

## **The Impact of Gadget Addiction on Mental Health Alpha Generation**

**Susan Nurlaelasari<sup>1</sup> Yulia Amanda<sup>2</sup> Tasya Avionita<sup>3</sup> Kokom Komalasari<sup>4</sup> Dede Iswandi<sup>5</sup>**

Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia<sup>1,2,3,4,5</sup>

Email: [susan.0412@upi.edu](mailto:susan.0412@upi.edu)<sup>1</sup> [yuliaamanda.29@upi.edu](mailto:yuliaamanda.29@upi.edu)<sup>2</sup> [tasyaavionita@upi.edu](mailto:tasyaavionita@upi.edu)<sup>3</sup>  
[kokom@upi.edu](mailto:kokom@upi.edu)<sup>4</sup> [dedeiswandipkn@upi.edu](mailto:dedeiswandipkn@upi.edu)<sup>5</sup>

### **Abstract**

This article discusses the factors causing gadget addiction in children, the impact of gadget addiction on children's mental health, especially in the alpha generation, and provides strategies or solutions to overcome it. The research method used is literature study and secondary data analysis from various trusted sources. Data was collected through a literature review including journals, scientific articles, and research reports from interviews and questionnaires. The results of the study indicate that one of the factors causing children to become addicted to gadgets is the lack of parental supervision and parenting which causes problems with children's physical and mental health. The solution to overcome this is to limit the use of gadgets in children, one of which is by implementing a picture timetable and google family link.

**Keywords:** Generation Alpha, Gadget Addiction, Mental Health



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### **INTRODUCTION**

In the increasingly developing digital era, technology, especially gadgets, has become an integral part of everyday life, especially for the Alpha generation who have a strong attachment to technology. Currently, parents do not hesitate to buy their children technological equipment such as computers, laptops, gadgets and others. (Harrison & McTavish, 2018). In public places, it is clear that the use of gadgets has become widespread among children from an early age, such as restaurants, supermarkets, and even other public places. These devices are used to play games and watch their favorite movies, and other digital activities. Children tend to adapt more easily to the digital world than the adults around them. Some parents are even proud of their children's ability to use gadgets and other digital technologies without worrying about the impact. (Munawar, et al., 2019). The impact of excessive gadget use can increase the risk of stress, anxiety, and depression in children. This is caused by various factors, such as pressure to stay connected to the digital world, pressure to maintain an online image, and pressure to continue updating information available from gadgets (Syifa et al., 2019). However, wise and healthy use of gadgets can also have a positive impact on improving children's learning abilities, such as faster and easier access to information, to stimulate children's development, and the ability to communicate and collaborate with classmates and teachers (Hidayat. A, 2020). Based on this, it is important for educators and parents to regulate and supervise the use of gadgets in children to stay healthy and support children's mental health. Based on the background description above, the author is interested in analyzing more deeply the factors causing gadget addiction in children, the impact of gadget addiction on children's mental health, especially in the alpha generation, and providing strategies or solutions to overcome it. Previous studies have indeed identified several negative impacts of gadget use, but the impact of gadget addiction on children's mental health, especially the alpha generation, has not been widely studied. Therefore, this study is expected to provide an important contribution in understanding more deeply the impact of gadget addiction on the alpha generation, and can provide appropriate recommendations to overcome its negative impacts.

## **Literature Review**

### **Gadget Addiction**

Gadget addiction or also known as gadget addiction is a condition where a person experiences excessive dependence on the use of gadgets, such as smartphones, tablets, laptops, and other electronic devices. This condition is increasingly common in this digital era, where technology is increasingly sophisticated and facilitates access to information and social interaction. Gadget addiction can have a negative impact on a person's physical and mental health, as well as affect productivity and quality of life. Based on BPS data, the number of gadget users for early childhood in Indonesia is 33.44%, with details of 25.5% of child users aged 0-4 years and 52.76% of children aged 5-6 years. This does not rule out the possibility that it can trigger gadget addiction in children. Gadget addiction in children is a phenomenon that is increasingly affected in this digital era. According to a survey by the Indonesian Child Protection Commission, more than 71.3% of school-age children have gadgets and play them for quite a long time in a day and as many as 79% of child respondents are allowed to play gadgets other than for studying. However, sometimes this is not realized by parents, so that many children are addicted to gadgets to the point that children who spend too much time in front of the screen often experience various problems, ranging from sleep disorders, decreased academic achievement to social and emotional problems. For children, gadget use has a major impact on social and emotional development. Excessive use of gadgets will have a negative impact on children's social and emotional development. This is indicated by symptoms of children becoming withdrawn, sleep disorders, liking to be alone, violent behavior, fading creativity, and the threat of cyberbullying (Fatimah, et al., 2024). If children's gadget use is not limited, their socialization abilities can be disrupted. This is in line with the opinion of (Situmorang 2021, p. 5) which states that a child's inability to socialize is certainly influenced by the development of their social aspects. The inability to socialize is not only experienced by adults, early childhood also experiences it. This inability to socialize is partly influenced by excessive use of gadgets (Hidayat, et al., 2023).

### **Generation Alpha**

Generation Alpha (Gen A) is a group of children born from the millennial generation. This term was first introduced by social researcher and speaker, Mark McCrindle, through his writing in Business Insider in 2011. Generation Alpha is the successor to Generation Z, including children born after 2010, precisely between 2011 and 2025. They are known as a generation that is very familiar with digital technology and are considered the most intelligent generation compared to previous generations (McCrindle, M. (2019). Socially, according to Dr. Neil Aldrin, M.Psi., a psychologist, Generation Alpha tends to have a more pragmatic and materialistic nature because they grew up in the midst of an era of technological advancement. They tend to think practically, pay less attention to values, and generally show a more selfish attitude than previous generations. This rapid technological development will certainly affect various aspects of their lives, from the way they learn, educational materials at school, to social interactions in everyday life. (Novianti, R., Hukmi, H., & Maria, I. 2019). Generation Alpha is a generation born and raised in an era of rapid technological advancement, which significantly shapes their way of thinking, lifestyle, and social interactions. This generation is known as a group that is very familiar with digital technology from an early age, making them the most connected and informed generation compared to previous generations. However, the ease of access to technology also affects their characteristics, which tend to be more pragmatic, materialistic, and practical in thinking, but often ignore traditional values such as empathy, togetherness, and social concern. With all these characteristics, Generation Alpha presents a great challenge in terms of instilling moral and

social values, but at the same time offers extraordinary potential in utilizing technology for innovation, creativity, and progress in the future.

### **Mental Health**

Mental health is a condition in which an individual achieves well-being as reflected in his/her ability to realize his/her potential, cope with life's pressures in various situations, work productively, and contribute to his/her community. Quoting the WHO jargon, "there is no health without mental health," which shows that mental health should be considered as important as physical health. Understanding that health is a balanced condition between oneself, others, and the environment can help society and individuals maintain and improve it. (WHO, 2001). According to (Yusuf, 2011) in (Fakhriyani, DV 2019) explains that mental health is related to several aspects. First, how a person thinks, feels, and lives his/her daily life. Second, how a person views himself/herself and others. Third, how a person evaluates various alternative solutions and makes decisions in dealing with the situation at hand. Mental health is a condition that encompasses a person's overall well-being, as seen from an individual's ability to realize their potential, deal with life's pressures, and live life productively. Mental health also involves the ability to cope with stress, adapt to change, and make the right decisions in dealing with various life situations. Individuals with good mental health can work effectively, achieve success, and make positive contributions to the community or society around them. However, if mental health is disturbed or neglected, negative impacts can appear in various forms, such as anxiety, depression, or other disorders. This condition can hinder an individual's ability to cope with everyday problems, interact with others positively, and live life productively. (Fakhriyani, DV 2019).

### **Causative factor**

According to our resource person, Mrs. Eka Fauziyya Zulnida, S.Psi, M.Psi, Psychologist., one of the factors causing why the alpha generation is susceptible to gadget addiction is because we have entered 4.0 and soon we will enter the 5.0 era, they were born in the midst of modernization where technology has developed rapidly and they have started to come into contact with technology since they were born. The second is because parents have introduced gadgets to children since they were small, even before the child is one year old, or maybe the stimulation given to children is also through gadgets. So that the alpha generation becomes a generation that inevitably has to come into contact with technology and is susceptible to addiction. Gadget addiction in children has the potential to cause serious negative impacts, so it is important to prevent it as early as possible. There are several factors that cause addiction to technology, especially gadgets in children, namely:

1. the influence of inappropriate parenting patterns. Often, parents unknowingly become the first to introduce gadgets to children. Because of the busyness of parents, many parents give their children access to gadgets without implementing adequate boundaries. There are several challenges faced by parents that can cause children to become addicted to gadgets, namely because of busyness, lack of education, and poor role models.
2. Neuroscience Factors. Excessive use of gadgets can stimulate the reward system in the brain, increasing the production of dopamine, an neurotransmitter that regulates feelings of pleasure. Positive experiences from gadgets, such as playing games or watching videos, trigger children to continue repeating these activities, creating a pattern of dependency. And low self-control also contributes to this addiction. Children, who are still developing, often do not have the skills to manage gadget usage time or recognize boundaries. When faced with stimuli from gadgets, they may find it difficult to resist, making them even more susceptible to addiction (Firdaus, W., & Marsudi, MS 2021).

3. Addictive Technology and Design. Many applications and games are designed with elements that intentionally make users addicted, such as reward systems, constant notifications, and interactive features that stimulate dopamine. This design encourages excessive use of technology and makes it difficult for children to stop. (Zaini & Soenarto, 2019).
4. Situational factors can influence gadget addiction among the alpha generation. An uncomfortable atmosphere, such as an unconducive home environment or social pressure at school, can encourage the alpha generation to seek escape through gadgets. Feelings of loneliness and sadness can also contribute, where children feel isolated and use gadgets as a way to cope with these negative emotions. Stress, both from the demands of studying and social interactions, can make children turn to gadgets as a form of entertainment or temporary escape. During school holidays, children also tend to spend more time playing with gadgets due to the lack of activities that can distract them. This creates an opportunity for them to get caught up in excessive gadget use.
5. Environmental Factors, Generation Alpha grows up in an environment where digital technology is an integral part of everyday life, so they have extensive access to digital devices from a very young age. This condition allows them to master technology quickly, but also carries a significant risk of dependence. Based on research published by uswitch.com, it shows that more than 25% of children worldwide have gadgets before they are 8 years old. One in three children start using gadgets when they are 3 years old and one in ten children enjoy gadgets at a younger age, namely 2 years old (Murdaningsih & Faqih, 2014).

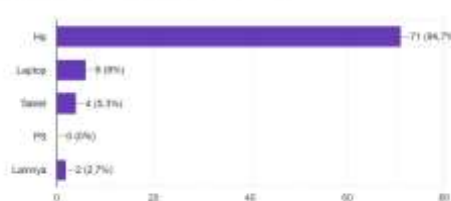
## METHODS

This study uses a descriptive qualitative method that describes the impact of gadget addiction on children's mental health. The data collection technique was carried out based on the results of interviews, questionnaires, observations, and literature studies in the form of literature reviews and previous research results. Researchers collected relevant data from book analysis, journals, and information from related sources. The sample of the questionnaire that we distributed were alpha generation parents whose children were addicted to gadgets, while the expert sources that we interviewed were UPI psychology lecturers.

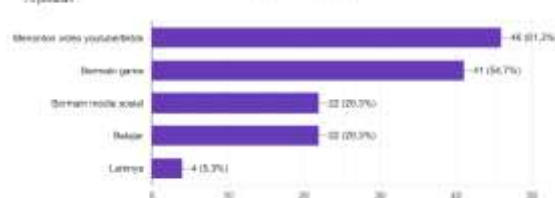
## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Based on the results of the questionnaire that we distributed to 75 parents of the alpha generation, the type of gadget most often used by the alpha generation is a cellphone, and their most frequent activity is watching YouTube and TikTok videos.

Apa jenis gadget yang paling sering digunakan oleh anak Anda?  
75 jawaban



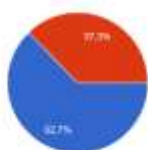
Apa aktivitas utama anak Anda saat menggunakan gadget?  
75 jawaban



In addition, as many as 62.7% of respondents also agreed that their children showed dependence on gadgets (such as being restless when not holding gadgets), and experienced behavioral changes after frequently using gadgets, such as becoming more angry, easily agitated, or less sociable.

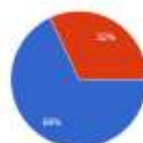


Apakah anak Anda menunjukkan ketergantungan pada gadget (seperti gelisah ketika tidak memegang gadget)?  
75 responden



Ya  
Tidak

Apakah Anda melihat perubahan perilaku anak anda setelah sering menggunakan gadget? (Seperti: menjadi lebih pemarah, mudah gelisah, atau kurang bersosialisasi)  
75 responden



Ya  
Tidak

According to our source, Mrs. Eka Fauziyya Zulnida, S.Psi, M.Psi, Psychologist., Gadget addiction is the result of parenting or family factors that do not provide limits on gadget use for children. This is because each age range of children has a minimum number of hours of gadget use, which should be around 2 hours per day for elementary school children. However, because there is no time limit for gadget use for children, it causes children to become addicted to gadgets because they access technology for more than 2 hours per day without any time limit from their parents. This is exacerbated by the existence of algorithms in technology that make children curious about what they watch/access. Giving gadgets to children since childhood due to technological developments and easy access to technology supported by Addictive Platform design, lack of time limits for gadget use, dominance of an environment that supports gadget use every day, lack of alternative physical activities, and low self-control make children increasingly susceptible to gadget addiction. When parental supervision is lacking, children often have the freedom to access applications and games that are designed to be addictive.

The implications of various factors causing technology addiction in Generation Alpha, including inappropriate parenting, neuroscience factors, technology factors, internal factors, situational factors, and external factors, have a significant impact on children's mental health and well-being. From a neuroscience perspective, excessive stimulation from gadgets can disrupt the balance of brain chemistry, and emphasizes the need for wise screen time management. The appeal of technology designed to maintain user attention indicates the need for regulation in application development so as not to harm children's physical and mental health. Addiction to technology has an impact on mental and emotional health, which ultimately has an impact on overall physical health. Stress and anxiety due to addiction can weaken the immune system, making them more susceptible to illness, distracting children from activities that should support their physical, mental, and emotional development. To overcome this, an active role is needed for parents in managing the time of technology use and increasing creative and physical activities, such as using picture timetables and family link applications to balance digital and non-digital activities, so that the negative impacts of technology can be minimized. Table 1 shows the analysis and summary of articles documented on the Impact of Gadget Addiction on Children's Mental Health included in this study.

**Table 1. Research Results on the influence of gadgets on children's mental health**

Research and Years	Journal	Research result
Hasanah, Muhimmatul. 2017	<i>Indonesian Journal of Islamic Early Childhood Education</i>	The use of gadgets in children can have an impact on physical changes and psychological impacts, including avoiding socializing with the environment, tending to choose less good relationships with parents, getting bored easily, and having difficulty concentrating on real life.
Damayanti, Ahmad, & Bara, 2020	<i>Dignity</i>	The negative impact of gadget addiction affects children's psychological health, which is characterized by an increasing desire to continue using gadgets and discomfort or anger when required to

		stop using them. This dependence can lead to various psychological problems, such as attention disorders, difficulty concentrating, and decreased ability to interact socially.
Aprilaini, DL, & Sari, RO (2023)	<i>Multidisciplinary Scientific Journal</i>	Gadget addiction in children can have a significant impact on their mental health. Some of the impacts that arise can trigger anxiety and depression, caused by social pressure, comparing oneself with others on social media, and difficulty in coping with stress. These impacts have the potential to affect the emotional and psychological well-being of children.
Kamaruddin, I., Leuwol, FS, Putra, RP, Aina, M., Suwarma, DM, & Zulfikhar, R. (2023).	<i>Journal on Education</i>	The impacts of gadget addiction can affect children's mental health, such as reduced concentration, increased anxiety and depression, and decreased levels of happiness. In addition, excessive use of gadgets can also reduce children's motivation to learn, because they are more interested in gadgets than in learning activities. Therefore, it is important for parents and teachers to supervise and limit children's gadget use, as well as provide alternative activities that can improve their mental health and learning motivation.
Putri, LM, Febrina, C., & Mariyana, R. (2022)	<i>REAL in Nursing Journal (RNJ)</i>	Most gadget users reported having trouble sleeping, anger, and depression. Teenagers often spend time until late at night using gadgets, so they are at risk of becoming more emotional and tend to rebel, which causes them to face mental health problems due to excessive gadget use.

Based on the table above, the impact of gadget addiction on the mental health of Generation Alpha children can cause decreased concentration, increased anxiety and depression, and decreased levels of happiness. Generation Alpha children, who grow up in a highly connected digital environment, are more susceptible to impaired concentration. In addition, gadget addiction can also increase anxiety and depression in Generation Alpha children. Social pressure caused by social media often makes them compare themselves to others, which can trigger feelings of inferiority or anxiety. In addition, excessive connectivity to the virtual world can also cause social isolation, increase stress, and worsen their mood. These feelings of anxiety and depression are further exacerbated by the lack of quality sleep due to continuous use of gadgets. The decline in happiness levels is also an impact that can be felt by Generation Alpha children. Although they may feel happy or satisfied when connected to gadgets, they often feel less satisfied with their real lives. Deeper social interactions and real-world activities may feel less interesting compared to digital entertainment, which can reduce their feelings of happiness in everyday life. Overall, gadget addiction can have a negative impact on the mental health of Generation Alpha children, affecting their emotional well-being, and disrupting their overall development. (Kamaruddin, I., et al., 2023). In addition, gadget

addiction can also trigger rebellious behavior, reflecting an increasing dependence on technology. Overall, these impacts disrupt the development process of Generation Alpha children, both emotionally, socially, and psychologically.

### **Solution Implementation**

There are several ways that can be applied to prevent technology addiction, especially gadgets in children, including by 1) Being a good example for children. Parents are expected to be able to provide a good example to their children, because children are "good imitators". (Ministry of Health, 2023). 2) Diverting to other activities that make children happy such as cooking or gardening together, this is in line with the solution offered by one of the alpha generation parents who has a child addicted to gadgets. 3) Limiting the time children spend playing gadgets, one of which is by implementing *picture timetable* (Hidayatul & Madyawati, 2023), and Google Family Link. This application allows parents to monitor and manage their children's gadget usage, including time limits, content filters, and application usage settings. This application also provides reports on children's gadget usage to parents, so that parents can monitor and manage gadget usage effectively (Utama et al., 2020). Decide on a schedule for when and how long children can use gadgets, choose applications according to their age and limit the time so that children do not play too long and avoid addiction so that children can interact and socialize with their environment. (Imron, 2018). 4) Provide opportunities for children to play with their peers outside, to avoid gadget addiction, parents should provide opportunities for children to play and socialize with their friends outside the home, divert children's attention from gadgets, help children communicate more with their surroundings and peers, and encourage children to interact directly with their friends so that their social interactions are maintained. (RA & Diana, 2023). 5) Accompany and supervise children when playing gadgets. One strategy in overcoming gadget addiction in children lies in the role of parents in accompanying, supervising, controlling, and limiting gadget use in children. Parents must be directly involved in accompanying their children when playing gadgets, and controlling the use of these gadgets by supervising what children access or do. This is considered effective because by accompanying, supervising, and limiting children when using gadgets directly, children will feel that they receive more affection and attention from their parents so that children will feel more comfortable being close, playing, and communicating with their parents than playing gadgets. (RA & Diana, 2023). Based on the results of the study (Ar Rais & Aprianti, 2021) it was also revealed that the role of parents in accompanying, establishing communication, providing opportunities, supervising, providing motivation, and directing children can reduce the intensity of gadget use so that gadget addiction in children can be overcome.

### **CONCLUSION**

Based on The results of the research that has been conducted, the alpha generation is a generation that has great potential to experience gadget addiction and impact their mental health. This is because the alpha generation is a generation that born and raised in an era of rapid technological advancement, which significantly shapes their way of thinking, lifestyle, and social interactions. This generation is known as a group that is very familiar with digital technology from an early age, making them the most connected and informed generation compared to previous generations. The implications of various factors causing technology addiction in Generation Alpha, including inappropriate parenting, neuroscience factors, technology factors, internal factors, situational factors, and external factors, have a significant impact on children's mental health and well-being. the impact of gadget addiction on the mental

health of Generation Alpha children can cause decreased concentration, increased anxiety and depression, and decreased levels of happiness. There are several ways that can be applied to prevent addiction to technology, especially gadgets, in children, including being a good example for children, diverting them to other activities that make children happy, such as cooking or gardening together, limiting the time children spend playing with gadgets, one of which is by implementing... *picture timetable* and google family link, as well as giving children the opportunity to play with their peers outside.

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