Analysis of Gadget Use and Gratification Among Students at *Pondok Pesantren* Sharif Hidayatullah Rejomulyo, Kediri City

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Article Info	ABSTRACT
	The development of information technology in the 21st century has brought significant changes in various fields, including education and religion. The 2023 APJII report noted that more than 70% of Indonesian teenagers have internet access through gadgets, indicating that the younger generation lives in a digital era. This development also influences religious-based educational environments, one of which is Pondok Pesantren Sharif Hidayatullah Rejomulyo in Kediri City. This pesantren is categorized as a modern Islamic boarding school with a policy that allows students to bring and use gadgets outside of worship and Qur'anic study times. Such a phenomenon raises questions about the motives and gratifications of students in using gadgets. This study aims to understand the motives and gratifications obtained by students in using gadgets at Pondok Pesantren Sharif Hidayatullah Rejomulyo in Kediri City. The research applies a descriptive qualitative approach using observation, interviews, and documentation methods. The Uses and gratification theory is used as the analytical framework to identify cognitive, affective, personal integration, social integration, and diversion needs. The research informants consist of active students who use gadgets in their daily activities at the pesantren. The findings reveal that students use gadgets to seek academic information and current news, obtain entertainment, communicate with family and friends, express themselves, and relieve boredom. The gratifications gained align with the motives that correspond to the five categories of needs in the Uses and gratification theory.

INTRODUCTION

In the 21st century, the development of information and communication technology has brought significant changes to human life, including in the fields of education and religion. One of the most influential forms of technology is the gadget, which has now become an inseparable part of everyday life. Gadgets are small electronic devices designed with specific functions, such as smartphones. These devices are the result of the latest technological innovations that offer new features, more optimal performance, as well as more practical and beneficial purposes and functions (Miranti, 2021). According to Lewis, a gadget is an electronic tool designed to support and simplify a person's daily activities (Iswidharmanjaya & Agency, 2014). Meanwhile, Osa Kurniawan Ilham in (Rohmah, 2017). Defines gadgets as small devices or mechanical tools that attract attention because of their relatively new nature, capable of providing new entertainment or pleasure for their users, although at times they may be less practical in use(Rahmatia & Azis, 2024).

In Indonesia, gadget usage has continued to increase from year to year. In 2022, it was recorded that around 204 million people used gadgets, and this number rose to 221 million in 2024, with most accessing the internet via mobile phones(Putra & Febrianto, 2024). The practicality and multifunctionality of gadgets make them not only widely used by adults but also spread across all age groups, including children and adolescents. This phenomenon is the impact of rapid technological advancement, shifting consumption patterns, and the growing needs of society. The surge in gadget use over the past decade has also been evident among students. Asosiasi Penyelenggara Jasa Internet Indonesia (APJII) 2023 report stated that more than 70% of Indonesian teenagers have internet access through their gadgets (APJII, 2024). These data confirm that today's young generation lives in the midst

of a rapidly developing digital world. This includes the use of gadgets in religious education environments such as Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*), which have long been known for their traditional learning systems.

Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*) are now beginning to undergo changes in their learning systems and internal policies in response to technological advancements. One example is Pondok *Pesantren* Sharif Hidayatullah Rejomulyo in Kediri City, which allows its students (*santri*) to bring and use gadgets. This *pesantren* is located near the campus area of UIN Syekh Wasil Kediri and is inhabited entirely by students who are also university undergraduates. Pondok *Pesantren* Sharif Hidayatullah Rejomulyo applies both traditional and modern systems in its teaching methods, including the utilization of technology (Fauziatur Rohmah, 2022). The use of gadgets in this *pesantren* is regulated with relatively flexible rules. *Santri* are only prohibited from using gadgets during prayer times and Qur'an recitation sessions. This regulation is intended to ensure that students maintain concentration in worship and focus on their religious studies. However, in practice, not all students comply with these rules. It is still common to find students bringing gadgets during religious activities, including Qur'an recitations, which disrupts their learning concentration.

In addition to these rule violations, gadget use also affects the discipline of the *santri*. Some students are often late for congregational prayers because they remain engrossed in their gadgets when the call to prayer is heard, delaying their ablution. This was evident from the initial observation documentation, which showed that prayer rows were not fully occupied. Out of a total of 55 students, approximately 70% were found to be undisciplined or late in attending congregational prayers

Picture 1. A Photo Showing Prayer Rows Not Fully Occupied, Reflecting That Many Students Still Arrive Late for Congregational Prayers at Pondok *Pesantren* Sharif Hidayatullah Rejomulyo, Kediri City

This condition indicates that gadget use has begun to influence the behavioral patterns and responsibilities of students (*santri*) in the *pesantren* environment. This phenomenon is particularly interesting to study, considering that Islamic boarding schools place a strong emphasis on character building and discipline. When gadget use is no longer controlled, the initial purpose of allowing students to bring gadgets namely to support academic and communication needs may shift into a source of distraction that disrupts the rules and order of the *pesantren*. This issue is important to examine further: do students truly utilize gadgets for academic and communication purposes, or are they merely seeking entertainment? Therefore, this research focuses on the motives and gratifications of gadget use among the students of Pondok *Pesantren* Sharif Hidayatullah Rejomulyo, Kediri City.

Several journal articles have discussed issues related to gadget use, with the sources obtained through searches in various online journal databases such as Google Scholar, followed by content analysis. From the search results, a variety of journals were found with different perspectives and discussions. Referring specifically to journal articles that examine the context of Indonesia, the

discussion highlights that gadgets are not only used as tools for interpersonal communication but also as platforms for acquiring information. For example, the article titled *"The Use of* Gadget *Technology as a Learning Medium"* explains that gadgets can facilitate communication, provide access to information, broaden knowledge, offer entertainment, and serve as tools to support a modern lifestyle. In addition, gadgets are also used as supplementary, supporting, or alternative learning media, such as searching for materials, accessing assignments, engaging in online discussions, and even distance learning(Anugrah Putra, 2017). Another article, *"The Effect of* Gadget *Use on Students' Learning Concentration at SMP IT Ad Durrah Private School,"* explains that uncontrolled gadget use affects students' concentration in class, primarily due to distractions from non-educational activities such as playing games and using social media(Susanti et al., 2024). Meanwhile, the article *"Analysis of* Gadget *Use on University Students' Social Interaction"* shows that gadgets provide positive benefits for students, especially in supporting lectures, communication, entertainment, and business. However, excessive use reduces direct social interaction and risks fostering antisocial attitudes if not managed wisely. Similarly, the article *"The Impact of* Gadget *Use on Early Childhood Social Interaction"* highlights that while gadgets can have positive effects, such as facilitating information access and enhancing creativity, the negative impacts are more dominant—namely reduced social interaction, addiction, and health problems(Nur Mutmainnatul Itsna & Risatur Rofi'ah, 2021).

Several journals discussed in the previous paragraph share similarities in terms of placing the object of study within the problem. All of the selected journals focus on the use of gadgets. The difference between this study and previous research lies in the research subjects. While some studies involved junior high school students, early childhood, and university students, similar research within the *pesantren* (Islamic boarding school) environment remains limited. Therefore, this study offers novelty by focusing the analysis on *santri* (Islamic boarding school students) as the research subjects, who live within a religious-based educational system yet continue to interact with digital culture.

This research aims to understand the motives of *santri* in using gadgets and to explore the satisfaction they derive from their usage. Pondok *Pesantren* Sharif Hidayatullah was chosen as the research site because it has relatively lenient policies regarding gadget use compared to other *pesantren*. This makes it an interesting case to observe how *santri* take advantage of such freedom in their daily lives. The findings of this study are expected to contribute both theoretically and practically. Theoretically, this research enriches the literature on gadget use motives in *pesantren* and serves as an academic reference in the field of communication studies. Practically, the research benefits the researcher in gaining deeper insights, provides society with a reference for similar studies, and assists *pesantren* administrators in better understanding the digital habits of their students as well as evaluating policies on gadget use.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study employs a **descriptive qualitative approach**. Qualitative research is a research procedure that produces descriptive data in the form of written or spoken words from people and observable behavior(Moleong, 2000). Descriptive research is a type of study that aims to explain or describe various phenomena that occur, whether naturally or as the result of human intervention(Moleong, 2000).

The informants consisted of five active students (*santri*) of Pondok *Pesantren* Sharif Hidayatullah Rejomulyo, Kediri City. Data collection techniques included observation, interviews, and documentation. The validity of the data was strengthened by source triangulation techniques. Triangulation is a method used to analyze and support the credibility of data so that it can be trusted(Sugiyono, 2018). The data analysis technique in this study employed the Miles and Huberman model, which is carried out during data collection within a certain time frame. If the answers from the interviewees were deemed insufficient after analysis, the researcher would ask additional questions until valid and reliable data were obtained(Sugiyono, 2017). According to Miles and Huberman, data analysis activities include data collection, data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing(Sugiyono & Lestari, 2021).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This study found that students at Pondok *Pesantren* Sharif Hidayatullah have various motives in using gadgets that align with the framework of the *Uses and gratification theory* by Katz et al.,

namely cognitive needs, affective needs, personal integration, social integration, and diversion. According to Elihu Katz, Jay G. Blumler, and Michael Gurevitch in their book "*The Uses of Mass Communication: Current Perspectives on Gratification Research*", the main concept of the *Uses and gratification theory* is that media use is based on the fulfillment of satisfaction, needs, desires, or motives perceived by the audience toward the media itself(McQuail, 2011). The five informants in this study were identified as active gadget users. The findings of this research support the *Uses and gratification theory*, which states that individuals use media driven by certain motives.

The first prominent motive is cognitive needs, namely the search for information to support lectures and learning activities. Students utilize gadgets to access digital Islamic texts, Qur'anic exegesis, and educational videos via YouTube. With the advancement of information technology, the teaching and learning process is no longer limited to books. Through gadgets, users can access various sources of knowledge according to their needs without having to go to the library, which would require more time(Rahmawati, 2020). In addition, gadgets also help them stay updated with the latest news more quickly than other media. This finding is in line with the *Uses and gratification theory*, which emphasizes that media is used to gain knowledge and to understand the surrounding environment(Nurudin, 2007). Thus, gadgets are proven to fulfill the students' informational needs while also providing satisfaction that encourages them to continue using them.

In addition to cognitive needs, affective motives are also clearly evident, as the students use gadgets for entertainment purposes, such as watching videos on TikTok and YouTube or listening to music. These activities provide a variety of emotional experiences, ranging from feelings of joy to sadness, depending on the content consumed. This aligns with the *Uses and gratification theory* regarding affective needs, which are related to pleasurable, emotional, and aesthetic experiences(Nurudin, 2007). The satisfaction obtained by the students indicates that gadgets are proven to reduce the monotony of *pesantren* and college routines, as well as provide a sense of relaxation through the entertainment they access.

Personal integration motives also emerge when some students use social media to express themselves and build their identities. They feel satisfied with the presence of gadgets because they can upload photos, activities, or personal feelings, which, according to them, enhance self-confidence and offer a space for free expression without limitations. However, not all students engage in this activity, as one informant expressed a preference for self-expression through personal notes. This finding is consistent with the *Uses and gratification theory* regarding personal integration needs, which relate to an individual's status, credibility, stability, and confidence(Nurudin, 2007).

Furthermore, social integration motives are seen in how students use gadgets as their primary means of communication with family, friends, and peers through WhatsApp, either in private messages or group conversations. This activity is further reinforced by the habit of leaving comments on social media posts, reflecting efforts to maintain kinship and solidarity. This finding aligns with the *Uses and gratification theory*, which explains that media use serves to fulfill social interaction needs, strengthen relationships, and maintain shared values. According to this theory, social integration needs are related to interactions with friends, family, or others to establish closer ties(Nurudin, 2007).

The last motive is the use of gadgets for diversion needs, namely the need to relieve stress and fatigue from *pesantren* routines and college activities. All informants agreed that gadgets serve as an effective medium to help them overcome exhaustion, especially during leisure time when there are no other activities. Gadgets are utilized for various forms of entertainment, such as watching videos on YouTube or TikTok, listening to music, and storing personal memories in the form of photos and videos(Fitriana et al., 2021). These activities not only provide entertainment but also create a sense of calm and relaxation for the students after undergoing their busy routines at the *pesantren*. Thus, in accordance with the *Uses and gratification theory*, diversion or the need for escape from pressure can be fulfilled through gadget use. The consensus among all informants reinforces that gadgets play an important role as a medium for stress relief as well as a source of entertainment relevant to each user's interests.

In addition to motives, this study also highlights the satisfaction experienced by students when using gadgets. Satisfaction arises when their motives are fulfilled, such as the need for information that allows them to access up-to-date knowledge and facilitates the learning process, the need for entertainment that reduces boredom and stress, the gratification of increased self-confidence, and social needs that strengthen relationships with family. However, this satisfaction is not without risks, as some

students admitted that they are often distracted by entertainment, which leads to delaying religious obligations or reduced concentration in learning. This indicates that gadgets have an ambivalent nature: on the one hand, they provide significant benefits, but on the other, they also have the potential to disrupt discipline.

When compared to previous studies, these findings are consistent with the research of Susanti et al. (2024), which revealed that uncontrolled gadget use negatively affects students' learning concentration due to distractions from games and social media. However, this study also highlights a difference, namely that within the *pesantren* environment, gadget use is still directed toward supporting religious activities so that its negative impacts can be minimized through strict supervision by the caretakers. Thus, gadget use at Pondok *Pesantren* Sharif Hidayatullah has its own dynamics. The students utilize gadgets to meet communication, learning, and information needs that support both academic and religious activities, in line with the framework of the *Uses and gratification theory*. Nevertheless, in practice, challenges often arise in the form of misuse, such as excessive use for entertainment or activities that violate the rules, which can potentially disrupt discipline and concentration. Therefore, clear regulations and consistent supervision from the *pesantren* are crucial to ensure that gadget use is more productively directed and contributes to the development of students' character and independence.

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings regarding the motives and gratification of gadget use among students at Pondok *Pesantren* Sharif Hidayatullah Rejomulyo, Kediri City, it can be concluded that the informants' motives are influenced by five categories of needs in line with the *Uses and gratification theory*: cognitive needs, affective needs, personal integration needs, social integration needs, and diversion needs. In addition, the satisfaction gained from using gadgets includes the following aspects: first, satisfaction in obtaining information; second, satisfaction in entertainment; third, satisfaction in enhancing self-confidence; fourth, satisfaction in strengthening social relationships with others; and fifth, satisfaction in relieving stress.

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