



# Analysis of Smartphone Usage and Changes in Social Cohesion Patterns (Ethnomethodology Study at UPT SDI Barugaia No. 60 Selayar Islands)

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## ABSTRACT

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This study aims to analyze smartphone usage and changes in students' social cohesion patterns at UPT SDI Barugaia No. 60, Selayar Islands. The focus of the study includes students' smartphone usage patterns, social cohesion patterns formed in their social lives, and changes in togetherness and social solidarity that emerge as a result of the use of digital devices. This study uses a qualitative approach with ethnomethodology studies. The research informants consisted of students as the main informants and teachers as key informants. Data collection techniques were carried out through observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation, while data analysis was carried out through data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions. The results show that students' smartphone use occurs collectively through online gaming activities, WhatsApp group communication, and sharing digital content that forms a new social interaction space outside the school environment. Students' social cohesion patterns are still formed through academic cooperation and friendships, but develop stronger in small groups based on shared digital experiences. In addition, students' togetherness and social solidarity have changed from physical game activities to solidarity based on digital communication networks through the practice of sharing hotspots, assignment information, and cooperation in online gaming activities. Thus, smartphone use does not weaken students' social cohesion, but transforms the form of togetherness and solidarity in the social relations structure of peer groups.

**Keywords:** *Smartphone Use, Student Social Cohesion, Digital Togetherness, Social Solidarity, Ethnomethodology*

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## INTRODUCTION

The global development of digital technology has transformed the way children build social relationships, with smartphones and internet access becoming new mediums for fostering togetherness and peer interaction. Elementary school-aged children are increasingly exposed to digital spaces that facilitate connectivity-based communication, entertainment, and friendships. This shift is crucial because social interaction at elementary school age is the primary foundation for developing a sense of belonging, solidarity, and social cooperation. International reports emphasize that changes in children's interaction patterns in the digital era are not neutral but rather have implications for the quality of social relationships and group cohesion. Therefore, the phenomenon of children's digital connectedness needs to be understood as a social change that influences patterns of social cohesion, not simply as a technological advancement (UNICEF Innocenti, 2025; OECD, 2025).

In education, global discourse positions digital technology as an external factor intersecting with students' social dynamics. UNESCO emphasizes that technology shapes how children participate, collaborate, and build social relationships, both inside and outside the school environment. These changes often occur in informal spaces, which then impact children's social behavior at school. Thus, schools cannot be understood as spaces separate from children's digital experiences, but rather as arenas where the impact of these experiences is manifested in everyday social interactions. This situation demands studies that focus on how children's social cohesion is formed and changed amidst the expansion of the global digital ecosystem (UNESCO, 2023; UNICEF, 2024).

Despite the rapid growth of research on children and digital technology, most research still focuses on device usage, screen time, or individual psychological impacts. Studies specifically examining changes in social cohesion patterns as a relational experience for children are still relatively limited. Yet, social cohesion in elementary school children is manifested through concrete interactions, such as togetherness, cooperation, and solidarity within peer groups. When social changes due to technology are viewed solely in terms of individual behavior, the deeper relational dimension is often overlooked. This gap highlights the need for an approach that focuses on children's cohesive interactions within concrete social contexts (OECD, 2025; UNICEF Innocenti, 2025).

In the Indonesian context, several studies have shown changes in elementary school children's social interactions with increasing access to smartphones and the internet. However, these findings are generally presented in general terms and do not explore the meaning of social cohesion experienced by children within their daily social groups. Some studies note a trend toward reduced face-to-face interactions and increased individual activities, but they do not explain how children's patterns of togetherness and social solidarity are reshaped in the school context. Furthermore, children's digital access spaces often occur outside of school, such as in the home environment or at public Wi-Fi hotspots, requiring a more in-depth explanation of their impact on school interactions. Therefore, there is a need for academics to examine changes in children's social cohesion patterns contextually and based on life experiences (Fauziddin, 2024; Mediari, 2025).

A phenomenon that emerged at the UPT SDI Barugaia No. 60 Selayar Islands shows a group of fifth and sixth grade students consistently gathering in one location that provides free Wi-Fi. This gathering habit creates a unique social space for students to interact, communicate, and build togetherness based on digital connectivity. Although smartphones are not used in the school environment, social experiences formed outside of school have the potential to influence student interaction patterns while at school. School then becomes a space where these social cohesion patterns are evident in the form of friendships, cooperation, and group solidarity. This phenomenon shows that changes in social cohesion do not always originate from digital activities in the classroom, but rather from social experiences formed outside of school (Aulia & Dafit, 2025; Anugrah, 2023).

The island context reinforces the uniqueness of this phenomenon, as Wi-Fi access becomes an important social meeting point for children. The literature on children and technology shows that digital access spaces often function as new social spaces, shaping social structures and group preferences. In such situations, children's togetherness can shift from traditional collective activities to connection-based togetherness. This pattern of togetherness has the potential to create a strong core group and alter the dynamics of interactions with other students at school. Therefore, the phenomenon at the research site needs to be understood as a shift in patterns of social cohesion observed through student interactions in the school environment (UNICEF, 2024; UNESCO, 2024).

Based on this phenomenon, the main problem that emerged was an indication of changes in social cohesion patterns in student interactions within the school environment. This change was reflected in the way students built camaraderie, chose social groups, and participated in social and academic activities. Social cohesion was no longer characterized solely by physical proximity, but also by the relationship structures formed from previous shared experiences. From a sociological perspective, social cohesion encompassed a sense of belonging, solidarity, and social attachment that kept groups positively connected. Therefore, the focus of the problem was directed at how students' social cohesion patterns manifested in

daily interactions at school (Putnam, 2020; Forsyth, 2019).

More specifically, changes in social cohesion patterns can be seen in the tendency for core groups to form, the level of social inclusiveness, and the quality of cooperation and conflict resolution among students. Studies on peer relationships indicate that friendship structures and social hierarchies in the classroom influence children's sense of security and social connectedness. When certain patterns of togetherness strengthen, there is the potential for social boundaries to emerge between different groups. This condition makes social cohesion a dynamic process that needs to be understood from the perspective of children's experiences. Therefore, the focus of the research problem is directed at students' cohesive interactions, rather than the technical aspects of smartphone use (Țepordei et al., 2023; Lu et al., 2024).

The purpose of this study is to understand and describe changes in social cohesion patterns among fifth and sixth grade students within the school environment as a result of smartphone-based experiences of togetherness and free WiFi access outside of school. This study seeks to uncover how social cohesion manifests through real-life interactions, such as group togetherness, cooperation, solidarity, and conflict management. Furthermore, this study aims to explore the meaning of togetherness and a sense of social connection as experienced by students in their daily lives. A phenomenological approach allows researchers to deeply capture the essence of these social experiences. Thus, the research objective remains consistent with understanding changes in social cohesion patterns, as focused on the title (Moleong, 2021; UNICEF Innocenti, 2025).

The theoretical benefit of this research is to enrich the sociology of education and primary education studies related to children's social cohesion in the digital era. Practically, the research findings are expected to serve as a reference for schools in designing strategies to strengthen students' social interactions and togetherness. This research also provides teachers and parents with an understanding of the importance of managing children's social experiences outside of school to maintain an inclusive social climate. From an educational policy perspective, the research findings can form the basis for developing programs to foster a school social climate that is adaptive to children's digital realities. Thus, this research makes a significant contribution to strengthening the social cohesion of primary school students (OECD, 2025; Gamu, 2025).

## METHOD

This study uses a qualitative approach because the focus of the study is directed at an in-depth understanding of the meaning, processes, and social dynamics experienced by the research subjects. With this approach, social reality is not viewed as a stand-alone objective fact, but as a construction of meaning built through social interaction. Therefore, qualitative research is considered most appropriate to answer the problem formulation that is oriented towards analyzing changes in social cohesion patterns, rather than measuring cause-and-effect relationships statistically (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The approach used in this study is ethnomethodology, a qualitative approach that focuses on how members of social groups practically produce and maintain social order through everyday interactions. Ethnomethodology views social reality as the result of practical actions and methods carried out repeatedly by individuals in certain social contexts. In recent studies, ethnomethodology is understood as an approach that examines how social structures emerge from concrete and empirically observable interaction practices (Lynch, 2020; Maynard & Clayman, 2021). Thus, this approach emphasizes the analysis of real social actions, not merely inner experiences or subjective perceptions. Data collection in this study was carried out in stages and sequentially, with the aim of obtaining in-depth, contextual data, and representing students' social experiences related to social cohesion patterns in the school environment (Guest, G., Namey, E., & Saldaña, J. 2014) Data analysis in this study was carried out continuously and simultaneously from the data collection process to the conclusion drawing stage. This approach allows researchers to understand the meaning of students' social experiences in depth and capture the dynamics of changes in social cohesion patterns as a whole. (Miles, MB, Huberman, AM, & Saldaña, J. (2014).

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

### **Patterns of smartphone usage among students at UPT SDI Barugaia No. 60, Selayar Islands.**

#### **a. Students' smartphone use begins in grades IV–V and develops as a social need to communicate, play games together, and participate in their peers' digital activities.**

The finding that students begin using smartphones intensively from grades 4–5 indicates a significant transitional phase in the development of children's social relationships at the elementary and secondary school level. At this stage, smartphones are no longer merely supplementary technological devices but begin to function as a medium for social integration within peer groups. The intensity of digital device use at this age marks a shift in interaction patterns from relationships based on physical proximity to relationships mediated by communication technology. This situation demonstrates that students' involvement in digital activities is not simply an individual choice but part of the process of adapting to the evolving social environment. In this context, smartphones serve as a means of social participation that enables students to maintain connectedness with their peers. Thus, smartphone use from grades 4–5 can be understood as an early indicator of the formation of digital interaction networks within students' social structures.

From the perspective of social cohesion theory, students' involvement in smartphone use since the middle grades of elementary school demonstrates the process of forming relational attachments through repeated social experiences within peer groups. Social cohesion is formed not only through shared values but also through active participation in interaction practices that strengthen a sense of belonging to a particular social group (Dragolov et al., 2022). Routine digital communication activities enable students to build micro-solidarities, which form the basis for the formation of small-group social cohesion. From Durkheim's perspective, individual attachment to a group is a prerequisite for the emergence of social order in communities, including student communities within the school environment (Durkheim, 1995). Therefore, smartphone use at this developmental stage can be understood as part of the process of producing social attachments that occurs in students' daily lives. In other words, smartphones function as a relational medium that strengthens social integration within friendship networks.

Several recent studies have shown that smartphone ownership and use in elementary and middle school age correlates with an increased need for social communication among peers. A study by George and Odgers (2021) showed that the use of digital devices by school-aged children does not always have negative impacts, but rather serves as a means of maintaining social relationships within friendship groups. Other findings by Vanden Abeele (2021) also confirm that digital communication technology plays a role in expanding children's social interaction through informal but repetitive daily communication practices. In the context of elementary education, smartphone use often serves as a means of coordinating group activities, strengthening students' social connectedness outside of school hours. This demonstrates that student involvement in digital communication is part of the dynamics of social adaptation to an increasingly technologically connected social environment. Therefore, the findings of this study align with empirical trends indicating that smartphones are an important instrument in students' social integration processes. These findings provide an important contribution to understanding changes in student social cohesion patterns in the context of digital communication technology use in elementary school environments.

#### **b. Smartphone usage activities are dominated by online games (mabar), social media (TikTok), YouTube, and communication via class WhatsApp groups as a means of group interaction.**

Findings regarding the dominance of smartphone use for online games, social media platforms like TikTok and YouTube, and communication via WhatsApp groups indicate that digital devices have become part of students' social interaction spaces, not merely a means of individual entertainment. These activities demonstrate that students' engagement in the

digital world occurs through collective and repetitive communication patterns within peer groups. In their daily practices, smartphone use does not stand apart from social life, but rather serves as a medium for expanding friendships beyond the classroom. The intensity of shared application use creates a shared social experience among students, strengthening emotional connectedness within the group. This suggests that students' digital activities have a broader social function than simply consuming content. Thus, smartphone use for online games and group communication can be understood as a means of fostering social closeness that occurs naturally within students' social dynamics.

Within the framework of social cohesion theory, students' simultaneous engagement in the same digital activity demonstrates the formation of relational solidarity through repeated shared experiences. Social cohesion is not only formed through face-to-face interactions but also through participation in communication practices that create a sense of connectedness among group members (Dragolov et al., 2022). Collective play and communication through digital platforms enable students to build a stronger sense of belonging to their social group. From Durkheim's perspective, collective shared experiences play a crucial role in strengthening social integration within a group (Durkheim, 1995). Therefore, students' use of the same digital application can be understood as a form of social practice that strengthens peer group cohesion. These activities demonstrate that students' social relationships are formed not only through direct interactions but also through structured digital communication experiences in their daily lives.

These findings also align with recent research showing that digital media use among school-aged children plays a role in maintaining social relationships and expanding peer communication networks. A study by George and Odgers (2021) demonstrated that children's engagement in digital communication often serves as a means of maintaining social closeness with peers outside of the classroom. Another study by Vanden Abeele (2021) confirmed that routine digital communication activities can strengthen a sense of social connectedness through repeated experiences of group interaction. In the context of elementary education, the use of group communication applications such as WhatsApp is an important tool for maintaining social coordination among students outside of formal school hours. This demonstrates that students' smartphone use cannot be understood solely as a media consumption activity, but as part of an ongoing process of social relationship formation. Therefore, the findings of this study strengthen the argument that students' digital activities serve as a medium for social integration within peer groups. These findings provide an important contribution to understanding changes in students' social cohesion patterns in the context of smartphone use as a medium for group communication.

**c. In the practice of using smartphones, unwritten social rules are formed, such as sharing hotspots, sharing WiFi passwords, waiting for friends to finish games, and helping each other use digital applications.**

Findings regarding the emergence of unwritten social rules in smartphone usage indicate that students' digital activities do not occur freely and individually, but are organized through shared understandings that develop naturally within peer groups. The habits of sharing hotspots, sharing WiFi passwords, waiting for friends to finish games, and helping friends understand how to use applications demonstrate the existence of structured interaction patterns in everyday technology use. These rules are not formally formulated but are consistently implemented as part of group habits that strengthen social relations among students. In this context, smartphones function not only as digital communication tools but also as a medium that creates new interaction norms in peer group life. The presence of these informal norms indicates that smartphone use has become part of a shared social experience that shapes regularity in students' friendships. Thus, the practice of sharing digital access can be understood as a form of social bonding that arises from repeated shared experiences within a group.

From the perspective of social cohesion theory, the formation of these unwritten social rules reflects the internalization of values of togetherness and solidarity within peer group interactions. Social cohesion is formed through relational experiences that enable individuals

to depend on each other and demonstrate concern for other group members (Dragolov et al., 2022). The practice of sharing internet network access and helping each other use applications demonstrates the micro-solidarity that develops naturally in students' daily digital activities. From Durkheim's perspective, social order within a group is not always built through formal rules, but also through collective habits repeatedly practiced by group members as part of their social life (Durkheim, 1995). In this context, unwritten rules regarding smartphone use become a form of expression of social attachment that strengthens peer group integration. Thus, the practice of sharing digital access can be understood as a mechanism for building social cohesion within student group interactions.

These findings align with previous research showing that sharing digital resources within peer groups plays a role in strengthening social relationships and a sense of community among group members. Research conducted by Vanden Abeele (2021) shows that collaborative digital communication activities enable the formation of new social norms that govern interactions between users within peer groups. Other findings from George and Odgers (2021) confirm that the use of communication technology by school-age children often involves practices of mutual assistance and sharing access as part of the dynamics of social relations that develop informally. In the context of smartphone use among elementary school students, the practice of sharing hotspots and digital information demonstrates a process of social adaptation to an increasingly technologically connected communication environment. This suggests that unwritten rules in smartphone use are part of the process of forming new social relational structures within peer groups. Thus, the practice of sharing digital access is an important indicator in understanding the dynamics of student social cohesion in elementary school environments.

These findings provide an important contribution to understanding the changing patterns of students' social cohesion in the context of smartphone use as a medium for group interaction. The presence of unwritten social rules indicates that the use of digital technology not only influences how students communicate but also shapes new social relationship structures within peer groups. This condition shows that students' social cohesion is determined not only by the frequency of interactions but also by the quality of the shared experiences they build through shared practices in technology use. These findings help explain how smartphones can function as a medium for building social solidarity through collective digital activities.

**d. Smartphone use occurs collectively through the habit of gathering at free WiFi locations such as village offices, surrounding fields, and places to hang out with peers.**

Findings regarding students' collective smartphone use habits through gatherings at locations with free Wi-Fi access indicate that digital technology use does not occur as an individual practice separate from social life, but rather becomes part of peer group interaction patterns. The habit of gathering at specific points after school shows that smartphones function as a medium that facilitates the formation of new shared spaces outside the formal school environment. In practice, these gatherings are not only oriented towards internet access but also serve as a means of strengthening social relations between students through shared digital experiences. The presence of shared Wi-Fi locations acts as an alternative social space that allows students to maintain closeness with their group on an ongoing basis. This activity demonstrates that smartphone use has become integrated into students' daily social structures as part of collective social practices. Thus, the habit of gathering at Wi-Fi locations can be understood as a form of reorganization of students' social interaction spaces that develops in the context of digital technology use.

From the perspective of social cohesion theory, the practice of gathering at Wi-Fi hotspots with peers demonstrates the process of forming relational bonds through repeated experiences of togetherness. Social cohesion is formed when individuals engage in shared activities that foster a sense of belonging and solidarity within a social group (Dragolov et al., 2022). This habit of gathering demonstrates that digital interaction does not replace social interaction but rather serves as a new means of strengthening the experience of togetherness

within a peer group. From Durkheim's perspective, routine collective experiences play a crucial role in building social integration within a community, including elementary school students (Durkheim, 1995). The activity of gathering at Wi-Fi hotspots with peers demonstrates that students' social connectedness is formed through technology-mediated yet relational interactions. Thus, collective smartphone use through gathering activities is part of the mechanism for building social cohesion within student groups.

These findings also relate to previous research showing that shared internet access spaces in local communities often serve as new arenas for social interaction for children and adolescents. Research conducted by Vanden Abeele (2021) shows that collective use of communication technology can strengthen social connectedness through simultaneous digital interaction experiences within peer groups. Another finding from George and Odgers (2021) explains that shared digital activities often serve as a means of maintaining social relationships outside of formal school spaces. In the context of rural communities, the presence of public Wi-Fi facilities plays a significant role in expanding children's social interaction spaces through routine shared digital activities. This suggests that the practice of gathering at Wi-Fi locations is not simply a technical activity for accessing the internet, but also part of the social dynamics of peer groups. Thus, the habit of gathering based on shared network access can be understood as a form of student social adaptation to the development of the digital communication environment. Understanding changes in student social cohesion patterns in the context of smartphone use as a medium for group interaction. The habit of gathering at Wi-Fi locations demonstrates that the process of forming student togetherness is no longer limited to the school or family environment, but also occurs in alternative social spaces mediated by communication technology.

### **Social cohesion patterns of students at UPT SDI Barugaia No. 60 Selayar Islands**

#### **a. Students' social interactions are more intense in small groups based on shared digital activities such as playing games together and communicating via WhatsApp groups.**

Research findings indicate that the stronger intensity of students' social interactions in small groups based on digital activities indicates a shift in the structure of peer relationships in elementary school environments. Interactions that previously occurred relatively evenly within the classroom have now become more selective based on students' shared digital communication experiences. The closeness formed through shared play and regular communication in WhatsApp groups indicates that digital experiences have become a significant factor in determining the direction of students' friendships. This indicates that students' social relationships are no longer solely built through physical proximity in the classroom, but also through shared engagement in repeated digital activities. The intensity of communication that occurs within these small groups creates a stronger sense of togetherness than general interactions among all students in the classroom. Thus, digital activities serve as a medium that strengthens the structure of peer group social interactions in students' daily lives.

From the perspective of social cohesion theory, the formation of small groups based on digital activities indicates that social cohesion develops through repeated relational experiences within the same communication space. Social cohesion is influenced not only by the presence of individuals in the same social environment but also by their involvement in shared activities that foster a sense of belonging to a particular group (Dragolov et al., 2022). The activity of playing games together and communicating through WhatsApp groups are forms of collective experiences that strengthen social connectedness among peer group members. Durkheim's view explains that individual attachment to a group is one of the main mechanisms for forming social integration in collective life (Durkheim, 1995). In this context, the similarity of digital activities serves as a shared experience that strengthens social cohesion within small groups of students. Therefore, the intensity of interactions based on digital activities can be understood as an indicator of the formation of relational solidarity within peer groups in the school environment.

These findings also align with recent research showing that digital communication among school-aged children plays a role in forming more selective yet socially intense peer networks. Research by George and Odgers (2021) explains that children's digital media use often strengthens closeness within specific groups that engage in similar communication activities. Another finding from Vanden Abeele (2021) shows that involvement in group digital communication allows for the formation of new social interaction spaces that strengthen connectedness among peer group members outside the formal school setting. In the context of elementary education, communication activities through digital platforms not only serve as a means of exchanging information but also serve as a medium for forming group identity within students' friendships. This demonstrates that the use of digital communication media significantly contributes to shaping the structure of small group social interactions within the school environment. Thus, the findings of this study strengthen the argument that digital activity is a factor influencing the formation of students' social cohesion within peer groups. These findings provide an important contribution to understanding changes in student social cohesion patterns in the context of smartphone use as a medium for group communication.

**b. Students' social closeness tends to be formed based on the experience of gathering outside of school at shared WiFi locations, so that a core group emerges within the class social structure.**

Research findings indicate that students' social closeness is not only formed through routine classroom interactions, but also develops more strongly through shared experiences outside of school, particularly when students gather in locations with shared Wi-Fi access. These gathering activities expand students' social interaction space into the community environment, so that friendships are no longer limited to the formal classroom structure. The closeness built through shared digital experiences creates a more intense bond than situational interactions during learning activities. This suggests that informal social spaces outside of school play a crucial role in shaping students' social structures. Repeated shared experiences at Wi-Fi locations serve as a means of strengthening core group relationships, which then carry over into classroom interaction dynamics. Thus, the formation of students' core groups can be understood as a consequence of the expansion of social interaction spaces based on shared digital experiences.

From the perspective of social cohesion theory, the formation of core groups based on experiences gathering at Wi-Fi locations demonstrates that social cohesion develops through repeated relational experiences within specific shared spaces. Social cohesion is influenced not only by shared values or formal class membership but also by the intensity of social experiences built through shared participation in group activities (Dragolov et al., 2022). The experience of gathering at Wi-Fi locations demonstrates the process of forming a sense of belonging to a group that forms naturally in students' social lives. Within Durkheim's framework, social order within a group is formed through repeated collective experiences, creating stable social integration among group members (Durkheim, 1995). Thus, the experience of gathering outside of school becomes an important mechanism that strengthens micro-social cohesion within students' social structures. Therefore, the core groups formed within student relationships are part of a relational process that develops through daily practices of togetherness.

These findings align with recent research showing that informal digital interaction spaces in community settings play a role in strengthening the social connectedness of children and adolescents outside the formal school environment. A study by Third et al. (2021) showed that children's engagement in local community digital spaces contributes to the formation of more intense and sustainable peer networks. Another study by Mascheroni and Ólafsson (2022) explained that shared digital activities outside of school enable children to build social closeness through simultaneous communication experiences within peer groups. In communities with limited but centralized access to public Wi-Fi, these locations often develop into alternative social spaces for children to maintain group interactions. This situation suggests that shared internet access spaces have a social function that goes beyond

their mere role as technological facilities. Thus, the experience of gathering at Wi-Fi locations becomes part of the dynamics of the formation of students' social relationship structures within their community. These findings provide an important contribution to understanding the dynamics of student social cohesion in the context of smartphone use in elementary school settings.

**c. Student cooperation and solidarity are still visible in academic activities and peer assistance, but are stronger in small groups than in the classroom as a whole.**

Research findings indicate that student cooperation and solidarity at UPT SDI Barugaia No. 60, Selayar Islands, remain active in learning activities, particularly through the practice of helping each other complete group assignments, sharing lesson information, and supporting friends experiencing learning difficulties. However, the intensity of this cooperation is not evenly distributed across all students in the class, but is more visible in small groups that have developed close relationships through shared digital interactions. This condition indicates that the structure of student solidarity has not decreased generally, but has been selectively strengthened within certain groups. This developing pattern of cooperation indicates a tendency for students to choose learning partners with whom they have had previous experiences together outside the classroom. Thus, student social solidarity is maintained in academic activities, but develops more strongly in small groups than within the class as a whole. This suggests that shared social experiences play a role in determining the direction of cooperation formed in student learning activities.

From the perspective of social cohesion theory, stronger cooperation in small groups indicates that social cohesion is formed through repeated and meaningful relational experiences within peer groups. Social cohesion is influenced not only by the presence of individuals in the same social space but also by the quality of the interactions they build through shared activities within a particular group (Dragolov et al., 2022). The practice of mutual assistance in academic activities demonstrates a growing sense of social responsibility within students' small group relationships. Within Durkheim's framework, solidarity is formed through individual involvement in collective activities that strengthen their attachment to their social group (Durkheim, 1995). Therefore, more intense cooperation in small groups can be understood as a form of relational solidarity that arises from repeated shared experiences. Thus, the dynamics of student cooperation reflect the process of forming micro-social cohesion within their social structures within the school environment.

These findings also align with recent research showing that collaborative activities in elementary school-aged children tend to develop more strongly in groups with prior social interaction experiences. Research by Wentzel et al. (2021) demonstrated that close peer relationships play a significant role in improving the quality of students' academic collaboration in the school environment. Another finding from García-Moya et al. (2023) explains that social support from peers is a key factor in strengthening student engagement in group learning activities. In the context of digital communication technology, shared interaction experiences outside the classroom also strengthen close relationships, which then influence students' academic collaboration patterns. This suggests that learning solidarity does not form spontaneously within a formal classroom structure but develops through repeated social experiences within peer groups. Thus, students' academic collaboration is part of the dynamics of social relationships influenced by shared experiences in small groups.

These findings provide an important contribution to the understanding of changes in students' social cohesion patterns in the context of smartphone use in elementary school environments.

**d. Social conflicts between students are partly influenced by digital interactions such as misunderstandings in WhatsApp groups or online game competitions, but can generally be resolved through direct communication or teacher mediation.**

Research findings indicate that social conflicts between students at UPT SDI Barugaia No. 60, Selayar Islands, arise not only from direct interactions within the school environment but are also influenced by the dynamics of digital communication that occur outside the

classroom. Misunderstandings in WhatsApp group conversations and competition in online games are among the sources of tension in student friendships. However, these conflicts do not develop into prolonged conflicts because students still have the ability to resolve them through direct communication after returning to school. The presence of teachers as mediators also plays a crucial role in helping to defuse conflicts that occur between students. This condition shows that digital interactions not only expand students' communication space but also bring new consequences to the dynamics of their social relationships. Thus, conflicts influenced by digital activities are part of the changing patterns of students' social interactions in their daily lives.

From the perspective of social cohesion theory, the emergence of conflict resulting from digital interactions can be understood as part of the normal relational dynamics in the process of forming and maintaining group social bonds. Social cohesion is not always characterized by the absence of conflict, but rather is evident in the ability of group members to manage differences through constructive communication (Dragolov et al., 2022). Misunderstandings that arise in digital communication indicate the high intensity of interaction within peer groups, making conflict part of the process of negotiating social relations between group members. Within Durkheim's framework, social order within a group can be maintained as long as group members have conflict resolution mechanisms that enable social integration (Durkheim, 1995). Thus, students' ability to resolve conflicts through direct communication or teacher assistance indicates that social cohesion within their group is maintained. Therefore, conflicts that arise through digital interactions do not necessarily weaken students' social relations but can be part of the process of strengthening group bonds.

These findings also align with recent research showing that digital communication among school-aged children often becomes a source of social misunderstanding due to limited nonverbal expression in online interactions. Research conducted by George and Odgers (2021) explains that interactions through digital media can increase the potential for mild conflict in peer relationships, especially in groups of children with high levels of digital communication. Other findings from Uhls et al. (2021) indicate that conflicts arising through digital communication are generally temporary and can be resolved through ongoing face-to-face interactions within the child's social environment. In the elementary school context, the role of teachers as social mediators also plays a crucial role in helping students understand how to resolve conflict constructively. This suggests that conflict influenced by digital communication is part of the dynamics of students' social adaptation to changing patterns of technology-mediated interaction. Thus, digital conflict can be understood as a relational phenomenon that emerges with the development of technology-based peer group communication. These findings provide an important contribution to understanding changes in students' social cohesion patterns in the context of smartphone use in elementary school settings.

### **Changes in togetherness and solidarity among students who use smart phones.**

- a. There has been a change in the pattern of student togetherness from traditional physical game activities to togetherness based on the use of smartphones such as playing together, sharing digital content, and communicating in WhatsApp groups.**

The shift in students' social interactions, from physical play activities to smartphone-based interactions, demonstrates a transformation in the form of social interaction that follows the development of the digital communication environment around them. Togetherness is no longer fully realized through traditional games that emphasize shared physical presence, but has shifted to collective activities mediated by digital devices without eliminating the element of group interaction. This shift demonstrates that students maintain

the need to gather and interact, but adapt this form of togetherness to communication practices that are more relevant to their daily lives. Activities such as playing games together and sharing digital content have become new means of maintaining social closeness among peers. This condition indicates that student togetherness is not diminishing substantially, but rather is reorganizing into a form that is more adaptive to technological developments. Thus, this change in social interactions can be understood as part of the process of students' social adjustment to the transformation of modern interaction spaces.

From the perspective of social cohesion theory, this shift in the form of togetherness reflects that social bonds do not always depend on face-to-face interactions but can also be formed through repeated shared communication experiences in digital spaces. Social cohesion develops through individual engagement in collective activities that create a sense of belonging to their social group, both in physical spaces and through technology-based communication spaces (Dragolov et al., 2022). Shared digital activities demonstrate that shared experiences remain the foundation for solidarity within peer groups. Within Durkheim's framework, repeated collective experiences play a crucial role in maintaining the social integration of group members despite changes in the forms of interaction (Durkheim, 1995). Thus, smartphone-based togetherness can be understood as a new form of collective solidarity practice in students' social lives. This shift demonstrates that social cohesion is dynamic and follows changes in the context of interactions experienced by group members.

These findings also align with recent research showing that digital communication among school-aged children plays a role in expanding shared spaces without diminishing the function of direct social interaction. A study by George and Odgers (2021) explains that children's use of digital media often serves as a means of maintaining social relationships with peers through ongoing communication activities. Research by Vanden Abeele (2021) also shows that shared digital interaction experiences enable the formation of new forms of togetherness that still have a social function equivalent to traditional face-to-face interactions. In the context of local communities, shared digital activities often serve as an alternative interaction space when access to physical play facilities becomes increasingly limited or changes in form. This suggests that digital togetherness is not a substitute for social interaction, but rather a form of adaptation to changes in children's communication environment. Thus, changes in students' patterns of togetherness are part of the normal process of transforming social relations in an increasingly digitally connected society.

These findings provide an important contribution to understanding changes in students' social cohesion in the context of smartphone use as a medium for group interaction. The shift from physical play to digital togetherness indicates that the process of forming students' social relationships has not declined, but has undergone a transformation in accordance with developments in communication technology. This condition shows that smartphones function as a means to expand students' space for togetherness without eliminating their need for collective interaction. These findings help explain that changes in patterns of togetherness are part of students' social adaptation process to the increasingly dominant digital communication environment in their lives. Furthermore, the results of this study show that group digital activities are an important indicator in understanding the dynamics of students' social cohesion at the elementary school level. Thus, changes in togetherness based on smartphone use are an important part in explaining the transformation of students' social relationships in the context of current developments in communication technology.

**b. Student communication patterns have shifted from face-to-face interactions to digital media-based communication, even when gathering physically, interactions still take place via devices.**

The shift in student communication patterns from face-to-face interactions to digital media-based communication demonstrates a change in the way students maintain social relationships in their daily lives. Communication that previously took place face-to-face now occurs simultaneously with communication through WhatsApp groups, online games, and the exchange of digital content, which has become part of routine peer interactions. This situation

shows that smartphones do not replace face-to-face communication, but rather expand students' social interaction space into a more flexible and sustainable communication network. Even when students are in the same location, communication continues through devices as a continuation of interactions that previously occurred in the digital space. This phenomenon indicates that digital communication has become part of the structure of students' social relationships in building group togetherness. Thus, this change in communication patterns represents a form of student social adaptation to an increasingly digitalized communication environment.

From the perspective of social cohesion theory, these changes in communication patterns reflect that social bonds are formed not only through shared physical presence but also through involvement in communication networks that enable continuous interaction. Social cohesion develops through repeated and meaningful communication experiences within specific social groups, including through digital media, which become part of students' daily interaction practices (Dragolov et al., 2022). Within Durkheim's framework, social integration can be maintained as long as individuals engage in collective experiences that strengthen their sense of belonging to their group, even though the forms of interaction change (Durkheim, 1995). Digital communication, in this context, functions as a new medium that maintains the continuity of social relationships among students. This shift demonstrates that social cohesion is dynamic and able to adapt to developments in communication technology. Thus, digital media-based communication becomes part of the mechanism for forming students' social relationships in the context of modern primary education.

These findings align with recent research showing that digital communication among school-aged children serves as a means of maintaining social closeness within peer groups despite changes in the frequency of face-to-face interactions. George and Odgers (2021) explain that digital device-based communication allows children to remain emotionally connected with their peers through ongoing interactions outside the classroom. Research by Mascheroni and Ólafsson (2022) also shows that children's use of digital communication media contributes to the formation of broader social networks and strengthens relationships within core friendship groups. In the context of primary education, digital communication serves not only as a means of exchanging information but also as a medium for coordinating social activities within student groups. This suggests that digital communication is part of the transformation of children's social interaction structures in contemporary learning environments. Thus, changes in students' communication patterns reflect the process of adapting social relations to the development of communication technology, which is increasingly integrated into their lives.

**c. Smartphone use encourages the formation of exclusive groups based on device ownership and involvement in digital activities, so that some students are less involved in group conversations.**

The formation of exclusive groups based on smartphone ownership and involvement in digital activities demonstrates that the use of communication technology not only strengthens social closeness within certain groups but also indirectly shapes the boundaries of social participation within student social structures. Students who actively engage in shared digital activities tend to have a higher communication intensity than students who do not engage in such activities, resulting in more selective social relations developing within certain groups. This condition indicates that shared digital experiences function as a factor in forming new social closeness that influences the direction of peer group interactions. In this context, smartphones act as a medium that not only expands communication but also organizes the structure of students' social relations informally. This pattern of exclusivity does not indicate a complete severance of social relationships, but rather a change in patterns of engagement in group conversations based on shared communication experiences. Thus, smartphone use is one factor that shapes the differentiation of social participation in students' social lives.

From the perspective of social cohesion theory, the formation of exclusive groups based on digital activities indicates that social cohesion develops through the intensity of engagement in relational experiences shared within a particular group. Social cohesion is not

always evenly distributed across all members of a large group, but often develops more strongly in subgroups with higher frequency of interaction (Dragolov et al., 2022). Within Durkheim's framework, group solidarity is formed through repeated collective experiences, creating stronger social bonds between members of certain groups compared to members of other groups (Durkheim, 1995). In the context of elementary school students, shared digital activities are one form of collective experience that strengthens micro-social cohesion within peer groups. This suggests that group exclusivity is not a form of weakening social cohesion, but rather part of the dynamics of solidarity formation within the structure of small-group relations. Thus, involvement in shared digital activities is an important indicator in understanding the differentiation of students' social cohesion.

These findings align with recent research showing that access to digital devices plays a role in shaping the structure of peer relationships in school-age children. A study by Mascheroni and Ólafsson (2022) showed that digital device ownership influences children's level of participation in peer group communication networks. Research by Livingstone and Helsper (2021) also explains that differences in access to communication technology can lead to variations in social engagement in children's group interactions in the school environment. Furthermore, research by Third et al. (2021) shows that shared digital activities often form the basis for the formation of core groups within friendships among children and adolescents in the local community. These findings demonstrate that the use of communication technology has implications for the structure of social participation within peer groups. Thus, group exclusivity based on digital activities is a common phenomenon in the dynamics of children's social interactions in the digital communication era.

These findings provide an important contribution to understanding the changing patterns of togetherness and solidarity among students in the context of smartphone use as a medium for social interaction. The formation of exclusive groups based on digital activities indicates that student social cohesion is no longer entirely homogeneous within the classroom, but develops into a more differentiated relationship structure based on shared communication experiences. This condition shows that smartphone use plays a role in forming a new configuration of student social relations that is selective but still maintains the sustainability of social relationships in general. These findings help explain that the transformation of student social cohesion occurs through changes in participation patterns in peer group interactions. Thus, the exclusivity of groups based on digital activities is an important indicator in understanding the dynamics of changes in the structure of student social relations in the digital communication era.

**d. Student social solidarity remains established but has changed form into digital network-based solidarity through the practice of sharing hotspots, sharing assignment information, and collaborating in online gaming activities.**

Research findings indicate that students' social solidarity has not decreased due to smartphone use, but has undergone a transformation from one based on direct interaction to one based on digital communication networks. The practice of sharing hotspots, sending assignments via WhatsApp, and collaborating in online games demonstrates that students maintain the habit of helping each other within their peer groups. These changes demonstrate that solidarity has not disappeared, but rather is adapting to the evolving interaction media within students' social lives. Shared digital activities provide a new means for students to maintain collective social relationships even though they are not always in the same physical space. This situation demonstrates that smartphones function as a medium that expands the practice of togetherness in a more flexible form. Thus, digital network-based solidarity represents a form of student social adaptation to changes in their communication environment.

From the perspective of social cohesion theory, solidarity formed through digital communication networks demonstrates that social bonds are not only built through physical proximity but also through repeated collective communication experiences in digital spaces. Social cohesion develops when individuals remain engaged in practices of mutual assistance and share meaningful social experiences within their groups (Dragolov et al., 2022). The

practice of sharing internet access and assignment information demonstrates the persistence of social responsibility within student peer relationships. Within Durkheim's framework, social solidarity is formed through individual involvement in collective activities that create a sense of group attachment despite changes in the form of interaction (Durkheim, 1995). Therefore, digital solidarity can be understood as a new form of social integration that emerges in the context of technology-based interactions. Thus, the practice of digital network-based solidarity is an indicator that student social cohesion persists within the dynamics of modern communication.

These findings also align with recent research showing that the use of communication technology by school-aged children plays a role in maintaining social support practices among peers. George and Odgers (2021) explain that digital communication allows children to stay connected and share social support even though interactions do not always occur in person. Research by Mascheroni and Ólafsson (2022) shows that digital communication media is an important means for children to maintain social networks and share academic information within peer groups. Furthermore, a study by Third et al. (2021) emphasized that digital community spaces function as new environments that enable children to develop social solidarity practices through collective communication experiences. These findings demonstrate that digital solidarity is part of the changing patterns of children's social interactions in the technological era. Thus, students' digital network-based solidarity is a phenomenon consistent with the dynamics of children's social relations in contemporary digital society.

## **CONCLUSION**

The results of the study indicate that smartphones have become an important part of the social life of students at UPT SDI Barugaia No. 60 Selayar Islands. In addition to being used for entertainment, smartphones are used as a medium for communication, playing together, and sharing digital experiences through various platforms. Their use forms new patterns of social interaction supported by the habit of gathering in locations with WiFi access and the emergence of social rules such as sharing hotspots and helping each other in using applications. Student social cohesion is maintained, even though it develops in small groups formed based on shared digital experiences. Cooperation, solidarity, and mutual assistance are still evident in academic activities and daily interactions, while conflicts that arise due to digital activities can generally be resolved through direct communication and teacher guidance. The use of smartphones does not reduce student togetherness, but changes its form from traditional physical interactions to digital communication-based interactions. Solidarity is maintained through information sharing, sharing internet access, and cooperation in online activities, so that smartphones play a role in transforming patterns of togetherness without eliminating social relationships between students.

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