J. Lee et al., 2018).

Parental control with active management performs better for controlling problematic smartphone use, for example, parents explain and talk over their children the pros and cons of smartphone use (Beaton et al., 2015). Good relationships and communication between parents and children motivate children to have an open mind and voluntarily describe their behavior to parents (Stattin & Kerr, 2000). Here,

problems that may arise from using smartphones can be avoided. The concern felt by the child from parental control provides an increased sense of emotional warmth, punishment tends to be less, thus leading to an increased sense of happiness and comfort.

Previous studies have reported that negative parenting styles can increase the risk of smartphone addiction (Kalaitzaki & Birtchnell, 2014). Accordingly, this research showed that negative parental control, namely strict supervision, is the main predictor for high levels of problematic smartphone use. Therefore, students who are stressed or strictly protected early in life appear to be more susceptible to maladaptive behavior later in life, leading to problematic smartphone use. These results can be deeply understood using problem-behavior theory. Specifically, the perceived surrounding environment has a big influence on individual behavior, especially the individual's closest environment, namely parents. Strict parenting can increase the risk of children seeking friendship through excessive smartphone use. Therefore, the more an individual perceives parental interference and distrust, the more antagonistic and problematic behavior may be triggered (Lian, L., You, X., Huang, J., & Yang, R. 2016).

In the hierarchical regression analysis of models one and two, there found a significant increase when peer influence was added to parental control on problematic smartphone use. Even though no previous research has explained the influence of peers and parental control on problematic smartphone use, the findings of previous researchers by (Lin et al., 2017; Syarifuddin, 2021) have confirmed that it is easier to understand this relationship. The findings of this research can be understood that when students have good relationships with peers and parental control with active management, the risk of problems caused by smartphone use can be reduced.

Peers and parental control are the core environments in which students grow and develop. The meaningful relationships that students feel with their peers will make them feel

that their presence is not ignored by their friends. Even students will feel that their friends will need their presence. In the same way, in relationships with parents, parental control given to students means attention and understanding, thereby providing a common basis for controlling their behavior. Active involvement of parents in student activities will increase students' desire to participate in accordance with parental guidance, including the use of smartphones (Ko, M. et al., 2015). On the other hand, a minimum number of peer relationships and harsh parenting patterns increase problematic smartphone use (Jahng, 2019). Thus, the disclosure of students arising from the presence of peers and parental control influences problematic smartphone use.

Unfortunately, it was reported that the more parental control felt by students, the higher the problematic use (Lee, J. et al, 2018). In this case, the researchers assume excessive parental control as not mental support for students. Children tend to hide their bad behavior rather than improving it when perceiving parental control of bad behavior, (Stattin & Kerr, 2000). In addition, the perception of limited parental control causes conflict between parents and children and has no effect on preventing smartphone addiction (Lee, J. et al, 2018).

This research has presented important information that peer support and parental control had an impact on problematic smartphone use. There are different results when students' perceptions were felt, both positive and negative. The researchers considered that guidance and counseling teachers or counselors play a role in training students' abilities to develop their positive perspectives, particularly how students are able to seek wisdom from the positive and negative treatment they experience from peers and parents. With a positive perspective, students will find it easier to create meaningful friendships. The relationship with parents, as the first environment for them, plays an important role in children's growth and development. Moreover, creating a harmonious relationship will help parents direct their children's behavior. Thus, the presence of

guidance and counseling teachers facilitates the personal and social counseling is needed.

According to the findings, the future researches are suggested to further explore the possible impact of peers and parental control to be a predictor on problematic smartphone use. Also, other variables, such as gender may be considered to examine how male and female seemingly give various effects in every relationship available in the investigation.

In this way, it is suggested that school counselors explore the effectiveness of approaches or programs provided by guidance and counseling teachers in helping students develop a positive perspective on peer relationships and parental control so as to reduce problematic smartphone use.

CONCLUSION

This research has shared important information that peers are associated with problematic smartphone use. It even is getting stronger when parental control is involved. Based on the findings of this study, the future researches are recommended to involve gender which may provide different results between men and women. In terms of limitations, researchers did not collect data regarding what applications were installed on their smartphones, and explore negative emotions which have been mentioned as predictors of problematic smartphone use. Thus, it is expected that guidance and counseling teachers/counselors can provide counseling services to reduce students' maladaptive behavior.

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