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**TEACHERS' PERSPECTIVES:
SHEDDING LIGHT ON PRESCHOOL TECH ADDICTION**

***Annotation.** In recent years, the increasing prevalence of technology in the lives of young children has raised concerns about its impact on early childhood development. This study explores preschool teachers' perspectives on tech addiction, focusing on its effects on children's behavior, social skills, and cognitive development. Through qualitative analysis of interviews with preschool educators, the study reveals that while technology offers educational benefits, excessive screen time can hinder social interaction, attention spans, and emotional regulation in young learners. The purpose of this research is to determine the solution suggestions for technology addiction problems encountered in preschool education according to the opinions of teachers working in preschools. 10 preschool teachers participated in the study. This research sheds light on the growing challenge of tech addiction in early childhood education and provides actionable recommendations for creating a balanced and developmentally appropriate approach to technology use in preschools.*

***Key words:** Technology addiction, Preschoolers, Preschool teachers, qualitative study, Turkish context*

***Анотація.** Останніми роками все більша поширеність технологій у житті маленьких дітей викликала занепокоєння щодо їх впливу на ранній розвиток дітей. У цьому дослідженні розглядаються точки зору вихователів*

дошкільних закладів щодо технічної залежності, зосереджуючись на її впливі на поведінку дітей, соціальні навички та когнітивний розвиток. Завдяки якісному аналізу інтерв'ю з вихователями дошкільних закладів дослідження показує, що хоча технології пропонують освітні переваги, надмірний час перед екраном може перешкоджати соціальній взаємодії, об'єму уваги та емоційної регуляції молодих учнів. Мета цього дослідження – визначити пропозиції щодо вирішення проблем технологічної залежності, що виникають у дошкільному навчальному закладі, згідно з думками педагогів, які працюють у дошкільних закладах. У дослідженні взяли участь 10 вихователів дошкільних закладів. Це дослідження проливає світло на зростаючу проблему залежності від технологій у дошкільній освіті та дає дієві рекомендації щодо створення збалансованого та відповідного розвитку підходу до використання технологій у дошкільних закладах.

Ключові слова: технологічна залежність, дошкільнята, вихователі дошкільних закладів, якісне дослідження, турецький контекст

Introduction. In today's rapidly evolving digital landscape, technology has become an integral part of children's lives, even from an early age. While digital tools can offer educational benefits, concerns are growing about the potential for tech addiction in preschoolers. Teachers, who closely observe children's interactions with technology in classroom settings, offer valuable insights into how excessive screen time may impact their development. This topic explores preschool teachers' perspectives on tech addiction, highlighting the effects of prolonged exposure to digital devices and its influence on children's social, emotional, and cognitive growth during their formative years. Understanding these insights is crucial to addressing the balance between technology use and healthy development in early childhood. With the development of technology, technology addiction has become widespread and many studies have been conducted in the last thirty years and the effects of technology addiction have been revealed more clearly and strikingly. The concept of addiction, defined as excessive addiction to an object or behavior, is usually

evaluated concerning the use of substances such as cigarettes, alcohol, and drugs. However, in recent years, it has been argued that some behaviors such as gambling, exercise, eating, and sleeping are also addictive. The same applies to technological devices and applications such as computers, the internet, online games, tablets, and mobile phones. Excessive use of these technologies can lead to technology addiction in individuals [1]. Technology is an inseparable part of education and if education is a communication network between teachers, students, and the environment in every aspect, then educational technology has an important role in defining the relationships between these network elements. In addition, it emphasizes that using superior technology alone is not enough and that it is important to benefit from technology in education at the necessary time and place [8]. During crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic, societies use technology more actively to reduce stress and anxiety and alleviate depression. While technology enables large groups of people to work from home, it has become the main tool for socialization in this process. While technology provides the entertainment needed, unconscious individuals are at risk of developing problematic usage patterns [3]. After the introductory information about social media, the main focus of the research is how preschool children interact with these media types in connection with the socialization process and what consequences it produces. The general outlines of personality and socialization develop between the ages of 0-6 [2]. The transformation of technology use into an indispensable activity for individuals also brings with it the problem of behavioral addiction. Technology addiction is described as a behavioral addiction that involves the interaction of people with machines [4]. In the most recent review, it was reported that children's use of technological devices for inappropriate periods, frequencies and in different postures causes health risks such as developmental problems, musculoskeletal system problems, physical inactivity, obesity and inadequate sleep quality [7]. Adults' intensive use of technological devices can sometimes make them lazier or more passive, while children can often become frustrated due to the games in video games [6]. It can be said that the rate of information communication technologies (ICT: television, smartphone, computer, tablet) usage by today's

children is increasing and especially with smartphones and touch screen technologies, young children have started to use ICT more widely than before. When the studies conducted were examined, no study was found in Turkey that would represent the country sample regarding the usage time of smart devices such as TVs, computers, tablets, and smartphones by preschool children [5]. Studies conducted show that today's children and young people spend more than 4-5 hours a day in front of mass communication tools such as television, video, computer, internet, cinema, radio, tape recorder, and video games [9].

Purpose of the Research. The purpose of this research is to determine the solution suggestions for technology addiction problems encountered in preschool education according to the opinions of teachers working in preschools, which are increasingly trending towards technology addiction in our country. In the research, the question of what is the exposure of children between the ages of 4-6 to technology in preschool age, the levels of technology addiction and related factors? Is addressed as the basic problem of the research.

Method. Research Model: This study will be prepared based on the opinions of preschool teachers and parents. The qualitative research method will be used in the study. The qualitative research method is preferred by researchers because it allows systematic examination of the meanings that emerge in line with the experiences and personal opinions of the people who are being researched or planned to be researched. The study is in the phenomenological design, which is one of the qualitative research types. Phenomenological design is a qualitative research method that aims to reveal the experiences, perceptions and meanings people attribute to a phenomenon that they are aware of but do not have an in-depth and detailed understanding of. Phenomenological research may not produce generalizable, definitive results. However, it helps to better understand the phenomenon in question and provides some contributions to the theory and practice of this phenomenon. In the phenomenological design, data sources are individuals or groups who experience the phenomenon on which the research is focused or who can reflect and express this phenomenon [10].

Study Group: The study group of the research consists of 1 primary school affiliated with the Ministry of National Education (MEB) located in Konya City Center and including a kindergarten class, and a Private Kindergarten located in Kütahya City Center and 10 preschool teachers in these schools in the 2020-2021 academic year.

The study group of the research was determined using the easily accessible case sampling method, which is one of the purposeful sampling methods used in qualitative research. In purposeful sampling, a sample determined for a specific purpose is studied. In this context, in determining the study group of the research, easily accessible case sampling, which is one of the purposeful sampling methods that allows the selection of volunteer and easily accessible preschool teachers who are considered suitable for the research, was used. In this research project, the target universe is all preschool children in Turkey, and since it would be very difficult to reach this universe, an accessible universe will be created and it was carried out by volunteer preschool teachers in Konya and Kütahya provinces. It was thought that the easily accessible sampling method was suitable for the purpose in terms of accessibility of the schools located in Konya and Kütahya city centers and the voluntary selection of participants.

Data Collection Tools: A semi-structured interview form was created by the researcher during the data collection phase. An unstructured interview form prepared by the researcher was used to obtain data for the study. In an unstructured interview, questions are open-ended, and in-depth data collection is possible. This type of interview is a powerful technique that helps obtain rich, valuable data.

10 questions suitable for the study were prepared for teachers. Thus, the questions to be asked to teachers were determined as follows.

QUESTIONS.

PERSONAL INFORMATION FORM

1. *Your gender:*

2. *Your age:*

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

• *Are there any abnormal situations that occur due to addiction in your students who you think are addicted to technology? If so, what are they?*

• *Does the educational status of the parents affect children's technology addiction? If so, how?*

• *Does socio-economic status affect technology addiction? If so, how?*

• *How does technology addiction affect the child's developmental stages?*

• *How do you prefer to use technology in your activities?*

• *Are you or your school conducting a study on technology addiction?*

• *According to your observations at school, what are the problems caused by technology addiction in students?*

• *According to your observations of your students in the classroom during the COVID-19 pandemic, to what level has their technology addiction reached? Which technological devices have they increased their interest in?*

FINDINGS. In this section, in line with the purpose of the research, the opinions of 1 primary school affiliated with the Ministry of National Education in Konya city center and 1 private kindergarten in Kütahya city center and 10 preschool teachers in these schools regarding the examination of technology addiction in preschool children aged 4-6 were examined through their answers to semi-structured questions in line with the 2020-2021 academic year. In line with this purpose, the findings obtained by analyzing the interview data are included.

Of the 10 preschool teachers who participated in the research, 3 were male and 7 were female.

70% of the teachers who participated in the research were 23-30 years old and 30% were 31-50 years old.

Are there any abnormal situations that occur due to addiction in your students who you think are addicted to technology? If so, what are they?

80% of the teachers said that there were abnormal situations. Technology addiction in children has had both physical and psychological effects. Examples of

these were a tendency towards violence, aggression, distraction and lack of sentence formation. 20% of the teachers said no.

S2: Lack of sentence formation, lack of attention, getting bored easily in the classroom.

S3: Of course there is. The child is constantly displaying aggressive behavior and not being able to complete the given tasks.

S5: His eyes have a disorder.

S6: No.

Does the education level of parents affect children's technology addiction?

If so, how does it affect them?

While 90% of teachers said that it affects most of them, a small group of 10% of teachers said that the education level of parents does not affect children's technology addiction.

- *S5: I don't think that the education level affects this.*

- *S8: It does. Because educated parents can understand the benefits and harms of technological devices and take precautions accordingly, parents with low education see technological devices as entertainment tools.*

Does socioeconomic status affect technology addiction? If it does, how does it affect it?

100% of teachers, regardless of age, stated that technology affects addiction.

S4: It affects it because, for example, since the family's financial situation is limited, only a telephone and television can be found at home and not everyone has a personal phone, but when the financial situation is high, personal technological devices are found at home, which brings with it technology addiction.

How does technology addiction affect children's developmental periods?

100% of teachers said it has negative effects. Teachers stated that it negatively affects children's social, emotional, cognitive and language development the most.

S4: It affects negatively. They may be cognitively behind their peers. They isolate themselves from the outside world socially. They have difficulty speaking and

expressing themselves in terms of language. Obesity is also seen due to inactivity because they are constantly in front of technological devices in terms of psychomotor.

S6: It causes negative results such as language speaking skills, social deficiencies, posture, sitting and eye disorders.

Do you or your school conduct any studies on technology addiction?

70% of teachers said they are conducting studies, while 30% of teachers said they are not.

S6: We provide education to our children on this subject with our guidance counselors and distribute brochures to parents.

S10: I have never conducted such a study before, it was not conducted in my school either.

How do you prefer to use technology in your activities?

40% of teachers said that they use music, videos, animations and sample activities. 20% said that they have to use it and use it for a limited time. Another 30% said that they prefer to use technology as a tool to convey information to children and help them learn at appropriate times. A small number, around 10%, stated that they use it in science activities.

S1: I usually use it in science activities.

S4: I prefer to use it as a supporting resource rather than at the center of the activity. For example, I use it in musical activities or to demonstrate concepts.

S5: I pay attention to it being under my control and in limited numbers.

S6: I use songs, educational videos, movies and interactive content.

According to your observations at school, what are the problems caused by technology addiction in students?

40% of teachers say they resort to violence and become aggressive, while 60% say they have attention deficit and communication problems with their friends.

S1: Children generally have attention deficits and constantly imitate the movements they see on social media.

S4: They can engage in aggressive behaviors. They can isolate themselves from their friends.

According to what level of technology addiction have you observed in your students in the classroom during the COVID-19 pandemic? Which technological devices have increased their interest?

Teachers said that their interest has increased by 100%. They said that they especially wanted to play with tablets and phones more and that their interest in them increased. They stated that their addiction level had reached an advanced level and that they learned to use the Zoom program without knowing how to read or write.

Conclusions. Preschool teachers play a critical role in identifying the early signs of tech addiction and its impact on young children. Their insights reveal the need for mindful technology use, emphasizing the importance of balancing digital exposure with hands-on learning and social interaction.

Addressing tech addiction in early childhood requires collaboration between educators and parents to ensure that technology is used in ways that enhance, rather than hinder, children's development. By promoting responsible digital habits, we can help children thrive in both the physical and digital worlds.

This study, which examined technology addiction in preschool children, attempted to determine what technology addiction in children is and to determine the effect of the family on its examination.

The findings of the study show that while parents stated that their children were not addicted to technology, they also stated that their children had a tablet since they were 4 years old and had unlimited time playing on the tablet and watching TV.

However, teachers stated that the same children were addicted to technology, exhibited aggressive behavior in class due to addiction, had attention deficit, did not fulfill the given tasks and had little communication. Most of the children preferred technology devices instead of playing with their toys. Because children easily have toys at a young age and also have technological devices. While technology addiction is so common in our country, schools do not carry out enough projects and studies. Considering all these results, we see that children are greatly affected by their families, but this effect is not as positive as families describe, but negative [3].

These recommendations aim to foster a well-rounded approach to technology use in early childhood, ensuring that young children develop healthy habits in an increasingly digital world.

1. *Promote Balanced Screen Time:* Teachers should collaborate with parents to establish clear, age-appropriate limits on screen time to ensure that digital engagement is balanced with physical play, social interaction, and creative activities.

2. *Incorporate Tech-Free Activities:* Schools and preschools should introduce more tech-free playtime, encouraging children to develop problem-solving, motor, and social skills through hands-on, experiential learning.

3. *Provide Digital Literacy for Teachers:* Offer training programs for teachers and parents on healthy technology use, focusing on recognizing early signs of tech overuse and providing strategies for managing screen time effectively.

4. *Emphasize Active Technology Use:* Encourage the use of educational apps or programs that engage children in active learning, rather than passive consumption, to foster cognitive development and critical thinking.

5. *Model Healthy Tech Behaviors:* Teachers and parents should model healthy digital behaviors by limiting their tech use around children and demonstrating the importance of face-to-face interactions and outdoor activities.

6. *Collaborate for Consistent Monitoring:* Schools should work with families to monitor the types of media content children are exposed to, ensuring that it is developmentally appropriate and contributes positively to their growth.

7. *Introduce Mindful Tech Usage:* Incorporate mindfulness activities in daily routines to help children become aware of their relationship with technology, promoting self-regulation and awareness of when to disconnect.

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