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Identification of gadget usage patterns and their impact on children's mental health using a local cultural approach in Ciamis Regency

Dini Nurbaeti Zen¹, Daniel Akbar Wibowo², Asep Wahyudi³, Irfan Permana⁴,
Bunga Maratun Nailla⁵, Septian Firmansyah⁶, Nina Deswinta⁷

^{1,3,5,6,7}Program Studi Keperawatan Fakultas Ilmu Kesehatan, Universitas Galuh, Ciamis, Indonesia

⁴Program Studi Ners Fakultas Ilmu Kesehatan, Universitas Galuh, Ciamis, Indonesia

ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
<p><i>Article history:</i></p> <p>Received Nov 30, 2025 Revised Dec 3, 2025 Accepted Dec 11, 2025</p>	<p>The development of digital technology has brought significant changes to children's behavior, including in Ciamis Regency. Gadgets such as smartphones and tablets are now part of children's daily lives, both for entertainment and learning. However, excessive use without parental supervision can have various negative impacts on children's mental health, such as sleep disturbances, emotional changes, and decreased social interaction. This study aims to identify gadget usage patterns and their impact on children's mental health, as well as explore the potential of local cultural values as a promotive and preventive approach in maintaining children's psychosocial balance in the digital era. This study uses mixed methods with an explanatory sequential design, namely a quantitative analysis is carried out first to map the conditions of gadget use and mental health of school-aged children, then continued with a qualitative approach to explain the quantitative findings in more depth. In the quantitative stage, 60 children aged 7-12 years in Ciamis Regency were selected as respondents from the educational units that served as the research location. The instruments used were a questionnaire on gadget usage patterns and a mental health assessment instrument. Data analysis was carried out descriptively, cross-tabulation, and continued with ANOVA tests to determine the effect of gadget use on children's mental health. The results of the study showed that the majority of children were in the 9-11 year age range, a period of cognitive and psychosocial development that is highly sensitive to environmental stimulation. Gadget usage patterns showed that 50% of children were in the moderate usage category, while 36.7% were in the problematic usage category. The duration of gadget use was dominated by more than three hours per day with main activities such as watching YouTube, accessing TikTok, playing online games, and communicating via WhatsApp. Factors triggering high gadget use include busy parents, low supervision, and the use of gadgets as a tool to calm children. In terms of mental health, it was found that 43.3% of children were in the problematic category and 40% were in the borderline category, indicating a fairly concerning condition. Frequently reported symptoms included sleep disturbances, irritability, anxiety, decreased concentration, and withdrawal from social interactions. ANOVA analysis showed a p-value = 0.000, indicating a significant influence between gadget usage patterns and mental health. In other words, the more intense gadget use, the higher the risk of children experiencing mental health disorders. These findings align with previous research showing a strong link between excessive digital device use and increased symptoms of anxiety,</p>
<p><i>Keywords:</i></p> <p>Culture Gadget Usage Patterns Mental Health School Age Children</p>	

depression, and social dysfunction in children and adolescents (Holmes et al., 2021; Odgers & Jensen, 2020). The qualitative phase was conducted through in-depth interviews with 21 informants consisting of parents and teachers. The analysis technique used was thematic analysis. The qualitative results revealed two major themes: (1) the emergence of psychological symptoms due to excessive gadget exposure and (2) changes in children's social behavior. Informants described that children became irritable when asked to stop playing with gadgets, were less interested in physical activities, and reduced interaction with peers. They preferred digital activities to traditional games or studying. Interviews also showed that local values such as *silih asih* (compassion), *silih asah* (grooming), and *silih asuh* (caregiving) are still recognized, but have not been consistently integrated into parenting patterns and therefore have not been able to become a strong protective factor against the impact of gadget use. Overall, this study concludes that school-age children in Ciamis Regency are a group vulnerable to mental health problems related to gadget use. The mixed methods used provide a comprehensive picture that problematic gadget use patterns are directly proportional to the increased risk of mental health problems. Therefore, family-based interventions, schools, and local wisdom are important strategies in reducing the negative impacts of gadget use and supporting children's mental development.

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Corresponding Author:

Dini Nurbaeti Zen,
Nursing Study Program, Faculty of Health Sciences,
Universitas Galuh,
Jalan Martadinata 104 46274 Ciamis West Java,
Email: dininurbaetizen@unigal.ac.id

INTRODUCTION

The development of information and communication technology has had a major impact on the lives of global society, including children (Munti & Syaifuddin, 2020), (Wiriany, Natasha, & Kurniawan, 2022). Gadgets such as smartphones and tablets have become a part of children's daily lives from an early age, serving as a medium for entertainment, learning, and social interaction. According to a report by the Indonesian Internet Service Providers Association, the internet penetration rate in Indonesia has reached 78.19%, with a significant increase in the 10-18 age group. Children in areas such as Ciamis Regency, who previously had relatively minimal digital access, are now experiencing changes in their behavior patterns due to easier access to digital technology. (Luddiana, 2024), (Resia, Pamungkas, & Rachman, 2024).

While gadget use can provide educational and entertainment benefits, uncontrolled, excessive, or unsupervised use can negatively impact children's mental health. A study by Twenge and Campbell showed that children and adolescents who spend more than 3 hours a day in front of screens are at higher risk of experiencing mood disorders, anxiety, and decreased social interaction (Ramadhani, Adrias, & Zulkarnaini, 2025), (Nahdiyah, Chairy, Fitria, & Volta, 2023). This is reinforced by a WHO report, which states that excessive digital media use in school-age children is correlated with increased sleep disturbances, impulsive behavior, and mild to moderate depressive symptoms (Amalia & Hamid, 2020), (WIJAYA, nd).

On the other hand, Ciamis Regency has rich local cultural potential, such as the values of compassion, caring, nurturing, community-based social interactions, and traditional activities that

are rich in educational and spiritual values (Tjeppy, 2021),(Rahmah, 2020). This local culture should be a protective factor in maintaining the balance between technological development and children's psychosocial health. However, in practice, these cultural values are starting to be marginalized by the dominance of global digital culture (Shobirin, Rosyadi, & Sari, 2025),(Sunarya & Ruswadi, 2024).

This situation shows a gap between children's technology consumption patterns and the minimal integration of local cultural values in efforts to foster mental health (Kusnanto et al., 2025),(Shobirin et al., 2025). Local culture-based intervention and education approaches are still very limited, even though these approaches have the potential to be more effective because they are contextual, close to the community, and widely accepted. Furthermore, data from the 2023 Basic Health Research (Riskesdas) shows that approximately 20% of school-age children in Indonesia experience symptoms of emotional disorders, while promotive and preventive interventions relevant to the local context are still minimal (Yuniati, KM, & Musliha Mustary, 2025),(Herliawati et al., 2024).

Therefore, it is important to conduct research that not only identifies gadget usage patterns and their impact on children's mental health, but also explores the potential of a local culture-based approach as a strategic effort that is relevant to the character of the Ciamis Regency community (Hidayat, 2019),(Okitasari, 2021). This research is important and urgent as a scientific basis for formulating educational policies, child care, and child health programs that are adaptive to the challenges of the times, but remain rooted in local cultural values (Praekanata, Virnayanthi, Juliangkary, & Ratnaya, 2024),(Daga, 2025).

RESEARCH METHOD

Research Design

This study uses a mixed method approach, combining quantitative and qualitative methods to gain a comprehensive understanding of gadget usage patterns on the mental health of school-age children with a local cultural approach.

- a. Quantitative Methods, the quantitative method in this study involved three main approaches. First, a cross-sectional survey was conducted with students to obtain representative data on gadget usage patterns and mental health (Nasution et al., 2025). Second, data collection was carried out using a questionnaire and analyzed descriptively and connected between the two variables (Fatimah, Abustang, & Supardi, 2022),(Prasetya, Kuryanto, & Hilyana, 2023).
- b. Qualitative Methods, the qualitative methods in this study include in-depth interviews, Focus Group Discussions (FGD), and classroom observations (Salwa, 2023),(Sumarmi, 2023). In-depth interviews with teachers and parents aimed to understand their perspectives and experiences regarding gadget usage patterns and children's mental health, using a cultural approach. Focused group discussions (FGDs) with student groups were conducted to explore their perceptions and experiences regarding gadget use in depth. Classroom observations were conducted to directly observe student interactions and gadget use in the context of learning, and the application of cultural values in everyday life.

Sample

The first participants in this study were 60 students of various school age levels (7-12 years) (Sari, 2021),(Salihin, Fakhrudin, & Sutarto, 2023). The selection of these students provides a broad overview of gadget usage patterns among school-aged children. The second participant was 15 parents of school-aged children, thus providing a more holistic perspective on parents' views on gadget usage patterns and mental health conditions as well as the application of local cultural values in children's daily lives. The third participant was 6 teachers, including class teachers and subject teachers, who were part of the study to provide views from the educator's perspective on gadget usage patterns and their impact on mental health and the application of local cultural values in children's lives. The sampling technique used was stratified random sampling, which was chosen to ensure that the samples taken reflected a balanced representation of various age

groups and genders. This approach helps reduce bias and ensures that the research results can be generalized to the entire population.

Data analysis

- Quantitative Analysis, the quantitative analysis began with descriptive statistics to describe gadget usage patterns among school-age children. Correlation analysis was used to examine the relationship between gadget usage patterns and children's mental health.
- Qualitative Analysis, involved thematic analysis of interview and focus group data using NVivo software, which helped identify key themes and patterns from the collected data. Open coding was used to identify key themes from the qualitative data, while constant comparative analysis helped develop relevant categories and subcategories.
- Data Integration, involved triangulating quantitative and qualitative results to validate and collaborate on findings, ensuring consistency and reliability. Furthermore, a conceptual model was developed explaining the relationship between gadget usage patterns and the mental health of school-aged children, using a local cultural approach.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Respondent Characteristics

The study involved 60 school-aged children (7-12 years) along with 21 key informants (parents and teachers).

Table 1. Overview of school-age children in Ciamis Regency

Child Age	Frequency	Percentage (%)
7 Years	5	8.3
8 Years	8	13.3
9 Years	11	18.3
10 years	15	25.0
11 years old	13	21.7
12 years old	8	13.3
Amount	60	100

Table 1 shows the age distribution of 60 schoolchildren who participated in the study in Ciamis Regency. Based on the table, the largest age group was 10 years old, with 15 children (25.0%). The next most dominant age groups were 11 years old, with 13 children (21.7%), and 9 years old, with 11 children (18.3%).

Meanwhile, the 8-year-old and 12-year-old children each had the same number of children, namely 8 children (13.3%). The age group with the lowest number was the 7-year-old, with 5 children (8.3%).

Overall, these data show that most respondents are in the 9-11 year age range, which is an active phase of cognitive and social development, making it relevant in the context of research on gadget use and children's mental health.

Table 2. Gender profile of school-age children in Ciamis Regency

Class	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Woman	26	43.3
Man	34	56.7
Amount	60	100

Table 2 illustrates the gender distribution of the 60 school-age children who participated in the study. The table shows that there were more male respondents than female respondents. There were 34 boys (56.7%), while there were 26 girls (43.3%).

Table 3. Friedman test results between use and no use of SENSE

Variation	p-Value	Information
NEX 1 with and without SENSE	0.001	There is a difference
NEX 2 with and without SENSE	0.001	There is a difference

NEX 3 with and without SENSE 0.007 There is a difference

The results of the Friedman test between NEX 1 with and without SENSE, NEX 2 with and without SENSE, and NEX 3 with and without SENSE obtained a p-Value <0.05. So the null hypothesis (Ho) is rejected, meaning there is a significant difference between images using SENSE and without using SENSE.

To see which has anatomical image information for the Lumbar, you can look at the mean rank results from the Friedman test between NEX 1 with and without SENSE, NEX 2 with and without SENSE, and NEX 3 with and without SENSE.

Table 4. Overview of the duration of gadget use among school-age children in Ciamis Regency

Gadget User Length	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1-12 months	19	31.7
13-24 months	9	15.0
25-48 months	10	16.7
49-60 months	11	18.3
61-72 months	10	16.7
> 72 months	1	1.7
Amount	60	100

Table 4 shows the distribution of gadget usage duration among school-age children in Ciamis Regency, with a total of 60 respondents. Based on the table, the group with gadget usage duration of 1–12 months is the most dominant, with 19 children (31.7%). This indicates that some children have only begun using gadgets intensively in the past year.

The next category is gadget use for 49–60 months, with 11 children (18.3%). Use for 25–48 months and 61–72 months each had 10 children (16.7%), indicating that some children have been using gadgets for 2–6 years.

Meanwhile, gadget use for 13–24 months was recorded in 9 children (15.0%). The longest duration, over 72 months, was only experienced by 1 child (1.7%), representing a very small percentage.

Overall, these data indicate that the majority of children have been exposed to gadget use for a period of 1–5 years, thus providing an overview of the potential medium-term impact on their behavior and mental health.

Children's Gadget Usage Patterns

a. Quantitative Findings

Table 5. Overview of gadget usage patterns among school-age children in Ciamis Regency

Gadget User Patterns	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Low	8	13.3
Currently	30	50.0
Troubled	22	36.7

Table 5 presents the distribution of gadget usage patterns among school-aged children in Ciamis Regency, with a total of 60 respondents. Based on the table, the majority of children fall into the moderate gadget usage pattern category, namely 30 children (50.0%). This indicates that half of the respondents use gadgets at a relatively moderate level but still require supervision. In addition, 22 children (36.7%) fall into the problematic gadget usage category. This percentage is quite high and indicates a tendency for uncontrolled gadget use, potentially disrupting children's learning activities, social interactions, and mental health. Meanwhile, only 8 children (13.3%) fall into the low usage pattern category, indicating that only a small portion use gadgets minimally. Overall, this data indicates that more than a third of children have problematic gadget usage patterns, requiring special intervention and guidance from parents, schools, and the community to minimize potential negative impacts.

- b. Qualitative Findings, based on the results of interviews regarding gadget usage patterns, two sub-themes were obtained, namely the duration and type of digital activity and lack of parental supervision.
- c. Duration and Type of Digital Activities, most children use gadgets for more than 3 hours per day. The dominant usage time occurs after school until the evening, especially when parents are working or busy at home. The most common types of digital activities are watching YouTube, playing online games, and using social media (especially TikTok and WhatsApp). This is in accordance with the following information statements: (a) "When he gets home from school he immediately takes his cellphone, sometimes watching YouTube while eating. It can last until the evening, if I don't remind him." (b) "Every day it's definitely more than three hours. Especially when I'm at the office, my grandmother and I like to give him a cellphone so he doesn't get fussy. Usually he opens TikTok or YouTube." (c) "My child plays with gadgets most often after taking a bath in the evening until he goes to bed. Usually he watches videos and plays online games with his friends. If I'm busy, the time is longer." (d) "If you count it, it's more than three hours a day. He often plays with his cellphone after school because I'm still out of work. He often opens YouTube and WhatsApp to chat with his friends." (e) "My child uses his old phone almost every day. It starts after school and lasts until dinner. He mostly checks TikTok and plays online games. When I have homework, it's even harder to get him off his phone."
- d. Lack of Parental Supervision, the majority of parents do not consistently monitor gadget usage time, mainly due to limited time and understanding of digital impacts. (a) "Sometimes I just let it be, as long as it's quiet... I have to cook and work too." (b) "I sometimes don't have time to supervise my child because there's a lot of work at home. So my child often plays with his cellphone for longer than the limit I set." (c) "If I'm working or tired, I just let him use his cellphone. Sometimes I don't realize that the time has passed long ago. And my child has a lot of homework to do so I'm not too worried." (c) I want to supervise, but I'm often overwhelmed. If I'm busy working, he plays with his gadget by himself and sometimes I don't know how long."

This trend is also related to the lack of parental supervision in monitoring children's digital activities. Most parents allow their children the freedom to use gadgets due to work commitments or a lack of understanding of the psychological impacts of excessive gadget use.

These findings align with research by Twenge & Campbell (2018), which found that the more frequently children use gadgets, the greater their likelihood of experiencing behavioral changes and psychological disorders. Therefore, these results can provide an important basis for designing family-based and local culture-based promotive-preventive interventions in the Ciamis region.

Thus, it can be concluded that excessive gadget use is a factor that requires serious attention from parents, schools, and local communities. Local culture-based approaches, such as *silih asih* (compassion), *silih asah* (grooming), and *silih asuh* (caregiving), can be a contextual solution to educate and limit gadget use in a more humanistic and sustainable manner (Purwanto, 2025),(Siswanto et al., 2024).

The Impact of Gadget Use on Children's Mental Health

- a. Quantitative Findings

Table 6. Overview of mental health in school-age children

Mental Health	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Normal	10	16.7
Borderline	24	40.0
Troubled	26	43.3

Table 6 shows the distribution of mental health conditions among school-age children in Ciamis Regency, based on an assessment of 60 respondents. The data shows that most children are not in optimal mental health.

The category with the highest number of children was mental health problems, with 26 children (43.3%). This finding indicates that nearly half of the respondents exhibited symptoms or behaviors suggestive of a mental health disorder requiring special attention.

Furthermore, 24 children (40.0%) were in the borderline category, a condition that straddles the line between normal and problematic. Children in this category are at risk of developing mental disorders if they do not receive adequate environmental support. Meanwhile, only 10 children (16.7%) were in the normal category, indicating that the proportion of children with mental health is relatively small compared to other categories.

Overall, these results illustrate that the majority of school-age children in Ciamis Regency are in a mental condition that requires further monitoring and intervention, especially in the context of increasing gadget use and decreasing local social and cultural activities.

Table 7. The relationship between gadget usage patterns and the mental health of school- age children in Ciamis Regency

Mental Health	Gadget Use						Total		p-value
	Low		Currently		Troubled		f	%	
	f	%	f	%	f	%			
Normal	5	62.5	5	16.7	0	0.0	10	16.7	0.000
Borderline	3	37.5	15	50.0	6	27.3	24	40.0	
Troubled	0	0	10	33.3	16	72.7	26	43.3	
Amount	8	100	30	100	22	100	60	100	

Table 7 illustrates the distribution of the relationship between gadget use patterns and the mental health of school-aged children. The data show a very clear pattern: the more problematic the gadget use pattern, the higher the proportion of children experiencing mental health disorders. Children with normal mental health were mostly from the low gadget use group, namely 5 children (62.5%). The others were from the moderate gadget use group (5 children or 16.7%). None of the children with problematic gadget use were in the normal mental health category.

The borderline category was most commonly found in children with moderate gadget use (15 children (50%). Furthermore, 6 children (27.3%) were in the problematic gadget use group, and 3 children (37.5%) were in the low use group.

Furthermore, it was found that 16 children (72.7%) were experiencing problematic gadget use. Ten children (33.3%) were in the moderate gadget use group, and none were in the low gadget use group.

Overall, this pattern shows a strong trend: the higher or more problematic the gadget use, the worse the child's mental health.

Table 8. ANOVA

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1 Regression	11,152	1	11,152	31,429	,000b
Residual	20,581	58	0,355		
Total	31,733	59			

a. Dependent Variable: Mental health

b. Predictors: (Constant), Use of gadgets

A p-value of 0.000 indicates a significant relationship between gadget usage patterns and the mental health of school-aged children in Ciamis Regency. This means that variations in mental health conditions can be statistically explained by differences in gadget usage levels. This means that the more problematic gadget usage patterns, the greater the child's risk of experiencing mental health disorders. This finding aligns with the data distribution in Table 3.2, where schools with problematic gadget use have the highest proportion of children in the problematic mental health category.

The results of the descriptive analysis and ANOVA together indicate that gadget usage patterns have a significant relationship and influence on children's mental health. The more uncontrolled gadget use, the greater the risk of children experiencing mental disorders such as anxiety, stress, or other maladaptive behaviors. These findings are important as a basis for

designing more effective, locally based interventions to maintain children's mental health in Ciamis Regency.

- b. Qualitative Findings, there were 2 sub-themes found from the interview results, including children's psychological symptoms and changes in social behavior.
- c. Psychological Symptoms of Children, some common symptoms observed were difficulty sleeping, mood swings, decreased concentration and focus in school, and anxiety when not using gadgets. However, positive impacts on children were also found, including increased knowledge. One statement from the information obtained included: "It's hard to get him to sleep, sometimes he's still playing on his phone in his room until 11 at night, then he wakes up late, and he's sleepy at school."
- d. Social Behavior Change, it was found that children preferred playing individually with devices rather than interacting with peers directly. One statement from the information obtained included: "I used to love playing hide-and-seek, but now I just stay quiet, locking myself in my room. If I ask you to go out, I say I'm tired."

Integration of Ciamis Local Cultural Approach

- a. Local Culture Is Still Relevant, local values such as mutual respect, mutual care, and mutual care are still understood and believed to be an important part of raising children, but they haven't been actively integrated into all daily family activities. "In the past, children were raised through mutual cooperation... all the neighbors helped look after them. Now that's rare, children play alone." "In the past, children did a lot of activities together, so mutual respect and mutual care were more tangible. Now, we spend more time at home with our gadgets, so those values aren't always visible in action." "I still uphold that local culture, but it hasn't been incorporated into all my daily activities. Sometimes I only convey it when advising my children."
- b. Cultural Activities as Interventions, cultural activities such as traditional games and neighborhood association (RT/RW) activities are believed to distract children from their gadget dependency, while strengthening their social and emotional bonds. "Kids now need group activities, like playing pole-and-ball or the 17th-anniversary competition. That can help them forget about their gadgets. "If I tell them to go outside to meet friends, they always say they're tired. In the past, their most enthusiastic activity was playing hide-and-seek." "My child rarely plays outside now. He says he'd rather play online games, saying they're more fun than playing with friends."

CONCLUSION

The results of this study indicate that school-age children in Ciamis Regency have a high level of gadget exposure, with the majority experiencing problematic usage patterns, which are then reflected in their mental health conditions, which are predominantly borderline to problematic. Statistical analysis proves a significant influence between gadget usage patterns and mental health, where the more uncontrolled gadget use, the higher the risk of children experiencing mental disorders. This finding emphasizes the importance of preventive interventions, and a parenting approach based on local Ciamis cultural values, such as strengthening social interaction, self-control, and emotional closeness within the family, has the potential to be an effective strategy to reduce the negative impact of gadget use on children's mental development. The findings of this study have important implications for efforts to prevent mental health disorders in school-age children in Ciamis Regency. First, the high level of gadget exposure and the large number of children categorized as problematic users indicate the need for digital literacy programs for parents and teachers, so that supervision of gadget use can be carried out more focused and consistently. Second, because children's mental health has been shown to be significantly influenced by gadget usage patterns, schools and community health centers need to integrate mental health screening and education on healthy gadget use into routine activities, especially for the most vulnerable age group of 9-12 years. Third, these results emphasize the importance of strengthening parenting patterns based on local wisdom in Ciamis, such as the values of *silih asah*,

silih asih, silih asuh, to increase emotional closeness, communication, and self-control in children, thereby becoming protective factors against the negative impacts of gadgets. Fourth, local governments can use these findings as a basis for developing child-friendly policies based on local culture, including the provision of traditional play spaces, campaigns for wise gadget use, and culture-based parenting training. Overall, this study underscores the need for cross-sector collaboration between families, schools, health services, and the government to build a healthy and culturally diverse growth and development environment for children in the digital era.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We would like to express our sincere gratitude to the LPPM Universitas Galuh for the support and funding provided for this research. Without LPPM's assistance and financial support, this research would not have been possible. The support we received has enabled us to conduct an in-depth analysis of gadget usage patterns and their impact on the mental health of school-aged children. We greatly appreciate LPPM Unigal's trust and investment in this research, which has contributed significantly to our understanding and addressing this important issue. We hope that the results of this research will provide significant benefits to society and can continue to encourage further research in the field of child and community health.

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