

## CONSTRUCTION OF THE EXPERIENCE OF MOTHER-CHILD BONDING IN EARLY CHILDHOOD WITH SPEECH DELAYS DUE TO GADGET EXPOSURE

Gita Fitria Maharani<sup>1a</sup>, Rr. Setyawati<sup>2b\*</sup>, Mohd Nazri Abdul Rahman<sup>3c</sup>, Mahdi Anbari<sup>4d</sup>, Endah Silawati<sup>5e</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Master's Program in Faculty of Psychology, Universitas Muhammadiyah Purwokerto

<sup>2</sup>Faculty of Psychology, Universitas Muhammadiyah Purwokerto

<sup>3,4,5</sup>Faculty of Education, Universiti Malaya

<sup>a</sup> [gitafitriamaharani9@gmail.com](mailto:gitafitriamaharani9@gmail.com)

<sup>b</sup> [rrsetyawati@ump.ac.id](mailto:rrsetyawati@ump.ac.id)

<sup>c</sup> [mohdnazri\\_ar@um.edu.my](mailto:mohdnazri_ar@um.edu.my)

<sup>d</sup> [mahdi\\_anbari@alumni.iust.ac.ir](mailto:mahdi_anbari@alumni.iust.ac.ir)

<sup>e</sup> [endah\\_silawati@upi.edu](mailto:endah_silawati@upi.edu)

(\*) Corresponding Author

[rrsetyawati@ump.ac.id](mailto:rrsetyawati@ump.ac.id)

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### ABSTRACT

This study explores how mothers construct attachment experiences with young children who experience speech delays due to early exposure to gadget. Using a qualitative approach with Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA), this research involved nine mothers whose children had been exposed to gadget since approximately 1.5 years of age and were undergoing speech therapy. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews and non-participant observation and analysed idiographically and interpretatively. The findings indicate that excessive and unsupervised gadget use weakened core attachment functions, including secure base, proximity maintenance, safe haven, and responses to separation distress. Mothers interpreted their children's speech delays as a crisis of maternal identity marked by guilt, regret, and role conflict, particularly among working mothers. Gadget initially perceived as practical parenting tools, were reconstructed as symbols of emotional absence and disrupted relational presence. Despite this, mothers demonstrated reflective capacity to restore attachment through restricting gadget use, increasing emotional and physical presence, enhancing direct interaction, and utilizing spiritual coping strategies and family support. This study concludes that speech delay related to early gadget exposure is not merely a linguistic issue but a relational phenomenon closely linked to maternal psychological presence and the quality of attachment in digital parenting.

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### INTRODUCTIONS

The development of digital technology has brought fundamental changes to family life and early childhood parenting practices (Maisaroh et al., 2025). Gadget are no longer just tools, but have been integrated into daily routines as a means of entertainment, emotional management, and even practical strategies to calm children (Hijriyani & Astuti, 2020). The phenomenon of early exposure to gadget is often done without adequate supervision, thereby creating increasingly complex developmental issues (Sofiyah et al., 2024). One of the most highlighted consequences is the

increase in speech delays in early childhood, which cannot be understood solely as a linguistic problem, but rather as a relational and emotional issue in the context of the mother-child relationship (Damanik et al., 2024).

Early exposure to gadget often occurs without adequate supervision, leading to increasingly complex developmental issues, this practice gradually replaces face-to-face interaction and emotional contact. These interactions are fundamental to both language development and attachment (Triani et al., 2024). Thus technology not only affects what children consume, but also how the emotional relationship between mother and child is built, maintained, and experienced in everyday life (Sukmawati, 2019).

Gadget are often used by parents as a practical strategy to distract children or calm negative emotions, especially when mothers face the demands of dual roles in daily life (Septyani et al., 2021). The impact of these conditions is felt by both children and mothers, where excessive exposure to passive media limits children's opportunities to learn language through direct interaction, contributing to speech delays and emotional regulation difficulties (Paoletti et al., 2025). For mothers, gadget-based parenting practices often give rise to emotional experiences such as guilt, regret, and psychological pressure due to the gap between the ideal mother role and the parenting practices carried out on a daily basis (Ajilore et al., 2023).

To understand these dynamics more deeply, Bowlby's attachment theory provides a relevant theoretical framework (Bowlby, 1988). Attachment is formed through the presence of a sensitive and responsive caregiver, which allows children to feel safe to explore and learn, and language development is understood as a relational process that is highly dependent on the quality of the emotional relationship between the child and the primary caregiver (Bretherton, 1992). In digital parenting, the quality of attachment is greatly influenced by the psychological presence of the mother, not just her physical presence, in line with the phenomenon of technofence, which describes how the use of gadget by parents can repeatedly interfere with their attention, sensitivity, and responsiveness to their children (Li et al., 2022).

This disorder causes a decline in the quality of emotional interaction and weakens the mother's function as a secure base and safe haven for the child (Yudha et al., 2024). This issue becomes even more complex when linked to digital parenting practices and media exposure in early childhood, where parents' use of technology affects interaction patterns and emotional involvement in parenting (Yudha et al., 2024). Passive media exposure without parental supervision reduces children's opportunities to engage in meaningful interactions that support language development and attachment (Varadarajan et al., 2021). Thus, digital parenting, technofence, attachment, and media exposure are interconnected and collectively form a series of relational and emotional developmental problems (Linder et al., 2021).

Although the relationship between gadget exposure and speech delay has been extensively studied, most research is still dominated by quantitative approaches that emphasize gadget usage duration and correlational relationships (Triani et al., 2024). This approach has not been able to fully capture the emotional dynamics and subjective experiences of mothers in their daily digital parenting practices (Sofiyah et al., 2024). Qualitative research exploring mothers' lived experiences, particularly regarding attachment and emotional reflection in the context of speech delays due to gadget exposure, remains relatively limited (Golds et al., 2025). This limitation is important to note because without understanding mothers' subjective experiences, parenting intervention practices risk being normative and lacking contextual understanding of family emotional dynamics (Dollberg, 2022).

Therefore, this study is important because it attempts to fill the gap in understanding the relational and emotional dimensions of speech delay in the digital age, particularly in the context of mother-child relationships (Bretherton, 1992). By placing the mother's experience at the center of analysis, this study not only highlights the impact of gadget use but also explains how mother-child attachment is disrupted and reestablished in digital parenting. Based on this gap, this study aims to explore in depth the construction of the experience of mother-child attachment in young children who experience speech delay due to exposure to gadget from an early age through the Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) approach (Smith & Nizza, 2021).

## METHOD

This study uses a qualitative approach with Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) to explore in depth the lived experiences of mothers in building attachment with young children who experience speech delays due to exposure to gadget from an early age. IPA was chosen because, methodologically, it emphasizes idiographic analysis, which is the deepening of each participant's experience individually, a phenomenological approach that focuses on the subjective experiences of mothers and a hermeneutic process through double hermeneutics, which is an effort to understand how mothers interpret their parenting experiences and how researchers interpret those meanings reflectively (Smith & Nizza, 2021). The research focused on the meaning of mother-child interactions, emotional dynamics, and mothers' reflections in the context of parenting and child therapy processes.

The researcher acted as the main instrument directly involved in data collection, analysis, and interpretation (Fadli, 2021). The entire process was carried out with continuous reflexivity so that the interpretation remained based on the participants' narratives. The research was conducted at a therapy centre, Rumah Terapi Pelangi Insan, in Purbalingga Regency, Central Java. This location was chosen methodologically because it is a growth and development service that routinely treats children with speech delays and provides speech therapy, occupational therapy, and behavioral therapy, allowing researchers to access relevant participants and observe the natural context of mother-child interactions in a therapeutic setting.

There were nine mothers participating in this study with the following inclusion criteria: (1) mothers who have children aged 3–6 years with speech delay, (2) children who have a history of gadget exposure since around 1.5 years of age, (3) children undergoing speech therapy, occupational therapy, and/or behavioral therapy once a week for approximately 40 minutes per session. The exclusion criteria in this study were not based on the child's developmental diagnosis, so this study did not rule out the participation of mothers with children who were typical with speech delays, or children with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) and Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), as long as speech delays and digital parenting experiences were the main issues experienced. The exclusion criteria focused on mothers who did not play a primary caregiving role in their children's daily lives, given the limitations of direct involvement in daily interactions, even though this study included mothers who worked until the afternoon but remained the primary caregivers after work hours.

The participants in this study were selected using purposive sampling, which is the deliberate selection of participants based on certain characteristics that are considered most capable of providing an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon being studied (Creswell, 2010). In the context of this study, purposive sampling was aimed at recruiting mothers who had children aged 3–6 years who experienced speech delays and had a history of exposure to gadget from an early age, so that the experiences of caregiving and mother-child attachment could be explored phenomenologically. Based on these criteria, nine mothers were selected because they had directly experienced and reflected on the dynamics of digital parenting, their children's speech delays, and efforts to restore the mother-child relationship.

Participant recruitment was conducted through the Pelangi Insan Purbalingga Therapy House, where the researcher coordinated with therapists to identify mothers who met the research characteristics, then contacted prospective participants directly to explain the research objectives and procedures and obtain informed consent. The number of nine participants was considered adequate in the context of Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) because it allowed for an idiographic deepening of the experience of each mother before cross-case analysis was conducted (Smith & Nizza, 2021).

Data were collected through semi-structured interviews and non-participant observation. The interview questions were developed inductively based on the research objectives, focusing on daily parenting experiences, mother-child interactions, emotional experiences, and changes in parenting after the child underwent therapy, without rigidly tying the questions to attachment theory. Before the interview, the researcher built rapport through initial conversation, explanation of the research objectives, and confirmation that participants were free to narrate their personal experiences. The interviews were conducted over three weeks, once a week, for a duration of approximately 40 minutes. The interviews were conducted while the child was undergoing therapy in a separate room so that the mother was not in the same room as the child. If the data was not yet in-depth, the researcher conducted further exploration through WhatsApp voice notes.

Observations were conducted non-participantly using photographic documentation with participants as supporting data. Observations focused on the context of the mother's presence, emotional responses, and interaction dynamics before and after the therapy session, without intervening in the activities taking place. Observation data was used to supplement and confirm interview data. Data analysis was conducted following the IPA stages (Smith & Nizza, 2021). The researcher read and reread the interview transcripts in depth, made exploratory notes, and then identified themes that emerged inductively in each case. The analysis was conducted idiographically first before continuing with cross-case analysis to find patterns of similarities and differences in experiences among participants. The research themes were not predetermined but emerged through a layered hermeneutic interpretation process centered on the meaning of the mothers' experiences.

Data validity was maintained by referring to Lincoln & Guba (1985), trustworthiness criteria, whereby credibility was reinforced through method triangulation (interviews and observation), continuous researcher involvement, and limited confirmation of the appropriateness of the meaning of the interpretation results. Transferability is maintained through detailed contextual descriptions of the participants and research location. Dependability is ensured through systematic recording of the research process (audit trail), while confirmability is

maintained by ensuring that all themes and interpretations are based on empirical data and that all participants sign a participation consent form, with their identities kept confidential.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSIONS

### Result

Based on the analysis of 9 participants, seven main themes were found that describe the construction of maternal attachment experiences. A summary of these themes and sub-themes is presented in Table 1 below:

**Table 1.** Themes, and Subthemes of Attachment in Mothers Who Have Children with Speech Delays Since Early Childhood

Theme (Qualitative Findings)	Subtheme (Manifestations of Qualitative Data)
The Attachment of Mothers as Primary Figures	Children only feel comfortable and seek their mother as the center for their basic needs (for example: when they want to sleep, ask for food, or simply feel calm).
Maternal Awareness of Parenting	Dedicating full and exclusive time to the child (full-time assistance) after recognizing the problem, in an effort to restore the role of secure base.
Maternal Awareness of Parenting	A shift in parenting style from neglect to intensive and deliberate guidance.
Changes in How to Interact with Children	Commitment to strict monitoring of all children's activities as part of efforts to maintain new closeness.
The Bond Between Mother and Child as the Primary Figure	Mothers serve as emotional regulators (a place of refuge), where children instinctively seek physical closeness (being carried) when they are anxious or crying.
The Bond Between Mother and Child as the Primary Figure	The use of strong physical holding to instantly calm tantrums, reinforces the mother's body as a source of reassurance.
Role Conflict	Internal turmoil triggered by the conflict between professional responsibilities and parenting, resulting in feelings of guilt over absence
Negative Effects of Gadget on Children	Frustration when basic activities (e.g., eating) are disrupted triggers emotions in the mother/child and requires excessive effort, reflecting stress due to difficulties in communication and interaction.
Maternal Identity Crisis	Regret and internalization of mistakes (purely my fault), which is Mom's deepest emotional response to the consequences of separation/distance in interaction caused by gadget .
Spiritual Coping Strategies	Interpreting the child's condition as a test/mandate from God, which serves as spiritual encouragement to remain responsive and patient.
Changes in How We Interact With Children	Seeking support from husbands/families so that mothers can maintain a responsive attitude and not react aggressively/angrily when facing challenges with their children.
Maternal Awareness of Parenting	Completely eliminate access to gadget to minimize distractions and ensure that mothers can pick up on their children's signals (increase sensitivity).

Next, these themes will be explained in depth through phenomenological interpretation as follows this section

presents a phenomenological interpretation of mothers' experiences in building attachment with children who experience speech delays due to exposure to gadget. The analysis in this study was conducted through double hermeneutics, namely how mothers interpret their caregiving experiences and how researchers interpret the psychological meaning of these interpretations. The focus of the results is not only on parenting events, but also on the transformation of meaning, internal conflicts, and the dynamics of attachment experienced by mothers.

#### **Mother's Identity Crisis**

A diagnosis of speech delay is interpreted as a collapse of the ideal mother identity. Guilt is internalized as a personal failure that attacks the concept of self. The following are verbatim excerpts that illustrate the crisis of maternal identity:

"Pasti bu...pasti saya merasa bersalah banget, karena dulu terlalu sering memberikan gadget dan sekarang resikonya harus saya tanggung sendiri karena itu pure kesalahan dari saya" (M, 10 11 2025, 173-175)

"Pas saya buka-buka internet dan saya nyari tahu kenapa belum bisa ngomong, terus enggak fokus, dan ternyata eh ada salah satu faktornya karena kebanyakan nonton TV atau HP. Nah, dari situ saya menangis dan saya merasa apa ya... ya merasa bersalah." (AY, 3 11 2025, 208-211)

**Subjective Meaning:** Participants M and AY interpreted their children's condition as "punishment" for their negligence. They felt deeply devastated because they saw themselves as the main cause of their children's developmental delays.

**Researcher's Interpretation:** The researcher interprets this as extreme internalization of responsibility. The mother uses current ideal standards to judge past decisions, creating a painful maternal identity crisis.

#### **Role Conflict**

For working mothers, parenting is perceived as a moral conflict between professional responsibilities and the emotional needs of children. The following are verbatim excerpts that illustrate this role conflict:

"Tapi kadang karena saya juga bekerja, maka untuk pendampingan itu memang saya akui tidak maksimal. Kadang saya merasa berdosa menomor duakan anak." (AF, 31 11 2025, 16-17)

"Pernah mikir kenapa enggak dari dulu resign, pasti enggak kebablas sampai 3 tahun belum bisa ngomong waktu itu." (E, 14 11 2025, 271-272)

**Subjective Meaning:** Participants AF and E interpreted their jobs as a source of guilt. There was existential regret that their career choices had deprived them of their role as primary caregivers.

**Researcher Interpretation:** This conflict is interpreted as an exhausting process of self-negotiation. The researcher observes that physical absence during work is interpreted by mothers as a "moral sin" that damages the quality of attachment.

#### **Mothers' Awareness of Parenting**

In response to feelings of guilt, there was a reflective awareness to take control of parenting by completely limiting technology. The following is an excerpt from a verbatim statement that shows the mother's awareness of parenting:

"Enggak, soalnya game-nya udah tek hapus semua," (FT, 14, 11, 2025, 22)

"Kalau di rumah kan memang udah enggak pegang HP, enggak nonton TV..ya paling itu kalau misalnya saya di rumah, jadi waktunya harus full." (AY, 3 11 2025, 14-15)

**Subjective Meaning:** FT and AY participants interpreted the removal of gadget as a crucial step to "redeem" lost time. They felt they had to be fully present in order to restore attachment.

**Researcher Interpretation:** The researcher interpreted this action as an effort to rebuild self-control. The elimination of gadget is a manifestation of the mother's new awareness to become a responsive and fully present figure.

#### **Mother's Attachment as the Main Figure**

Amidst verbal limitations, mothers reconstruct physical interaction as the primary medium for performing their role as emotional regulators. The following is an excerpt from a verbatim statement that shows the mother's attachment as the main figure:

"Emang keseharian emang nyamannya cuma sama ibunya... kalau mau bobo itu pasti narik ibunya, kan, tapi kalau sama yang lain dia enggak mau." (FD, 4 11 2025, 11-13)

"Biasanya kalau main suka nangis minta gendong, jadi saya gendong pakai selendang sebentar, nanti juga udah tenang." (AT, 12 11 2025, 7-8)

**Subjective Meaning:** FD and AT participants interpreted their children's physical dependence as proof that their position was irreplaceable. Physical closeness became a new "language" between them.

**Researcher Interpretation:** The researcher interpreted this as a safe haven function. The mother's body served as the primary medium of attachment, replacing verbal communication functions that were not yet developed.

#### **Spiritual Coping Strategy**

To cope with exhaustion and guilt, mothers frame their children's condition through a spiritual lens as a gift from God. The following is an excerpt of verbatim statements that illustrate spiritual coping strategies:

"Allah, kan, ngasih cobaan itu berarti orang-orang yang mampu. Berarti saya dianggap mampu kebersamai." (ES, 10 11 2025, 521-523)

"Ehhh, iya..Allah ingin saya lebih sabar, lebih ikhlas dan lebih bersyukur tentang semuanya." (AS, 16 11 2025, 214-215)

**Subjective Meaning:** ES and AS participants interpreted their children's diagnoses as tests aimed at spiritual maturation.

**Researcher Interpretation:** Spirituality was interpreted as a transformative coping strategy. The researcher observed that by viewing their children as a "trust," mothers were able to transform suffering into parenting resilience.

#### **Negative Effects of Gadget on Children**

Initially, gadget were considered a practical solution to keep children calm, but over time their meaning has shifted to become a cause of negative effects that damage children's focus. This interpretation is reflected in the following statement:

"Saya kan pengennya anaknya yang penting anteng, jadi saya kasih awal mulanya di usia 3 tahun" (MZ, 10 11 2025, 9-11)

"Dipanggil enggak merespons, apa-apa juga masih minim... pokoknya dampaknya buruk banget." (FD, 4 11 2025, 192-195)

**Subjective Meaning:** Participants MZ and FD realized that their desire for their children to be "well- behaved" had a negative impact on their children's social skills and responsiveness.

**Researcher Interpretation:** Researchers interpret this as a shift in perception. Gadget, which were originally "parenting assistants," are now defined as relational barriers that trigger deep regret.

#### **Changes in the Way of Interacting with Children**

The process of restoring attachment involves changing interaction patterns supported by the social system, especially emotional support from one's partner. The following are verbatim excerpts that show changes in the way of interacting with children:

"Suami buuu ini yang sering memberi dukungan emosional, kalau saya mau marah sama anak pasti suami yang bilang ...sabar sabar.. jangan marah kek gitu." (AT, 16 11 2025, 144-145)

"Iyaa buu sebisa mungkin sudah saya ajari, tapi karena saya juga sembari momong dedek kan repotnya di situu." (FT, 14 11 2025, 126-127)

**Subjective Meaning:** AT and FT participants interpreted this process as a daily struggle that required extra patience and moral support from their families.

**Researcher Interpretation:** The researcher interpreted this change as a transition towards more sensitive attachment. External support enabled mothers to remain responsive without becoming reactive, thereby making the mother-child relationship more meaningful.

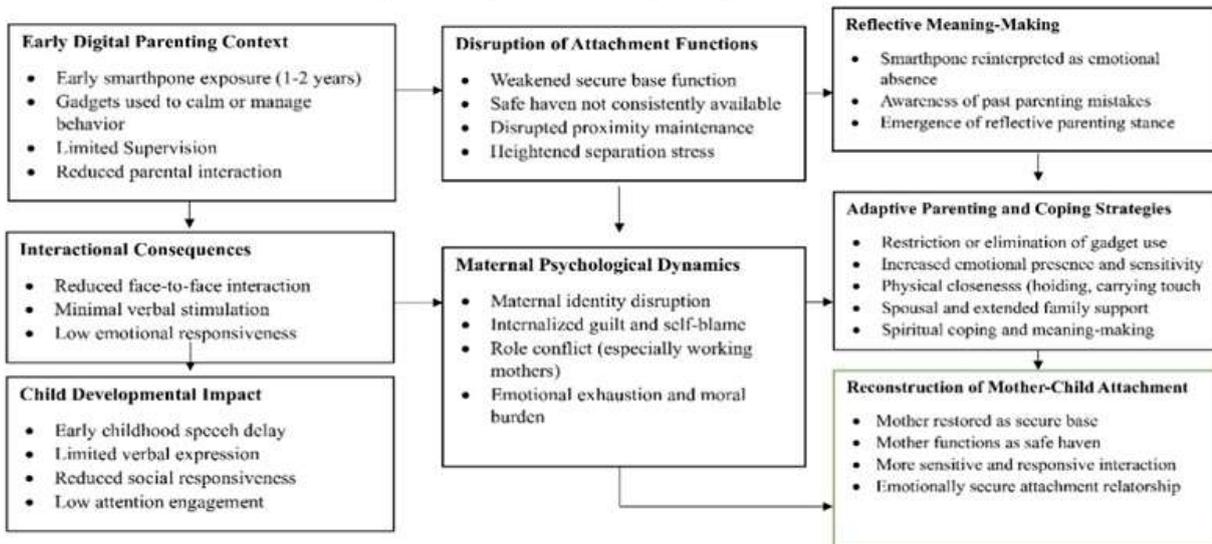
Non-participant observations conducted on nine informants also served as triangulation of the method for constructing the attachment experiences revealed through interviews. In the context of changes in the caregiving system, the observations confirmed the mothers' efforts to restore the focus of interaction by completely eliminating access to gadget. In the homes of participants FT and AY, for example, digital devices were kept turned off during interactions, demonstrating a commitment to intensive and deliberate mentoring.

In addition, the role of the mother as the primary caregiver was clearly evident in daily interactions. When children experience anxiety or frustration (as often triggered by verbal limitations), they instinctively seek physical

closeness with their mothers, which is a behavioral manifestation of their basic need for security. Strategies such as physical holding (carrying the child even though they are older) used by Participant AF were observed to be the most effective method for regulating the child's emotions and stopping tantrums, confirming the centrality of the mother as an irreplaceable source of comfort and emotional protection in the field.

**Psychological-Relational Dynamics of Mother-Child Attachment in Early Childhood**

**Speech Delay Due to Smartphone Exposure**



Psychological-Relational Dynamics Scheme of Mother-Child Attachment Reconstruction in Early Childhood Speech Delay Due to Gadget Exposure

**DISCUSSIONS**

This study reveals that the experience of maternal attachment to children with speech delays due to early exposure to gadget is a process of emotional, moral, and relational meaning-making. In line with the Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) approach, the findings not only show what mothers experience, but also how they interpret and give meaning to these parenting experiences (Smith & Nizza, 2021).

**Gadget as a Symbol of Failure**

In this study, mothers interpreted gadget not merely as childcare aids, but as symbols of failure in fulfilling their ideal maternal roles. and dependence on gadget to calm children emerged as a response to time constraints, emotional exhaustion, and lack of parenting readiness, which ultimately caused mothers to feel guilty. These findings are in line with (Angrasari & Rahagia, 2020) who stated that excessive use of gadget has the potential to reduce the direct communication stimulation needed by children for speech development. Additionally, Sofiyah et al (2024) explain that high exposure to gadget is often associated with unresponsive parenting, causing children to experience obstacles in language development and emotional relationships. This condition shows that gadget not only have a technical impact on language development, but are also emotionally interpreted by mothers as a sign of failure in providing sensitive and attentive parenting.

This interpretation is supported by Morris et al (2022) who argue that parental gadget use reduces the quality of contingent verbal input and shared attention, which are essential foundations for early language acquisition. When parents are psychologically distracted, interaction becomes less responsive, thereby limiting children's opportunities to engage in meaningful linguistic exchanges. The concept of parental phubbing provides further insight into this phenomenon. Liu et al (2024) demonstrate that when parents prioritize gadget use over interaction, children experience relational neglect that disrupts communication and emotional engagement. In this study, mothers' guilt can be understood as an emotional response to recognizing this relational rupture.

**Moral Redemption in Parenting**

Rayce et al (2024) found that increased mobile device screen time was significantly associated with poorer language development among toddlers, highlighting that early language delays are closely linked to environmental interaction patterns rather than isolated child deficits. This empirical evidence reinforces mothers' reflections in this

study, in which speech delay was interpreted not merely as a child's limitation but as a consequence of disrupted interactional environments, thereby intensifying feelings of responsibility and motivating corrective parenting efforts. The guilt experienced by mothers encourages moral redemption in parenting, in the form of conscious efforts to repair their relationship with their children after realizing the negative impact of gadget use. This form of redemption is evident through restrictions on gadget use, increased involvement in speech therapy, and efforts to create warmer and more responsive interactions. Aisyah et al (2022) state that active parental involvement in speech therapy plays an important role in optimizing children's expressive language skills, while also strengthening the emotional bond between parents and children.

Husna & Eliza (2021) also emphasize that consistent language stimulation through two-way communication is an important factor in supporting early childhood language development. Thus, moral redemption not only serves as a response to guilt, but also as a means of reflection for mothers to rebuild more meaningful parenting practices. This process of moral redemption aligns with findings by Selak et al (2024) who report that parents' emotional regulation and problematic gadget use significantly influence the continuity of parent-child interactions. Conscious efforts to reduce gadget use reflect mothers' attempts to restore emotional availability and interactional sensitivity.

#### **Children as a Trust and Source of Spiritual Meaning**

In the process of parenting reflection, children are perceived by mothers as a trust that has spiritual and moral value. This awareness encourages mothers to reinterpret their role not merely as physical caregivers, but as figures responsible for the emotional, linguistic, and value development of their children. This perspective is in line with Muhibbin & Muzdalifah (2025) who emphasize that religiously-based parenting patterns can strengthen secure attachment and parenting awareness in the digital age. Nur et al (2024) also state that viewing children as a trust encourages parents to be more careful in their use of gadget and to prioritize direct interaction. Thus, spiritual meaning serves as an internal foundation that helps mothers reorient their parenting towards a more conscious and responsible relationship.

#### **Attachment as a Joint Recovery Process**

Research findings indicate that attachment between mothers and children is not static, but can be restored through a joint process involving changes in attitudes, interaction patterns, and mothers' emotional awareness. This recovery process is evident when mothers begin to reduce their dependence on gadget and improve the quality of their emotional presence in daily interactions. Rizki & Cahyono (2021) explain that the quality of mother-child attachment plays an important role in supporting children's emotional regulation and independence. In addition, Parianto & Marisa (2022) emphasize that intense verbal and nonverbal communication is key to rebuilding emotional closeness between parents and children. These findings confirm that attachment recovery is a relational process that occurs gradually and involves joint efforts between mothers and children in rebuilding a sense of security and emotional closeness.

#### **Theoretical Implications**

The finding that gadget symbolize failure shows that digital technology is not neutral but is subjectively interpreted as an indicator of failure in motherhood, thereby expanding the concept of attachment to the realm of mothers' psychological interpretations. Furthermore, moral redemption in parenting confirms that guilt can function as a reflective mechanism that encourages changes in parenting behavior and the reconstruction of mother-child relationships. The interpretation of children as a trust and source of spiritual value adds cultural and spiritual dimensions to attachment theory, indicating that a mother's value system plays an important role in shaping parenting awareness and secure attachment.

Meanwhile, the theme of attachment as a process of mutual recovery emphasizes that attachment is dynamic and can be repaired through changes in awareness, interaction, and emotional involvement between mother and child. Overall, this study confirms that attachment is a meaningful process shaped by the mother's subjective reflection, so that understanding attachment in the digital age needs to consider the emotional, moral, and spiritual aspects of the parenting relationship.

This study has a number of significant practical implications for various parties involved in early childhood care and intervention in the digital age. First, for parents, especially mothers, the findings of this study emphasize the importance of psychological presence in parenting, not just physical presence. The use of gadget as a passive parenting tool has been shown to not only impact children's speech delays but also weaken key attachment functions, such as secure base and safe haven. Therefore, parents need to be guided to consciously limit gadget use and replace it with responsive, warm, and attentive direct interaction.

Second, for speech therapists, the results of this study show that speech delay cannot be treated through a linguistic technical approach alone. Intervention needs to be expanded to include relational and emotional aspects, particularly the quality of the mother-child attachment. Therapists are expected to educate parents about the importance

of two-way interaction, regulating children's emotions through physical closeness, and parental emotional involvement during the therapy process. Third, for early childhood education institutions and health services, this study implies the need for digital parenting education programs that are not normative or blame parents. Education needs to be designed empathetically, taking into account the role conflicts, emotional exhaustion, and moral pressure that mothers experience. A reflection-based approach and attachment awareness will be more effective in encouraging changes in parenting behavior than an approach that only emphasizes prohibiting the use of gadget .

Although providing in-depth understanding, this study has two limitations that need to be considered. First, all participants in this study were mothers, so the perspectives of fathers or other caregivers were not directly explored. In fact, the support of partners and family dynamics have been shown to play an important role in the process of restoring attachment and regulating mothers' emotions. Future research should involve fathers or other caregivers to obtain a more comprehensive picture. Second, this study was conducted in the context of a specific therapy service, so the mothers' experiences were greatly influenced by the culture, family values, and social support system in that environment. This context may limit the transferability of the findings to different cultural settings or services.

## CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the attachment experience of mothers with young children who experience speech delays due to exposure to gadget from an early age is a complex relational phenomenon that is rich in emotional, moral, and reflective meaning. Using the Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) qualitative approach, this study successfully reveals how mothers interpret digital parenting practices, emotional relationships with their children, and changes in maternal identity that arise along with the diagnosis of their children's speech delay.

The findings show that excessive use of gadget without supervision contributes to the disruption of the main functions of attachment as described in Bowlby's theory, including secure base, proximity maintenance, safe haven, and response to stress due to separation. The psychological absence of mothers mediated by gadget reduces the quality of face-to-face interaction, emotional responsiveness, and reciprocal communication, which are essential for children's language development and sense of security. In this context, speech delay is not only understood as a linguistic disorder but as an indicator of disrupted attachment relationships in digital parenting.

This study also confirms that mothers interpret their children's speech delay as a crisis of maternal identity characterized by guilt, role conflict, especially in mothers who play dual roles, and moral pressure over the discrepancy between ideal parenting and actual practice. Mothers initially interpreted gadget as a practical solution, are reconstructed as symbols of regret and failure, but at the same time trigger reflective awareness in parenting.

Nevertheless, the results of the study show that mother-child attachment is dynamic and reparative. Mothers demonstrate the capacity to reconstruct parenting through limiting or eliminating the use of gadget, increasing emotional presence, intensifying direct interaction, and utilizing physical closeness as a strategy for regulating children's emotions. Spousal support and spiritual coping strategies play an important role in maintaining mothers' emotional resilience and enabling continued responsiveness in parenting.

Thus, this study confirms that speech delay due to gadget exposure needs to be understood as a relational phenomenon closely related to the quality of mothers' psychological presence, sensitivity, and responsiveness in digital parenting. These findings imply the importance of interventions that not only focus on the technical aspects of gadget use or language therapy, but also on strengthening attachment relationships, mothers' emotional reflection, and digital parenting education that is sensitive to psychological dynamics and family values in the digital age.

Based on the findings of this study, several practical recommendations can be made to improve the quality of care and intervention for early childhood children who experience speech delays due to gadget exposure. First, parents, especially mothers, are advised to develop awareness of the importance of psychological presence in parenting. The use of gadget should not be used as the main strategy to calm or distract children, as this practice has the potential to reduce mothers' emotional sensitivity and responsiveness. Parents need to actively replace screen time with direct interaction involving eye contact, two-way communication, physical touch, and emotional involvement as the main foundation for attachment and language stimulation.

Second, for psychology practitioners and developmental therapists, the results of this study recommend that speech delay interventions should not only focus on the technical aspects of children's language abilities, but also integrate assessment and strengthening of the attachment relationship between mother and child. Therapists are expected to help mothers reflect on their emotional experiences, manage feelings of guilt, and strengthen the role of mothers as a secure base and safe haven in the therapy process. Third, for early childhood therapy and education service institutions, this study recommends the development of a parent assistance program oriented towards reflective parenting. This program should not be judgmental, but rather support mothers in understanding the emotional

dynamics, role conflicts, and moral pressures that arise in digital parenting practices, so that changes in parenting patterns can occur in a more sustainable manner.

Fourth, for families and couples, this study emphasizes the importance of emotional support from partners and the family system. The involvement of fathers or other family members in supporting mothers' emotional regulation can help mothers remain responsive and non-reactive in facing the challenges of parenting children with speech delays.

In addition to practical recommendations, this study also provides a number of academic recommendations for the development of developmental psychology and family psychology studies in the digital age. First, further research is recommended to develop longitudinal studies to trace the dynamics of mother-child attachment and child language development on an ongoing basis after gadget restrictions and improved interaction quality have been implemented. This approach will provide a more comprehensive understanding of the long-term attachment recovery process. Second, future research needs to involve fathers or other caregivers to explore the dynamics of attachment more broadly within the family system. This is important given that spousal support has been shown to play a role in maintaining mothers' emotional stability and the continuity of sensitive caregiving. Third, further research is recommended to integrate qualitative and quantitative approaches (mixed methods), for example by combining the exploration of mothers' subjective experiences through IPA with measurements of attachment quality or intensity of gadget use. This approach can strengthen the validity of findings and expand the theoretical contribution of the research. Fourth, theoretically, further research is expected to develop the concept of attachment in the context of digital parenting, particularly by including the psychological, moral, and spiritual dimensions of mothers as important factors in the formation and restoration of attachment. This will enrich classical attachment theory to make it more contextual to the challenges of parenting in the digital age.

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