

THE EFFECT OF GADGET USE ON THE READING HABITS OF ELEMENTARY MADRASAH STUDENTS

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Abstrak: Kemajuan teknologi digital telah meningkatkan frekuensi penggunaan perangkat seluler di kalangan anak-anak usia sekolah dasar. Meskipun perangkat seluler dapat dimanfaatkan sebagai sarana pembelajaran, muncul kekhawatiran bahwa penggunaannya yang lebih dominan untuk hiburan dapat memengaruhi kebiasaan membaca siswa. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengetahui pengaruh penggunaan perangkat seluler terhadap kebiasaan membaca siswa kelas IV di MI Nurul Huda Madukoro. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode deskriptif kualitatif dengan teknik pengambilan sampel jenuh yang melibatkan seluruh 32 siswa kelas IV. Data dikumpulkan melalui observasi dan wawancara semi-terstruktur dengan guru serta siswa, kemudian dianalisis menggunakan tahapan reduksi data, penyajian data, dan penarikan kesimpulan. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa penggunaan perangkat seluler memiliki dampak positif maupun negatif terhadap kebiasaan membaca siswa, namun dampak negatifnya lebih dominan. Siswa cenderung menggunakan perangkat seluler untuk bermain gim dan menonton video selama 2–6 jam per hari, sementara waktu membaca mereka hanya sekitar 20 menit per hari. Kondisi ini menyebabkan penurunan minat baca, berkurangnya durasi membaca, serta kecenderungan membaca secara sekilas (*skimming*) dibandingkan membaca secara mendalam. Kendati demikian, perangkat seluler juga memberikan manfaat dengan memudahkan siswa mengakses buku elektronik (*e-book*), bahan bacaan digital, dan informasi untuk mendukung pembelajaran mereka. Berdasarkan hasil pengodean tematik, dampak negatif mencakup 40%, dampak positif 20%, dan dampak netral 40%. Dengan demikian, penggunaan perangkat seluler memengaruhi kebiasaan membaca siswa madrasah dasar, sehingga diperlukan pengawasan dari orang tua dan guru, pembatasan waktu penggunaan, serta pemanfaatan perangkat seluler secara bijak sebagai sarana pembelajaran guna mendukung peningkatan budaya literasi siswa.

Kata Kunci: Perangkat Seluler, Kebiasaan Membaca, Siswa Madrasah Ibtidaiyah.

Abstract: Advances in digital technology have increased the frequency of mobile device use among elementary school-aged children. Although mobile devices can be used as learning tools, concerns have been raised that their predominant use for entertainment may affect students' reading habits. This study aims to determine the effect of mobile device use on the reading habits of fourth-grade students at MI Nurul Huda Madukoro. The study employed a qualitative descriptive method with a saturation sampling technique involving all 32 fourth-grade students. Data were collected through observation and semi-structured interviews with teachers and students, then analyzed using the stages of data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions. The results indicate that the use of mobile devices has both positive and negative effects on students' reading habits, though the negative impacts are more dominant. Students tend to use mobile devices to play games and watch videos for 2–6 hours per day,

while their reading time is only about 20 minutes per day. This situation has led to a decline in reading interest, a reduction in reading duration, and a tendency toward skimming rather than in-depth reading. Nevertheless, mobile devices also offer benefits by making it easier for students to access e-books, digital reading materials, and information to support their learning. Based on the results of thematic coding, negative effects accounted for 40%, positive effects for 20%, and neutral effects for 40%. Thus, the use of mobile devices affects the reading habits of elementary madrasah students, necessitating supervision by parents and teachers, restrictions on usage time, and the wise use of mobile devices as learning tools to support the improvement of students' literacy culture.

Keywords: *Mobile Devices, Reading Habits, Elementary Madrasah Students.*

INTRODUCTION

Rapid technological advancements have made it easier for people to access a wide range of information (Tabrani et al., 2024; Fadhlie et al., 2025). This technology is used not only by adolescents and adults but also by young children. The ease of access to and use of digital devices has led many minors to be able to operate these devices (Sugiarti et al., 2022; Thoriq et al., 2024). According to 2022 data from the Central Statistics Agency (BPS), 33.44% of young children in Indonesia have used digital devices, with 25.5% in the 0–4 age group and 52.76% in the 5–6 age group. In addition, approximately 24.96% of young children have accessed the internet, comprising 18.79% of children aged 0–4 years and 39.97% of children aged 5–6 years. The latest survey by the Indonesian Internet Service Providers Association (APJII) in 2026 shows that the number of internet users in Indonesia has reached 235.26 million people, or about 81.72% of the total population.

Growing use of mobile devices among children has brought about changes in communication patterns and daily activities (Zis et al., 2021; Sajawandi et al., 2025). The presence of mobile devices has transformed the way individuals interact and obtain information. Currently, mobile devices are not only used for learning but also for playing games, watching videos, accessing social media, and various other entertainment activities (Pradona et al., 2023; Fauziddin et al., 2024). The high intensity of use has led many children to spend hours in front of screens. In fact, quite a few children exhibit signs of dependence, making it difficult for them to reduce their screen time in daily life (Swasono et al., 2020; Hutasoit et al., 2025).

Reading habits are a crucial aspect of education because they help students acquire knowledge and broaden their horizons (Sabriadi, 2025; Hartatik et al., 2025). Good reading

habits are demonstrated through regular and sustained reading activities. Mauludhin et al., (2020) state that reading habits need to be instilled from an early age, both within the family environment and at every level of education, from elementary school through college. Reading habits and mastery of science and technology are interrelated and inseparable (Ambarita, 2024; Anisa et al., 2021).

According to Widiawati et al., (2024), gadgets are modern devices equipped with various applications for providing information, communication, social networking, and entertainment. In line with this, Fathoni, (2017) states that gadgets are widely used by various groups, including children. Advances in digital technology mean that the use of gadgets is no longer limited to adults but has also become part of the daily lives of elementary school-aged children (Tasya., 2025; Domitila et al., 2021). The various features available make smartphones easily accessible and appealing to use, both as a learning tool and for entertainment (Stevanus et al., 2022; Prasetya et al., 2022).

But every student's reading habits are different. Some set aside time to read every day, while others rarely read outside of school requirements. These differences are influenced by various factors, including family environment, school, and technological advancements.

This research is important because the use of digital devices among elementary school-aged children is on the rise and has the potential to affect students' reading habits. Although digital devices can be used as learning tools, concerns have been raised that their predominant use for entertainment may reduce students' interest in and duration of reading. Therefore, research is needed to provide an overview of the impact of mobile device use on the reading habits of elementary school students as a basis for teachers, parents, and schools to develop monitoring strategies and foster a culture of literacy.

The uniqueness of this study lies in its use of two perspectives those of teachers and students to examine the impact of mobile device use on reading habits. Furthermore, this study was conducted at the Madrasah Ibtidaiyah level, presenting interview results categorized into themes such as mobile device usage, reading habits, and their positive and negative impacts, thereby providing a more contextual picture of students' literacy conditions at school.

Thus, the research question in this study is: How does the use of electronic devices affect the reading habits of Madrasah Ibtidaiyah (MI) students? This study aims to determine the impact of electronic device use on the reading habits of MI students. It is hoped that this study will benefit teachers, parents, and schools in understanding the impact of electronic device use

on students' reading habits and serve as a basis for guiding and supervising the wise use of electronic devices among children.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study employed a qualitative descriptive method that prioritized data collection through verbal accounts (Peuuma dkk., 2022; Achjar et al., 2023). Data were collected through observations and interviews with students and teachers as the research subjects. The data sources were elementary school students who use digital devices in their daily lives. The data were analyzed descriptively to uncover and explain the impact of mobile device use on students' reading habits.

The study was conducted at Madrasah Ibtidaiyah (MI) Nurul Huda Madukoro with a population of 32 fourth-grade students. The sampling technique used was saturation sampling, in which the entire population was included in the study sample. According to Sugiyono (2016:124) this technique is used when the population size is relatively small.

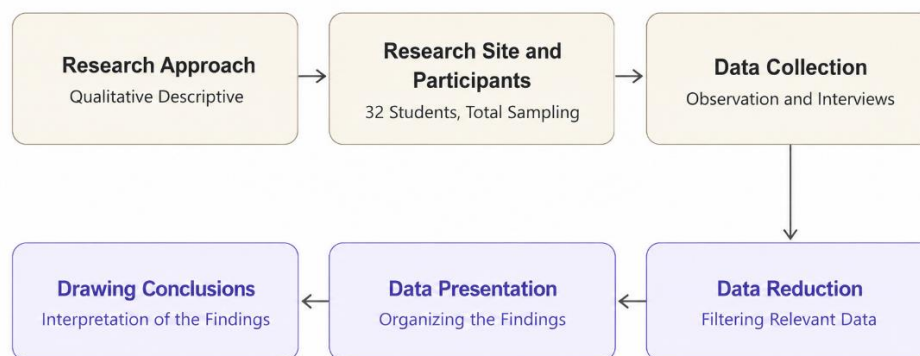


Figure 1. Stages of Data Collection

Data collection was conducted through observation and semi-structured interviews. Observation was used to examine students' reading habits and their use of electronic devices in the school environment, while interviews were conducted with teachers and students to obtain information regarding the frequency of electronic device use, reading habits, and their impact on learning activities. The data obtained were then analyzed descriptively through the stages of data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions to provide an overview of the influence of electronic device use on students' reading habits.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**Results**

To provide a clearer picture of students' reading habits and the impact of gadget use, the following is a summary of the results of interviews with teachers and fourth-grade students at MI Nurul Huda Madukoro.

Table 1. Summary of Interview Results with Teachers

No	Question Topic	Summary of the Teacher's Answer
1	Students' Reading Habits in Class	• Students are accustomed to skimming information rather than reading in depth. • Interest in reading long texts is declining; students are more interested in books or articles that are rich in images or graphics. • Free periods are more often spent on social media or playing games than visiting the library.
2	The Impact of Mobile Devices on Reading Interest	• Mobile devices reduce interest in reading if they are dominated by instant entertainment apps. • Mobile devices increase interest in reading if they are used to access e-books or educational article platforms. • Interactive notifications on mobile devices often disrupt students' concentration when they are reading long texts.
3	The Positive Impact of Using Mobile Devices	• Makes it easier for students to find journals, scientific articles, and digital encyclopedias from around the world. • An animation- and audio-based reading app makes early literacy activities more enjoyable.

		• Speeds up the search for new vocabulary or references for school assignments without having to look through books on the shelf.
4	Dampak Positif Penggunaan Perangkat Seluler	• Para siswa mengalami kesulitan memahami makna tersirat dari teks-teks yang rumit. • Konsentrasi mereka saat belajar mudah terganggu oleh keinginan yang terus-menerus untuk memeriksa perangkat elektronik mereka. • Waktu penggunaan layar yang berlebihan menyebabkan mata lelah dan mengganggu daya ingat.
5	Schools' Efforts to Foster a Love of Reading	• Implement a 15-minute habit of reading non-curricular books before class. • Build a school library ecosystem with access to official e-books that appeal to students. • Assign students to write book reviews or create infographics based on their digital reading. • Limit the use of personal devices to specific class periods that require internet access.

Table 2. Summary of Interview Results with Students

No	Question	Student's Answer
1	Do you have a mobile device (cell phone or tablet)?	Yes, I have a cell phone.
2	How often do you use your device each day?	About 2–4 hours on school days, and 5–6 hours on days off.
3	What do you usually use your device for?	To play games and watch videos.

4	Do you often use your device to read school materials or e-books?	Sometimes, but only if I have homework from my teacher.
5	Do you prefer reading printed books or using your device? Why?	I prefer using my cell phone because I find it more interesting than reading books.
6	How much time do you usually spend reading each day?	About 20 minutes.
7	Does using your device cut into your reading time?	Yes, because I often play games and watch videos.
8	Do you play games or read books more often when you have free time?	I play games more often.
9	Do electronic devices help you find information for school assignments?	Yes, it helps because I can look up information online.
10	In your opinion, what are the benefits of electronic devices for learning?	To make it easier to find answers when there's homework.
11	Do your parents limit your use of electronic devices at home?	Not strictly limited, but parents still remind me not to use my phone for too long.
12	What do you do when you're not using electronic devices?	I usually play with friends when my mom is holding my phone.
13	Do you find yourself more interested in watching videos than reading books? Why?	Yes, because watching videos is considered more interesting than reading books.
14	Does using electronic devices make it easier for you to find reading material?	Yes, because I can find reading material on the internet.
15	In your opinion, do electronic devices affect your reading habits? How do they affect them?	Yes, it has an impact; respondents prefer playing, so their reading time decreases.

The data in Table 1 show that teachers have observed a shift in students' reading habits from deep reading toward skimming, a decline in interest in long texts, and a growing interest in illustrated content and digital entertainment. Teachers also believe that mobile devices can

have a positive impact if used to access e-books and educational platforms, but a negative impact if dominated by entertainment apps; consequently, schools have implemented a number of literacy programs, such as a 15-minute reading session before class and providing access to e-books in the library.

Meanwhile, the data in Table 2 show that the majority of students use mobile devices for a relatively long duration 2–4 hours on school days and up to 5–6 hours on days off with the dominant activities being playing games and watching videos. Students' reading time is relatively short about 20 minutes per day and they acknowledge that device use has reduced their reading time. Students also state that they are more interested in videos than in printed books because they find them more engaging, although devices still provide benefits in helping them search for information for school assignments. Parental supervision of device use at home is relatively lax, limited to verbal reminders without strict time limits.

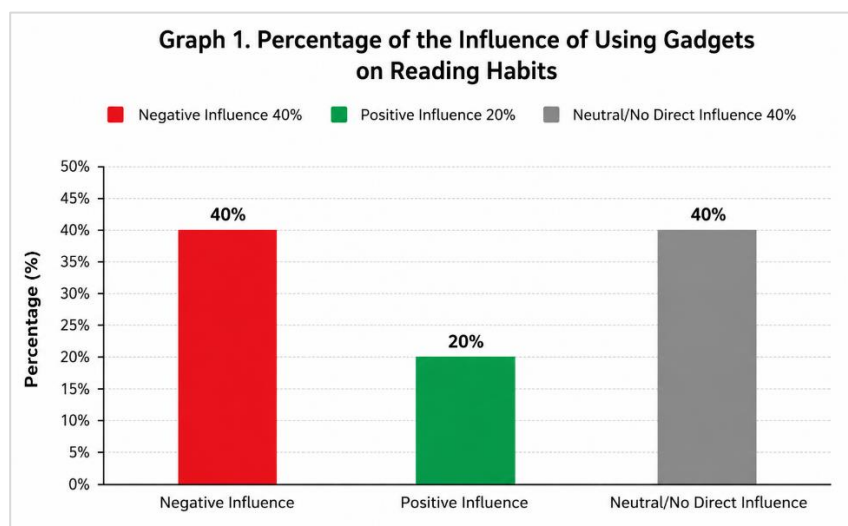


Figure 1. The Effect of Gadget Use on Students' Reading Habits

The results of thematic coding of 15 interview responses from fourth-grade students at MI Nurul Huda Madukoro show that the “negative impact” category accounted for the largest share (40%). This is reflected in students' responses, in which they admitted to preferring to use mobile devices or watch videos rather than read, and their reading time had decreased to only about 20 minutes per day compared to mobile device use, which ranged from 2 to 6 hours. The neutral category—or factors not directly related to reading habits (such as smartphone ownership and parental supervision)—also accounted for 40%, while positive influences—in the form of easier access to information and digital reading materials—amounted to only 20%.

Overall, the interview results reinforce the finding that smartphone use has a predominantly negative impact on elementary school students' reading habits, particularly in terms of reduced reading duration and diminished interest in in-depth reading, although smartphones still have the potential to provide positive benefits if their use is properly guided and supervised by teachers and parents.

The use of mobile devices has both positive and negative effects on the reading habits of MI students. The negative effects are more dominant, such as a decrease in reading time and frequency, as well as an increase in students' interest in social media and games. Positive effects are evident in the ease with which students access information, digital reading materials, and learning resources through mobile devices. In the field, an imbalance in the reading habits of students at MI Nurul Huda Madukoro was observed. Some students showed low interest in reading and were more interested in discussing topics related to mobile devices, such as social media (TikTok, Instagram, WhatsApp, YouTube) and online games. Although the school prohibits bringing cell phones, some students still bring them and use them after school hours, leading to a lack of focus in learning, including reading. During class, some students more often discussed apps rather than the lesson material.

Based on interviews and observations, both teachers and fourth-grade students indicated that smartphone use affects reading habits. Students tend to skim to obtain key information rather than read deeply. Interest in longer texts has declined because illustrated content is more appealing. Excessive, unsupervised smartphone use can dampen the enthusiasm for learning.

Positive effects emerge when students use mobile devices to access e-books and educational platforms as learning media. This indicates that mobile devices can be utilized in the teaching and learning process. According to (Khairally, 2023) learning media are supportive tools in the teaching and learning process that can be used to stimulate students' thoughts, feelings, attention, as well as their abilities and skills, thereby fostering the learning process.

However, in practice, devices are more often used for entertainment, so students are more likely to browse social media or play games than to read books or visit the library. This situation has prompted schools to take various measures to increase students' interest in reading, such as establishing a 15 minute reading habit before class, providing access to e-books in the library, and assigning literacy based tasks.

Discussion

Gadget usage affects elementary school students' reading habits through changes in behavior regarding time management, reading frequency, and the ways they acquire information and learn (Putri et al., 2025; Ayuni et al., 2026). Technology continues to evolve rapidly over time. Advances in digital technology have an impact on various aspects of human life, including the world of education (Hendrizar, 2018). Developments in science and technology also have negative impacts, such as a diminished role for teachers, an increase in individualistic attitudes, the risk of accessing inappropriate content, dependence on the internet, and the rise of cybercrime (Zunaera et al., 2025; Wardatussururi et al., 2025). Furthermore, virtual learning with minimal direct interaction can reduce students' engagement in learning and social interaction; therefore, supervision and guidance from teachers and parents are necessary when using these devices (Sudibyo & Asmani, 2011). Generally, the negative effects of device use remain more dominant; however, under certain conditions, devices can also provide benefits if used appropriately and purposefully in learning activities.

Within the family environment, parenting styles are one of the factors influencing a child's development (Dwistia et al., 2025; Annisak et al., 2023). Most parents practice a democratic parenting style that combines granting children freedom with the enforcement of rules and discipline (Novita et al., 2024; Hadian et al., 2022). However, the application of this parenting style is not always consistent. Under certain conditions, such as work demands or low parental digital literacy, parenting styles can shift toward being more permissive or more authoritarian (Amanullah & Kharisma., 2022; Qotrunnada & Darmiyanti., 2024). A number of studies indicate that the use of social media without supervision from parents or relevant parties can lead to a decline in character values, such as manners, discipline, and responsibility (Burhanuddin, 2024; Sutisna et al., 2024; Ramadhani & Suyoto, 2024).

The negative impact is evident in the decline in students' reading habits, as they are more interested in playing games, watching videos, and using social media than in reading books (Sari et al., 2024; Yulia et al., 2025). This situation has led to irregular reading habits and a declining interest among students in printed reading materials. This aligns with the findings of Rini et al., (2021) who state that uncontrolled gadget use can disrupt children's attention and reduce their concentration while studying. Kurniawan (2019) also notes that excessive gadget use can diminish the focus of school-aged children during study sessions.

Furthermore, excessive exposure to gadget screens can cause eye strain and impair students' cognitive ability to comprehend complex information (Khosiah & Andriani., 2024; Wardhani et al., 2026). These effects indirectly impact students' academic performance and reading habits. The predominant use of devices for entertainment also reduces children's physical activity and social interaction (Ayuni et al., 2026; Purba et al., 2026). As a result, some students become more withdrawn, tend to isolate themselves, and feel anxious when away from their devices.

Nevertheless, on the other hand, mobile devices still have a positive impact when used as a learning tool. They help students obtain information more easily, access digital reading materials, and support independent learning. Digital learning media can also increase students' interest in reading and seeking information. This aligns with Rasyid (2018) view, who states that learning media can facilitate interaction between teachers and students and make the learning process more engaging.

Based on the research findings, some students tend to be more interested in using digital reading materials than printed books. This is because digital reading materials are considered more practical, easily accessible, and have a more appealing appearance for students. Additionally, the inclusion of multimedia features such as videos, audio, images, and animations in digital books makes the reading process more interactive, thereby increasing students' interest in learning via mobile devices. This aligns with the view of Hidayat & Wulandari, (2024) who state that digital books offer access to interactive learning resources through the integration of multimedia elements such as video and audio. These features make the reading process more engaging for the digital native generation, thereby helping to sustain their interest in reading and improve their understanding of the material.

The use of mobile devices also fosters the development of students' imagination and creativity. Derry Iswidharmanjaya & Beranda Agency (2014) note that one of the positive effects of mobile devices is the development of children's imagination. This view is reinforced by Ubaidillah, (2018) who states that imagination can develop through stimuli and experiences children gain from their surroundings, including through digital media.

In addition to fostering creativity, mobile devices can also enhance students' learning abilities, such as digital reading, understanding numerical concepts and images, and using educational apps that can develop cognitive skills. Educational games on mobile devices can help boost students' self-confidence and problem-solving skills. This aligns with Supriyadi

(2022) finding that users of educational apps demonstrate better focus and problem-solving abilities. Rahmawati (2019) also notes that intelligence is related to the ability to think, understand, reason, and solve problems.

In this regard, the roles of parents and teachers are crucial in monitoring students' device usage. Children who are given time limits on device use tend to have better concentration while studying compared to those who are not supervised (Muthmainnah Asmal, 2025). Furthermore Santoso, (2021) states that parental supervision and restrictions on device use can help children use devices more wisely. Enforcing clear and consistent rules at home and at school can help reduce the negative impact of device use on students' concentration and reading habits.

Future research is recommended to involve a larger number of respondents and include multiple schools so that the findings have a higher degree of generalizability. Additionally, the study could employ a quantitative approach or mixed methods to measure the extent of the impact of device use on reading habits more objectively. Future research could also expand the study by incorporating additional variables, such as parenting styles, digital literacy, learning motivation, and the effectiveness of school literacy programs, thereby providing a more comprehensive understanding of the factors influencing students' reading habits in the digital age.

Thus, the use of digital devices can benefit students' reading habits when used appropriately and purposefully such as to access digital learning materials, search for academic information, and use educational apps that support the learning process. Therefore, the use of digital devices should be guided so that students do not merely use them as a form of entertainment but also as a tool to enhance their learning abilities and reading habits.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the research findings, it can be concluded that the use of electronic devices has a significant impact on the reading habits of fourth-grade students at MI Nurul Huda Madukoro. The effects are both positive and negative, but the negative impacts are still more dominant. Students tend to spend more time using electronic devices to play games and watch videos than to read books, resulting in a decline in both the duration and interest in reading. In addition, students are more accustomed to skimming than to reading in depth, which has the potential to affect their ability to comprehend the content of what they read.

On the other hand, mobile devices also have benefits when used appropriately as a learning tool. They make it easier for students to access information, e-books, and various digital learning resources that can support the learning process. Therefore, the use of mobile devices needs to be guided wisely through parental and teacher supervision, usage time limits, and the use of educational apps that support literacy activities. School initiatives such as establishing a reading routine before class, providing digital reading materials, and strengthening literacy programs need to be continuously developed so that the use of mobile devices does not diminish reading habits but rather serves as a tool capable of improving students' literacy skills.

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