

The Impact of using Gadgets on Children

Sundus M*

Department of Computer Science, Lahore Garrison University, Lahore

Abstract

Technology plays vital role in our daily lives. These include electronic games, home computers, handheld devices, and different type of gadgets. Gadgets are popular in children and as likely in elders. In this norm we can't keep our children out of this. This paper presents the impact of gadgets on children in positive and negative manner. Research has been conducted in how gadgets impact on cognitive and motor skills of children. It also describes the ways for parents how they can monitor their children by limiting their time of gadget uses. As the gadgets are increasing day by day, it is leading to the technology addiction among children. The paper concludes with recommendations for further study of better understanding of more problems in children by growing impact of computers.

Keywords: Screen time; Motor skills; Cognitive skills

Introduction

Many researchers have studied that children spend average of their time on different gadgets like telephone, radio, TV, games, Xbox, iPod and stereo system [1]. Kids use gadgets for various purposes like playing games, watching videos, listening songs, chatting with their friends, browsing different websites. They spend most of their time in these activities and don't pay attention to their posture, screen brightness, and screen distance from their eyes which ultimately affect their vision and health.

Staring at electronic screen continuously for long time causes distress [2]. Kids suffer various problems like eye irritation or have difficulty to focus for a while. If we are facing problems to cope with screens, imagine how our child's eyes must be going through. In this era, we can't keep ourselves or our children away from these devices so we can try to minimize the impact of these devices on our children. It's really surprising a 2 year old baby can and knows how to use a gadget, similar to how a kid knows to use a feeding bottle. A study has been conducted in USA on kids and result shows 1 out of 3 children can use a tablet or phone before they even talk?

In 2013 Daily mail reported that 29% of the toddlers can easily use the gadgets and remaining 70% are master by primary school age. Really Surprising! According to the USA Centres for Disease Control and Prevention, an average child spends about 8 hours a day watching electronic screens. As they are growing older the use of gadgets also increases. Too much gadget use can also affect the long-term vision problem [3]. Plus chance of myopia also increases in children when they spend about 8 hours daily on gadgets. When people use electronic screens, they blink less. On an average, a person blinks about 15 times in a minute. Due to the high attention required while using an electronic screen, this rate can drop to less than 5 times in a minute. A lot of research has been done on this type of phenomena; this paper describes the positive and negative impact of gadgets on children (Figure 1).

The Positive Impact of Gadget Use

Children have better motor skills

Motor skills are the skills which are linked with muscles of small movements like lips, fingers, wrists, tongue and toes. So when toddlers play games on tablet or any other gadgets their fingers and hands get a workout [4]. This is such a healthy exercise for growing children. Using modern keyboards and keypads or other handheld devices they have no risk of any injury or any kind of threat as compared to playing outside.



Figure 1: Children using gadgets.

As a result, they know better use of their hands and fingers and become very efficient in it in short time.

Improved cognitive skills

Cognitive skills are the ability to process information, reasoning, remembering and relating objects with other objects. These skills are directly related to memory, and language [4]. Now a day's technology helps faster and better development of cognitive skills in kids. The games which they use to play before whether it's a puzzle or scribbling on drawing books everything now can be done on electronic devices. Like interactive apps, video games, different kinds of challenges and educative programs available on various kinds of devices. Such products would always improve a kid's cognitive skills. The modern gadgets help to develop their learning skills faster as they are more interested in gadgets then books.

Cause of distraction in children

Gadgets occupy kid's minds. Leave child with a Smartphone, tablet Xbox or any other handheld device he can spend hours or even weeks with it. So you don't have to worry about the child because there is no risk of getting injured or harmed by these gadgets. Also don't worry about any other major mess like painting a wall, disturbing others.

*Corresponding author: Sundus M, Department of Computer Science, Lahore Garrison University, Lahore, Tel: + 0323-8437975; Email: sundusmunir@lgu.edu.pk

Received September 13, 2017; Accepted January 05, 2018; Published January 10, 2018

Citation: Sundus M (2018) The Impact of using Gadgets on Children. J Depress Anxiety 7: 296. doi:10.4172/2167-1044.1000296

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Technology has changed all that. Simply a Smartphone can keep a child busy for hours, whether he is playing games or watching videos etc.

More fun for kids

Gadgets are fun for kids while they use them. They enjoy playing games on them whether it's a puzzle or race, or candy crush, or a simple first person shooter game, children have fun and they understand simple aspects of cause and effect, action and reaction. Electronic devices have much more advanced learning options for children in a fun way than books or older methods.

Educating young ones

Technology has been proven to be very helpful in educating student. Children can access the educational websites and can get detailed information about required topic. Technology makes things better as have access to pile of material and can be very useful in research and understanding things better. Visual presentations, educational videos, interactive programs, learning tutorial and variety of books available all the time on internet has revolutionized education in a better way. Kids learn state of the art tools and methods by their own. Educational games help children to perform well in their studies. As they can have many online quizzes available, online tutorials and brainstorming riddles.

Competition skills

Children love to play video games. When playing such games with other people around the world and their relatives, friends they get the feeling of competition that enhances their skills of competition and enables them to manage themselves in competing environment.

Negative Effects of Gadgets Use

Speech or language delay

In order to understand the speech or language delay in children first we understand the difference between the speech and language. Speech refers to verbal form of communication used by humans, and language refers to the whole system of communication spoken or written, verbal and nonverbal. A child with a language delay might pronounce words well but only be able to put two words together. A child with a speech delay might use words and phrases to express ideas but be difficult to understand. Speech delay, also known as alalia, these two problems often overlaps. Many researchers have studied this and also concluded many theories about it. By using a screening tool, researchers studied that the more time children spend on smart phones, tablets and electronic games and other handheld devices the more likely the child have delays in expressive speech. Children will learn to talk and communicate through interactions with others. This is the way how they will learn to communicate well if they are not communicating they are not learning. Every one minute that your child is spending on the screen is one minute fewer that he could speak or learn with others. Screen time is the time you child is spending on screen whether it's TV or any other gadget. Screen time takes away the time of child which he can spend by talking and communicating with other people.

This can be well understood by an example if you are travelling in a car with you children. Your children have a screen in front of him as he is watching his favourite TV show or playing any game. So you will not interrupt him by talking or asking something, on the other side, if he don't have any gadget in front of him he would probably be talking and communicating with you. Using a screening tool, researchers found that the more handheld screen time a child's parent reported, the more likely the child was to have delays in expressive speech, concluding that

for each 30-minute increase in screen time, a child was 49 per cent more likely to be at risk of expressive speech delay.

The study found that the more time children between the ages of six months and two years spent using handheld screens such as smart phones, tablets and electronic games, the more likely they were to experience speech delays.

Attention deficits

Attention deficit: Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) is a mental disorder. It refers to problems like paying attention, excess activity or has difficulty controlling behaviour which is not appropriate. This can occur in children and cause them to be fidgety, unable to focus, restless and easily distracted. This change in behaviour can cause problem at school or at home as well.

Learning problems

Children learn lot of things before the age of five even toddlers learning perspective is much faster than children. If they are using gadgets their time to communicate with their parents and learning is bounded. They need proper time talking with their parents so they can learn new words and how to communicate. They need their parents not gadgets. Also exposure of these gadgets are linked to cognitive delays and impaired learning. Researchers at the University of Washington reveal that modern gadgets are not necessary in child development.

Anxiety

Anxiety is a fear about future events and reaction to current events. These kinds of feelings may lead to various physical symptoms, like shakiness and fast heart rate.

This phase is usually harmless and temporary but children who are suffering from anxiety experience nervousness, shyness and fear. They try to avoid people, places and activities. Child shows aggression or appears tense when they can't get online and this feeling magically goes when their devices are given back. This behaviour can be easily notice. Dr Graham says 'Child gets upset or shows anger when by small things and when they get online they become calmer. He said parents should not the signs of agitation, anxiety and irritation in children'. Dr Watts added: ' It's pretty normal if a child gets upset not being able to online with one's friend, but if a child continuously shows anger or depression not being online then it's time to start a conversation.

Childhood depression

Childhood depression is very common and severe medical illness that negatively affects child behavior. The way they think and act. Too much gadget use introduces depression in children of certain ages. It also leads mental health issues in children in childhood and adolescence. They may act depressed or we can see worst of these symptoms in a couple of days.

Negative impact on character

This is one of the biggest problems in this growing world of technology. Children use internet to see adult content rather to search for educational websites. This practice leads bad impact on their character. They forgot their moral values. They are the future of the country. They become mentally advanced beyond their age (Figure 2).

Discussion

Protecting children from the adverse impacts of electronic screens

Here are some tips parents can follow when their child is using

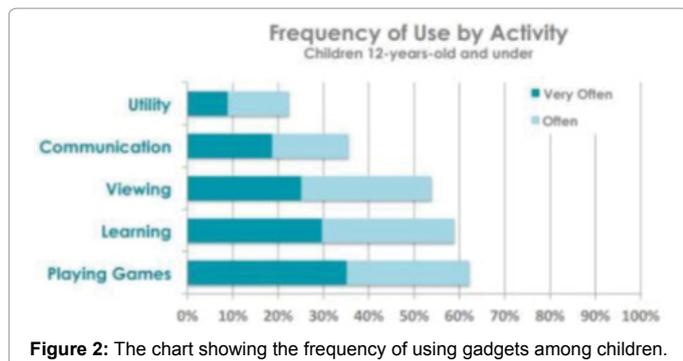


Figure 2: The chart showing the frequency of using gadgets among children.

gadgets. So, parents can keep track of the amount of time kids are spending on using gadgets

Set time for using screens: Restrict the amount of time children spend on gadgets and don't allow them to use after their time is finished. Also limit the time of watching TV. Small children can use gadget an hour a day and two hours a day for school going children.

Make them play outside: Encourage your children to play outside with their friends and siblings. So they learn to interact and communicate with other children. Its far better to play with pets like cats, dogs and other kids rather than watching any animated movie. It also helps in exercising long distance vision and lessens the chances of myopia.

Gadgets as babysitters: It's not a good idea to keep your child busy with gadgets so can do whatever you want to do in peace, instead keep

them occupied with other creative toys, story books, puzzles, coloring books.

Ensure adequate sleep of your child: Children must have enough sleep for about 10 hours a day. Good sleep also helps recover from eye strain and for efficient working of brain. Good sleep is also necessary for good health.

Conclusion

Everything is good if you use it in a positive way or bad if we use it in a negative way. Some suggestions have been given above to help parents about limiting their child's exposure to gadgets. This is difficult to keep them away from gadgets but we can limit their time. Encouraging child to use it in educational field or study purpose can lead to drastic change in their lives. It can help them to enhance their skills. Use of gadgets in a constructive way can lead to healthier and efficient minds. A lot of research can be conducted on how gadgets affect children in other ways.

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