

Role of Smart Phones in Developing Social Qualities in A Child: Perception of Parents

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Abstract:

Developing social qualities in a child is the basis of citizenship training for a future citizen. Due to availability of information in finger tips in a while the digital devices like smart phone, laptop, tablet etc. at present have become one of the dominant sources of information and entertainment at present. In this study the researchers emphasise upon the perception of parents on role of smartphones in social development of a child. The researchers have adopted descriptive survey method for the study. A sample of 100 parents was selected purposively for the study. The required data was collected by using a questionnaire as tool for the study. This study reveals that due to the overuse and dependency on the smart phones the children of today are not getting enough scope to develop their social qualities effectively and most of the children are developing a tendency to withdraw themselves from the social life and becoming more screen addicted leading to mental and physical health issues as opined by most of the respondents.

Key words: Smart phone, social qualities, perception

Introduction:

The modern digitalised world of education demands use of digital devices to make teaching learning process more effective. Quality education is the right of each and every child in the world. The teachers, parents, elder members of the society etc. always try to give their best for the all-round development of a child. Providing all the learning facilities to their children is considered by most of the parents as an important responsibility. As a result of Covid-19 pandemic, the dependency on digital devices has increased comparatively. Smart phones, laptops, tablets etc. have become an integral part in teaching learning process for many children. Achieving the aim of holistic development of a child requires attention on social development also. With the increase in the use of digital devices in recent years, their impact on the development of children has also increased. On one hand, it has become a boon for learning and cognitive growth whereas on the other hand it has become quite alarming for many parents to observe the excessive time spent by their children in the use of smartphones. One of the many concerns is the impact these devices have in influencing the social skills in children such as lack of empathy, compassion, and sensitivity to human relationships.

Review of related literature:

Guo (2017) stated on her CRI Project 2016 Report on 'The Impact of Technology on attachment and Social Skills' that new technologies have become an integral part of children's life. In addition to positive cognitive and social development, children are also exposed to harmful contents of social media that has increased violence and aggressive behaviour. Negative impacts also included decline of physical activity leading to increased health issues and obesity of the current generation. The report suggested the importance of monitoring children's use of digital devices so that it does not displace social activities such as social interactions with peers and family members. The research also mentioned that no evidence is found on the use of technology as educationally beneficial for infants and early childhood. Hence the emphasis for children of this category should be on developing healthy social attachment without exposure to digital devices.

Charu (2018) states in the study entitled 'A Study of Impact of Smart Phones on Children' that use of smart phone not only gives pleasure and reduces pain and stress, but it also leads to a failure to control the amount of time spent on the device, despite severe financial, physical, psychological, and social consequences. Media addicts, according to studies, are unable to handle real-life duties. People who spent more time on the Internet had less social support and were lonelier. Children who used a cellphone had more behavioural problems, such as anxiety, temperament, mental distraction, and indolence, and these problems were worsened if they began using a cellphone at a young age.

The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) (2019), in its report, 'Educating 21st Century Children: Emotional Well-being in the Digital Age' examines children as digital citizens. Many children have access to tablets and smart phones before they learn to walk and talk. They are spending more time online than ever before and at younger ages, despite the persistence of various digital inequalities. This has exposed children across OECD countries to different online risks and opportunities as well. Instilling digital skills at a young age is important in the sense that children can use devices effectively and safely. At the same time, there is a potential risk for young children in the use of apps which are not meant for their age range. Children who are vulnerable offline are also more likely to be vulnerable online. Moreover, behavioral outcomes such as delinquency and anti-social behaviors are found to be more in children who are extreme internet users. It is therefore important that policies should be focused on these vulnerable groups in terms of online protection, and fostering digital literacy and resilience.

According to Beurkens (2020), in the research article 'How does technology affect children's social development?', mentioned about the pros and cons of using digital devices by children. It can be used to bring likeminded individuals together and stay connected through social media platforms. It helps to develop interaction skills and gain confidence. Children can share experiences and receive encouragement and guidance through online support groups which may not be available in their local communities. However, the negative aspect is that, excessive use of digital devices takes away time that could be spent in more productive social interactions and in developing social qualities in a child. It hampers the development of social and relational skills resulting in socially disruptive behaviors. Increased use of these devices

can lead to conflicts, isolation, loneliness, and depression since it leads to reduced quality time with family, peers, and relatives.

Operto.et.al. (2020), in their study 'Digital Devices Use and Language Skills in Children between 8 and 36 Month', evaluated the relationship between uses of digital devices and development of language abilities in children and found that a longer period of exposure to digital devices was related to lower mimic-gestural and language skills in children regardless of age, gender, socio-economic status, content, and modality of use. The ability to understand and use language develops through the interaction of the child with people, objects, events, and other environmental factors. The study suggested that parents limit the use of digital devices by children and encourage the social interaction more to enhance learning of language and communication skills.

Objectives of the study:

To study the perception of parents on role of smartphones in developing social qualities in a child.

Research question:

What is the perception of the parents on role of smartphones in developing social qualities in a child?

Research methodology

The study follows descriptive survey method and the data collected were both qualitative and quantitative type. The data were collected by using a questionnaire comprising both open and close ended questions from 100 parents selected purposively. The parents who are well versed with the use of smart phone and whose wards are studying in class IV or V were selected purposively for the study. The reliability of the questionnaire was determined by using split-half method and the validity was determined by taking suggestions from the experts related to the field of study. The quantitative data were analyzed by using frequency and percentage and the qualitative data were analyzed by using content analysis technique.

Results and discussion:

Analysis of quantitative data:

Table no. 1: Responses on role of digital devices in developing social qualities in a child

Sl no.	Questions	Responses (N=100, f-frequency)					
		Yes		No		Neutral	
	Can the smart phones develop:	F	%	f	%	f	%
1	cooperation among children?	30	30	60	60	10	10
2	honesty among children?	22	22	68	68	10	10
3	patience among children?	20	20	75	75	5	5

4	sense of kind heartedness among children?	22	22	70	70	8	8
5	leadership qualities among children?	15	15	75	75	10	10
6	the skill of communication with others?	32	32	50	50	18	18
7	empathy among children?	24	24	45	45	31	31
8	the skill of interacting with others?	21	21	68	68	11	11
9	aloofness in children?	85	85	10	10	5	5

From the data shown in table no. 1 it is vivid that according to majority of the respondents the smart phones cannot develop the social qualities like cooperation, honesty, patience, sense of kind heartedness, leadership, skill of communication, empathy, skill of interaction amongst children. 85% respondents agreed that the smart phones can develop aloofness in children.

Analysis of qualitative data:

Pros and cons of smart phones with regard to social development of a child

Most of the parents opined that smart phones can help in getting some information in a short time but addiction to smart phone keep the children away from the social life in most of the times. The children like to keep them busy in watching some videos or searching some other information which can provide entertainment to them at any time of the day if the smart phone is available. As the children are not matured enough to understand the differences between good and bad therefore constant guidance of parents is the most important requisite at the use of digital devices by children. Most of the parents also mentioned that due to the overuse and dependency on the smart phones the children of today are not getting enough scope to develop their social qualities effectively and most of the children are developing a tendency to withdraw themselves from the social life and becoming more screen addicted leading to mental and physical health issues.

Conclusion and recommendation

Digital devices are an integral part of children's lives in the 21st century and children at younger ages spend more time in the digital environment than ever before (OECD, 2019). The brighter side of technology is the easy access to information and connectivity with family and friends. Children learn the digital skills from early access to technology that will entail their success in school and as adults later in life. However, the darker side of technology is the excessive time spent by children in the use of smartphones. The consequences of overuse of technology have led to various developmental and behavioral problems such as lack of attention and interaction, aggressive behaviors, obesity, physical inactivity, insomnia, etc. to name a few. Social skills in children such as empathy, compassion and sensitivity to human relationships have declined. For a holistic development of the child, equal attention should be focussed on social development as with other cognitive developments. Children should be

monitored on balancing digital opportunities and risks, at the same time ensuring knowledge and skills to participate in digital realms.

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