

Impact of Intervention in Gadget Usage Among Children

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ABSTRACT

Present study aimed to assess the impact of counseling on gadget usage among thirty children aged two to six years studying in an inclusive education system from an urban school in Bangalore. Tools used were Impact of Technology on Children (2015) by Dr. Jacqui Taylor and Behavior problem check list to assess the behavior of the children. Counseling Intervention along with psycho education is given to parents and children about the negative effect of gadgets on children. Intervention is given for one month and at the end of the intervention gadget usage has been assessed using the same questionnaire. The differences in the behavior also been studied.

Results showed that there is an impact of gadget usage on children's behavior. There are remarkable improvements in children on the area of language, attention, learning problems, anxiety and depression as a result of intervention. After the intervention it was found that gadget usage reduced among children and children were able to focus better at their work, develop better cognitive skills, improvement in speech and language acquisition and better social skills. More than all these there was joy for learning at school.

Keywords: Technological Gadget, Children, Intervention

INTRODUCTION

Now-a-days children are spending an average of seven hours a day on entertainment media, including televisions, computers, phones and other electronic devices [1]. We all know the effects of addiction, whether it is the addiction of tobacco, alcohol, drugs or gadgets. It takes a great deal of effort for a person to come out of the addiction devoid of age, sex and type of addiction. Only time and good methods can help a person to get rid of addiction. Same is true with the addiction of gadgets, especially in toddlers and kids towards the modern touch screen gadgets.

Given that children now spend more than seven hours a day with their TV's, computers, cell phones, and other electronic media more time than they spend with family and more than many of them sleep - Parents also have got to get smart about their children's media use and how it affects their physical and mental health, and they need to develop a family strategy for managing media [2].

Parents work hard to protect their children from harm, but they often think nothing while teaching or encouraging toddlers to use I pads or letting them play addictive or violent games. They are trying to cut the junk food out of their diets while letting them gorge on junk media.

To help kids make wise media choices, parents should monitor their media diet. Parents can make use of

established ratings systems for shows, movies and games to avoid inappropriate content, such as violence, explicit sexual content or glorified tobacco and alcohol use. Studies have shown that excessive media use can lead to attention problems, school difficulties, sleep and eating disorders, and obesity. In addition, the Internet and cell phones can provide platforms for illicit and risky behaviors.

By limiting screen time and offering educational media and non-electronic formats such as books, newspapers and board games, and watching television with their children, parents can help guide their children's media experience.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

There are a lot of studies conducted in the area of Gadget usage among children. Tompopoulos [3] conducted a study on infant to find the effect of media exposure on toddler

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development. 259 mother-infant dyads participated in a long-term study and found that cognitive development is lower in children having media exposure in 6 months onwards. Dev found that Media technology can be used effectively as a teaching tool in school but the results depend on how teachers use the technology and their own comfort level with the media. Attention to television appears to be closely related to the child's understanding of the contents. Role of parents in understanding the needs of children are important [4].

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

Pre post experimental design used to assess the usage of Gadgets in children before and after the intervention program.

Research question or research statement

- Is there any effect of Gadgets on children aged 2 to 6 years?
- Whether intervention has any impact on the usage of gadgets among Children

Objective

1. To assess the usage of gadgets among Children aged 2 to 6 years.
2. To assess the effect of usage of gadgets on children.
3. To examine the impact of intervention on Gadget usage among Children.

Hypothesis

- There will be an effect of Gadgets on children.
- There will be an impact of intervention in Gadget usage among Children.

Tools

- Impact of Technology on Children (2015) by Dr. Jacqui Taylor.
- Behavior problem check list and Semi Structured interview schedule prepared by the researcher to assess the usage before and after intervention.

Sample, Inclusion Criteria and Exclusion Criteria is as Follows

Sample: 30 children selected from Urban Bangalore for the present study.

Inclusion criteria: Children having age 2 to 6 years old.

Exclusion Criteria: Children above six years of age not included in the study.

Procedure

Sample of 30 children has been selected using random sampling methods from Bangalore urban for the present study.

Rapport has been established with children and parents and the written consent has been taken from the parents. The purpose of the research has been explained and confidentiality assured. Status of health and behavior of the children in the school and also at home has been assessed. Semi structured questionnaire prepared by the researcher to assess the use of Gadgets after expert opinion and suggestion.

Counseling Intervention along with psycho education is given to parents and children about the negative effect of gadgets on children. Intervention is given for one month and at the end of the intervention gadget usage has been assessed using the same questionnaire. The differences in the behavior also been studied.

Intervention module

- Psychoeducation
- Parental Counseling

Findings

Present study shows that children and toddlers use these gadgets at least less than one or two hours every day.

Applications that are used most in these devices are Rhymes and YouTube and the maximum number of games played by toddlers are Temple Run and Angry birds.

Large number of parents feel that they gadgets are useful and can be given to kids as they are informative and children learn stuffs like rhymes and alphabets easily.

Prolonged use of Gadgets leads to speech / Language delay, attention deficits, learning problem, anxiety, childhood depression, poor cognitive skills, negative impact on character building.

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.

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 [5,6].

Though more than half of the parents feel that their children a large amount time with these gadgets, only a few

take steps to actually reduce their usage whereas other feel that they gadgets are informative and a learning tool for their children.

Following statements were made by parents in the interview

- “I could see that there was improvement in eye-contact, my child is calmer than before, banging of head had stopped. Started slowly looking out when her name was called.” (Parent,4)
- “My child started to listen to adult’s speak and trying to say few words”. {Children learn language through human interaction, they observe the lip movements, listen to human sounds and in the process possess language. When put in front of Television, it so happens that there is no interaction and hence no learning happens.} (Parent,30)
- “We are thankful for the intervention; we have completely kept the child away from smart phone and that now the child is back to Normal”. (Parent, 24)
- “We always knew the ill effect of the gadgets and we monitored our child’s time with the gadgets and now the child shows more interest in reading”. (Parent,14)
- After the intervention it was found by reducing the usage of gadgets children were able to focus better at their work, develop better cognitive skills, improvement in speech and language acquisition, better social skills more than all these there was joy for learning at school. Even with children with deviation (differently abled children) who were asked to completely stop gadgets, there was development seen in all areas of development.

It can be inferred from the analysis, only few children obey their parents instantly and shut down their device when they are told to do so whereas other children get really angry and testy or shut down only after their parents pressurize. After prolonged usage of gadgets, parents themselves feel that their children are becoming more aggressive, stubborn and become dependent on the virtual world.

By using gadgets, the time to communicate with their parents and learning is bounded. By avoiding, quality talking with parents and other children happened which led to improvement in language acquisition, communication and social skills improved.

Children who were spending more time with gadgets, started to live in a virtual world. Hence stopped communicating with real world.

While comparing the usage of gadgets and traditional toys by the children, we can see that almost 30-50% of gadgets time is integrated in the play time of the children and a

considerable amount of parent still are not aware of the physical and psychological problems the child will face in his/her future life due to this addictiveness.

Interview with the parents found that awareness about gadget usage is less among parents. As a result of intervention, parents realized the consequences of using gadgets.

CONCLUSION

Gadget usage have an effect of children’s cognitive functioning like attention, perception, problem solving abilities and in interpersonal relationships with parents and other family members. One in seven of them confessed that they allowed their babies to use tablets and smartphones for up to four hours a day, or more. Although 81 per cent of our parent felt that children today spend too much time on smart devices, it hasn’t put most of them off using them to entertain their baby. Hence it is always better to just remove these modern gadgets and replace with exercise, games, toys and human interaction. Parental awareness and counseling have an effect of usage of Gadgets among children [7].

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