

## The **silent** THIEF

### Is Your Child Under A Digital Trap?

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Our is the age of memes where creative people can turn anything and everything into a joke. So, picture this - a family gathered around a dinner table yet immersed in playing a video game; a child glued to a phone screen with a dinosaur in the background named as 'Outdoor Play'; a toddler throwing a tantrum not for a toy but because the internet is down! While it may be okay to laugh at all these images, they are much more than just harmless jokes. A survey by the Pew Research Centre shows that almost 60% of children are exposed to phones before they turn five. Innumerable studies by psychologists and pediatricians repeat that children under the age of five should spend no more than one hour per day on screens. These statistics hint at the biggest problem of our times, that our children are growing up in a world where their best friends, and sometimes their only friend, are their smartphones.

#### Loss of innocence

Beyond these statistics, there is a far more subtle, and mostly unrecognised, theft happening right under our noses - of our children's innocence. Smartphones can be a

great tool for learning, but they are also full of myriad apps which have slowly but surely begun to replace almost all the traditional childhood experiences. Children today are no longer going out to play hide and seek, almost no one is riding bikes, and even gully cricket, once a trademark of all streets, has lost its sheen. Now, the maximum amount of exercise a child gets is by scrolling on social media, playing video games, or watching YouTube videos. Studies show that 89% of children between the ages of five and 11 watch YouTube videos regularly, as do 57% of the children who are two or younger. How many can truly claim to climb trees, chase after birds and bees, stumble over and scrape their knees? The virtual world has not only taken away the 'child' from childhood, but also along with it the innocent world of exploration, curiosity, and fascination.

#### Severe health hazard

Equally detrimental is the fact that the clutches of digital world is compromising children's emotional and mental development, threatening real-life friendships and good old family time. The American Psychological Association has conducted studies to show a link between smartphone use and increased anxiety, depression, and



Illustration: Nitya Stuti, AIS Vas 6, VIII B

body image issues in young adults who were exposed to smartphones from a young age. Research suggests that there's a deeper link between smartphone overuse and attention deficit, sleep disturbances, and difficulty in concentrating in children. The constant bombardment of information and the multi-tasking nature of smartphones are also hindering the cognitive development of children. The instant gratification through one small device has replaced real-world learning which is critical for a sound body and mind, resulting in childhood obesity and weakened immune systems. Who needs Vitamin D when you have unlimited Coco Melon or Paw Patrol, right?

#### The way out

Several factors have contributed to this digital epidemic among children. Often, parents are juggling work and household responsibility and end up using the smartphone as

a babysitter. If the child is not eating, put on a cartoon; toddler not going to sleep, play a music video. What else could be the reason if children as young as two years are dancing to hip-hop and acting like superheroes? Moreover, when almost every household in the cities has easy access to the internet, it's easier for children to be online constantly.

Howbeit, this isn't just about keeping fidgety fingers off Candy Crush anymore; it is about the very soul of the next generation. Reducing the use of smartphones is necessary to ensure better mental and physical health for children. It is important to remember that smartphones are mere tools, and their impact depends solely on their usage. We need to focus on teaching children to be mindful about using their gadgets and the potential risks of the ever-evolving digital world. It's time to bring back the magic and the mystery of childhood. 🇮🇳

**THE GT POLL**

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a) Yes  
b) No  
c) Can't say

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Unfold the chronicles of warmth and comfort, embracing the silent tales weaved into the fiber of the lovable and cosy blankets.  
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**Charm au chocolat**  
From the sacred Mayan elixir to the tempting global indulgence, tune in to explore the delectable and rich escapades of our beloved chocolate.  
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**POLL RESULT**  
for GT Edition July 22, 2024

**Do you think NCFSE's recommendation to conduct CBSE board exams twice a year, will provide the students an opportunity to retain better score?**

|     |     |           |
|-----|-----|-----------|
| Yes | No  | Can't say |
| 55% | 29% | 16%       |

Results as on July 27, 2024