

BALANCING DIGITAL LIFE AND FAMILY HARMONY (A CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF CHALLENGES AND SOLUTIONS IN MEDAN MAIMUN)

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Article history: received 13 June 2024; revised 21 June 2024; accepted 20 July 2024

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.33751/jhss.v8i2.10207>

Abstract. *This research aims to analyze the impact of gadget use on family harmony on the Deli River Bank, Kampung Baru, Medan Maimun District. The research method used is a qualitative approach with descriptive techniques. Data was collected through in-depth interviews and observations of mothers in the area during the period March to June 2024. This research found that gadget use varies among family members, with smartphones being the most dominant media. Gadgets are used for various purposes such as seeking information, entertainment and communication. Although gadgets increase productivity and access to information, excessive use can reduce the quality of interactions between family members and disrupt daily routines. Therefore, it is important for families to find a balance between gadget use and direct interaction to maintain harmony and emotional well-being.*

Keywords: *gadgets; family harmony; media use; technology balance*

I. INTRODUCTION

The increase in the use of gadgets in daily life has become an unavoidable global phenomenon, including in the Deli River Bank, Medan Maimun District. According to data obtained from the Medan City Central Statistics Agency (BPS), more than 80% of households in this area have at least one gadget, such as a smartphone or tablet[1]. This technology has changed the way people communicate, work, and spend their free time. Research conducted by the University of North Sumatra in 2022 shows that 65% of residents in this area spend more than 4 hours per day using gadgets, both for work, education and entertainment purposes[2]. The impact of the increased use of gadgets is felt in the daily lives of families on the Deli River Bank. Many families report significant changes in their communication and interaction patterns. For example, a survey conducted by the Medan Communication and Informatics Service (Diskominfo) in 2023 found that 70% of respondents felt that the time spent interacting with family members directly had decreased due to the presence of gadgets[3]. Children and teenagers in these areas also show a high dependence on digital devices, which impacts their academic performance and mental well-being. Apart from that, research conducted by the Center for Social and Cultural Studies, Medan State University in 2023 revealed that excessive use of gadgets on the Deli River Bank has caused health problems, both physical and mental. The study shows that 45% of children and adolescents in the region experience sleep disturbances, concentration problems, and significantly increased levels of anxiety (U. Medan state, 2023). Parents in this area also express difficulties in regulating their children's gadget usage time, which often results in conflict within the family.

Conditions on the banks of the Deli River reflect the challenges faced by many urban communities in this digital era. The increased use of gadgets, although it brings many benefits in terms of access to information and communication, also gives rise to various social and health problems[5]. Therefore, there needs to be a joint effort from various parties, including the government, educational institutions and society itself to find the right balance between digital life and direct interaction within the family[6], [7], [8], [9]The balance between digital life and direct interactions within the family is an important aspect to maintain harmony and emotional well-being[10]. Excessive use of gadgets can interfere with direct communication between family members, reduce the quality of time together, and even cause conflict[11]. Quality live interactions play an important role in building strong emotional connections and supporting children's social development[12], [13]. In various families, changing interaction patterns due to gadget use often have a negative impact on family relationships. Therefore, finding the right balance between digital life and in-person interactions is essential to maintain family harmony[14]. The main challenges families face in maintaining a balance between gadget use and direct interaction include dependence on technology, lack of time together, and difficulty in managing gadget use.[15]. Time spent interacting with family directly is often reduced due to the presence of gadgets. Parents also often have difficulty regulating gadget usage time for their children, which often results in conflict within the family. These challenges require practical solutions that can be implemented to reduce the negative impact of gadget use and improve the quality of interactions within the family[16], [17], [18]. This research aims to analyze the challenges that arise

due to the use of gadgets in the family and present practical solutions to improve family harmony through managing gadget use[19]. One approach that can be used is the Uses and Gratifications theory, which examines the motives and effects of media use[20]. By understanding the reasons behind gadget use and the needs met through gadgets, families can develop more effective strategies for managing their time and activities. In addition, this research will also evaluate family programs and activities that can increase direct interaction and strengthen family relationships. The Uses and Gratifications theory offers a useful framework for analyzing gadget use in families[21]. This theory emphasizes that individuals use media to fulfill certain needs and desires, such as entertainment, information, and social interaction. In a family context, applying this theory can help understand how and why family members use gadgets, as well as the impact on direct interactions[20], [22]. Previous studies show that the use of gadgets can reduce the quality of direct interactions, but can also be used positively to improve communication and family relationships if managed well.[23]. Therefore, it is important for families to find a balance between gadget use and direct interaction to maintain harmony and emotional well-being.

II. RESEARCH METHODS

This research uses a qualitative approach to examine the use of gadget media and its impact on household harmony on the Deli River Bank, Kampung Baru, Medan Maimun District. Using a descriptive method, this research attempts to describe in detail how mothers in this environment use gadget media in their daily lives[24]. This approach involves in-depth interviews and observations to understand mothers' perceptions and experiences regarding gadget use[25], [26]. The research was conducted on the Deli River Bank, Medan Maimun District, during the period March to June 2024. The four month period provided researchers with sufficient opportunity to observe and document the use of gadget media and its impact on household harmony. This location was chosen because of its relevance in reflecting the social and economic dynamics typical of the Medan Maimun urban area.



Figure 1. Research Location

The main data in this research was obtained through interviews with families, supplemented by reports from the Central Statistics Agency (BPS), survey results from the

Indonesian Internet Service Providers Association (APJII), as well as research from institutions such as We Are Social and Datareportal. Using these verified sources ensures the research is based on valid information and reflects the reality of gadget media use in the community.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Household Policy on Gadget Use

The use of gadget media among families on the banks of the Deli River shows diverse and significant patterns in daily life. The duration of gadget use varies among family members, with some using gadgets for hours each day, while others only use them for a limited time. The most frequently used media include smartphones, tablets and laptops, with smartphones being the most dominant due to their ease of access and portability. The purposes for using gadgets are varied, from seeking information, entertainment, to communicating with friends and family. The impact of gadget use on the daily lives of families on the banks of the Deli River is quite significant, with some families experiencing positive benefits such as increased knowledge and ease of communication, but there are also those who experience negative impacts such as reduced interaction between family members and disruption to sleep times and routines. daily.

The duration of gadget use among families on the banks of the Deli River varies, with the average time spent each day being quite significant. Family members divide their gadget usage time between work and entertainment, with most of the daily time spent on entertainment such as playing games and watching videos, while the rest is spent on work, communicating and searching for information. This division reflects how gadgets play an important role in meeting the daily recreational and productivity needs of families in the region. Interviews with several families showed variations in the duration of gadget use, from 3 to 6 hours per day, reflecting the daily needs and activities of each family member.

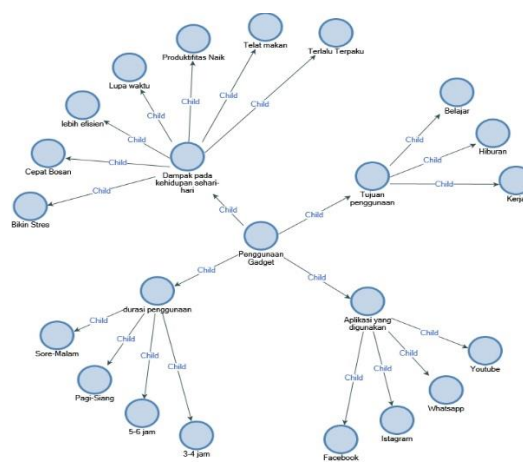


Figure 2. Mind Map of Gadget Use on the Deli River Bantara

In the digital era like now, applications and social media have become an important part of many people's daily lives, including in the family environment on the banks of the Deli River. WhatsApp is the application most often used for work and interpersonal communication. Instagram is popular for entertainment or marketing, while YouTube is a favorite for entertainment content. This application usage pattern shows certain tendencies at certain times, such as WhatsApp usage increasing in the morning and evening, Instagram being active during the day, and YouTube being accessed more frequently at night. The interview results show that each family member has different application preferences according to their needs and daily activities. Interview results show that family members use gadgets mainly for work and entertainment purposes. Children tend to use gadgets for learning and entertainment, while parents focus more on work and communication. The division of time using gadgets between work and entertainment varies, but generally they are mostly used for entertainment. Most respondents felt that using gadgets was in line with their daily needs. Gadgets are used for various purposes such as sales, communication, entertainment and learning, with a fairly balanced division of time between work and entertainment.

Gadget use has various impacts on the productivity and well-being of family members. According to Mr. Firman Adha Parinduri, the use of gadgets can increase productivity because it allows fast access to information and communication with clients. However, on the other hand, using gadgets can also cause stress and reduce social interaction because of the tendency to focus too much on these devices. Mr. Hasan Siregar stated that the use of gadgets affects the daily routine of family members by making them sometimes feel bored more quickly, especially children who tend to prefer playing with gadgets rather than playing with friends outside the home. The fairly intensive use of gadgets among families on the banks of the Deli River reflects how technology has become an integral part of their daily lives, fulfilling various needs from entertainment to productivity. However, excessive use of gadgets can also have negative impacts such as eye health problems, posture problems and potential addiction. Several respondents stated that using gadgets can increase productivity at work and make it easier to access information, but it can also reduce sleep quality and disrupt the balance between the real world and the virtual world. The use of gadget media among families on the banks of the Deli River shows that digital technology has integrated itself into their daily lives. Duration and purpose of use varies among family members, reflecting individual needs for entertainment, work, and study. Despite significant benefits, such as increased knowledge and ease of communication, excessive gadget use can have a negative impact on social interactions and physical well-being. Therefore, it is important for families on the banks of the Deli River to manage the use of gadgets wisely in order to maximize the benefits and minimize the negative impacts that arise.

Household harmony in families on the banks of the Deli River

Domestic harmony in families on the banks of the Deli River can be influenced by various factors, including effective communication, quality time together, emotional support, division of tasks and responsibilities, and problem solving. Effective communication is very important in building harmonious relationships. When family members can communicate well, they can understand each other's feelings, needs, and expectations, which helps prevent conflict and strengthen family bonds. Apart from that, the quality of time together also plays an important role. Spending time together as a family, whether through daily activities or special events, helps strengthen relationships and create beautiful memories that strengthen household harmony.

Emotional support is also a key element in maintaining household harmony. When family members support each other emotionally, they feel appreciated and loved, which creates a safe and comfortable environment at home. Fair distribution of tasks and responsibilities is also important to avoid feeling burdened on just one party. This creates balance and cooperation in the family. Finally, the ability to solve problems together in a constructive way is also important. Families that can resolve conflicts with open discussions and find solutions together will be better able to maintain harmony in the long term. Thus, these factors collectively support the creation of a harmonious household environment on the banks of the Deli River.

Effective communication is the basis of household harmony, especially for families on the banks of the Deli River. In this context, open and honest communication between family members allows them to understand each other's feelings, needs and hopes. This not only helps avoid misunderstandings and conflicts, but also strengthens emotional bonds between family members. With effective communication, every family member feels heard and appreciated, thereby creating a harmonious and supportive home atmosphere. In practice, effective communication involves the ability to listen actively, speak clearly and politely, and show empathy and respect for each other.

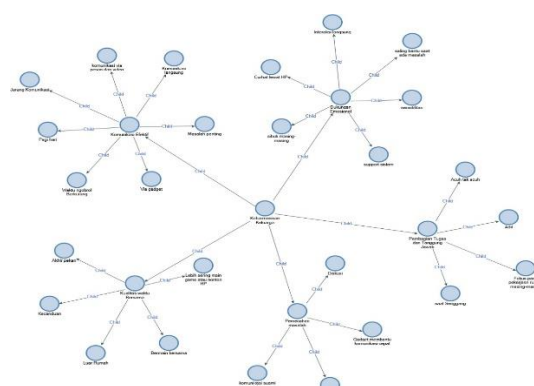


Figure 3. Mind Maps of Family Harmony on the Deli River Banks

The use of gadgets among families on the banks of the Deli River often reduces the frequency of direct communication between family members. Mr Hasan Siregar noted that when his family members were using gadgets,

direct communication rarely occurred. They are more involved in their respective activities on their gadgets, so verbal interactions are significantly reduced. However, when they are not using gadgets, they prefer to talk and interact directly. This shows that although gadgets have benefits in providing entertainment and information, excessive use can hinder direct communication and interaction which is important for family harmony and closeness. Quality time together is a crucial element in building and strengthening family relationships on the banks of the Deli River. Taking time to do activities together, such as watching movies, playing games, or even just talking, allows family members to connect with each other and strengthen their bonds. These activities not only provide an opportunity for families to enjoy being together, but also help in building positive memories and promote better communication. Thus, even though technology such as gadgets is frequently used, it is important for families to still set aside special time for direct interaction, creating a balance between the use of technology and face-to-face interactions to maintain harmony and emotional closeness. Emotional support is an important element in strengthening family relationships around the Deli River. The family is often a comfortable place for family members to support each other and express their feelings. Joint activities, such as playing games or watching movies, can also be moments to encourage each other and relieve stress. This shows that emotional support is an integral part of quality time with family at Sungai Deli. The importance of emotional support is reflected in the efforts of family members to support and understand each other. Even though the busyness and challenges of daily life can prevent intense interaction, the Sungai Deli family tries to remain open and caring towards the feelings and needs of other family members. This emotional support helps create a safe and comfortable environment for each family member to thrive and feel loved.

Uses and gratification analysis of gadget use on household harmony on the banks of the Deli River

Uses and Gratification Theory (UGT) helps understand how and why individuals use media, including gadgets, to fulfill their needs. In the context of the use of gadgets for household harmony in the Deli River Basin, UGT can analyze how family members use gadgets to fulfill their communication, entertainment, information and social function needs, as well as how this use affects family dynamics and welfare. Gadgets are used to meet the need for fast and efficient communication. Instant messaging and social media applications allow family members to stay connected, share information, and communicate in real-time even when separated by distance. However, excessive use of digital communication can reduce face-to-face interactions, which are essential for strengthening emotional ties and warmth within families. Gadgets also provide easy access to various forms of entertainment, such as videos, music, games and social media. This entertainment helps fill free time and provides enjoyment, but when used excessively, it can distract from joint family activities. For example, family members who prefer watching videos on their gadgets rather than participating in activities families can reduce quality time

together. Apart from that, gadgets make it easy to access information. Family members can search for information for work, education, or daily activities. However, reliance on gadgets to search for information can reduce direct interactions and discussions within the family, which usually help build mutual understanding and family solidarity. UGT also sees gadgets as tools to fulfill social functions, such as interacting with friends and online communities. This interaction can provide social support and expand friendship networks. However, when more social interactions occur in cyberspace, family members may feel isolated in real life. Children who interact more with their friends via social media than in person may have difficulty developing healthy social and emotional skills. Overall, the Uses and Gratification theory shows that although gadgets can fulfill various individual needs, excessive or unbalanced use can disrupt household harmony. Therefore, it is important for families to manage gadget use wisely, set healthy boundaries, and ensure that technology is used to support, not replace, face-to-face interactions and interpersonal relationships within the family.

Concept of Technology Balance in Family Life

Uses and gratification theory focuses on how individuals use media to fulfill their needs and expectations. This theory argues that individuals do not just passively receive media messages, but actively select and use media according to their specific needs, such as the need for information, entertainment, personal identity, or social integration. For example, someone might watch the news to get the latest information, listen to music for relaxation, or use social media to keep in touch with friends and family. Overall, uses and gratification theory emphasizes the active role of individuals in selecting and using media to meet their needs. By understanding these two theories, we can better evaluate the role of media in everyday life and develop strategies to utilize media more effectively and responsibly. From field findings regarding the use of gadgets on the Deli River Bank, it appears that there is a tendency that the use of gadgets can influence family interaction and harmony. One of the concepts that emerges from this data is the concept of "Balancing Technology and Family Life". This concept reflects the importance of finding the right balance between the use of technology, especially gadgets, and quality family interaction. The concept of "Balance of Technology and Family Life" highlights the importance of understanding that excessive or uncontrolled use of gadgets can have a negative impact on balance in family life. When family members are more fixated on gadget screens, direct interactions between family members can be disrupted. This can lead to less time spent together, reduce the quality of relationships, and increase the risk of conflict within the family. Therefore, it is important for each family member to understand the limits in using gadgets so that more meaningful family activities can still be carried out.

On the other hand, wise and targeted use of gadgets can be a means of supporting family harmony. By using gadgets positively, such as for communicating, sharing information, and managing schedules, families can strengthen bonds between family members. Targeted use of gadgets can

also help families to stay connected with the outside world, expand knowledge, and enrich experiences without neglecting social interactions and family activities. To achieve a balance between technology and family life, it is important for families to develop awareness of healthy and balanced gadget usage patterns. This can be done by setting clear rules and boundaries in the use of gadgets at home, such as a designated time and place of use. Apart from that, it is also important to educate family members about the importance of direct interaction and communication in maintaining family harmony. Healthy and balanced gadget usage patterns can help families stay connected to the digital world without sacrificing time and direct interaction with family members. By managing the use of gadgets wisely, families can allocate sufficient time for direct interaction, playing together, and carrying out other family activities that strengthen bonds between family members. This will help create a harmonious and mutually supportive family environment. The concept of "Balancing Technology and Family Life" encourages the importance of open communication and mutual understanding within the family regarding the use of gadgets. In this context, effective communication between family members is very important. By discussing openly, family members can understand each other's needs, expectations and limits regarding gadget use. This helps create a common agreement about how gadgets can be used in a healthy and balanced manner in everyday life.

Apart from communication, mutual understanding is also the key to achieving a balance between technology and family life. Every family member needs to understand the impact of excessive gadget use, both on themselves and on family relationships. With the same understanding of the importance of maintaining a balance between digital activities and direct interactions, families can support each other and remind each other to use gadgets wisely. In this context, families can create an environment conducive to development and mutual respect. Through open communication and mutual understanding, families can overcome potential conflicts that arise due to the use of gadgets. They can also create daily rules and habits that promote direct interaction and meaningful family activities, thereby strengthening family bonds and improving the quality of relationships between family members. In facing the influence of technology which continues to develop rapidly, this concept emphasizes the importance of families remaining open to technological change and innovation. With an open attitude, families can use technology as a tool to enrich their lives, without having to sacrifice the quality of family relationships. Apart from that, families also need to continue to learn and adapt to technological developments, so that they can take maximum advantage of existing technology without having to lose important family values and norms. Thus, the concept of "Balance of Technology and Family Life" emphasizes that the main key in maintaining family harmony in the digital era is open communication, mutual understanding, and an open attitude towards technological changes. By applying this concept, families can create a healthy and harmonious

environment, where technology becomes a tool that supports, not interferes with, the overall well-being of the family.

IV. CONCLUSIONS

The research results show that the use of gadgets in families on the banks of the Deli River has a significant impact on their daily lives. The duration of gadget use varies among family members, with some using gadgets for many hours each day, while others only for a limited time. Smartphones are the most dominant media used because of their ease of access and portability. The purpose of using gadgets includes seeking information, entertainment and communicating with friends and family. The impact of using these gadgets can be seen from positive benefits such as increased knowledge and ease of communication, but there are also negative impacts such as reduced interaction between family members and disruption to daily routines. This research also found that the division of time using gadgets between work and entertainment is quite balanced. Most of the time is spent on entertainment such as playing games and watching videos, while the rest is spent on work, communication and searching for information. WhatsApp, Instagram and YouTube are the most frequently used applications, each with different usage patterns according to the time and needs of family members. Although gadgets help increase productivity and access to information, their excessive use can reduce sleep quality and the balance between the real and virtual worlds. Uses and Gratification Theory (UGT) emphasizes that gadgets are used to fulfill the communication, entertainment, information and social function needs of family members. However, uncontrolled use of gadgets can disrupt direct interactions and family well-being. Therefore, it is important for families to manage gadget use wisely, set healthy boundaries, and ensure technology is used to support, not replace, face-to-face interpersonal interactions. This balance will help maintain household harmony and minimize the negative impact of excessive gadget use.

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