

PROBLEMS ARISING FROM CHILDREN'S USE OF DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES AND SOLUTION SUGGESTIONS

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ABSTRACT

In recent years, children's socialization and games with peers in neighborhoods and parks have become virtual games in which they spend their free time in front of the computer. Today, many digital games have emerged with the effect of technological developments. Playing digital games and using social media for long hours causes many social, physical and psychological conditions. Excessive use paves the way for many diseases and mental health problems. Especially in recent years, applications to clinics have increased due to the problems created by digital games. When the literature is examined, there are limited studies on children's digital gaming tendencies. The aim of this study; To raise awareness that children will experience physical and psychological problems due to excessive and aimless use of technology and to draw attention to the issue by making a short compilation on the subject.

Keywords: technology use, virtual game, psychological problems, technology addiction

Introduction

When it comes to the unconscious use or abuse of technology, the first thing that comes to mind is the uncontrolled, unlimited and purposeless use of technology (Dinç, 2015). This type of use is a type of use that affects the life of the person in a way that disrupts daily life and responsibilities, and also includes many situations such as unnecessary long-term use, exposure of children to inappropriate content, and negative effects on physical, social, psychological and mental development (Küçükvardar & Tİngöy, 2018).

These problems appear in the form of negative effects on physical development and psychological (spiritual) and sociological problems. In particular, disruption of sleep patterns is one of the most common problems. Children and adolescents sleep less in order to watch more television, access the internet more, play more digital games, or message with friends (Bağcıçetin, 2023; Erden & Bulut, 2023). It has been observed that children's aggression level and impulsive behaviors increase when sleep patterns are disrupted and the needed 6-8 hours of sleep are not obtained (Choi, Son, Park et al. 2009). On the other hand, it is known that children who have attention deficit problems and thus whose learning process is negatively affected are exposed to excessive and unconscious use of technology. However, the problems caused by the unconscious use of technology are not limited to these. Scientific studies have shown that children who use unconscious technology have significant nutritional problems; It has been shown that sugary foods and "fast food" consumption are too much in order to save time in people who are addicted to technology (Yam & İlhan, 2020). Although this situation causes an unbalanced and unhealthy diet and excessive weight gain of the person, it has shown that impulsive behaviors increase due to the fact that the energy taken into the body more than needed is not excreted through physical activities (Muslu & Gökçay, 2019). Thus, children and young people who are pushed to a sedentary life suffer both physically, mentally and psychologically (Park, Kim, & Cho, 2008). The main thing is that the individual knows himself in line with his interests, talents and abilities, is aware of the pros and cons, develops his deficiencies and is at peace with himself. However, the unconscious use of technology stands as an obstacle in front of all these factors that are very important for the individual and has the power to affect their entire lives. The equivalent of this situation in the cause and effect cycle can be described as follows: With the aimless and unlimited use of technology, the individual will not be able to ask himself the questions necessary for his psychological development or will not have the opportunity to ask himself, and he will not be able to use the time, which is his most valuable asset and cannot be returned, as well as missing the opportunity to invest in himself in a positive way. Since the person uses technology unconsciously, it can become very difficult for him to manage his emotions, strengthen his will and have a say in himself, focus on a goal and pursue it. Due to all these negative feedbacks, the need for regular and in-depth relationships necessary for social development cannot be met in the abuse of technology, and this situation negatively affects social development and causes communication problems (Çeliker & Aşiroğlu, 2020).

A number of attitudes and behaviors are needed for mental development to be healthy. These are: turning to accurate and useful sources of information, reading, seeing, thinking, using information channels correctly, keeping the mind clean. The use of technology causes the person to fill their mental capacity with unnecessary information in a way that wastes it, and if the information cannot find a place in that capacity, if false and harmful information negatively affects the quality of life of the person, or if the mind is filled with entertainment images that are watched and forgotten, there is abuse of technology (Batman, Güngör & Korkman, 2023; Muslu & Gökçay, 2019; Rock, 2023; Brother, 2020).

Concepts (Addiction, Behavioral Addiction, Technology Addiction)

Today, every person uses technology in every aspect of their lives. In addition to being an advantage to make life easier, the use of technology also brings with it many problems caused by addiction (Andreassen, Pallesen & Griffiths, 2016). Dependency; It is a psychiatric disorder that causes undesirable behaviors in the individual when the effect of the factor that is continuous, repeated, increases in dose and harms the social and personal world of the individual, disrupts the functions of the individual (Yalçın Irmak & Erdoğan, 2016). With the spread of technology, technology addiction, which is a behavioral addiction, has also entered the literature. Game, internet, social media, smartphone addiction can be counted among technology addictions (Doğan, 2013).

This study was conducted to understand the effects of children's exposure to digital technologies on their cognitive, social, and emotional development, and to help make informed decisions about how to use these technologies. Raising awareness about technology use and addiction in children is becoming increasingly important for parents and educators. When the literature was examined, a limited number of studies were reached in which children's attitudes and behaviors towards digital technologies were examined. It is thought that this study will make an important contribution to the literature.

Method

This study was investigated by descriptive compilation (scanning) method, which is one of the qualitative research methods. The data collected using the content analysis technique, which is one of the qualitative research techniques, were analyzed and some inferences were made (Çelebi, 2023). In order to reach the studies related to the field in the world, Turkey and the TRNC, they are in the form of ERIC, TÜBİTAK, ULAKBİM and Google academic, respectively. In addition to these researches, university libraries were visited and the books and theses found there were researched.

Results and Interpretation

In this part of the research, findings and comments are included

Table 1: Effects of Using Digital Technologies in Children

Positive Effects	Use of Technology in terms of education:	When used correctly and limitedly, it is beneficial for access to educational materials and learning processes.
	Creativity and Problem Solving	Apps and games can help children develop their creativity and increase their problem-solving skills.
Negative Effects	Physical Health:	Prolonged exposure to screens can lead to eye strain, sleep disturbances, and obesity.
	Psychological Health:	Addiction can cause psychological problems such as depression, anxiety, and low self-esteem.
	Academic Performance:	Excessive use of technology can make it difficult to focus on lessons and reduce academic achievement.

When the table is examined, it is seen that digital technologies have a great contribution to the education of children. Educational apps, interactive learning materials, and online lessons make it easier for children to access information and make the learning process more enjoyable. Especially during the pandemic period, thanks to distance education platforms, children did not fall behind in their education and were able to follow their lessons online.

Digital technologies have both positive and negative effects on children. In addition to advantages such as educational benefits, access to information, social connections and the encouragement of creativity, disadvantages such as health problems, social isolation, security risks, decreased academic performance and distraction should not be ignored.

Table 2: Ways to Protect Children from the Harms of Digital Technologies

Prevention and Intervention Methods	Parental Control & Guidance	It is important to set certain deadlines for the use of technology and to follow these limits.
	Modeling	Parents should also limit their own use of technology by being good role models for their children.
Education and Awareness-Raising:	Information	To inform children about both the benefits and harms of technology use and to teach them to use it consciously.
	Alternative Activities	Engaging children with alternative activities such as physical activities, reading, art and sports.
Professional Support:	Expert Assistance	If the symptoms of addiction are severe, it may be necessary to seek professional help from a psychologist or pedagogue.

In the table, information that can help children use digital technologies in a safe and healthy way is presented. To prevent children from becoming addicted to digital technologies, physical activities should be encouraged. Outdoor activities and sports activities protect children's physical health while also allowing them to get away from the digital world. Developing hobbies and interests also offers alternatives for children to spend time outside of digital technologies.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Children and their families need to be aware of the use of technology. For this reason, school counselors should organize seminars for students and families on technology addiction in schools. It is necessary to carry out studies to improve the social skills of children. Families should make time to spend time together. The use of technology in children provides educational and developmental benefits when managed correctly. However, excessive and uncontrolled use leads to addiction and causes serious physical, psychological and social problems. Therefore, it is of great importance for parents and educators to be conscious and attentive, to guide children.

Research shows that long-term technology use can negatively affect children's cognitive and social development. Excessive screen time, especially for young children, leads to a decrease in language development and attention span.

High screen time in early childhood can lead to a decline in children's problem-solving abilities and academic achievement.

Excessive screen use can increase the risk of obesity in children. Lack of movement and unhealthy snack consumption trigger this situation.

Staring at a screen for long periods of time can lead to eye strain, headaches, and sleep disturbances. Blue light exposure reduces sleep quality by suppressing melatonin production.

Long-term screen use leads to a decrease in children's social skills, distraction, and even psychological problems such as depression and anxiety.

Studies have shown that the use of social media has negative effects on self-esteem and self-perception among young people. It is seen that these negative effects mostly affect themselves and their immediate environment.

Correct and balanced use of technology can have positive effects on education. Educational games and apps can support children's learning processes and provide them with a variety of skills. Parental guidance and supervision and the use of technology help children become responsible and conscious individuals. Because every family's needs may be different, these recommendations can be tailored to your own lifestyle and the needs of your children.

Having regular conversations with children about the use of digital technology makes it easier for them to share the problems they face. It is important to actively observe what children are doing online, what sites they are visiting, and who they are communicating with in order to detect potential dangers early. Parents should demonstrate positive digital behaviors to show their children how to use digital technologies correctly and safely. Limiting screen time and choosing appropriate content is a good example for children. It's also helpful to increase the number of quality time spent without technology by planning family activities. Therefore, parents and educators should provide guidance and take necessary precautions to ensure that children use digital technologies in a balanced and conscious manner. This will ensure that children make the most of the opportunities offered by the digital world while also being protected from potential harm.

Developing digital literacy skills enables children to use the internet and technology more safely and effectively. This means that in the daily routines of the same children, a balance must be maintained between the use of technology and other activities.

Parents should keep a close eye on their children's use of technology and provide guidance.

Preferring educational and age-appropriate content helps children use technology more efficiently. Active participation in children's use of technology should be encouraged. This will allow children to not only become consumers, but also to be creative and productive.

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