

## **Persistent Use of Gadgets and Internet in Lockdown Endangers Childhood**

by

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### **Abstract**

This report deals with the frequent interaction of kids and teenagers with their electronic gadgets which have been causing severe and distressing effects. In light of the current situation, the study revealed all the mental and physical problems which had contributed to deteriorating the lifestyle of the kids and teenagers through excessive use of social media in Lockdown. This also threatens the future of Pakistan as the excessive use of social media tarnishes the skills and mentality of the youth as well as their routine, and the youth of any country are the most essential part as they are the ones who have to run the country in the near future and no country could prosper with unskilled and poorly trained and unorganized set of people. The study critically analyzed the major reasons which have contributed to a lack of productivity and the time is spent on social media. It can be concluded that teenagers spend daily on social media at an average of 7-8 hrs. The overall purpose of the study was to let people aware of the mishap which had been created through this unexpected situation in the country and what consequences it would have to deal in the near future. This study analyzes secondary data such as journals, reports, newspapers, relevant national and international research, or news article. It is recommended that parents should know the activities of their kids and have to be vigilant and attentive in encouraging children to maintain their routine. Social media had also contributed to promoting vulgarity and if it continues it won't be long when modesty gets eradicated and vulgarity becomes common.

**Keywords:** Lockdown, Vulnerable to Social Media, COVID-19, Mental and Physical Health, Pakistan.

### **Introduction:**

“I think our dependence on social media for better or for worse has increased tenfold since COVID-19,” said Kimberley Lee, vice President of Resource Developing and Branding at the mental health association in Springfield. With the beginning of 2020, humanity met with its most dreadful fate. It was not long that this epidemic was declared a pandemic by the WHO. In order to prevent the further influence of COVID-19, measures were taken by the government of Pakistan, and the lockdown was declared. People were asked to self- quarantine themselves to prevent it from spreading.it aimed to prevent further loss of lives through the spreading of this pandemic.

The youth of this generation, especially the younger kids became addicted to social media because of boredom, and accessing social media at a younger age means getting vulnerable to all the “Not - So-Kids” Sites.

Children are now more involved in online games, which may be fun and great time killers. But, at the other side of the coin, it makes them rage and rage so hard that it breeds anger in their young, learning, and yet developing minds which makes them aggressive, disrespectful, and furious at all times. It also lessens sympathy and empathy and sensitivity for others from their hearts.

“Scientists have investigated the use of violent video games for more than two decades but to date, there is very limited research addressing whether violent video games cause people to commit acts of criminal violence,” said task force chair Mark Appelbaum in a statement. (Alexandra Sifferlin August 2015). Moreover, as technology advances people usually prefer mobile phones or tablets to computers themselves because it can be carried. However, it creates Hazardous and fatal health diseases. And, in this quarantine, being more attached to the electronic gadgets makes them more prone to diseases for example as the child looks directly on those small screens, that can here severe effects on eyes and can also lead to permanent blindness. Furthermore, as peoples usually either, lean, or lay is unusual positions, it damages their spine, which further weakens their whole body, as well as their reflexes. It can also cause fatigue in the body.

Kids get psychologically ill, depressed, or stress over the virtual world which also leads to physical illness. Such as Laziness, obesity. It also lowers their confidence, communication skills, and make them less-interactive, thus becoming anti-social or introverts. Researchers say that, that the kids get so depressed that they even commit suicide or at least attempt them one. They also isolate themselves and creates FOMO (Fear OF Missing Out). In this situation, as the kids watch the luxury of other people on social media, they get prone to inferiority complex and start thinking that others are living a very luxurious life or as if they are lacking behind or they are missing something from their lives. Harris Ali (2020) said that “*Rumors are a second form of misinformation*”. The rumors which spread through social media breeds fear in the hearts of the youth which can have devastating effects on the Mental health of the youth, which prevents them from interacting socially and they prefer the use of technology instead.

In addition, those kids who tend to sacrifice their sleep for social media, or other virtual entertainment make them insomnia and lessens their hunger. Now as the food doesn't enter the body, the body doesn't develop well, which in turn makes them deficient in nutrients and thus, getting weak which also makes them less productive. Children have also become dependent on these gadgets and are unable to perform effectively without them.

Dejectedly, Pakistan has been declared as one of the most ranked countries in watching porn (Desk, 2015), and it is very disappointing as the majority of Pakistani are youth and kids, because of quarantine it provides more opportunities to kids to get access to a thing, which they shouldn't be watching. And, after some time, this becomes an addiction, and as they start investing more time in them, this results in lack of productivity. It can be understood through this situation that for example, a kid spends 8 hours watching this more 8 hours on sleep and 4 hours on the rest household chores, he only has 4 hours left to do something productive, whereas avoiding watching them and doing something productive would ultimately increase productivity (drug, 2019), further it also manipulates the minds of the kids and teenagers which in turn leads to the cases such as rapes, adultery, and fornication.

Lastly, watching porn releases two of four happy chemicals (dopamine and serotonin). These chemicals are also released when we exercise. That's why kids or teenagers involved with these sites do not exercise as the chemical is already released. Similarly, if the guy who works out daily would tend to avoid porn (Drug, 2019). And as the rate of porn-watchers, is increasing, the kids or the teens set up expectations regarding sex in their young minds which in turn leads to violent, lustful acts, also makes them feel frustrated and is one of the major reasons which breed anger in them and force them to commit crimes.

### **Signs of Technology Addictions:**

In the beginning, parents are usually “too-engaged” with the other stuff that they are unable to give proper time to the toddler. So, they turn toward gadgets to engage their child in something, while they are not around. Kids start to get the hang of their gadget and their mind itself develops in favor of using technology. In this lockdown, when passing time is itself a challenge, the craving towards technology rapidly increased. Thus, many people are converting to “technology-addicts”

### **Psychological Signs:**

Technology on kids has a serious impact on Child's brains. The most prominent among all is that the kid would prefer “loneliness” and “His gadget” over people or friends. He would lack in public speaking skills, confidence, and anxiety disorder while facing people. Compare to other kids, they would show reluctance towards physical activities. He would face psychotic rage over small matters, and he would be prone to negativity. And lastly, he would be furious and rude with his kith and kin at all times, with no specific reason.

### **Physical Signs:**

Where psychological effects are taking over kids' brains, it is also creating hazardous health problems. The most prominent effect is that the kid would be lazy and compare to other children who would be weak and suffer malnutrition. The main reason for this condition is that they get so engaged in the virtual world that they are ready to sacrifice their basic necessities, (i.e. sleep and food). This condition is known as insomnia. Kids lack the proper development of body and it is quite natural that they would be prone to some sort of eye's, head's, bone's, joint's or back's disease or they would simply experience weakness.

### **Objectives of the study:**

The study is based on the following objectives:

- i. To study how technology engages kids?
- ii. What role has lockdown played in making more kids into technology addicts.?
- iii. How it leads to violence and anti-social behavior?
- iv. After lockdown, how kids would behave going back to their normal life?
- v. How would parents deal with them?
- vi. What measures should be taken to prevent technology's addiction?

## **Literature Review:**

In this research, previous researches have been taken into notice. There is no doubt that the dependency on electronic gadgets has been increasing from the past decade. And, this lockdown had added the spice to the dish. Not only toddlers, but even adults are vulnerable to technology in this lockdown as an alternative to boredom. According to a study, there were 76.38 million internet users in Pakistan in January 2020. It has increased by 11 million (17%) from 2019-2020.

It is an alarming situation because if the child from its childhood is being exposed to technology because of either getting over boredom, or to look after kids from creating mishaps, or any reason, it may temporarily solve the problems for the tightly-scheduled parents in looking after their kids, but it also creates permanent damages to the brain which affects mental health. And, your mental health is co-linked with your physical health, which in turn damages the child as a whole. As you step in the world of fantasies and virtual life, there is no way back. And, kids who are easy to fall for, are the most vulnerable. With time, it becomes a habit, and this habit works as a “slow poison” which the kid may think to be entertaining but would actually limit his thinking capacity up to the things which he watches on a daily basis. And would also “develop” your brain in the “wrong manner”.

Most people have this confusion that every “brain development” is good for health or learning. But, it’s not the case. Watching “junk” or the wrong information on a daily basis also develops your brain in the wrong manner which instead proves to be harmful than innocuous. “The illiterate of the 21<sup>st</sup> century will not be those who cannot read and write, but those who cannot learn, unlearn and relearn”. (M., 2014)

Similarly, porn-watchers and hyperactive gamers who are addicted to them are bound to make lustful and violent acts as their brain has developed a “wrong lobe”, which makes them furious when they do not get what they desire.

## **Methodology:**

This is an exploratory research design and the secondary data has been collected from research articles, discussion with family and friends. In the explanatory research, the researcher prefers using his assumptions and judgment in obtaining information and with the basis of the critically analyzed secondary data, it then comes to a conclusion.

## **Conclusion:**

Conclusively, there is no doubt that children have been using social media all along but imposing lockdown gave more opportunities to kids to get involved in social media which had increased the number of social media addicts and assist these gadgets to tighten their hold on the kids and teenagers which led to extremely devastating effects. Moreover, the little physical activity they had, had also been relinquished because of the current scenario. And, it won’t be wrong to say that the current generation would catch rust till the lifting of the lockdown, and some may even forget or waste the skill they had learned or the talent they had!

## **Recommendations:**

By taking the current scenario into notice, it is highly recommended that the parents keep a watchful and vigilant eye on their children and their activities. Furthermore, Parents may

encourage their kids for spending quality time with their family, and also try indulging them with different other chores or let them learn new skills online, which would be a beneficial use of these gadgets, and to keep their skills into practice so that, they may not catch the rust. Parents should ensure children's devices have the newest software updates and antivirus programs; produce untie dialogues with kids on how and with whom they are communicating online; perform with children to found policy for how, when, and someplace the internet container be used; be alert to cryptogram of distress in kids that may emerge in link with their online activity, and be frequent with drill locality policies and limited coverage mechanisms and give edit to facts of pillar helplines and hotline handy.

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