

Gadget Addiction and Parental Responsibilities in Child Rearing

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Received date: March 23, 2022; **Accepted date:** April 16, 2022; **Published date:** May 28, 2022

Citation: Sharadha Ramesh, (2022) Gadget Addiction and Parental Responsibilities in Child Rearing, *J. Clinical Case Reports and Studies* 3(4); DOI: 10.31579/2690-8808/113

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Abstract

Gadgets like mobile, iPad and other electronic devices are a necessary evil in the modern world. These electronic devices have many advantages in the day-to-day life of human and it is a boon in terms of knowledge transfer to all age groups in a very short span of time. It has its own disadvantages and when recklessly used causes very many ill effects for the mankind. The global pandemic of Covid 19 since the year 2020 has made these gadgets available and usable for all age groups. Children are the major users and have no other option except to use these gadgets. This causes addiction in these young little minds and has a huge physical, mental and social ill health. The only way that this can be minimized though not prevented is by the way of customizing the nurturing pattern and added parental responsibilities. Parents they themselves are over worked with gadgets due to pandemic it becomes an utmost need to modify the nurturing practices to prevent gadget addiction in their children.

Keywords: gadgets, addiction, creative work, e-books

Abbreviations: Apps – Applications, v/s – Versus, WHO – World Health Organization

Introduction

Children are the future of the world. The early part of life as a child is always remembered and reminiscence by every individual at a later part of their life. This is because every human get a cherished life and memory during childhood. Lot of liberty, no shy attitude whether it be in playing, singing, dancing etc., makes it the most memorable part of human life. Children's life style is like a free bird without any inhibitions. They play a lot, socialize with their age group and loves outdoor activities. Though schooling gives them some time of high intense studies rest of the time they make friends, play in the ground, celebrate various events and enjoy having a group meal. All these were before Covid 19 pandemic declaration. Post pandemic things has been turned upside down for these young minds. They are literally caged for necessity and preventing disease spread. While earlier schools and parents banned their screen time, now it has been forced on to them. Where neither parents nor the

children have any other option but to accept the gadgets. The worst affected among children are the under fives /toddlers and primary school children. Due to force of screen time to learn even music, dance, yoga this in the due course becomes an addiction. This could be prevented if understood and tweaked in the way children are nurtured. To look into its perspectives one has to first understand what a gadget addiction.

Side headings/Sub headings

What is gadget addiction?

Gadget addiction is a sense of urge to use a smartphone or other gadget like tablet, computer, television, ipad etc., when bored or idle when used uncontrollably equates to addiction. It is measured in terms of screen time and does not discriminate who is affected, it affects all age groups and people of all races. This effects mental, emotional and physical health. The impact is so high that children may not be able to quit the addiction and parents may not be able to restrict the usage as it is an important tool for education starting from the kindergarten level.

Life with v/s without Gadgets

Life without Gadgets	Life with Gadgets
Children played together outdoor	Information access on every one's finger-tips
Face to face communication was very important	Virtual interaction is more than face to face
People were more focused on activities with family and friends	Use of mobile phones, tablets as pacifiers for kids is the current scenario
Reading newspapers or seeking library was more common	Apps for everything which includes paying bills, games, e-books etc. search for library is very minimum

Screen Time for Children < 2 years

There are many more to the with v/s without gadgets. The usual question among parents and elders is how much screen time should children below the age of 2 years be allowed?

Many say it is 15 minutes, 20 minutes, 30 minutes but the actual time is none for children less than 2 years.

Statistical Data insights on Addiction

- The amount of time 113 children whose ages were between 4 and 7 years spent watching a gadget which was measured for this study. The results suggested more screen time leads to negative effects on motor proficiency. (Cadoret, et.al, 2018).
- Studies showed that increased use of gadgets in children leads to a risk for mental health problems like depression, anxiety, ADHD, mood disorders and suicide. (Wahyuni, et. al, 2019)
- Extended screen time exposure may affect young children's socialization and lowers their ability to understand others emotions. (Skalicka, et. al, 2019)
- The number of children (0-8 years) using gadgets had increased from 52% to 75% in just 2 years (Rideout, 2013)

The researches above give the insight that gadget usage with increased screen time makes children go through lot of physical, social and mental ill effects. The straight and vertical effect on these health dimensions helps to understand why the screen time for children should be reduced though not curbed in the current scenario of Covid 19 the global pandemic.

Reasons why one should reduce screen time in Children

- Impairs the child's ability to socialize and interact
- It will be a hinderance to getting homework done on time.
- Playing with friends, outdoors and spending time with family is disrupted
- Kids who spend more time sitting in front of the TV or on the smart phone are more likely to be overweight or obese
- It prevents children from being child-like, creative and be a great explorer which is the characteristic developmental mile stone of a toddler.

How can parents and elders curb this menace for which guidelines by various health professional organisation will come handy.

Evidence, guidelines and Recommendations

1. American Academy of Pediatrics Recommendations

- Below 2 years: Can use face time or video call
- 2 – 5 years: less than 60 minutes of high-quality programs.
- Parents should watch with the child.
- 6 years above: Consistent limits should not replace sleep time, physical activity and essentials.

2. Dr. Kimberly Young's Rule of 3-6-9-12 (NetAddiction.com)

- 0 -3 years: Never give a screen time
- 3-6 years: less than 60 minutes of educative videos that include shapes, colors, places etc.
- 6-9 years: Less than 2 hours, setting limits and supervised screen time by parents.
- 9-12 years: less than 2 hours, enable safety features, supervised screen time by parents.
- 12-18 years: Independence, by now they have their own phone, setting a balance and hand holding by the parents.

3. World Health Organization (WHO)

- less than 2 years: no screen time
- 2 - 4 years: Less than 60 minutes of sedentary screen time
- WHO strongly recommends on increasing the physical activity among children.

4. The Sydney Children's Hospital Network (Australia):

- less than 2 years: no screen time
- 2 – 5 years: 1 -2 hours of high-quality programming
- School age begins: Need to have a media plan.

There are other organizations also giving recommendations. It becomes important for nurses and health care providers to give parents and elders these insights of nurturing the children. The following aspects throw light on few tips to improve the screen time and prevent gadget addiction among children.

a. When can the screen time be allowed for Children?

- Parents should make sure it is quality screen time with educational information
- Learn colors, shapes, phonics, different languages
- Use parental control to block unwanted content
- Reduce brightness and sound
- Keep a time-table

b. Provide a Music time for Children

- Play music for kids to be up, moving and dancing
- Sing along songs like Baby Shark, Head, shoulder, knees and toes
- Do not forget our old roots of classical music and dance
- Play an instrument Guitar, piano or flute if the parents know any of these instruments.

c. Encourage and hand hold Creative activities

- Parents can read a book with their child
- Let them explore colors like kid friendly paints, wax colors etc.
- Use clay (play dough) to make different art and shapes.
- Parents doesn't have to buy fancy or expensive materials. They can make their own at home. Follow the simple tips given below.

d. Procedure to make Salt Play Dough at home which is user and eco friendly

1-cup **salt**, 4 cups **flour (any edible flour)**, 1 ½ cups **water** 4tbs edible oil. Mix **flour** and **salt**. Add **water** and oil slowly to the dry ingredients, stirring with a spoon until well blended. Knead dough until soft and pliable. Add food color to make different colors. This dough is not dangerous even if accidentally tasted by the children. All that is required is parents should show their interest and time in making this homemade dough.

e. Children are great helpers - Make them your little helper at home

- Involve kids in the daily chores like cleaning up after play time, arranging crockery, cutlery etc.,

- Engage them in cooking – simple safe tasks like peeling a banana, coring an apple etc.,
- Teach them to organize their toys, books and games every time it is dismantled.
- There are many tips and options for parents and elders in reducing screen time and good nurturing practices given by the American Academy of Pediatrics: Family Media Plan. Parents and health care providers should take their time out to learn such easy tips and reduce the risk of gadget addiction among children which is of a very high priority in the current situation across nations.

Discussion & Conclusion

Post pandemic of Covid 19 and still the situation is grim due to the rise and fall of infection it becomes our utmost need and priority to concentrate on the nurturing practices of children. Gadgets are here to stay. It is no point in talking about preventing or avoiding screen time as the gadgets will take over all the daily chores in a short span of time. Parents, Elders and health care providers should improvise, innovate, customize certain activities and protect the young minds from getting addicted to gadgets; but use it cautiously and carefully to save the nations. After all children are the wealth and pride of any nation.

Conflict of Interest

I, Dr. Sharadha Ramesh author of the article declare that I do not have any financial interest or any conflict of interest exists by writing and submitting my review article on the gadget addiction and parental responsibilities in children.

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DOI: [10.31579/2690-8808/113](https://doi.org/10.31579/2690-8808/113)

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