

# **The Effect of Group Counseling Using the CBT Approach with Self-Control Techniques to Reduce TikTok Social Media Addiction**

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**ABSTRACT.** The development of social media has had a significant impact on adolescents' lives, one of which is addiction to using TikTok, which disrupts self-control, decreases productivity, and affects academic and social balance. This condition demands appropriate intervention strategies, one of which is through group counseling services based on Cognitive Behavior Therapy (CBT) with Self-Control techniques. This study aims to determine the effect of group counseling with a CBT approach using Self-Control techniques in reducing TikTok social media addiction among class X.E.1 students at SMAN 2 Lintau Buo. The research used a quantitative method with a one- group pretest-posttest experimental design. The research population was 32 students, with a purposive sample of 10 people. The instrument was a Likert-scale TikTok addiction scale consisting of 32 valid items. The analysis results showed a significant effect of group counseling services with self-control techniques on reducing TikTok addiction. The t-test value indicated the alternative hypothesis was accepted, while the N-gain test resulted in an average of 0.31, which falls into the medium category. Thus, group counseling with a CBT approach using self-control techniques is proven effective in reducing TikTok social media addiction among students. These findings provide practical implications for school counselors in designing interventions to help students manage social media use more healthily and productively. In addition, this study provides a theoretical contribution to the development of counseling research, particularly by enriching CBT-based and self-control intervention models for addressing digital media addiction among adolescents

**Keywords:** Group Counseling, Cognitive Behavior Therapy (CBT), Self-Control Techniques, Social Media Addiction, TikTok

## **INTRODUCTION**

The rapid development of digital technology has significantly influenced the social lives, educational patterns, and lifestyle behaviors of adolescents. One of the most prominent phenomena in this digital era is the increasing use of social media, particularly TikTok, which is currently one of the most accessed platforms among Indonesian students. TikTok, as a short-form video sharing application, provides space for creativity, entertainment, and fast-paced social interaction that is highly appealing to adolescents seeking instant gratification and social validation. Algorithmic personalization where social media platforms continuously serve emotionally stimulating, tailored content appears to reinforce prolonged engagement and risky usage patterns. Recent empirical analysis of TikTok users shows that those classified as 'high-risk' exhibit compulsive usage behaviors and frequent re-engagement, underscoring behavioral addiction beyond mere heavy use (Yang et al., 2025). Moreover, algorithm-driven social media

curations have been linked to increased vulnerability among adolescents: youths exposed to algorithmically intensified feeds report higher levels of emotional distress, poorer mental-health outcomes, and greater dependence on social media (Arora et al., 2024). A national study further confirms that TikTok has become a strong predictor of media dependency among remaja Indonesia (Zuhroh & Setiawan, 2023).

Excessive exposure to TikTok has been shown to trigger behavioral addiction characterized by decreased productivity, weakened self-control, emotional reliance on digital stimulation, and the emergence of academic and social problems. This trend is reflected among high school students who often spend hours accessing TikTok, experience anxiety when they cannot open the application, and use the platform as an emotional escape from academic pressure or personal stressors. The APJII Survey (2023) reported that more than 79% of Indonesian adolescents are active social media users, with TikTok as the most frequently accessed platform. International data also indicate similar patterns, where TikTok's reinforcement system makes problematic use increasingly common among adolescents globally (Liu, Zhang, Yang, & Xu, 2025). Evidence from schools in Indonesia also shows that high levels of TikTok consumption are positively associated with loss of focus, mood instability, and reduced academic engagement (Fadhlilah & Marsinun, 2023).

Ball-Rokeach and Melvin DeFleur (1976), through the Media Dependency Theory, emphasize that media addiction occurs when individuals increasingly depend on media to satisfy personal, social, and emotional needs. In the context of TikTok, higher dependence on entertainment, pleasure, and social interaction offered by the application makes it more difficult for adolescents to regulate their usage. Recent studies strengthen this argument, showing that TikTok's endless scrolling, algorithmic personalization, and rapid reward cycle significantly increase habitual and compulsive usage (Yang et al., 2025). Similar findings were observed in preliminary observations in class X.E.1 at SMAN 2 Lintau Buo, where several students reported using TikTok for more than three hours per day and experiencing difficulty managing their study time.

Previous research has identified various negative effects of social media addiction, such as impaired concentration, academic decline, cyberloafing, and increased psychological distress (Rahmat et al., 2020). Excessive use of TikTok can lead to loss of self-control, decreased learning focus, emotional dependence on notifications, and compulsive engagement with entertainment content. Empirical studies indicate that adolescents with low self-control are more susceptible to digital addiction, as they struggle to regulate impulses and delay gratification. This relationship is also supported by recent findings in Indonesia, showing that excessive TikTok use significantly correlates with emotional instability and low self-esteem among adolescents (Conte et al., 2025).

Existing studies generally focus on describing the consequences of addiction but rarely provide concrete psychological interventions applicable within the school environment. This creates a research gap, highlighting the need for studies that examine the effectiveness of counseling interventions that directly target thought patterns and behavioral changes to reduce social media addiction (Anissa et al. 2023). Repeated addictive behavior weakens self-control over time, leading to a maladaptive cycle that is difficult to break without structured psychological assistance (Zhao et al., 2022).

One therapeutic approach considered effective for addressing digital addiction is Cognitive Behavior Therapy (CBT) combined with self-control techniques. CBT focuses on identifying irrational thoughts, restructuring maladaptive cognitions, and modifying problematic behaviors. Self-control techniques within CBT help students resist impulsive urges, regulate behavior, and practice self-management skills (Abdilah et al., 2025; Rahmat et al., 2020). Beck (2013) highlights that CBT enables individuals to recognize the negative impacts of excessive digital use and develop healthier habits. Recent research further supports the effectiveness of

CBT in reducing problematic digital media use, including TikTok and gaming addiction (Ding & Li, 2023; Gim Ling & Abdullah, 2024; Reangsing et al., 2025).

Self-control techniques in CBT include impulse regulation training, time management, self-monitoring, and redirecting attention away from addictive stimuli. Ermayulis et al. (2019) argue that group counseling-based self-control training can restructure students' thought patterns and help them adopt healthier technology-use behaviors. Meta-analyses also confirm that improved self-regulation significantly reduces digital dependency (Mora et al., 2025).

Additionally, group dynamics allow students to share experiences, receive social support, and learn coping strategies from peers. This collaborative process enhances motivation for behavioral change and reduces feelings of isolation commonly associated with digital dependence. Intervention-based approaches such as CBT have shown efek positif terhadap kesejahteraan pengguna dan dapat membantu mengurangi problematic social media use (Zhou et al., 2021)

Based on these phenomena, this study aims to examine the effect of group counseling using the CBT approach with self-control techniques in reducing TikTok addiction among students. This research not only provides empirical evidence regarding the effectiveness of the intervention but also contributes theoretically by enriching counseling intervention models relevant to the challenges of digital addiction in modern adolescence. The findings are expected to support school counselors and educational institutions in managing students' digital behavior more effectively.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

Cognitive Behavior Therapy (CBT) is one of the most widely used counseling approaches for addressing addictive behaviors, including digital addiction. CBT is based on the assumption that thoughts, emotions, and behaviors are interconnected; therefore, modifying irrational thought patterns will lead to more adaptive behavioral changes (Beck, 2013). In the context of social media addiction, CBT helps students identify unrealistic cognitions such as "I must always check TikTok so I don't miss out" and replace them with more rational and healthy thought patterns. According to Beck (1977), cognitive restructuring is central to modifying maladaptive behaviors, including compulsive social media use. These theoretical assumptions are supported by recent studies demonstrating the effectiveness of CBT in reducing symptoms of digital addiction, such as internet addiction and social media addiction (Ding & Li, 2023; Reangsing et al., 2025).

Self-control is a key component in the behavioral change mechanism within CBT. Chaplin (2014) defines self-control as the individual's ability to regulate impulsive urges, manage behaviors, and delay gratification. In the context of social media use, low self-control makes adolescents more vulnerable to distractions and excessive time spent on TikTok, which in turn affects their academic responsibilities and social functioning (Rahmat et al., 2020). Recent evidence further indicates that low self-control is a strong predictor of social media addiction, and improvements in self-control significantly contribute to reducing addictive behaviors (Mora et al., 2025).

Group counseling using the CBT approach combined with self-control techniques has emerged as an effective intervention strategy for addressing digital addiction in school settings. Through group processes, students not only learn to identify their maladaptive thinking patterns but also gain social support, develop intrinsic motivation, and practice self-regulation strategies within a supportive environment (Ermayulis et al., 2019). Group dynamics provide opportunities for students to share experiences, learn coping strategies from peers, and strengthen their commitment to behavioral change.

Although the theories of CBT and self-control have been widely discussed, the conceptual relationship between these constructs and social media addiction requires more explicit explanation. Theoretically, CBT interventions enhance self-control by strengthening students' self-regulation abilities, impulse management, and cognitive reorientation. Increased self-control subsequently leads to reduced addictive behaviors toward TikTok. Thus, there exists an indirect or mediated relationship between CBT interventions and the reduction of TikTok addiction through the enhancement of self-control. Recent studies further support this mechanism, showing that self-control functions as a mediator in CBT-based interventions targeting digital addiction (Zhao et al., 2022; Ding & Li, 2023). Recent developments in the field demonstrate that CBT continues to evolve as a highly effective intervention for addressing various forms of digital addiction, including social media addiction, TikTok addiction, and internet gaming disorder (Reangsing et al., 2025; Mora et al., 2025). Consequently, the present literature review offers a more comprehensive and theoretically grounded understanding of the interrelationships between CBT, self-control, and TikTok addiction. It further underscores the importance of implementing structured, school-based intervention programs to adequately respond to the growing challenges posed by digital addiction among adolescents.

## **METHODOLOGY**

This study employed a one-group pretest–posttest design using a quasi-experimental quantitative approach. This design is widely used in intervention-based behavioral studies because it allows researchers to measure changes before and after treatment even without a control group (Creswell, 2015). In this design, the experimental group was administered a pretest to measure the initial level of TikTok addiction, followed by an intervention in the form of CBT-based group counseling with self-control techniques. After the treatment, a posttest was conducted to observe changes in students' addictive behavior. The use of a pretest–posttest model is supported by previous digital addiction research, which shows that quasi-experimental designs are effective for detecting behavioral improvements following psychological interventions (Alavi et al., 2021).

The study involved students of class X.E.1 at SMAN 2 Lintau Buo, consisting of a total population of 32 students. Sampling was conducted using purposive sampling based on initial screening results. From this screening, 10 students who were categorized as experiencing moderate to high levels of TikTok addiction were selected as research participants. Purposive sampling is considered appropriate for behavioral intervention studies because it allows researchers to target individuals who meet specific criteria relevant to the research objectives (Palinkas et al. (2015).

The instrument used in this study was a TikTok addiction scale developed based on the six well-established dimensions of social media addiction proposed by Griffiths (2005) that is salience, mood modification, tolerance, withdrawal, conflict, and relapse. These dimensions are widely used in measuring social media and short-video platform addiction (Galanis et al., 2024). The Likert-type instrument underwent validity testing using the Corrected Item-Total Correlation, which showed that 32 of the 40 items were valid. Reliability testing produced a Cronbach's alpha value of 0.874, indicating high internal consistency according to reliability criteria set by George and Mallery (2019). High reliability such as this strengthens the consistency of the data collected in behavioral research. Additionally, recent studies emphasize that social media addiction scales should demonstrate strong psychometric properties to ensure measurement accuracy (Zarate et al., 2022).

The counseling intervention was delivered in six sessions, each lasting 60–90 minutes, following structured Cognitive Behavior Therapy (CBT) procedures combined with self-control training. Session components included cognitive restructuring, self-monitoring, impulse control techniques, behavioral rehearsal, and relapse-prevention strategies. CBT has been widely

recognized as one of the most effective interventions for reducing problematic digital media use, including social media addiction and short-video app dependency (Ding & Li, 2023).

Data analysis utilized a paired sample t-test to determine the significance of differences between pretest and posttest scores. This statistical test is commonly employed in single-group intervention studies to assess whether behavioral changes are statistically meaningful (Field, 2018). Additionally, an N-Gain test was used to measure the effectiveness of the intervention. The N-Gain score of 0.31 falls into the medium category, indicating that CBT-based group counseling with self-control techniques successfully produced meaningful improvement. Medium effectiveness is consistent with the outcomes of previous CBT-based interventions targeting online behavioral addiction (Reangsing et al., 2025).

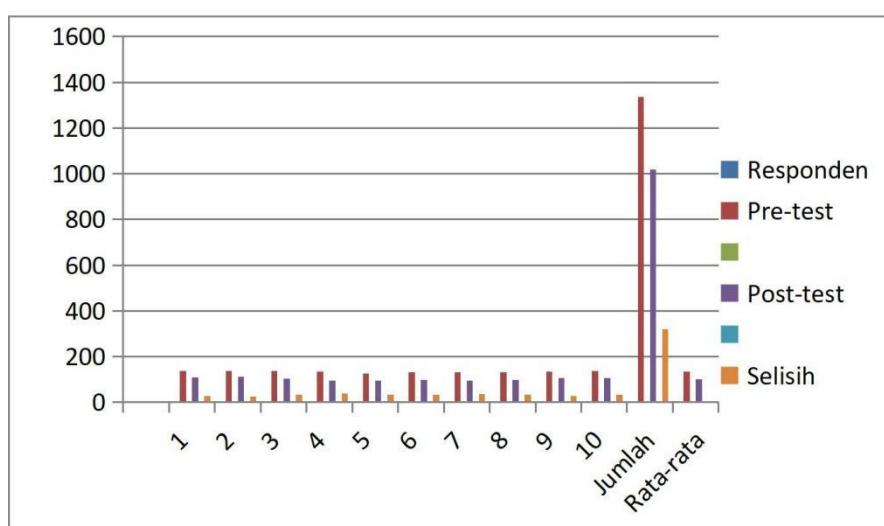
Overall, these findings reinforce the growing body of empirical evidence that CBT combined with self-control skills training is an effective approach for reducing digital media addiction among adolescents.

## FINDINGS

The results of the study show that group counseling using the Cognitive Behavior Therapy (CBT) approach combined with self-control techniques has a significant effect on reducing TikTok social media addiction among students of class X.E.1 at SMAN 2 Lintau Buo.

**Table 1. Comparison of Pretest and Posttest Scores**

Measurement Stage	Average Score	Category
Pretest	133,6	High
Posttest	101,7	Medium



Based on the data in Table 1 above, it can be seen that the comparison of the pre-test score is 1336 with an average of 133.6, which falls into the high category. After the treatment, there was a decrease in the post-test score to 1017 with an average of 101.7, which falls into the medium category. It can be understood that group counseling services using a CBT approach with Self-Control techniques can reduce students' TikTok social media addiction.

The change in average score from 133.6 to 101.7 indicates a fairly significant decrease in the addiction level. The t-test results strengthen that there is a significant difference between the conditions before and after treatment, while the N-gain calculation resulted in an average of 0.31, which falls into the medium category. Group counselling programs and group-therapy based on CBT have been shown to reduce Internet addiction levels and improve time management, reduce compulsive use, and ameliorate associated psychological symptoms (Liu et al., 2017).

The N-Gain approach measures the relative change between students' level of understanding before and after a learning process. By making this comparison, the N-Gain Test analysis is a method for measuring the effectiveness of learning by looking at the increase in student learning outcomes after participating in learning. This method calculates the difference between the pretest (test before Treatment) and posttest (test after Treatment) scores, which is then normalized so it can be compared with the ideal learning outcome (Hake, 1998)

The results of the paired sample t-test support these findings, with a t-value of 23.567, df = 9, and a p-value of 0.000 ( $p < 0.05$ ), indicating that the difference between the pretest and posttest scores is statistically significant. The practical effectiveness of the intervention is also notably high, as reflected in the effect size (Cohen's d) of 8.05, which falls into the very large effect category. Nevertheless, the average N-Gain score of 0.31 is categorized as moderate, suggesting that while the behavioral changes observed are meaningful, they have not yet reached an optimal level, considering external influences such as the digital environment and the relatively short duration of the intervention.

Furthermore, it can be seen from the N-Gain test. The data experienced a decrease of 0.31. So, if we look at the processing above and the Value  $0.30 \leq \text{N-Gain} \leq 0.70$  falls into the medium criteria. Thus, group counseling with Self-Control techniques in reducing TikTok social media addiction for students of X.E.1 SMAN 2 Lintau Buo experienced a decrease into the medium criteria, which is 0.31.

In terms of process, observations during the group counseling sessions showed that most students initially had the habit of using TikTok for more than six hours per day, frequently accessing the application during study time, experiencing reduced concentration, and exhibiting anxiety when unable to access the platform. Interviews with the school counselor further reinforced that TikTok addiction had contributed to delays in submitting assignments, decreased learning motivation, and difficulties in time management. After participating in six group counseling sessions, the students began to demonstrate improved impulse control, more structured study schedules, and reduced frequency of TikTok use. The cognitive restructuring sessions helped students identify irrational thoughts related to TikTok use, while self-control exercises such as the delay technique, self-monitoring, and behavioral activation effectively assisted them in reducing the habit of opening the application without purpose. These findings align with Beck's theory, which states that changes in addictive behavior originate from the modification of maladaptive thought patterns, and with Chaplin's assertion regarding the importance of self-control in regulating impulsive behavior. Moreover, the group dynamics enabled students to gain social support, share experiences, and learn coping strategies from their peers, thereby strengthening the overall change process.

Overall, these findings are consistent with previous studies that have demonstrated the effectiveness of CBT in addressing digital addiction. They also enrich the theoretical understanding of the relationship between cognitive change, increased self-control, and the reduction of TikTok addiction. The results highlight that structured CBT interventions implemented in school settings have strong potential to help students manage social media use in a healthier manner. However, the moderate level of effectiveness also suggests the need for extended interventions, stronger environmental support, and research designs that include control groups to obtain more comprehensive outcomes.

## **DISCUSSIONS**

The findings of this study demonstrate that group counseling using the Cognitive Behavior Therapy (CBT) approach combined with self-control techniques has a significant effect in reducing TikTok addiction among students in class X.E.1 at SMAN 2 Lintau Buo. The decrease in pretest–posttest scores is consistent with Beck's (1977) cognitive theory, which asserts that changes in addictive behavior occur when individuals are able to identify and modify the irrational thoughts underlying such behavior. Within this study, cognitive restructuring sessions enabled students to recognize maladaptive thinking patterns such as fear of missing out (FOMO), perceived social obligation to stay updated, and the belief that TikTok is necessary for mood regulation. These cognitive distortions are widely documented as core mechanisms sustaining digital addiction (Zhao et al., 2022).

This finding is in line with results reported by Reangsing et al. (2025), Ding and Li (2023), and Gim Ling and Abdullah, 2024, who emphasized that CBT effectively reduces symptoms of problematic digital media use, especially through modifying dysfunctional cognitions and reinforcing adaptive behavioral responses. The improvement in students' self-control supports Chaplin's (2014) theory, which describes self-control as the foundation of adaptive behavior that enables individuals to delay impulses and regulate emotional reactions. Empirical studies also affirm that low self-control is a strong predictor of social media addiction (Mora et al., 2025). "Meta-analytic evidence shows that lower self-control is significantly associated with higher levels of digital addiction among college students." (Zhao et al., 2025). High self-control appears to lower the risk of problematic digital media use including smartphone & social-media addiction making self-regulation and time-management strategies a promising target for interventions aimed at reducing compulsive use." (Blachnio, Przepiórka, & Cudo, 2023).

The effectiveness of CBT-based self-control training is also aligned with meta-analytic evidence showing that interventions targeting self-regulatory skills reduce screen time, compulsive checking, and addictive digital behaviors in adolescents. This confirms that improvements in self-control act as mediating variables that strengthen the impact of CBT on digital addiction reduction.

However, the moderate effectiveness level of the intervention (N-Gain = 0.31) requires more nuanced interpretation. One contributing factor is the high level of digital tolerance, defined as the need to consume increasing amounts of digital content to achieve the same psychological reward. Individuals who experience more severe patterns of digital media overuse often show diminished self-control and higher dependence, which consequently requires longer and more structured intervention efforts to achieve meaningful behavioral changes (Zhao et al., 2022; Ding & Li, 2023). Frequent and intensive TikTok use as measured by validated problematic-use scales has been linked to negative mental-health outcomes such as insomnia and depression (Rogowska & Lechowicz, 2025). Because platforms like TikTok are explicitly designed with features such as infinite scrolling and algorithmic-driven content delivery to maximize user engagement, users are at high risk of developing habitual and compulsive usage patterns (Amirthalingam & Khera, 2024). While short-term interventions for example a six-session counseling program may raise awareness and introduce coping strategies, such limited engagement is unlikely to suffice in dismantling deeply ingrained habits formed around these powerful design features. Long-term behavior change thus requires a more comprehensive, multifaceted approach that addresses both individual self-regulation and structural aspects of platform design.

Environmental factors also influence the intervention outcome. Prior studies emphasize that digital behavior change depends not only on internal psychological factors but also on external conditions such as parental monitoring, school policies, and peer dynamics (Rahmat et al., 2020). Similar patterns emerged in this study, where limited parental supervision and peer-group pressures contributed to inconsistent behavioral changes. Interviews with the school counselor

indicated that several students continued to access TikTok during class hours or break time due to peer influence or habitual group behavior. Several empirical studies indicate that peer conformity and social pressure are major determinants of digital overuse: adolescents who perceive stronger peer influence are significantly more likely to show problematic social-media or smartphone use.

Group dynamics during the counseling sessions also exerted a notable influence. Students expressed feeling supported when sharing experiences and learning coping strategies from peers, consistent with the findings of Ermayulis et al. (2019), who reveal that group cohesion and social support accelerate behavioral change. However, variations in addiction severity created challenges, as students with heavier addiction patterns required deeper cognitive restructuring and more intensive self-control training than their peers an issue also highlighted in recent counseling research (Reangsing et al., 2025).

Theoretically, this study contributes to the expanding application of CBT in addressing digital and social media addiction in the modern era. The results show that self-control serves as a mediating mechanism linking cognitive restructuring to reductions in addictive behavior a relationship increasingly emphasized in contemporary digital addiction research (Zhao et al., 2022; Gim Ling & Abdullah, 2024). These findings extend prior literature by demonstrating that CBT not only modifies maladaptive cognitions but also enhances metacognitive awareness and self-regulatory capacity, thereby supporting long-term behavioral change.

The positive reduction in addiction scores is consistent with studies demonstrating that CBT-based interventions effectively reduce symptoms of digital dependency by restructuring cognitive errors and strengthening self-regulatory practices. Evidence from intervention studies conducted in Indonesian schools also shows that counseling models using self-management or behavior contracts are effective in decreasing problematic social media use among adolescents (Fauzan et al., 2025).

Overall, the findings confirm the effectiveness of CBT-based group counseling in reducing TikTok addiction; however, they also highlight that digital behavioral change requires comprehensive intervention strategies. Sustainable behavioral improvement necessitates extended counseling durations, stronger collaboration between school and family, consistent monitoring mechanisms, and structured digital-use regulations within school settings. Integrating CBT with self-control training, supported by strong empirical evidence across international and national studies, offers an effective and evidence-based framework for schools and counselors to address digital media addiction among adolescents (Alavi et al., 2021; Kim et al., 2018; Lindenberg et al., 2022).

## **CONCLUSION**

The findings of this study indicate that group counseling using the Cognitive Behavior Therapy (CBT) approach combined with self-control techniques is effective in reducing TikTok addiction among students of class X.E.1 at SMAN 2 Lintau Buo. This effectiveness is reflected in the significant decrease between the pretest and posttest scores, supported by statistical evidence through the paired sample t-test and a very large effect size. The intervention facilitated changes in students' cognitive distortions, strengthened their self-control, and reduced the frequency of compulsive TikTok use. Although the N-Gain value indicated moderate effectiveness, the overall results confirm that CBT-based group counseling can serve as an appropriate intervention strategy for addressing digital addiction among adolescents in a school setting.

Based on the findings, several recommendations can be proposed. For school counselors, it is advisable to implement CBT-based group counseling as one of the primary intervention strategies for managing social media addiction. In particular, strengthening students' self-control through structured exercises and cognitive restructuring can be integrated into regular guidance

and counseling programs to enhance their resilience against digital overuse. For schools, supportive policies are necessary to promote digital literacy, responsible use of technology, and monitoring of students' device usage, thereby reinforcing positive behavioral changes and creating a safer digital environment. Parents also play a crucial role; collaboration with counselors is essential to ensure consistent supervision and to establish a home environment that supports healthy digital habits. Finally, for future researchers, it is recommended to extend the duration of interventions, involve a control group, and consider broader environmental factors such as family dynamics and peer influence, which would provide more comprehensive insights into the determinants of digital addiction

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