Digital Technology: A Boon or Bane for Children's Well-Being

Dear Sir,

Digital technology has changed the whole world in the past two decades. It has contributed to all fields with its innovations. One of the key reasons for the success of digital technology is smartphones. During the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) and post-COVID-19 era, the teaching–learning process has become technology-dependent. So, most of the children are exposed to this technology.

Technology has promoted hand–eye coordination in children, along with language improvement and problem-solving skills. It has imbibed digital literacy skills at an early age that help them succeed in school and as adults in this competitive world and to become an independent learner as they are able to access digital information to explore the topics that interest them.[1,2]

Despite these advantages, children are susceptible to the overuse of smartphones and gaming devices, which has led to developmental and behavioral problems. There are many studies that have shown an association of overuse of these devices with physical inactivity and obesity. Preschool children may present with difficulty in communication (verbal/nonverbal) or speech difficulty. It causes distraction to parent–child interaction and child play leading to the negative impact on the socioemotional development of child. An increase in screen time causes visual disturbances. Children also develop sleep disturbances and poor quality sleep in addition to behavioral problems, such as anxiety, depression, lack of attention, low self-esteem, and aggressive behavior. Sometimes, they may become victims of cyberbullying and harmful online content and sexual exploitation. Children with these problems need a multidimensional approach in treatment so that they are treated holistically.[3,4]

In this digital era, it is impossible to stay without technology. Owing to its negative impact on children's well-being, which is a major public health concern, it should be used cautiously and judiciously. All the stakeholders, such as parents, teachers, and policymakers in education and health, should come together to combat this issue. The strategies that can help to prevent the hazards are to have healthy e-discipline (monitoring the screen time and content and making sure that the child takes a short break from the screen every 20 minutes to protect the vision) and encourage children to involve in outdoor activities, yoga, hobbies, and creative art-based activities that promote imagination—such as drawing, craftwork, playing with play dough or blocks, storytelling in school and at home, and educating parents on parenting skills so that they are able to cope up with the child in a better way. The family as a unit of society plays an important role in a child's life. Parents have to be a role model to their children. They should decide on the family screen-free time (avoiding screen use during mealtimes and one hour before bedtime as it interferes with the quality of sleep) and create screen-free zones, such as play area, family lounge, and bedrooms at home. A well-designed educational policy should be in place to monitor the use of digital technology in the curriculum of schools to promote the overall well-being of children.[5]

Conflicts of interest

There are no conflicts of interest.

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