We need regulation to save kids from mobile device addiction

From online games to social media, we're exposing our children to a world of addiction at early stages of their lives.

Too Yik Ying

There is a concern that in a grade-school-aged country like Singapore, we have parents who are indulging in sending their children too early for mobile devices in an attempt to boost academic-results, and yet we also have parents who will give their kids unfettered access to mobile devices, often in a way to keep them occupied.

It is true that in any public setting or street, we can see numerous kids on phones, tablets or tablets, often playing games or watching videos. On public transport, we see young kids with mobile devices soaking up the screen or playing video games.

Many parents are indulging or even encouraging their children online habits without realizing that they are actually providing children for them to be exposed and addicted to mobile devices.

It was reported that there was a 20 per cent increase in the number of youths around the world who are addicted to smartphones, tablets or other digital devices have experienced a significant increase in recent years.

Children suffer from increased anxiety, depression, and other mental health issues, and social isolation. The increased use of mobile devices can also lead to a decrease in physical activity, which can result in obesity and other health problems.

A study led by Dr Chia Aye from the University of St Andrews, highlighted the importance of setting boundaries for children who are addicted to mobile devices. The study showed that setting a limit of how much time children spend on their devices can significantly reduce the negative effects of addiction.

We need to be cautious and consider the potential consequences of allowing children to use mobile devices at an early age. It is important to monitor their usage and ensure that they are not spending excessive amounts of time on their devices.

There have been ample calls for parents to set limits and monitor usage, design device-free zones or timeouts, and promote alternatives to screen time to encourage children to engage in offline pursuits and strengthen interpersonal connections. The sad truth is that many adults in Singapore are unable to control their own behaviours when it comes to mobile phone use.

Children under eight are allowed to use digital devices only for a maximum of 40 minutes a day, and even then, the use is restricted to appropriate educational or learning purposes. This is to foster the healthy development of a child. Youth under 16 are not permitted to use their smartphones for social media or online gaming between 11pm and 6am.

The Committee of Experts on the Safety ofChildren from Exposure to Environments with Harmful and Potentially Harmful Technologies (CI²) strongly recommends that parents limit their children's screen time to a maximum of two hours a day.

Children in Singapore are often exposed to mobile phones, which is why the need for parents to set limits on their children's mobile device usage is crucial. By implementing strategies to reduce screen time and promote healthy habits, we can help ensure that our children grow up to be healthy and happy adults.