



Enhancing Self Control among Elementary School Students with Excessive Gadget Use through Classical Guidance and Group counseling

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ABSTRACT

Background: Excessive gadget use among elementary school students negatively impacts self control, resulting in study time management difficulties, impulsive behavior, and emotional instability. Children at this developmental stage have not yet established optimal self regulatory skills, necessitating targeted support through school guidance and counseling services. **Objective:** This study aims to describe the implementation of classical guidance and Group counseling in developing self control among elementary students who display excessive gadget engagement. **Methods:** Employing a qualitative descriptive design, the study involved 20 elementary school students selected based on specific criteria of heavy screen time and impulsive behavioral tendencies. Data collection was conducted through in depth interviews, direct observations, and student self reflections, enriched by collateral information from teachers and parents. The structured intervention combined classical guidance and Group counseling sessions over several stages. **Results:** Findings indicate that both guidance formats positively improved student self control. This transformation was evidenced by heightened digital awareness, stronger impulse suppression, more stable emotional regulation, and improved study habits. **Conclusion:** Classical guidance and Group counseling represent effective, practical counseling strategies for enabling elementary students to navigate gadget use in a responsible, balanced, and productive manner.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The rapid advancement of digital technology has significantly transformed children's daily lives, particularly among elementary school students. Gadgets have become an integral part of children's learning, communication, and entertainment activities, offering numerous opportunities to enhance educational access and skill development. However, the increasing accessibility of smartphones, online learning platforms, and digital entertainment has accelerated children's exposure to digital media at progressively younger ages. As a result, excessive gadget use has emerged as a growing concern because it negatively affects children's cognitive, emotional, behavioral, and social development (Shafa et al., 2025; Sundus, 2017). Children who spend excessive time using gadgets tend to experience reduced learning concentration, limited face-to-face social interaction, emotional instability, and difficulties regulating their behavior (Indania et al., 2026). Consequently, fostering healthy self-regulation and responsible digital behavior has become an urgent educational priority rather than merely a parental responsibility. Therefore, excessive gadget use should be viewed as a critical educational and developmental issue requiring collaborative efforts among educators, parents, school counselors, and policymakers to promote children's healthy development and responsible engagement with digital technology.

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From the perspective of self-control theory, elementary school students are expected to develop the ability to regulate their thoughts, emotions, and behaviors according to social norms and developmental tasks. Baumeister & Vohs (2018) explain that self-control is a psychological capacity that enables individuals to regulate impulses, delay gratification, and make responsible decisions through continuous practice and behavioral habituation. Similarly, Tangney et al. (2004) argue that self-control is closely associated with emotional regulation, academic achievement, interpersonal competence, and psychological adjustment. Within the educational context, guidance and counseling services, particularly classical guidance and group counseling, are expected to facilitate students in developing self-awareness, self-regulation, responsible decision-making, and healthy digital habits.

Empirical evidence indicates that the current condition differs considerably from these ideal expectations. Other research reported that children who spend more than two hours per day using screens are at greater risk of experiencing delays in reading and writing development (Caballero-Juliá et al., 2024; Polat, 2025; Rosen et al., 2014). Furthermore, a survey conducted by Indonesia's Ministry of Communication and Informatics revealed that elementary school students spend approximately 21 hours per week using gadgets (Rahmatullah, 2024). Data from Statistics Indonesia (BPS) indicate that 33.44% of early childhood children have already used gadgets. At the same time, the Indonesian Child Protection Commission (KPAI) reported that over 71.3% of school-age children's own gadgets and 79% use them for purposes beyond learning. Previous studies also found that excessive gadget use contributes to decreased learning motivation, poor emotional regulation, impulsive behavior, diminished social interaction, and difficulties managing study time (Syifa, 2019; Hidayatullah, 2024). These findings indicate a substantial gap between the expected development of students' self-control and their actual behavioral conditions.

Research examining the relationship between gadget use and students' self-control has expanded considerably in recent years. Previous studies consistently report that excessive gadget use contributes to decreased academic concentration, gadget dependency, emotional instability, and reduced self-control among elementary school students (Setyawan et al., 2024; Rahmawati, 2021). Other studies further demonstrate that digital learning applications may positively influence students' motivation when used appropriately and under adequate supervision (Rahmayani, 2025; Kamilla et al., 2025). These findings suggest that gadget use itself is not inherently problematic; rather, the absence of appropriate self-regulation and educational guidance contributes to maladaptive behavioral outcomes among children.

Although previous studies have extensively examined the effects of excessive gadget use on children's behavior, several important research gaps remain. First, most previous investigations primarily focused on identifying the negative impacts of gadget use, while relatively limited attention has been devoted to intervention strategies designed to strengthen students' self-control. Second, existing studies predominantly examined gadget addiction, academic performance, or emotional problems separately without integrating classical guidance and group counseling as complementary counseling services. Third, previous research generally emphasized survey or correlational approaches, whereas qualitative descriptions of the implementation process of guidance and counseling interventions remain limited. Addressing these gaps, the present study investigates how classical guidance and group counseling services can be implemented to develop elementary school students' self-control in managing excessive gadget use.

This study holds substantial theoretical and practical significance for the advancement of school guidance and counseling, particularly in addressing the growing challenges of elementary student digital behavior. Conceptually, it enriches the body of knowledge on self control development by providing empirical evidence regarding the effectiveness of guidance and counseling interventions in fostering student ability to regulate emotions, behaviors, and technology use within digital environments. The findings also contribute to the integration of self control theory with preventive and developmental approaches in school counseling, thereby expanding the conceptual foundation for counseling practices in the digital era. In applied terms, this study offers evidence-based recommendations for school counselors, teachers, parents, and educational policymakers in designing and implementing effective classical guidance and group counseling programs. These interventions can help cultivate healthy digital habits, strengthen emotional self regulation, reduce the risks associated with excessive digital media use, and promote student overall personal and social development. Ultimately, the study provides a valuable reference for developing preventive counseling strategies that support child well being and responsible digital citizenship in elementary education.

This study aims to describe the implementation of classical guidance and group counseling services in developing self-control among elementary school students with excessive gadget use. Specifically, the study focuses on examining changes in students' awareness of gadget use, impulse control, emotional regulation, study time management, and compliance with agreed behavioral rules following participation in the counseling interventions. Through a qualitative descriptive approach, this study seeks to provide a comprehensive understanding of how school guidance and counseling services can support children's self-regulation and healthy digital behavior.

2. METHOD

2.1 Research Design

This study employed a qualitative approach using a descriptive design to obtain an in-depth understanding of excessive gadget use among elementary school students and the implementation of classical guidance and group counseling in developing students' self-control. A qualitative descriptive approach was selected because it enables researchers to explore participants' experiences, behaviors, and perceptions within their natural settings without manipulating research variables. This approach is appropriate for describing social phenomena comprehensively and interpreting participants' perspectives regarding behavioral changes resulting from counseling interventions (Creswell, 2012).

2.2 Participants

The research participants consisted of 20 elementary school students selected through purposive sampling. Participants were chosen based on the following inclusion criteria: (1) excessive gadget use beyond reasonable daily limits, (2) declining academic performance or learning difficulties associated with gadget use, (3) inability to manage study and leisure time effectively, and (4) impulsive behaviors related to gadget use, such as difficulty stopping gadget use and displaying negative emotional reactions when access to gadgets was restricted. Classroom teachers and parents also participated as supporting informants to provide additional information regarding students' behavioral patterns and changes observed during the intervention.

2.3 Instruments and Data Collection

The primary research instrument was the researcher, supported by interview guidelines, observation sheets, field notes, and documentation records. Data were collected through in-depth face-to-face interviews with students, classroom teachers, and parents to obtain comprehensive information regarding gadget use habits, self-control, and behavioral changes. Non-participant observation was conducted during the implementation of classical guidance and group counseling sessions to monitor students' participation, emotional responses, and behavioral development. Documentation, including field notes and counseling records, was used to complement and verify the interview and observation findings. To strengthen data credibility, member checking was conducted by confirming interview results and researchers' interpretations with the participants, ensuring that the findings accurately represented their experiences.

2.4 Intervention Procedure

The intervention consisted of two counseling sessions integrating classical guidance and group counseling services. The classical guidance session focused on increasing students' awareness of the benefits and risks of gadget use, promoting healthy digital habits, and introducing self-control strategies. Subsequently, group counseling facilitated discussion, reflection, peer interaction, and problem-solving activities that encouraged students to share experiences, strengthen self-awareness, and develop responsible gadget use behaviors. Throughout the intervention, students' participation and behavioral responses were systematically observed and documented to identify changes in self-control.

2.5 Data Analysis

The data were analyzed using qualitative thematic analysis following the procedures proposed by Creswell (2012). The analysis began simultaneously with data collection through interview transcripts, observation records, and field notes. Subsequently, the data were organized, coded, categorized into meaningful themes, interpreted, and synthesized to describe patterns of students' self-control development following the intervention. The analysis emphasized identifying changes in students' awareness of gadget use, impulse control, emotional regulation, study time management, and compliance with agreed behavioral rules. Primary data obtained from interviews, observations, and documentation served as the basis for drawing research conclusions.

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Result

The implementation of classical guidance and group counseling resulted in observable improvements in students' self-control regarding excessive gadget use. Data obtained from interviews, observations, and counseling documentation indicate positive changes in students' awareness of gadget use, emotional regulation, impulse control,

time management, and compliance with agreed-upon rules following the intervention. Prior to the intervention, most participants demonstrated excessive gadget use, limited ability to regulate emotions, difficulties managing study time, and low compliance with parental and school rules. Following two counseling sessions, students exhibited more adaptive behavioral patterns and greater awareness of responsible gadget use.

Table 1. Comparison of Students' Self Control Before and After the Intervention

Aspect	Pre-Intervention	Post-Intervention
Awareness of gadget use	Students were unaware of the negative impacts of gadgets and used them without limits	Students began to understand the risks of excessive gadget use
Self-control	Difficult to stop using gadgets and impulsive	More able to control the urge to use gadgets
Study time management	Study activities were often delayed due to gadget use	Students began prioritizing school tasks
Compliance with rules	Frequently violated gadget usage rules	More compliant with agreed rules and regulations

The findings presented in Table 1 indicate consistent improvements across all observed aspects of self-control. Before the intervention, students generally displayed impulsive gadget use, poor emotional regulation, ineffective study time management, and limited compliance with gadget use rules. After participating in classical guidance and group counseling, students demonstrated greater ability to delay gadget use, regulate emotions more appropriately, organize study and leisure time more effectively, and comply with agreed behavioral rules. These findings suggest that the intervention contributed to the development of more adaptive self-control behaviors.

Further analysis identified four major dimensions of self-control that changed during the intervention process, namely emotional regulation, time management, impulsive behavior, and compliance with rules.

Emotional Regulation: Before the intervention, many students expressed anger, frustration, and restlessness when their access to gadgets was restricted. Gadgets were frequently used as a means of escaping unpleasant emotions. Following the intervention, students became more capable of expressing their feelings verbally, controlling emotional reactions, and choosing alternative positive activities instead of relying on gadgets.

Time Management: Prior to the intervention, students frequently postponed homework and spent excessive amounts of time using gadgets. After participating in the counseling sessions, students began prioritizing school assignments before engaging in recreational gadget use and showed greater awareness of daily time management.

Impulsive Behavior: Before the intervention, students tended to use gadgets immediately whenever they had the opportunity, without considering potential consequences. After the intervention, they demonstrated improved ability to postpone gadget use, control impulsive urges, and follow instructions provided by teachers and parents.

Compliance with Rules: The intervention also contributed to increased compliance with gadget use regulations established at home and at school. Students showed greater willingness to follow agreed schedules, limit screen time, and accept supervision from parents and teachers, indicating improvements in responsible gadget use.

In addition to behavioral changes, interviews with teachers and parents revealed that students became more disciplined in completing academic tasks, participated more actively in classroom activities, and engaged more frequently in direct social interaction with peers. These observations support the interview findings, indicating improvements in students' self-control following the implementation of classical guidance and group counseling.

3.2. Discussion

The findings of this study demonstrate that the implementation of classical guidance and group counseling effectively strengthened elementary school students' self-control in managing excessive gadget use. Following the intervention, students showed greater awareness of responsible gadget use, improved emotional regulation, better time management, reduced impulsive behavior, and increased compliance with agreed-upon rules regarding gadget use. These findings directly address the research objective by indicating that guidance and counseling interventions can facilitate positive behavioral change through the development of students' self-regulation. Rather than merely reducing gadget use, the intervention encouraged students to become more reflective in making decisions and more capable of balancing academic responsibilities with digital activities.

These findings are consistent with the concept of self-control proposed by Baumeister & Vohs (2018), which emphasizes that self-control is a capacity that enables individuals to regulate impulses, delay immediate gratification, and make decisions aligned with long-term goals. Likewise, Tangney et al. (2004) argue that individuals pos-

sessing stronger self-control generally demonstrate better emotional regulation, academic adjustment, and interpersonal competence. The improvements observed in this study indicate that classical guidance and group counseling created opportunities for students to develop self-awareness, evaluate their gadget use habits, and practice adaptive behavioral regulation. These results also support Bandura's (1986) Social Cognitive Theory, which highlights that behavioral change occurs through observation, reflection, self-efficacy, and social interaction, all of which were facilitated during the counseling sessions.

The present findings are generally consistent with previous studies reporting that excessive gadget use is associated with decreased self-control, emotional instability, learning difficulties, and reduced academic concentration among elementary school students (Rahmatullah et al., 2024). Previous research has also demonstrated that students with stronger self-control are more capable of regulating gadget use and maintaining academic engagement (Albahri & Suardi, 2025; Azqa et al., 2025; Putri et al., 2024; Prayuda et al., 2025). However, unlike most previous investigations that primarily examined the relationship between gadget use and behavioral outcomes through survey or correlational approaches, this study explored the implementation of classical guidance and group counseling as an intervention strategy using a qualitative descriptive design. This distinction provides a deeper understanding of how behavioral change develops during counseling rather than merely identifying statistical associations between variables.

This study provides unique contributions by resolving specific gaps identified in existing scholarship. From a theoretical viewpoint, it extends current research beyond the harms of device overuse to focus on actionable strategies for strengthening self control. Methodologically, it adopts a qualitative descriptive design to illuminate the nuanced process of behavioral transformation during counseling, where prior work primarily utilized quantitative surveys. From a practical perspective, this research merges classical guidance and group counseling into a comprehensive framework, demonstrating how school counseling can effectively manage digital behavior among young learners.

The significance of these findings extends to both educational theory and professional practice. In terms of literature, the study enriches guidance and counseling research by demonstrating that student's self control can be systematically developed through structured counseling interventions emphasizing self awareness, emotional regulation, and behavioral reflection. In applied contexts, the findings provide evidence-based recommendations for school counselors, teachers, parents, and educational institutions in designing preventive programs that encourage healthy digital habits. Furthermore, the study supports educational policies promoting guidance and counseling services as an essential component of student's character development and digital citizenship education in elementary schools

A critical analysis of the findings suggests that improvements in students' self-control cannot be attributed solely to increased knowledge about the negative effects of gadget use. Rather, behavioral change emerges through an integrated mechanism involving cognitive awareness, emotional regulation, social interaction, behavioral commitment, and continuous reinforcement (Michaelsen & Esch, 2023; Witkiewitz et al., 2022). Based on these findings, a conceptual mechanism may be proposed in which classical guidance enhances students' cognitive understanding of responsible gadget use. At the same time, group counseling facilitates reflection, peer learning, mutual support, and behavioral commitment. Together, these processes strengthen self-regulation, enabling students to exercise greater control over gadget use and adopt healthier behavioral patterns (Azizah & Sinaga, 2024; Widyastuti & Putri, 2025). This integrated mechanism expands the understanding of how preventive counseling interventions contribute to sustainable behavioral development among elementary school students.

Despite these encouraging findings, alternative explanations should also be considered. Improvements in students' self-control may have been influenced not only by the counseling intervention but also by increased parental supervision, consistent school regulations, teacher encouragement, peer support, and students' personal motivation to change. Differences in family environments, digital literacy, personality characteristics, and previous experiences with gadget use may also have affected the extent of behavioral change observed among participants. Since this study employed a qualitative descriptive design involving a limited number of participants from one educational setting, the findings should be interpreted within their contextual boundaries. Future research involving multiple schools, larger participant groups, or mixed methods designs is needed to examine the consistency and broader applicability of these findings.

4. IMPLICATIONS AND CONTRIBUTIONS

4.1 Research Implications

The findings of this study provide theoretical, practical, and educational policy implications for the field of guidance and counseling, particularly concerning the development of self-control among elementary school students in managing excessive gadget use. The study demonstrates that the integration of classical guidance and group counseling effectively enhances students' self-awareness, emotional regulation, impulse control, time management, and compliance with responsible gadget use. These findings address a methodological gap by providing empirical evidence from a qualitative descriptive investigation of the behavioral change process during counseling interventions, as well as a practical gap by illustrating how preventive and developmental counseling services can be implemented to promote healthy digital behavior among elementary school students.

4.1 Research Contributions

The findings of this study contribute new scientific knowledge to the field of guidance and counseling by providing an integrated intervention framework for developing elementary school students' self-control through the implementation of classical guidance and group counseling. The study offers a practical conceptual framework explaining that improvements in students' self-control emerge through the interaction of cognitive awareness, emotional regulation, peer interaction, and behavioral commitment developed during counseling activities. Supported by empirical evidence obtained directly from the school setting, this framework may serve as a reference for researchers, school counselors, teachers, and educational institutions in designing evidence-based counseling programs that foster responsible gadget use and strengthen students' social, emotional, and academic development in the digital era.

5. LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

5.1 Research Limitations

This study has several limitations that should be considered when interpreting the findings. First, the study employed a qualitative descriptive design involving only 20 elementary school students from a single school, limiting the transferability of the findings to other educational contexts. Second, the intervention consisted of only two sessions of classical guidance and group counseling, which did not allow for the evaluation of long-term changes in students' self-control and gadget use behavior. Third, the study relied primarily on interviews, observations, and documentation, which may be influenced by participants' subjective responses despite the application of member checking to enhance data credibility. Finally, this study focused exclusively on the implementation of counseling services without examining the comparative effectiveness of other intervention approaches or quantitatively measuring the magnitude of behavioral change.

5.1 Recommendation for Future Research Directions

Future research is recommended to involve larger and more diverse samples from different schools and educational settings to improve the generalizability of the findings. Longitudinal studies are also needed to examine the sustainability of students' self-control following classical guidance and group counseling interventions over an extended period. Furthermore, future studies may adopt mixed methods or experimental designs to compare the effectiveness of classical guidance and group counseling with other school-based interventions, such as parental involvement programs, digital literacy education, self-management training, or cognitive behavioral counseling. Researchers are also encouraged to investigate the moderating roles of parental supervision, school climate, peer influence, digital literacy, and students' psychological characteristics in strengthening self-control toward responsible gadget use, thereby contributing to a more comprehensive understanding of healthy digital behavior among elementary school students.

6. CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the implementation of classical guidance and group counseling effectively enhances self-control among elementary school students experiencing excessive gadget use. The intervention successfully improved students' awareness of responsible gadget use, emotional regulation, impulse control, time management, and adherence to agreed behavioral rules. These findings indicate that the development of self-control is achieved

through a gradual process of increasing self-awareness, behavioral reflection, and adaptive decision-making, enabling students to manage gadget use more responsibly in their daily lives.

The findings also demonstrate that the integration of classical guidance and group counseling provides a comprehensive approach to fostering students' self-regulation in the digital era. This study extends the literature on school guidance and counseling by providing empirical evidence that structured preventive and developmental counseling services can strengthen students' cognitive awareness, emotional competence, and behavioral commitment toward healthy digital habits. Consequently, the study contributes both theoretically to the development of guidance and counseling science and practically by offering evidence-based strategies that can be implemented by school counselors, teachers, and educational institutions.

This study highlights the importance of strengthening guidance and counseling services as an integral component of character education and digital citizenship in elementary schools. The successful development of students' self-control requires not only counseling interventions but also consistent collaboration among schools, parents, and the broader social environment to reinforce positive behavioral changes. The findings of this study will serve as a valuable reference for developing more comprehensive counseling programs and stimulate future research aimed at improving students' responsible gadget use and promoting their academic, social, and emotional well-being in the digital era.

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Author Contribution Statement

All authors discussed the results, contributed to the final manuscript, and approved the final version for publication. Mumtaz Afridah: Conceptualization and Design; Writing - Original Draft. Qoonitah Aziizah: Methodology, Writing - Review & Editing; Performed data collection and Analysis. Najwa Safira: Interpretation of the results.

Declaration of Generative AI (GenAI) Usage in Scientific Writing

The authors declare that artificial intelligence (AI) assisted tools were used solely to support language refinement, grammar checking, and manuscript editing. All aspects of the research, including the study design, data collection, data analysis, interpretation of findings, and conclusions, were conducted and critically reviewed by the authors. The authors take full responsibility for the accuracy, originality, and integrity of the content presented in this manuscript. All instances of Generative AI usage in this article were conducted by the authors in accordance with the [IJGCS GenAI Tool Usage Policy](#), with the authors assuming full responsibility for the originality, accuracy, and integrity of the work.

Conflict of Interest Statement

The authors declare that there are no commercial, financial, institutional, or personal relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest regarding the research, authorship, and publication of this article.

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