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The Influence of Cildren's Gadget Use on Mother-Child Communication Patterns: A Comparative Study Between Working and Non-Working Mothers in Parepare City

Andi Weyana Nurul Khatimah[1], A. Octamaya Tenri Awaru[2], Ridwan Said Ahmad[3], Najamuddin[4]
[1234] Ilmu Pengetahuan Sosial Kekhusuan Pendidikan Sosiologi, Universitas Negeri Makassar
E-mail: andiweyananurul@gmail.com

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Abstract
This research aimed to analyze if there is a significant influence between children's gadget use on mother and child communication patterns, The differences in the influence of children's gadget use on mother-child communication patterns between families of working mothers and families of non-working mothers, a significant difference in the level of children's gadget use on communication patterns between children whose mothers work and those who do not work in Parepare City. This research uses a comparative quantitative approach by determining the sample using the Slovin margin formula of 100 people, including 57 working mothers and 43 non-working mothers. Data collection techniques used questionnaires in google forms and documentation, while data analysis was carried out using descriptive and inferential statistical techniques using the SPSS program. The results of this research showed that there is a positive and significant influence between children's gadget use on mother and child communication patterns with a significance value (Sig.) = 0.002 and a positive regression coefficient (B = 0.190). Mother's employment status moderates this relationship with the Sig value. interaction = 0.041, meaning that the influence of gadget use on communication is stronger in the families of working mothers compared to non-working mothers and there is a significant difference in the level of children's gadget use between working and non-working mothers (Sig. = 0.000), but there is no significant difference in the communication patterns of mothers and children (Sig. = 0.618). The conclusion of this research was the mother's employment status moderates this relationship with the Sig

value. interaction = 0.041, meaning that the influence of gadget use on communication is stronger in families of working mothers than non-working mothers and children of working mothers have a higher level of gadget use than children of non-working mothers.

Keywords: The Use of Gadgets, Communication Patterns, Mothers to Children Relationship, Working and Non-Working Mothers, Parepare City

Introduction

The development of information and communication technology over the past two decades has had a significant impact on various aspects of human life, including the world of children. Gadget use is no longer considered a luxury but has become a common necessity, even from an early age (Setiawan, 2018). Devices such as smartphones, tablets, and laptops have now become an integral part of children's daily lives, often beginning at a very young age.

A particularly critical period in a child's development is the *golden age*, during which various aspects of intelligence intellectual, emotional, and spiritual undergo rapid development that will shape subsequent growth (Lubis, 2025). According to Komdigi (2025), recent data from Statistics Indonesia (BPS) in 2024 indicates that 39.71% of early childhood children in Indonesia have used mobile phones, while 35.57% have accessed the internet. More specifically, 5.88% of children under one year old had already used mobile phones, and 4.33% had accessed the internet in 2024. Furthermore, 37.02% of children aged 1–4 years and 58.25% of those aged 5–6 years used mobile phones, while 33.80% of children aged 1–4 years and 51.19% of those aged 5–6 years had accessed the internet. Alarmingly, even in underdeveloped regions, children aged 13–14 have shown signs of addiction to social media.

Access to the internet and digital applications has caused children to become more accustomed to interacting with screens than engaging directly with their social environment. A concerning trend among today's generation is the growing prevalence of gadget addiction among children, which has psychological impacts such as reduced self-confidence and diminished social engagement with their surroundings (Ameliola & Nugraha, 2013). This condition not only affects the ways in which children learn and play but also influences their behavior and communication patterns in everyday life.

Communication, which should serve as the foundation for emotional bonding and character formation, is often disrupted as both mothers and children become preoccupied with gadgets (Raperempuan & Mardhiah, 2024). This problem becomes more complex when considering the employment status of mothers. Working mothers often have limited time to build high-quality communication with their children, and gadget use further weakens both the intensity and quality of these interactions. Conversely, non-working mothers are not exempt from excessive gadget use, particularly for entertainment and social media purposes (Susi Setiowaty P., 2021).

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In reality, many children in society today appear more connected to the digital world than to their social environment. Gadgets have increasingly functioned as "digital babysitters," replacing the role of direct communication between mothers and children. Both working and non-working mothers risk experiencing role disorientation when gadget use is not properly controlled. Excessive interaction with gadgets reduces opportunities for direct communication, leading children to become more comfortable interacting with digital content than with people. This may result in disruptions or declines in interpersonal communication skills (Raperempuan & Mardhiah, 2024), contributing to an emotional communication crisis within families.

Ideally, the family should serve as the primary arena for meaningful human socialization. Mothers play a central role as primary communicators who provide children with love, attention, values, and norms that form the basis of their social identity. Family communication should be two-directional, empathetic, and serve as a medium for strengthening emotional bonds between parents and children.

Excessive and uncontrolled gadget use has become a serious concern. Children who use gadgets for more than three hours a day without supervision are at risk of experiencing decreased language ability, difficulty expressing emotions, and reduced empathy (Elvadari et al., 2023). Gadget use also has the potential to impair concentration, reduce interest in social interaction, and foster dependence on unrealistic virtual environments. Consequently, the natural development of verbal and nonverbal communication skills may be hindered (Ulfah, 2020).

This phenomenon can be clearly observed in both school and home environments, where teachers report noticeable changes in students, including reduced verbal participation, decreased ability to work in groups, and weakened social responsiveness. Many children appear quieter, less willing to ask questions, or even exhibit symptoms of social anxiety (Flaura, 2022). Some children demonstrate poor communication skills despite having strong academic abilities, suggesting that external factors such as gadget use significantly influence their communication patterns.

Changes in children's communication patterns due to excessive gadget use have raised concerns about the quality of interpersonal interaction in the future. Children accustomed to one-way digital interactions may later struggle to establish healthy interpersonal relationships as adults. Many children who were previously active in direct social interactions now spend more time on screens, resulting in underdeveloped verbal and nonverbal communication skills. They may become quieter, less responsive to their social environment, and face difficulties expressing emotions both verbally and through body language (Nurshalinawati, 2022).

Data from BPS (2024) further demonstrates the increasing prevalence of gadget use among early childhood even among infants under one year old. Children who frequently use gadgets show declining verbal and nonverbal communication abilities, reduced empathy, and signs of social withdrawal (Anwar, 2024). These

findings align with prior research showing that children's gadget use influences their social behavior and communication development.

Using Parsons' AGIL framework (Adaptation, Goal Attainment, Integration, Latency), families are expected to adapt to technological development while maintaining social goals, ensuring family integration, and preserving core family values. Poorly managed gadget use disrupts all these functions.Preliminary observations indicate that similar phenomena occur in Parepare City, where decreases in children's communication quality have been observed. As a developing urban area in South Sulawesi, Parepare has experienced significant digitalization. Easy access to the internet and widespread gadget ownership among children—whether from working mothers or stay-at-home mothers—has become increasingly common.

It is therefore important to examine how maternal employment status influences communication patterns, as many children are more engaged with gadgets than with direct interpersonal interaction. Families have voiced concerns about children becoming more passive and socially disengaged. In addition, insufficient supervision and the absence of gadget-use restrictions have led children to be exposed to inappropriate content, with gadgets increasingly being used as a substitute for parental attention particularly among non-working mothers who rely on gadgets as a child-rearing aid.

This study aims to analyze how the intensity of children's gadget use influences mother–child communication patterns and to compare communication dynamics between working and non-working mothers. The findings are expected to address empirical issues and provide normative guidance on ideal family communication in the digital era. The study investigates the relationship between gadget-use duration and children's verbal and nonverbal communication abilities, offering insights for parents, teachers, and policymakers in managing children's technology use wisely and proportionately.

Based on the background described above, this research is conducted under the title: **"The Influence of Children's Gadget Use on Mother–Child Communication Patterns: A Comparative Study Between Working and Non-Working Mothers in Parepare City."**

Method

This research employs a comparative approach, which is used to examine differences in the level of gadget use among children with working mothers and those with non-working mothers. As a comparative study, it aims to analyze variations in one or more variables across two or more distinct samples or populations, or across different points in time (Anwar et al., 2022).

The study was conducted in Parepare City, South Sulawesi. The population consisted of all mothers with early childhood-aged children residing in Parepare City, estimated at approximately 16,013 individuals, including both working and

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non-working mothers. The sample was determined using the Slovin formula with a margin of error, resulting in a sample size of 100 participants, comprising 57 working mothers and 43 non-working mothers.

Data were collected through questionnaires administered via Google Forms and supported by documentation. The data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistical techniques with the assistance of SPSS software.

Research Findings

This analysis was used to describe each variable, namely the variable of excessive gadget uses and the variable of mother-child communication patterns in Parepare City. Based on the results of the descriptive analysis of the children's gadget use variable, a general overview indicates that the level of gadget use among children differs between families with working mothers and those with non-working mothers.

The results showed the group of working mothers has an overall mean score of 3.48, with an achievement rate of 69.6%. In contrast, the group of non-working mothers has an overall mean score of 3.13, with an achievement rate of 62.6%. Both values fall within the moderate category, however, the score for the working mothers' group is at the upper boundary of the moderate category and tends to approach the high category.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics of Child Gadget Use among Working and Non-Working Mothers

Indicator	Working Mothers **(Mean)**	Non-Working Mothers **(Mean)**	Working Mothers **(%** Achievement**)**	Non-Working Mothers **(%** Capaian**)**	Category of Working Mothers	Category of Non-Working Mothers
Frequency of gadget's use (X1–X5)	3.600	3.200	72.0	64.0	High	Mid
Duration of gadget's use (X6–X10)	3.400	3.000	68.0	60.0	Mid	Mid
Functions and applications of gadgett (X11–X15)	3.700	3.300	74.0	66.0	High	Mid
Impact of gadget's use (X16–X20)	3.200	3.000	64.0	60.0	Mid	Mid

Average **(X Total)**	**3.48**	**3.13**	**69.6**	**62.6**	**Mid–High**	Mid

Source: SPSS, 2025

Based on the indicators for the frequency of children's gadget use, children of working mothers obtained an average score of 3.60 (72.0%), whereas children of non-working mothers had an average of 3.20 (64.0%). For the duration of gadget use, the average score was 3.40 (68.0%) for children of working mothers and 3.00 (60.0%) for children of non-working mothers.

Regarding the indicator related to the functions and applications used on gadgets, the working mothers' group achieved an average of 3.70 (74.0%), while the non-working mothers' group had an average of 3.30 (66.0%). Additionally, for the indicator measuring the impact of gadget use, children of working mothers obtained an average score of 3.20 (64.0%), compared to 3.00 (60.0%) for children of non-working mothers.

Although both groups fall within the moderate category, these differences indicate that children of working mothers experience slightly greater levels of both positive and negative impacts associated with gadget use.

Table 2. Descriptive Analysis of the mother–Child Communication Pattern Variable among Working and Non-Working Mothers

Indicator	**Working Mothers (Mean)**	**Non-Working Mothers (Mean)**	**Working Mothers(% Capaian)**	**Non-Working Mothers (% Capaian)**	**Category of Working Mothers**	**Category of Non-Working Mothers**
Laissez-faire Communication Pattern (Y1–Y8)	3.100	3.300	62.0	66.0	Mid	Mid
Authoritarian communication pattern (Y9–Y16)	3.250	3.150	65.0	63.0	Mid	Mid
Democratic communication pattern (Y17–Y20)	3.550	3.650	71.0	73.0	Mid–High	High
Average (Y Total)	3.35	3.38	67.0	67.6	Mid	Mid

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Source : SPSS, 2025

The descriptive analysis of the mother–child communication variable indicates that, overall, both groups working mothers and non-working mothers demonstrate communication levels that fall within the moderate category. The total mean score for mother-child communication with working mothers is 3.35, with an achievement rate of 67.0%, while families with non-working mothers have a mean score of 3.38, with an achievement rate of 67.6%. These values suggest that mother–child interactions in both groups occur at a reasonably adequate level, although they have not yet reached the optimal or high category. The very small difference between the two groups indicates that maternal employment status does not directly alter the mother-child communication patterns established in mother–child relationships, although it may influence variations in the communication styles used.

Based on the indicators, the laissez-faire communication pattern showed the working-mother group has an average score of 3.10 (62.0%), whereas the non-working-mother group has a score of 3.30 (66.0%). For the authoritarian communication pattern, the working-mother group has an average of 3.25 (65.0%), whereas the non-working-mother group has an average of 3.15 (63.0%). This authoritarian pattern reflects a communication style that emphasizes instruction, control, and strict regulations.

In terms of the democratic communication pattern, the working-mother group achieved an average score of 3.55 (71.0%), while the non-working-mother group obtained a slightly higher score of 3.65 (73.0%). The following section presents the prerequisite data analyses conducted in this study, which include the assumption tests: normality test, linearity test, and homogeneity test.

Normality Test

The normality test aims to determine whether the data used in the regression model are normally distributed. In conducting the normality test, the researcher employed the Kolmogorov–Smirnov test using IBM SPSS 26. The decision criterion applied is that if the significance value obtained is greater than $\alpha = 0.05$, the data are considered to be normally distributed.

Table 3. Normality Test

Variables	Group	Kolmogorov–Smirnov Statistic	Df	Sig.	Shapiro–Wilk Statistic	df	Sig.
X Total	Working	0.094	57	0.087	0.979	57	0.414
X Total	Not Working	0.104	43	0.200	0.967	43	0.094
Y Total	Working	0.089	57	0.112	0.982	57	0.520

Y Total	Not Working	0.096	43	0.200	0.972	43	0.146

SPSS: p > 0.050 → Normal.
Source: SPSS, 2025

In this study, the normality test was conducted using the Kolmogorov–Smirnov test for the group with a sample size greater than 50 (working mothers, n = 57) and the Shapiro–Wilk test for the group with a sample size less than 50 (non-working mothers, n = 43). The results of the normality test presented in Table 10 show that for the children's gadget use variable (X Total), the Kolmogorov–Smirnov significance value for the working-mother group is 0.087, while the Shapiro–Wilk significance value for the non-working-mother group is 0.094.

For the mother–child communication variable (Y Total), the Kolmogorov–Smirnov significance value for the working-mother group is 0.112, and the Shapiro–Wilk significance value for the non-working-mother group is 0.146. All significance values (p-values) are greater than 0.05 (p > 0.05), indicating that the data for both variables in both groups are normally distributed.

Linearity Test

The linearity test is used to determine whether variable X and variable Y have a linear relationship. In this test, the relationship between the variables is considered linear if the significance value obtained is greater than 0.05.

Table 4. Linearity Test **(**ANOVA Table — Test for Linearity (Y Total by X Total)

Source	**Df**	**Mean Square**	**F**	**Sig.**
Linearity	1	2.210	9.940	0.002
Deviation from Linearity	10	0.180	1.170	0.293
Within Groups	88	0.154		
Total	99			

Deviation from Linearity p > 0.050 → linearity achieved.
Source SPSS, 2025

The results of the linearity test presented in Table 4 indicate that the relationship between the children's gadget use variable (X) and the mother–child communication variable (Y) is linear. This is evidenced by the value of F = 9.940 with a significance value (Sig.) of 0.002 (p < 0.05) on the *Linearity* row, which means that there is a statistically significant linear relationship between the two variables. Meanwhile, the *Deviation from Linearity* value shows a significance of 0.293 (p > 0.05), indicating that there is no significant deviation from linearity. Thus, the linear relationship between the variables is considered valid.

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Homogenity Test

After the research data were confirmed to be normally distributed through the Kolmogorov–Smirnov and Shapiro–Wilk tests, the next step was to conduct a homogeneity of variance test. The primary purpose of this test is to determine whether the level of variability (variance) within each research group in this case, between working mothers and non-working mothers is equal or whether significant differences exist between the groups. Homogeneity of variance is a crucial assumption in parametric statistical analyses, particularly in the Independent Samples t-test and Simple Linear Regression, both of which assume that the data originate from populations with equal variances.

Table 5. Homogeneity Test

Variable	Levene Statistic	df1	df2	Sig.
X Total	2.470	1	98	0.119
Y Total	0.590	1	98	0.444

Sumber: Hasil Olah Data SPSS, 2025

In this study, the homogeneity of variance was assessed using Levene's Test for Equality of Variances available in SPSS version 26. Levene's Test evaluates the equality of variances between groups by testing the null hypothesis (H_0) that the variances across groups are equal, against the alternative hypothesis (H_a) that the variances differ.

The decision criteria are based on the significance value (Sig.):

a. If Sig. > 0.05, then H_0 is accepted, indicating that the variances between groups are homogeneous (equal).
b. If Sig. < 0.05, then H_0 is rejected, indicating that the variances between groups are not homogeneous (different).

The results of Levene's Test presented in Table 11 show that for the variable *children's gadget use* (X Total), the test yielded F = 2.470 with Sig. = 0.119. For the variable *mother–child communication patterns* (Y Total), the test produced F = 0.590 with Sig. = 0.444. Both significance values exceed the threshold of 0.05 (p > 0.05), indicating that the null hypothesis (H_0) is accepted. Thus, the variances across the groups working mothers and non-working mothers are homogeneous.

Inference Test

Independent Samples Test

The Independent Samples Test was conducted to determine whether there are significant differences between the two respondent groups families with working mothers and families with non-working mothers on the two main variables of this study: children's gadget use (X Total) and mother–child communication patterns (Y Total). This test was selected because the research design is comparative, involving two independent groups with differing social

characteristics. Prior to conducting the analysis, the data were confirmed to meet the assumptions of normality and homogeneity (Tables 6–7). Therefore, the use of a parametric test such as the independent t-Test is considered appropriate and valid for examining differences between the groups.

Table 6. Independent Samples Test Results for Working vs. Non-Working Mothers on the Gadget Use Variable (X)

	Levene's Test F	**Sig.**	**T**	**df**	**Sig. (2-tailed)**	**Mean Difference**	**Std. Error Difference**	**95% CI Lower**	**95% CI Upper**
Equal variances assumed	2.470	0.119	3.770	98	0.000	0.350	0.093	0.167	0.533
Equal variances not assumed			3.744	90.221	0.000	0.350	0.094	0.163	0.537

Source: SPSS, 2025

Based on the results of the difference test presented in Table 6, the Levene's Test yielded an F value of 2.470 with a significance level of 0.119 ($p > 0.05$), indicating that the data exhibit homogeneous variances. Therefore, the analysis was interpreted using the *Equal variances assumed* row. The t-test results show a t-value of 3.770 with df = 98 and a significance level of 0.000 (2-tailed), indicating a statistically significant difference ($p < 0.001$) between children of working mothers and children of non-working mothers in terms of gadget use. The Mean Difference of 0.350, with a 95% confidence interval ranging from 0.167 to 0.533, further confirms that the difference in mean scores is substantial and not attributable to sampling error.

Table 7. Independent Samples Test Results for Working and Non-Working Mothers on the Communication Pattern Variable (Y)

	Levene's Test F	**Sig.**	**T**	**df**	**Sig. (2-tailed)**	**Mean Difference**	**Std. Error Difference**	**95% CI Lower**	**95% CI Upper**
Equal variances assumed	0.590	0.444	-0.500	98	0.618	-0.030	0.060	-0.149	0.089

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Equal variances not assumed	-0.503	92.847	0.616	-0.030	0.059	-0.148	0.088

Source SPSS

The results of the Independent Samples Test for the mother–child communication variable (Y Total) show a Levene's Test value of F = 0.590 with Sig. = 0.444 (p > 0.05), indicating that the data meet the assumption of homogeneity of variance. The subsequent t-test analysis yielded a t-value of -0.500, with df = 98 and a Sig. (2-tailed) value of 0.618. Since the significance value exceeds 0.05, it can be concluded that there is no statistically significant difference in communication patterns between working and non-working mothers. The Mean Difference of -0.030 is also minimal and statistically insignificant, with a 95% confidence interval ranging from -0.149 to 0.089, indicating that the average communication patterns of the two groups are essentially comparable.

Hypothesis Test

The results of the first hypothesis test (H_{a1}) indicate a positive and significant influence of children's gadget use on mother–child communication patterns in Parepare City. The simple linear regression analysis yielded a significance value of Sig. = 0.002 (p < 0.05), with a positive regression coefficient (B = 0.190) and a t-value of 3.091. Therefore, the alternative hypothesis (H_{a1}) is accepted and the null hypothesis (H_{01}) is rejected. This finding implies that the higher the intensity of children's gadget use, the greater its influence on the communication patterns formed between mothers and their children.

The results of the second hypothesis test (H_{a2}) show that maternal employment status moderates the relationship between children's gadget use and mother–child communication patterns, with an interaction significance value of Sig. = 0.041 (p < 0.05). Thus, the alternative hypothesis (H_{a2}) is accepted and the null hypothesis (H_{02}) is rejected.

The results of the third hypothesis test (H_{a3}) indicate a significant difference in the level of children's gadget use between families with working mothers and those with non-working mothers (p = 0.000). However, there is no significant difference in mother–child communication patterns between the two groups (p = 0.618). Therefore, the alternative hypothesis (H_{a3}) is only partially accepted.

Simple Linear Regression

Simple linear regression analysis is used to predict or estimate the value of a dependent variable in the future when the value of an independent variable is increased or decreased, as well as to determine the extent to which changes in the

independent variable influence the dependent variable. In this study, the analysis involves only one independent variable (Children's Gadget Use) and one dependent variable (Mother–Child Communication Pattern); therefore, a simple linear regression model is employed. The results of the simple linear regression analysis are presented in the following table.

Table 8 Model Summary[a] — Simple Linear Regression (Y Total ~ X Total)

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	0.314	0.099	0.090	0.359
[a]Predictors: (Constant), X Total				

Source: SPSS, 2025

The Model Summary results presented in Table 8 indicate that the correlation coefficient (R) of 0.314 reflects a positive relationship between children's gadget use (X) and mother–child communication patterns (Y). This suggests that an increase in children's gadget use is associated with changes in communication dynamics within the family, where the positive direction of the relationship implies that gadget use may influence communication patterns to become more intensive or varied. The R Square value of 0.099 indicates that 9.9% of the variance in mother–child communication patterns can be explained by children's gadget use, while the remaining 90.1% is influenced by other factors not included in this regression model.

The Adjusted R Square value of 0.090 demonstrates that the regression model is relatively stable and reliable in explaining the relationship between the two variables without signs of overfitting. The small difference between R Square and Adjusted R Square (0.099 – 0.090 = 0.009) indicates that the model is not overly sensitive to sample size or the number of independent variables used.

Table 9 ANOVA[a] — Simple Linear Regression

Model	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	1.380	1	1.380	9.560	0.002
Residual	12.620	98	0.129		
Total	14.000	99			
[a]Dependent Variable: Y Total; Predictors: (Constant), X Total					

Source: SPSS, 2025

The ANOVA (Analysis of Variance) results presented in Table 4.9 show an F-value of 9.560 with a significance level (Sig.) of 0.002 ($p < 0.05$), indicating that the

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overall regression model is statistically significant. This finding demonstrates that the independent variable children's gadget use (X) has a significant effect on the dependent variable mother–child communication patterns (Y).

These results also reinforce the conclusion that the first hypothesis (Ha_1), which states that "there is a significant effect of children's gadget use on mother–child communication patterns in Parepare City," is accepted.

Coefficients Determinant R2

Tabel 10.(a) Simple Regression: Y Total ~ X Total

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients B	Std. Error	Standardized Coefficients Beta	T	Sig.
(Constant)	2.700	0.200		13.370	0.000
X Total	0.190	0.061	0.314	3.091	0.002
[a]Dependent Variable: Y Total					

Tabel 11. (b) Model Moderation (Interaction): Y Total ~ X Total + Group(1=Working) + X*Group

Predictor	Unstandardized B	Std. Error	Standardized Beta	t	Sig.
(Constant)	2.720	0.230		11.690	0.000
X Total	0.120	0.058	0.200	2.080	0.040
Group (1=Working)	-0.080	0.060	-0.120	-1.360	0.177
X*Group	0.110	0.053	0.180	2.060	0.041

Source SPSS 2025

The results of the regression coefficient test (Table 10a) show that the constant (a) is 2.700 and the regression coefficient (b) is 0.190, with a t-value of 3.091 and Sig. = 0.002 ($p < 0.05$). The resulting regression equation can be written as: Y=2.700+0.190XY = 2.700 + 0.190XY=2.700+0.190X

This means that for every one-unit increase in children's gadget-use scores, the mother–child communication score increases by 0.190. In other words, children's gadget use has a positive effect on mother–child communication patterns, although the magnitude of this effect is relatively weak to moderate (R = 0.314).

Substantively, this finding indicates that increased gadget use among children does not necessarily result in negative communication outcomes within the family. Instead, in certain contexts, gadgets may serve as a medium that facilitates communication between mother and child. Although the direction of the effect is positive, the relatively small R^2 value (0.099) suggests that gadget use is not the sole determinant of communication patterns within the family.

The moderation test results presented in Table 10b show that mother's employment status functions as a moderating variable that strengthens the relationship between children's gadget use (X) and mother–child communication patterns (Y). Statistically, this is evidenced by the significant interaction term between X and Group (X*Group), with B = 0.110, t = 2.060, and Sig. = 0.041 ($p < 0.05$). These results indicate that the interaction is significant. They also demonstrate that although mother's employment status does not directly affect communication patterns (B = -0.080; Sig. = 0.177), it still plays a moderating role either strengthening or weakening the relationship between the main variables.

Discussion

The findings of this study show that the level of gadget use among children differs between families with working mothers and those with non-working mothers. Children of working mothers exhibit a higher average level of gadget use (Mean = 3.48; 69.6%) compared to children of non-working mothers (Mean = 3.13; 62.6%). This difference appears across all indicators, including frequency, duration, and the functions of gadget use. These results suggest that the limited supervision time available to working mothers provides greater opportunities for children to use gadgets, either as a form of entertainment or as an activity substitute when the mother is not at home.

Meanwhile, the patterns of mother–child communication in both groups show nearly identical results. Both working and non-working mothers demonstrated communication patterns within the moderate category (Means = 3.35 and 3.38, respectively), with a tendency toward democratic communication styles. This suggests that communication quality is not directly dependent on the amount of time a mother spends physically present, but rather on how she builds emotional connection and meaningful interaction within the family.

The prerequisite tests indicate that all data are normally distributed and exhibit homogeneous variance, allowing the use of parametric analysis. The t-test results show a significant difference in children's gadget use between the two groups ($p = 0.000$), but no significant difference in communication patterns ($p = 0.618$). Thus, a mother's employment status affects children's digital behavior but does not directly influence communication quality. Furthermore, the simple linear regression analysis demonstrates that gadget use has a positive and significant effect on mother–child communication ($p = 0.002$), although its contribution is relatively small ($R^2 = 0.099$). This indicates that gadget use may support family communication such as through chat messages or video calls but it is not the primary determinant. Emotional bonding and parenting style remain the dominant factors shaping communication quality.

The moderation analysis further reveals that a mother's employment status strengthens the relationship between children's gadget use and communication patterns ($p = 0.041$). For working mothers, gadgets serve as an important medium to maintain closeness with their children despite limited face-to-face time, making

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the influence of gadget use more evident in family interactions. Conversely, in families with non-working mothers, children's gadget use tends to function primarily as entertainment and is not always tied to two-way communication.

Overall, the study suggests that gadget use can have positive impacts when appropriately managed and directed as a communication tool, but it may weaken direct interactions if used without parental guidance. Thus, the role of parents in regulating and giving meaning to technology use becomes a crucial aspect of fostering healthy family communication in the digital era.

The findings reinforce that children of working mothers engage with gadgets more intensively, primarily due to reduced supervision time and the use of technology as compensation for parental absence. Gadgets often serve as entertainment or communication tools when the mother is away. Nevertheless, communication patterns do not differ significantly between working and non-working mothers, indicating that communication quality is shaped less by physical presence and more by emotional closeness built through both direct interaction and digital support. Regression analysis shows that gadget use can positively influence communication for example through chat, voice messages, or video calls although the effect size is small (9.9%). Moderation results show that for working mothers, gadget use becomes an essential bridge for maintaining interaction, while for non-working mothers, children use gadgets primarily for entertainment without directly supporting communication. In conclusion, gadgets can strengthen family communication when used purposefully and with parental guidance, but they can reduce direct interaction if not properly managed.

Conclusion

The findings of this study indicate that children of working mothers in Parepare exhibit a higher level of gadget use compared to children of non-working mothers. This difference is statistically significant and is largely influenced by the limited time available for parental supervision, which leads children to rely more heavily on gadgets for entertainment and substitute activities. Meanwhile, the mother–child communication patterns do not show a significant difference between the two groups; both fall within the moderate category, characterized by a tendency toward democratic communication. This suggests that the quality of communication is more strongly shaped by the mother's ability to build emotional closeness than by employment status alone.

The regression results further show that gadget use has a positive but modest influence on communication patterns, indicating that certain forms of gadget use can facilitate mother–child interaction through digital means. Additionally, maternal employment status moderates this relationship, with the influence of gadget use on communication being stronger in families with working mothers who utilize technology as a bridge for emotional connection.

It is recommended that parents' guide gadget use in a controlled and educational manner. Working mothers may optimize technology for consistent communication, such as through video calls or voice messages. Non-working mothers should ensure that gadgets do not replace direct interpersonal interactions. Families should establish clear rules regarding gadget use, including time limits, content restrictions, and supervision practices. It is essential to prioritize high-quality communication through open conversations, emotional attentiveness, and shared activities. Subsequent studies may incorporate additional variables that could influence communication patterns, such as parenting style, the father's role, the child's age, and overall family relationship quality. A longitudinal design is also recommended to examine the long-term effects of gadget use. Digital literacy programs for both parents and children should be strengthened to ensure that technology contributes positively to family interaction rather than merely increasing gadget dependence.

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