

# UNDERSTANDING THE IMPACT OF DIGITAL MEDIA ON CHILDHOOD

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## **Abstract :**

Many children these days have access to a multitude of digital items from a very tender age. They also rapidly pick up skills in these items' use. Devices commonly accessed by young children include large and small screens, keyboards and control functions for mobile phones, laptops, tablets, televisions and desktop computers.

The digital environment was conceived as an environment for adult users. Not even its inventors thought it might one day be a place where childhood would be spent. Nor did they make any design concessions for child users. On the contrary, the utopian vision was that all users would be equal. And if all users are equal, then a child user is treated as if they were an adult.

Children's wellbeing in digital environment is of no less importance than their wellbeing in any other setting. Digital environment is man and woman made technology and can therefore be designed according to the needs of children and young people to meet their developing milestones. So far, however, it has failed to adapt to children's need.

Therefore the objective of this research paper is to understand the concern of digital media for children (age group 3-10years) in the terms of how the child's behavior and academics are getting affected.

Key words: digital media, digital environment, childhood.

## **Introduction :**

Digital technologies are bringing opportunities for learning and education to children, especially in remote regions and during humanitarian crises. Digital technologies also allow children to access information on issues that affect their communities and can give them a role in helping to solve them.

Digital technology can also make children more susceptible to harm both online and off. Already vulnerable children may be at greater risk of harm, including loss of privacy. Researchers acknowledge that excessive use of digital technology can contribute to childhood depression and anxiety. Conversely, children who struggle offline can sometimes develop friendships and receive social support online that they are not receiving elsewhere.

Efforts to protect children need to focus particularly on vulnerable and disadvantaged children, who may be less likely to understand online risks including loss of privacy and more likely to suffer harms. Digital technology has already changed the world and as more and more children go online around the world, it is increasingly changing childhood.

It is commonly believed amongst parents, experts and carers that digital media has a significant impact on children's environments, development and behavior. There's certainly a relationship to the learning process, as well as to their overall experience of being in the world, and likely an effect on how they build and learn about relationships. Still, there is a huge debate about how exactly children are affected by digital media. A huge host of serious issues intersect around the topic, ranging from those related to body image, to concerns about overuse, attention difficulties etc.

### **Impact of digital media**

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#### **(A) Positive impact**

- **Better Hand-eye Coordination**

Through engaging applications, children develop their hand-eye coordination further. This occurs when children visually follow an object on the screen and actively participate in the activity the application presents. Hand-eye coordination is essential as children begin school when they learn how to use their hands and eyes while writing and drawing.

- **Improves language skills**

Active screen time help children develop language skills. By reading eBooks or accessing stories online, they learn new words and proper ways to pronounce them. Many types of language development technology offer multisensory engagement, which offers speed and support to the learning process. Modern children have a keenly intuitive knack for understanding computer based systems. Parents can provide children with picture dictionary or flashcards for them to boost their vocabulary and teach them to look for word meanings should they come across an unfamiliar word.

- **Higher Capacity for Visual Attention**

Gaming and learning applications equip children to pay more attention to details in order to complete these activities. Ever noticed how your child seems preoccupied when playing a game? The reason behind that is he's concentrating on his next move. Let's use Role Playing Games (RPGs) for example. In RPGs, the child uses a character. In order to play, he has to move the character around while planning his next move. These simultaneous activities train children to pay attention to every detail on the screen in order to achieve the goals of the game.

- **Increases Motivation to Complete Tasks**

Many apps and computer activities are created to encourage children to complete a level in order to unlock the next level. These learning games may help create a foundation for children to keep on trying and to overcome challenges even outside the screen setting.

- **Develops Problem solving skills**

younger children are more interested in the short-term goals of games, which are essential in problem solving. When playing a game, they often wonder which step comes next, or what the effects may be should they present a particular action in the game. This is helpful for their learning, especially in Math and Logical Reasoning.

(B) Negative impact:

- **Child/parent relationship at stake**

A parent's touch, voice, and play can enable an infant to develop an emotional bonding up to 2 years of age. But, if toddlers spend a lot of time with tablets or smart phones, their neural pathways change to affect concentration, emotional attachment, and self-esteem

- **Addiction issue**

Smart phones and tablets can take a kid anywhere with just a click. It offers infinite possibilities for doing something new every time, and this characteristic of handheld devices can cause addiction in kids. Usage of such devices is responsible for the lack of moderation, impulse control, and self-discipline, which are main traits of an addictive personality.

- **Risk of frequent violent demonstration**

The outburst of tantrums is the most common symptom of addicts at any age. If kids are addicted to smartphones or tablets, they will throw a fit if you take these devices away from them. But then, every time you

cannot give what they are obsessed with just for the sake of temporary relief. Addiction of smart phones and tablets can severely damage internal self-regulation mechanism of the young ones.

- **Sleep deprivation**

It is the most obvious outcome of playing with a smartphone or a tablet or reading on an e-reader. Sleep deprivation can lead the little ones to stress and depression characterized by low grades in school. The light emitted from the screen neutralizes melatonin, a hormone responsible for sleep, and brings changes in body's sleep-wake cycle.

- **Slow reflexes**

Technology cannot replace face-to-face communication. If kids are over-indulged in texting and messaging online, they may show slow reflexes on in person communication. It is also observed that kids who remain busy in playing games on various smart devices have a slow motor and optical sensory development that eventually results in slow reflexes.

- **Brings social anxiety**

Social skills play a vital role in child's overall success. Nervousness and shyness are two major roadblocks for children to excel in any field of their choice. Though good at texting, children find it difficult to express their views in a face-to-face conversation that lead to social anxiety.

Technology has brought radical changes in our lives. But then, we will end up in having more disadvantages than advantages if our kids will overuse technology.

### **Literature review:**

Childhood today is increasingly technologically constructed with digital technologies such as computers, tablets, and smartphones now commonplace in many education systems and homes worldwide. While the ubiquity of these technologies has beneficial outcomes for youngsters' learning and socialization, it contributes also, among other detrimental outcomes, to the loss of minority languages and cultures. This loss is of concern given the increasing body of evidence that bilingualism and multilingualism can have lifelong cognitive, health, and economic benefits see, for example, Reference. Addictive behaviors supported by technologies, such as the internet and mobile phones, raise concerns, particularly in health services for early childhood. The bold claims of the American Academy of Pediatrics Committee on Education in 2001 included recommendations reducing the exposure of children under six years of age to screen media. These arose from concerns about overuse of digital devices, resulting in young children missing developmentally appropriate

activities and/or not getting enough exercise; in other words, typical activities in childhood are displaced by the adoption of digital media. Evidence that media can distract the attention of young children increased since those recommendations were published. However, directives to simply reduce time spent with digital devices are unhelpful and impractical in a world in which digital devices have become ubiquitous, and when a range of devices with apps and digital environments now marketed include some supporting developmentally appropriate activities that were adopted by early childhood educators and other experts in the field. In addition to the concerns about the exposure of young children to digital media, concerns about the influence of digital media on the behavior of family members emerged over the last decade. Given the complexity of effective parent and sibling interaction with young children, it is possible that increasing the use of mobile phones and other devices can adversely impact child development, particularly in families suffering from some form of media addiction.

Hsin, Li, and Tsai's comprehensive review of studies on information and communications technology (ICT) use in ECE found positive associations between children's language and literacy development and their use of digital tools and toys, although the learning outcomes generally depended on how the children used the technology. Chaudron's Europe-wide study investigating the digital technology behaviors of children (0–8 years) showed children typically using digital devices on their own, with parental management restricted to limiting length and frequency of use. Parents had little knowledge of what their children were actually doing in the digital world, however. Aubrey and Dahl found ECE educators likewise lacked detailed knowledge of children's digital experiences, and that parents rarely shared information with educators about how their children were using digital technologies at home. Marklind and Dunkels examined the introduction of tablets by early childhood teachers in Sweden, sometimes in the face of opposition from colleagues or parents, to develop children's literacy and school-oriented language development, which is especially relevant for multilingual children.

Kildare and Middlemiss's comprehensive literature review identified that there was a range of both parenting benefits and complications with the integration of mobile devices in their day-to-day lives, suggesting that the impact on any particular child was wide-ranging and complex. The common themes that emerged included "parent's level of absorption with their mobile devices, child safety in the presence of parents' mobile distractions and parents conflicted attitudes regarding device use, and decreased parental responsiveness and sensitivity towards children while distracted.". Perhaps most interestingly, they note that children's screen time increases with parents' screen time.

Experts point out that many children are growing up in a media-saturated environment and that in many parts of the world we are approaching universal access to media technology. Children can find digital media devices at home, school and even at nursery.

One first step is to be aware of what digital platforms children are using and how they are engaging with these. This will vary significantly according to age, gender and socioeconomic status. However the clear tendency is a trending increase in their use and in overall time spent by children using digital devices.

Some researchers have argued that the impact of digital technology on children might not necessarily be linear, in so far as more use does not always lead to worse outcomes. Przybylski and Weinstein (2017) suggest that the impact of the time spent on digital technology on children may, instead, be explained by a curvilinear relationship (Przybylski and Weinstein, 2017), which challenges the displacement hypothesis. In other words, not using digital technology at all might be expected to have a negative impact on children, while moderate levels of use could have a positive impact, and excessive use might have a negative impact. Problematically, there is no clear agreement on when the time spent on digital technology shifts from being moderate to excessive, as this is likely to be highly individual.

It has been well demonstrated that passive screen time even with products aimed at mental stimulation, in the case of small children, toddlers and babies does not in fact help children to learn and can even delay their development. Young children learn best through interaction.

Over the last 10 years, digital media has evolved rapidly. In 2011, 10% of children aged younger than 2 years used mobile devices, a number that grew to 38% in 2013. By 2015, 97% of low-income children aged younger than 4 years used these devices, with 75% owning their own device. This rapid increase in children's use of digital media is causing great concern for parents who question how best to guide their children in the use of this omnipresent technology.

### **Conclusion:**

As mentioned above, research studies already done in urban areas only all age group children in the states of US and UK. Also some studies is done in Indian context as well. But In India, there is further more need to study on the topic in case of children of working parents and how children's academics getting impacted with digital media usage because at the initial growth years child is making more use of digital media which in turn shaping their orientation towards future therefore potential human capital is also getting impacted.

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