

Sania Aiman, a middle school teacher at a renowned school in Dhaka further elaborated on the problems faced by the current generation, "The senior students are writing in distorted new-age text formats instead of using proper English or Bangla sentences. This sometimes make no sense at all in exams."

"Their language skills are no better. Many students tend to avoid writing or speaking in long sentences. The problems with smart gadgets are not just within the realms of language, many children are more prone to online bullying, which is harder to monitor compared to physical bullying, and that takes a serious mental toll," she said.

Aiman added a few other important points, "There's unsupervised watching of age-inappropriate content which definitely has a negative impact on mental and physical health of the young kids, often causing depression and other physical ailments such as headaches. The tendency to show off has also increased, where they are in a constant competition to stay one-step ahead of each other in respect of owning the latest tech gadgets."

Associate Professor, Dr. Helal Uddin Ahmed, Department of Child Adolescent & Family Psychiatry, National

Institute of Mental Health, Dhaka, choed the words of psychologist Tarana Anis on the effects of obsession over smart gadgets. According to the psychiatrist, every child suffering from an overdose in smart phone usage also suffers in numerous other ways, namely biological — where fine motor skills remained underdeveloped, vision became impaired, headaches and migraines increased and childhood obesity became common place; psychological — where the children suffered from agitation, depression, anxiety and restlessness; and social — where they had a hard time fraternising with other people in society.

"In most cases, the content of the Internet may not be age-appropriate, in turn causing the children to become aggressive and act in untoward ways — with an increase in bullying, fighting, cursing, etc. These children have a hard time disassociating between the real and virtual world," he said.

Dr. Ahmed also pointed out few other facts that an overdose of gadget use may cause children to become unsocial, so much so that they no longer want to associate with anyone new or even want to socialise with old friends; their language becomes distorted, including their writing structure, limited problem solving skills, and they become dangerously self-obsessed.

Much has been spoken about the difficulties, and solutions are necessary

to tackle the complicated psychological issue, and Dr. Ahmed had few pointers in this regard.

"Not everything is lost! Most of the time, just with a slight change in the environment, it is possible to reverse the negative effects of smart gadget obsession and it certainly begins with removing the device completely from the household or limiting the usage" said the doctor.

Other practical solutions provided by Dr. Ahmed, were a simple game of Ludo or Carrom, which helped significantly in increasing fine motor skills, and practicing high intensity physical games like football, running, cycling, and basketball to help build the body and nurture the mind, also serving in burning calories as an additional benefit.

To reverse the social menace, Dr. Ahmed advised parents to be involved in their children's lives and spend more time with them. Allowing their children to make new friends of their own age, because real friends help kids become socially intelligent and solve real life problems in a calm and mature way.

Reversing the detrimental effects of using gadgets, as suggested by Dr. Helal Uddin Ahmed, is a necessity.

Ananta Ahmed, a father of a three-year old now attending school, was faced with the problem of his son having difficulty in holding the pencil; instead of being able to grip on the lead body, he was swiping it and fidgeting with it. Sometimes, if forced, he would get

upset and throw away the pencil at people around him.

Based on suggestions from experts, Ananta removed all smart phones from the house and emphasised more on communication between parents and the child, and Tahiyar has been able to overcome all his previous difficulties.

The American Association of Pediatrics (AAP) discourages parents to use smart-gadgets below the age of two — and only limit it to an hour of co-watching for kindergarteners, where the parents take part in explaining to them the occurrences on screen. After that, a monitored and limited screen-time is suggested till the kids become adults.

Multitudes of research have proved that cognitive, social, psychological, and biological functions improve once human connections increase. Creative play is thus, a major necessity in every child's life. This helps them understand life around them and build on social norms and rules. On the other hand, with too much reliance on smart gadgets, a generation of golems is produced, lacking the ability to make genuine real-life connections.

Thus, we end by saying, it is only for robots to lack empathy, what we need are increased human connections to continue living as healthy and happy human beings.

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