

Warm congratulations to Dr. Arti Wanknis and Ms. Kuhoo Kulkarni on the publication featured in Hindustan Times on 19th December 2023 shedding light on their meticulous work in developing a tool to assess children's screen time exposure!!!

{ RESEARCH BY BHARATI VIDYAPEETH }

Tool developed to evaluate screen time exposure in kids

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PUNE: A team of doctors and researchers at Bharati Vidyapeeth's School of Audiology and Speech Language Pathology (SASLP) Pune has developed a tool to evaluate screen time usage and related factors in children. What's more, the indigenous tool has recently received a copyright from the Government of India (GOI), proving its effectiveness and reliability.

The tool not only suggests that screen time can be beneficial for the pragmatic development of children aged one to four years but also emphasises that following the recommended screen time exposure guidelines of the American Academy of Paediatrics (2016) is crucial for optimal results.

With this tool, parents can confidently monitor and regulate their children's screen time, ensuring their healthy growth and development.

The tool has been developed to obtain detailed information about the duration of screen

exposure and related characteristics of screen time usage after reviewing existing literature on screen time in children by the American Academy of Paediatrics (AAP), Indian Academy of Paediatricians (IAP) and the World Health Organisation (WHO).

Dr Aarti Wanknis, vice-principal, SASLP, said that there are guidelines issued by the WHO, AAP and IAP about screen time in children according to which the tool has been developed. The tool has questionnaires with details about screen time, period, age, type of screen, programme or content amongst others.

"We found that if children are exposed to screen time with quality programmes jointly with parents for a limited duration, it is beneficial for their pragmatic and language development. However, the discussion during viewing and post-viewing between the parents and children is important," she said.

Wanknis further said that it is not easy for parents to immediately stop their children from

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exposure to screen time and with the help of this tool, the content and time can be altered followed by discussion to benefit the children.

"The tool can be used for language and speech development in both normal children and those with learning disabilities. This can be used to prevent excessive viewing of screens by children," she said.

Dr Asmita Jagtap, executive director, Bharati Vidyapeeth Health Sciences, said that a complete withdrawal from the influence of screens seems impractical and even undesirable in today's technologically

driven world, and that navigating this new normal for children requires conscious effort. It is crucial to recognise its potential as a tool for learning, creativity, and connection; educational apps can spark curiosity and facilitate knowledge acquisition, while interactive platforms encourage creative expression and collaboration. However, the key lies in achieving a balanced approach," Jagtap said.

She further added that excessive screen time can negatively impact children's health in various ways. It is essential to set clear boundaries and guidelines, ensuring that screen time complements, rather than replaces, vital activities like physical play, social interaction, and unstructured exploration.

The tool in question was developed three years ago, and has been used for the assessment of over 300 children. During the study, the tool was used to evaluate the outcome of screen time modification in children (normal and those with learning disabilities) aged up to four years. Parents of 60

typically developing children (one to four years) also participated in the study. A semi-structured questionnaire was used to record parental responses related to screen time exposure. A 'checklist for assessment of pragmatics of pre-schoolers (Gejji-Deostalee & Wanknis, 2020)' was used to assess the pragmatic skills of children," said Kuhoo Kulkarni, audiologist and speech language pathologist at SASLP.

The tool contains a section to obtain information about the duration of exposure of the child to screen-based media devices. The characteristics of screen time exposure are the highlight of the tool, including information about the devices used by the child, parental involvement, and parent-child discussions during viewing. Also, information about the parental reasons for exposure to screens, their attitudes towards the impact of screen time on their children, and their knowledge about the recommendations regarding screen viewing patterns have been incorporated into the tool.