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Health ¹ Effects of Screen Time on Children

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Ethical Inquiry

How Ethical Theories Apply to this Issue

Excessive screen time has been frequently addressed in recent decades, particularly concerning children and the youth. As a result, parents are encouraged to restrict their children's digital devices such as smartphones, tablets, and laptops. In addition, there are various applications available to help parents monitor and manage their children's screen time (Amer, 2019). This aspect conforms with the deontological class of ethical theories that applies to this issue. Therefore, this means that parents ought to follow their obligations to their children in terms of regulating screen time since upholding their duties is considered ethically accurate.

On the contrary, fears of addiction, melancholy, and other physical issues are among the justifications against spending too much time in front of different displays. Still, there is a growing focus on how excessive screen time and continual connectivity impair social and cognitive capacities. In addition, mandatory use of internet technology is thought to make people forgetful, easily distracted, and uninterested in what is going on around them in the real world. The second disagreement stems from the belief that individuals, particularly children, and teenagers, cannot regulate their impulsive conduct regarding digital media. In the media discourse, this inability of youngsters to resist their cellphones has been characterized as a contemporary moral panic, even though it may have harmful consequences, hence why parents ought to regulate children's screen time.

Similarly, the utilitarian ethical theory does apply to this issue since parents should predict the outcome of excessive screen time, which is addiction. When new media technology is

launched, and consumers exhibit undesirable behaviors such as apathy or violence, moral panics are common. However, as new media platforms become more prevalent, complaints about their use, rather than specific content, are becoming more prevalent. According to Tang et al. (2018), screen time denotes a homogeneity of media activities that ignores various practices or styles of interaction in favor of the quantity of time spent online. Indeed, short-term, quantitative studies that do not examine children's larger life circumstances dominate the data mentioned in publications concerning screen usage.

Furthermore, they tend to focus on the hazards of digital media activities instead of the potential, as in earlier moral panics. Additionally, more qualitative research on children and media usage has addressed this disparity by stressing the differences between different media forms and uses and how diverse socioeconomic and cultural factors influence how parents react to screen time advice. Therefore, in this case, parents have an obligation to make choices that yield the most benefits to their children and themselves, which is considered ethically correct.

This concern is particularly important in the current debates around children's usage of digital technology. Young people's major way of playing, communicating, receiving, creating, sharing, and expressing themselves is through digital media; thus, the outcomes should be beneficial. Young people utilize the internet to explore their identities, get health information and resources, learn regarding their rights, report exploitation or infractions, express their views, and interact culturally and politically with government agencies and their environment. The technology has advanced into a strong tool for youngsters to overcome prejudice and exclusion, engage in meaningful judgment processes, and assert their rights in their interests. A rights-based methodology to kid's use of digital technology is important because of the reasons that it emphasizes the importance of integrating viewpoints meaning all children rights must be

deliberated together, which means that the right to be protected from damage cannot trump the right to contribution, confidentiality, play, learning, freedom of data, or manifestation.

Similarly, it highlights the need to consult children when making decisions about their usage of digital expertise. According to Article 12 of the UNCRC, youngsters have the right to be overheard in situations that affect them. Furthermore, their opinions must be considered appropriately based on age and maturity. Lastly, it recognizes the responsibility to guarantee that children's welfares are a major priority in every activity involving the child: UNCRC calls on all parties to guarantee that youngsters' best interests be at the forefront of these discussions. Guidance and policy must take into account the perspectives and experiences of children to accomplish this. Therefore, this policy outlines how the ethical theory based on rights applies to the issue.

Level 2 Composed Question

What conclusions can be drawn from the ethical theories that apply to this issue?

Cultural Inquiry

Cultural Values and/or Norms Influencing the Health Effects of Screen Time on Children

Youngsters' cultural experiences aid them in understanding who and what they are. Their physical, emotional, social, and language development are subjective to the cultural aspects they are exposed to from conception, like dietary traditions and principles, creative manifestation, dialect, faith, and in this case, screen time. Learning can be hampered when children's self-identity clashes with the social context owing to differences in culture. On the other hand, culturally appropriate educators assist children of all cultural backgrounds in learning by

demonstrating an awareness and appreciation of various cultures and contributing to each child's unique value (Browne et al., 2019). However, this may not always be the case. For example, in a setting where children are introduced to electronic devices at an early age, they develop the habit of spending most of their time on screens and becoming addicted. Similarly, households that encourage lengthy screen time, considering the practices as the households' norm, risk exposing their children to health complications associated with prolonged screen time because early infancy is a critical phase of emotional and mental development, and what children see and experience during this time may have a significant impact on their future.

Moreover, some cultural values believe that it is right to provide everything that a child asks for, which also influences this issue. Therefore, when parents encourage viewing movies, television shows, electronic games, and other internet entertainment, all of these activities impact children's development. According to research published by the American Psychological Association (APA), children's exposure to media violence can lead to aggressive behavior and attitude; access to advertisements for non-nutritious diet can lead to child obesity, and too much screen time can lead to early childhood educators' brain development being stunted. In addition, Children begin to learn from television programs around the age of 2.5, according to research by the Cognitive Impacts of Digital Media Workgroup. Children, however, tend to watch more entertainment programs after the age of six, which might negatively impact their conduct (Guerrero et al., 2019).

Furthermore, while computer games might aid in developing visual processing abilities in youngsters, they also could lead to violent behavior. The impacts on cognitive abilities and behavior are frequently game-specific. Nonetheless, all these activities have been socially

accepted by society; therefore, there is minimal effort to control them, meaning the issue continues to manifest.

The link to cultural background is obvious since various societies have varied views about television and other forms of entertainment media and varying financial means to acquire such media. For example, instead of viewing instructional television after school, a kid from a collectivist society could be encouraged to help newborn or elderly members of the family. Culture has an indirect impact on these children's capacity to profit from such encounters. Furthermore, children whose culture prohibits instructional television and other media may be mocked by their school peers for losing out on popular hobbies that other children participate in. The depiction and perpetuation of cultural stereotypes is another way that popular culture media can impact child development. A film could, for example, portray women or minorities in a bad way or not at all. Likewise, a comedy could exclusively have white characters, with no characters of other races or ethnicities. Sanders et al. (2019) state that the lack of good role models in modern media and negative perceptions may harm children's self-esteem. As a result, media might have a detrimental cultural impact on childhood growth.

Level 2 Composed Question

What are the possible resolutions to the issue of cultural values/norms in combating this issue?

Conclusion

Numerous linked concerns come into play when looking at screen time usage for children and adults, as demonstrated by all of the sections in this paper. Based on the discussion above, the argument over screen time and the youthful brain has been characterized as a modern moral

panic. Parents have been seen to possess certain levels of ethical duties to perform. Furthermore, it is opposed that screen time regulation is founded on a neoliberal worldview that places the burden of managing the alleged hazards of excessive digital media usage on the individual. Children cannot make correct choices; hence the back lies with their parents. Similar to how general health has been personal accountability, ensuring good nutrition and frequent exercise, parents are required to control media-related distractions by encouraging brain training using a variety of exercises and technology because fast digital media that create a culture of responsiveness, from this viewpoint, may be regarded as a serious threat to civilization, not simply an annoyance. Thus the idea of delayed gratification is fundamental to both the educational system and everyday society. The entire system would crumble if the present digital environment favors instant gratification over patience and delayed benefits since the health effects of screen time on youngsters ought to be considered with the current trend (Madigan et al., 2020). Therefore, youngsters who are constantly distracted by digital gadgets and their parents who are too indulgent to assist them in overcoming their addiction are the conventional wrongdoers in this morality drama.

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