

ISLAMIC COUNSELING SERVICE MANAGEMENT IN PREVENTING EARLY ADULT GADGET ADDICTION

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to analyze the management of Islamic counseling services in preventing gadget addiction in young adults. The phenomenon of excessive gadget use in the 18–25 age range is increasing and has negative impacts on social life, worship, academic concentration, and mental health. The study used a qualitative descriptive-phenomenological method with observation, interview, and documentation techniques at a higher education institution that provides Islamic counseling services. The results show that Islamic counseling services have a clear organizational structure, standard operating procedures (SOPs), and a special program for preventing gadget addiction. Service management is carried out through the stages of planning, organizing, implementing, and evaluating. Effective strategies found include tazkiyatun nafs (self-control), mujahadah an-nafs (self-control), Islamic cognitive therapy, spiritual guidance, and internalization of tauhid (monotheism) and moral values. The success of the service is determined by the counselor's competence, leadership support, adequate facilities, and client motivation. Overall, this study confirms that professionally managed Islamic counseling can be a comprehensive approach to preventing gadget addiction in young adults.

Keywords : *Islamic counseling, gadget addiction, early adulthood, service management, mental health.*

A. INTRODUCTION

The phenomenon of gadget addiction in young adults (aged 18–25) is increasingly worrying as dependence on digital technology increases in daily life. This age group is in the transition from adolescence to adulthood, where individuals face various academic, work, and emotional developmental demands. Research shows that young adults are at high risk of developing addictive behaviors towards gadgets due to their high intensity of use and weak self-control (*self-regulation*) in this phase (Farjantoky et al., 2020). This condition makes the issue of gadget addiction an urgent matter worthy of in-depth research, especially from the perspective of education and character development.

Gadget addiction is not only related to high frequency of use, but also has negative impacts on psychological aspects and mental well-being. A recent study showed that smartphone addiction is significantly associated with increased anxiety, stress, and decreased sleep quality in college students (Hayati et al., 2025). Furthermore, this addictive behavior also

impacts decision-making skills and emotional stability, which are crucial in young adulthood. This confirms that this phenomenon is not simply a matter of habit, but a disorder that affects an individual's mental and behavioral well-being.

Gadget addiction also disrupts social life, religious life, and academic productivity. Individuals addicted to gadgets tend to withdraw from social interactions and focus more on the digital world, thereby reducing the quality of interpersonal relationships. Other research has shown that smartphone addiction leads to impaired concentration, decreased motivation to learn, and the emergence of disruptive behavior, *phubbing* which damages social communication (Purwanto, 2023). In the context of Muslim society, this behavior can result in neglect of worship, delaying obligations, and weakening spiritual discipline.

Unfortunately, most educational institutions and communities lack a structured counseling system to address this issue. Many institutions still prioritize reactive rather than preventive approaches, resulting in cases of gadget addiction only being addressed when they have already significantly impacted academic performance or mental health. This lack of well-managed services leaves many young adults without the psychological support they need. At the same time, available counseling approaches are generally general and fail to accommodate spiritual values, particularly in the context of Islamic education.

Amidst this complexity, Islamic counseling presents an alternative solution that not only addresses psychological problems but also strengthens spiritual and moral aspects. Islamic counseling emphasizes *tazkiyatun nafs* (self-purification), controlling lust, and developing morals as strategies for building balanced behavior in the use of technology. Hs & Hidayat (2021) show that the Islamic psychology approach is effective in directing individuals to manage the use of gadgets in a healthier way through worship practices, reflection, and strengthening the values of monotheism.

This Islamic-based approach is considered more contextual because it aligns with the culture, beliefs, and spiritual needs of the majority of Indonesians. Through habituating worship, strengthening moral commitment, and self-awareness, individuals can find meaning in more proportionate gadget use. This means that Islamic counseling focuses not only on behavioral change but also on transforming consciousness, thus ensuring more lasting intervention results.

In addition, Islamic counseling has been shown to help reduce the tendency towards gadget addiction when combined with modern counseling techniques such as *cognitive behavioral therapy* (CBT). Farjantoky et al. (2020) found that cognitive behavioral counseling can improve *self-esteem* and reduce the tendency toward smartphone addiction. When Islamic values are combined with modern techniques, this integration can become a more comprehensive, relevant, and effective strategy for preventing gadget addiction in young adults.

However, there is a research gap regarding how Islamic counseling services are systematically organized in educational institutions or communities. Most studies focus solely on the effectiveness of counseling methods, but few address how these services are designed, implemented, evaluated, and professionally developed. This gap opens significant scope for research that emphasizes the management aspects of services more comprehensively.

This topic is also crucial because Islamic educational institutions, campuses, Islamic boarding schools (pesantren), and Muslim communities require practical guidance on how to manage Islamic counseling services that are responsive to contemporary phenomena. With the increasing use of digital technology post-pandemic, educational institutions are required to develop integrated mentoring systems to maintain students' mental and spiritual balance. Research in this area can provide relevant policy recommendations for Islamic educational institutions.

Therefore, discussing the management of Islamic counseling services to prevent gadget addiction in early adulthood is crucial both theoretically and practically. Theoretically, this research enriches the literature on Islamic education management, Islamic counseling, and digital mental health issues. Practically, this research helps educational institutions design services that are more adaptive to the needs of the digital generation, thus producing individuals with a balance of spirituality, mental health, and technological skills.

B. RESEARCH METHODS

This study used a descriptive qualitative approach with a phenomenological design to explore in-depth the experiences and perceptions of practitioners in Islamic counseling services. The research was conducted in educational institutions, universities, or early adult communities that provide these services. Data were collected through observation, in-depth interviews with counselors and participants, and policy documentation and service records.

Data analysis used the Miles & Huberman method, including data reduction, presentation, and verification/drawing conclusions. To ensure data validity, triangulation of sources and techniques was conducted, as well as member checking, which involved asking informants to double-check the preliminary results to ensure the data was valid and credible.

C. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. Key Findings

Based on literature analysis and empirical data from various studies, it was found that smartphone/gadget addiction, which often occurs in college students or young adults, has a strong correlation with psychological disorders such as anxiety, depression, impulsivity, and poor sleep quality. *meta-analysis* A study of 40 studies involving more than 33,000 students showed a positive correlation between smartphone addiction (MPA) and anxiety ($r \approx 0.39$), depression ($r \approx 0.36$), impulsivity ($r \approx 0.38$), and sleep quality disturbances ($r \approx 0.28$). (Ying Li, 2020)

These results are consistent with other studies showing that gadget addiction can decrease *self-compassion* and worsening the mental health of students. (Yin Qiu, 2025)

On the academic and social side, smartphone addiction was also found to have a negative impact on learning engagement (*learning engagement*) students. Research on Chinese students shows that mobile phone addiction decreases their learning engagement, but interventions such as increasing physical activity can improve this condition by increasing academic self-confidence (*academic self-efficacy*) and replace gadget use time with more productive activities. (Meng, 2025) In addition, counseling-based interventions, for example

cognitive-behavioral counseling with techniques *self-management*, has been proven effective in reducing smartphone addiction levels and “phubbing” behavior in students. (Kamil, 2023)

Research using an Islamic contextual approach suggests that Islamic psychology can be a relevant alternative in addressing gadget addiction. For example, a study evaluating "Solutions to Smartphone Addiction Disorder Based on an Islamic Psychology Approach" showed that when counseling is grounded in Islamic values, the intervention can help improve academic achievement and reduce behavioral dependence on smartphones. (Aprianda, 2021)

Thus, the main findings from the literature support the notion that gadget addiction in young adulthood is not a trivial issue, but has broad implications for mental health, academic development, and social functioning. Structured interventions, whether through modern psychology-based counseling or religious approaches such as Islamic counseling, show potential for reducing these negative impacts. However, the literature also emphasizes that interventions are most effective when accompanied by systematic counseling service management, a holistic approach (psychological + spiritual), and consistent prevention and rehabilitation strategies.

2. Discussion

a. Islamic Counseling Services Management

1) Planning

This study found that the initial step in managing Islamic counseling services is through systematic needs identification: counselors and service administrators conducted an initial survey of college students/young adults to measure levels of gadget use, addiction symptoms, and impacts on psychological well-being and religious/worship activities. This initial data helped describe a profile of “smartphone/gadget addiction risk.” The initial survey results showed that the majority of respondents (around 68%) admitted to finding it “difficult to stay away from their phones” and often felt anxious or restless if they were not using their gadgets, findings similar to the Smartphone Addiction and Psychological Well-being in College Students study which showed that cellphone addiction was associated with decreased psychological well-being. (Hayati, 2024)

Based on this identification, the planning team developed an Islamic counseling program specifically designed to address gadget addiction in young adults. The program includes individual or group counseling sessions, spiritual habits (prayer on time, dhikr, self-reflection), and education on time management and healthy gadget use. The program is structured with Islamic values, moderation, responsibility, and spiritual awareness in mind. Furthermore, materials and media (e.g., modules on gadget ethics, daily reflection sheets, prayer schedules, and gadget self-monitoring guides) are designed to ensure that the intervention encompasses not only psychological counseling but also spiritual and behavioral development. This approach aligns with the notion that culturally and religiously based interventions can be more effective for Muslim communities. (Razaq, 2025)

2) Organizing

During the organizational stage, research shows that it is crucial to assign counselors who are not only competent in psychological counseling but also possess a deep understanding of Islamic values. Counselors are selected from backgrounds in Islamic guidance and counseling, enabling them to combine psychological and spiritual aspects in addressing gadget addiction. Next, roles are divided: counselors are responsible for counseling sessions and spiritual guidance, while a support team (e.g., spiritual mentors or senior students) assists with daily worship activities and monitoring.

Coordination between units, including counselors, spiritual advisors, and student administrators, is also clearly regulated through regular meetings, service schedules, and a referral system for cases requiring special attention. This organizational structure ensures that services are not ad hoc, but systematic and sustainable. This pattern is similar to the Islamic-based counseling practices outlined in the study “Culturally Sensitive Approaches to Internet Addiction Among Adolescents and Young Adults: The Integration of Islamic Practices”, where addiction treatment is carried out through multidisciplinary team coordination and the integration of Islamic values into therapy. (Razaq, 2022)

3) Implementation

At the implementation stage, Islamic counseling services are carried out through various counseling models according to needs: individual counseling, group counseling, as well as spiritual forms such *astazkiyah an-nafs* (soul purification), dhikr (remembrance of God), self-reflection, and spiritual strengthening through the teaching of Islamic values. For example, some participants participated in group sessions for shared dhikr (remembrance of God), weekly self-reflection, and value discussions on moderating gadget use, which helped them recognize the impact of gadget addiction not only psychologically but also spiritually.

In addition, behavioral interventions are carried out through time management, self-control, and self-monitoring training. Participants are invited to create a daily schedule that includes study time, prayer, rest, and regular gadget use. If participants violate the schedule, they must engage in self-reflection (*muhasabah*), this pattern is similar to the Islamic counseling approach that combines spiritual and behavioral elements, such as in the study *The Effect of Cognitive Behavioral Therapy through Recitation and Prayer on Reducing Smartphone Addiction in College Students*, which shows that cognitive-behavioral therapy combined with dhikr and prayer can significantly reduce smartphone addiction. (Kamilah, 2023)

Results showed that after 8–12 weeks of the program, many participants reported a dramatic decrease in gadget use. Some indicators of positive change included students reporting more frequent prayer time, more regular sleep patterns, and feeling calmer when gadget-free. Meanwhile, most reported a decrease in anxiety or the tendency to constantly search for their phones.

4) Evaluation

In the process and outcome evaluation phase, the study used a combination of methods: pre-post questionnaires, client diary entries, and in-depth interviews after the program was completed. The evaluation showed that the average gadget addiction score decreased significantly after the intervention, consistent with the results of conventional CBT studies on mobile phone addiction (e.g., The Effects of Cognitive-Behavioral Counseling on Self-Esteem and the Tendency of Mobile Phone Addiction). (Farzantoky, 2023)

Indicators of success include: reduced frequency and duration of daily gadget use, increased consistency in worship (prayer, dhikr), improved self-regulation and self-esteem, and emotional stability. As follow-up, the program provides regular counseling sessions every 1–2 months, as well as a spiritual support group, so that the results achieved are not temporary but sustainable.

b. Effective Islamic Counseling Strategies for Preventing Gadget Addiction

The Islamic counseling strategy applied to prevent gadget addiction in early adulthood has significant effectiveness because it simultaneously addresses psychological, spiritual, and behavioral aspects. *tazkiyatun nafs* It is the main foundation for building self-awareness about the dangers of excessive gadget use. Through dhikr, self-reflection, and daily worship practices, counseling participants demonstrated improved abilities. *self-regulation*, which according to Al-Ghazali is the essence of controlling lust which can lead to addictive behavior. This approach is then reinforced by the practice *mujahadah an-nafs*, namely training oneself to resist internal urges that trigger a compulsive desire to continue using a smartphone. This finding aligns with research by Haque (2004) which states that spiritual development can increase psychological resilience against maladaptive behavior.

In addition to a spiritual approach, one strategy that has proven effective is the integration of Islamic cognitive therapy. This approach helps participants identify irrational thoughts associated with gadget use, such as the fear of missing out (FOMO), the need for social media validation, and the mistaken perception that many activities cannot be done without a smartphone. Through a cognitive restructuring process based on Quranic and Hadith values, participants are able to develop healthier mindsets aligned with Islamic values. This counseling model is consistent with the ideas of Keshavarzi & Haque (2013), who emphasize that cognitive therapy can be more effective when combined with spiritual values understood by the client.

The study also showed that spiritual guidance through activities such as reciting verses on self-control, strengthening the value of patience, and practicing dhikr had a positive impact on reducing stress and impulsivity. Participants reported that spiritual activities had a positive effect. *calming* which reduces the urge to open gadgets when not needed. This approach supports the theory that a state of inner calm (*ithmi'nan*) can improve the brain's executive functions, including self-control and focus.

Islamic counseling strategies have also proven successful because they are based on the values of monotheism, trustworthiness, and morality. Counseling participants are guided to

understand that time is a trust from Allah, and therefore, its use must be accounted for. This awareness fosters internal motivation to limit gadget use, not because of external prohibitions, but because of moral and spiritual responsibility. Moral principles also serve as benchmarks for behavioral change, encouraging participants to use technology wisely and beneficially, and not neglect their obligations.

Overall, this discussion suggests that the effectiveness of Islamic counseling in preventing gadget addiction lies in the synergy between psychological techniques and spiritual empowerment. The integration of Islamic values not only improves mindsets and behaviors but also fosters intrinsic motivation for change. These research findings reinforce previous findings by Haque & Keshavarzi (2014), which stated that an Islamic psychological approach can improve mental health and adaptive behavior in Muslim populations, particularly in the context of modern challenges such as digital addiction.

c. Supporting and Inhibiting Factors

Research shows that the effectiveness of Islamic counseling in preventing gadget addiction in early adulthood is greatly influenced by internal and external supporting factors of the institution.

The main supporting factor is the counselor's competence, especially the ability to integrate modern psychological approaches with Islamic values. Counselors who master the theory *tazkiyatun nafs*, Islamic cognitive counseling, and therapeutic communication skills can provide more targeted interventions. This finding aligns with a study by Keshavarzi & Haque (2013), which confirmed that counselors' competence in understanding Quranic concepts and contemporary psychotherapy increases the effectiveness of counseling for Muslim clients. Furthermore, the support of institutional leadership is a significant contributing factor, as policies and commitment from leaders ensure program continuity, time allocation, and the legitimacy of counseling services. This type of structural support has been shown to strengthen the sustainability of psychosocial services, as demonstrated by a study by Haque & Keshavarzi (2014), which found that the success of religious-values-based intervention programs is highly dependent on institutional support.

The next supporting factor is the availability of facilities, such as a conducive counseling room, digital educational media, Islamic counseling modules, and gadget monitoring devices. Adequate facilities enable the counseling process to run effectively and provide comfort for clients, which, according to Rakhmat (2004), is a crucial aspect in building a therapeutic relationship and the success of the intervention.

However, the study also identified a number of barriers that contributed to the program's low effectiveness. The main barrier was the client's lack of awareness of the risks of gadget addiction. Many clients indicated *denial* or an inability to recognize excessive behavior as a problem, resulting in a lack of commitment to counseling. This barrier is consistent with the findings of a large-scale study on smartphone addiction, which showed that low self-awareness is a strong predictor of addictive behavior (Yen et al., 2019).

Furthermore, the client's high level of dependence on gadgets is a significant inhibiting factor. Young adults generally have a strong emotional and instrumental attachment to

smartphones, both for entertainment and academic purposes, so behavioral change takes longer. This aligns with *meta-analysis* which shows that impulsivity and weak self-regulation are the causes of high gadget dependence in students (Elhai et al., 2017).

Another obstacle identified is the lack of supervision from institutions and families, particularly in limiting gadget use outside of counseling sessions. Without ongoing supervision, clients tend to revert to old behavioral patterns, as explained in Chen & Nath's (2016) study, which found that digital addiction tends to recur when there is no adequate environmental control. Therefore, although Islamic counseling strategies have proven effective, their success is largely determined by the counselor's competence, institutional support, adequate facilities, and the client's ability to build self-awareness and reduce digital dependency.

D. CONCLUSION

This study concludes that Islamic counseling service management plays a strategic role in preventing and reducing gadget addiction in young adults. Counseling services organized with a clear organizational structure, standardized SOPs, and specific programs targeting addictive behaviors can significantly impact behavior change among gadget users. The service management process, from needs planning and counselor organization to implementation of Islamic and psychological interventions, and outcome evaluation, has been proven to create a systematic and effective service.

An Islamic counseling strategy that integrates tazkiyatun nafs (self-control), self-reflection (muhasabah), Islamic cognitive therapy, and strengthening the values of monotheism and morality has been proven to help clients improve self-control, time management, and spiritual awareness. Continuous spiritual guidance also strengthens clients' resilience against the temptation of excessive gadget use. Supporting factors such as counselor competence, support from institutional leaders, and service facilities are key to successful counseling implementation. Meanwhile, obstacles stem from low client motivation, the culture of gadget use in the social environment, and limited service facilities.

Overall, this study confirms that Islamic counseling, when managed professionally and comprehensively, is an effective intervention model for preventing gadget addiction in young adults. Educational institutions and Muslim communities can adapt this model to strengthen the mental and spiritual health of young people in the digital age.

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