An Exploratory Study on the Negative Impact of YouTube Reels in the Preschooler's Cognitive Development Communication Skills: A Parental Perspective

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Abstract

YouTube reels or shorts has become very popular means of entertaining media for preschoolers in recent period. These short videos last around for 10 to 45 seconds, which are exclusively designed to grab the attention of very young age children. Trending music or BGM, capturing colors, and quick transitions are mostly used in these format videos to grab the audience. The main advantage of this kind of short video is minimum run time with quick message conveying convenience and make a good entertainment. Simultaneously the smart phone and internet facilities are provided by the parents to their children without any restrictions and hesitations to mind their works. So, there is more possibilities for the preschoolers to get impact of these reels, where this age children are hyperactive and were in the stage of learning things newly. According to American academy of Pediatrics (2016), children between 2 to 5 years are advised to limit their media usage in a day to one hour of HD programming and also warns that the excessive use of media may affect the cognitive and communication skill and development. Considering this into concern, this research study tries to investigate the impact of YouTube reels on the children cognitive and communication skill and development by conducting survey among the parents of preschoolers. Following this an extensive literature review, relevant methodology, result and analysis and conclusion are drawn to enhance the study. In conclusion, it summarizes the key concepts of the study and offers general recommendations for YouTube businesses.

Keywords: YouTube reels, Preschoolers, Cognitive development, Parent perspective on social media.

1. Introduction

Factually, children use to watch television along with their parents for the educational and entertainment purpose, which has shaped their cognitive and communication development. Mostly cartoon channels are offered by the parents during the earlier days. But due to the technological development, easy availability of smart devices and rise in social media, children had a very easy chance to the usage of the availability of all these things in the past decade. On the other hand, parents itself provide the smart devices for their children for their own work engagement. YouTube is a video-sharing platform, which has received worldwide attention since it was created in 2005 (Alexa, 2008).

Preschoolers are in dangerous progressing phase in the formation of communication and creative skills. The magic of the contemporary digital media is, they provide various video content in YouTube in a short duration and create an attractive video in order to create an attention among the audience (Alqahtani et al., 2023). There are different types of video content is available in YouTube which is related to education and entertainment. YouTube as an influence on language and communication skills and also in cognitive skills where it provides irrelevant content videos to the children of the age 2 to 4 years (Qadri & Akram, 2020). Therefore, the children's must be guided by the caretakers or parents in choosing the quality video in order to enhance their media usage in effective way. Cognitive thought indulges in how the individual match and process their experiences, which is considered as the important need for knowledge gaining and growth. The first four years of brain development is said to be very important because numerous information's are observed and learned by the [preschoolers through their environment only (Berk, 2012).

1.1. Negative impact of YouTube

YouTube reels have a huge popularity and it is well known for its short duration videos. But there is a concern that 2 to 12 years children may have a possible risk for emerging brains. Some of the key issues includes:

1.1.1. Impact on Sleep: Disturbance in getting quality sleep is one of the common problems in preschoolers because of over usage of mobile phone to watch YouTube videos, the blue light exposed from the screen inhibits melatonin production cause disruption mentally.

1.1.2. Bullying and Body Image Issues: Like other social media, YouTube can negatively affect body image and contribute to bullying. Children are vulnerable to harmful content and unrealistic beauty standards, which can harm self-esteem and social interactions.

1.1.3. Exposure to Inappropriate Content: Children's cognitive development can be adversely affected by exposure to age-inappropriate content, especially given the lack of oversight on YouTube channels.

1.1.4. Diminished Attention Span: The fast pace of YouTube Shorts may shorten attention spans, making traditional educational methods less effective and impacting academic performance.

1.1.5. Impaired Cognitive Development: Passive viewing of rapid content can hinder critical thinking and problem-solving skills, reducing engagement in creative activities and imaginative play.

1.2. Theoretical framework

Cognitive development, as described by Syaodih and Augustin (2008), involves the evolution of thought processes and cognitive functions in children, who face challenges that require problem-solving and recognizing potential solutions. Husdarta and Nurlan (2010) note that cognitive processes are continuous but may not always build on previous achievements, leading to qualitative differences. Children progress through distinct stages of cognitive development, integrating new experiences with existing knowledge, which requires adaptation. This development is crucial for learning, as it relates to memory and cognitive challenges, ultimately enabling children to explore their environment and acquire essential knowledge for managing life.

Piaget (Allen, 2010) defined cognitive development as a continuous interaction between children and their sensory experiences. His influential theory outlines stages of development where individuals develop new ways to organize information, focusing on the acquisition of schemata. Piaget, a constructivist, argued that cognitive abilities arise from active engagement rather than innate knowledge, contrasting with nativist views. He identified four stages: sensorimotor (0-2 years), preoperational (2-7 years), concrete operational (7-11 years), and formal operational (11 years and beyond). He received the Erasmus Prize for his significant contributions to the field.

1.3. Significance of the study

This study is crucial as it examines the impact of YouTube reels on children's cognitive development, addressing concerns from parents, educators, and policymakers. It aims to analyse how short videos on this popular platform affect young individuals' cognitive and psychological growth, providing evidence-based insights into media psychology, child development, and educational practices. The findings will help parents and caregivers make informed decisions about app usage, ensuring a balanced online environment for their children by understanding effects on attention span, memory, language acquisition, and critical thinking.

Additionally, the research will aid educators and content creators in developing age-appropriate materials that support cognitive development, enhancing learning outcomes. It will also guide policymakers in establishing guidelines for young audiences' digital media interactions, promoting safe and responsible online behaviour to protect children's cognitive growth in a technology-driven society.

1.4. Problem of the research study

YouTube videos filled with stories and visuals can inspire children's creativity and exploration. However, excessive exposure to structured, commercial content may hinder their ability to imagine and tell their own stories, crucial for cognitive and creative development. It's important to evaluate the balance of benefits and drawbacks of YouTube use among preschoolers. Understanding its impact on creativity and communication skills can help parents, educators, and policymakers create strategies that support children's growth. This study aims to offer insights for fostering a healthy environment for children in the digital age.

2. Review of literature

In recent years, researchers across various academic disciplines have shown a growing interest in YouTube, attributed to its widespread popularity. To gain a deeper understanding of children's engagement with YouTube and its potential negative impacts, we examine a selected number of studies conducted with young children and their families.

Alqahtani et al., (2023) pointed that preschoolers are in a crucial phase of development, especially for their creativity and communication abilities. In today's digital world, they are exposed to a variety of video content on platforms like YouTube. Contemporary kids are easily getting affordable to the smartphones and the technology. Social platforms like YouTube offers variety of short videos in the form of reels, contains variety of entertainment short video content which includes adult content also. When kids find fun on swiping the screen to move to the next videos, they were exposed to several contents of videos and getting chances to view and learn to many things to the video content which is irrelevant to their age.

Yadav et al., (2018) stated that YouTube is accessible to kids as young as two or three. These toddlers can skilfully browse playlists and play videos. Research shows that even six-month-olds can watch YouTube content. Before their first birthday, kids are especially drawn to music videos. By 12 months, they start showing interest in various films on different topics. Therefore, parents should get aware of why their kids need the mobile phone and should aware of what they are used for. On the other hand, APA (American paediatric Association) strongly suggest that kids between the age of 2 to 5 are advised to spend only one hour of screening time in day. And the kids below the age of 2 are not advised to watch mobile phone. Increasing the screening time for the kids in the age of 2 to 8 may affect their thinking process and reflects in their behaviour.

Elias & Sulkin, (2017) mentioned that Parents use online video platforms like YouTube to entertain, educate, calm, or occupy their children, supporting the idea that these platforms serve as a "digital babysitter." Many children under eight regularly watch videos on tablets and similar devices. Several studies found that excessive screening time subject to negative reflection in the children like change in attitude and behaviour, higher anxiety and distraction,

addiction to the screen and less engagement in other physical activities and adopting to the irrelevant content. Sometimes it may lead to the mental health concerns also.

Sholihah & Wathon (2023) found in his research survey that Parents should actively choose and oversee the videos their kids watch to support healthy creative development. YouTube offers quick access to a wide range of stimulating content. Engaging and colorful videos can boost children's creativity by presenting fresh ideas, inventive stories, and delightful characters. Understanding the impact and risks of excessive screening time on their children, parents can make decisions which helps their children in making a healthy screening habits.

American Academy of Paediatrics (2016) has updated its guidelines on children's media use due to the rise of touchscreen devices. Children under 18 months should avoid digital media, except for video chatting. For those aged 18 to 24 months, supervised use of high-quality apps is allowed, with a limit of one hour of quality programming daily. Children aged two to five should use digital media with their parents. In most of the cases YouTube are not going to educate the appropriate content and children are adopted to those irrelevant videos in just a few clicks or swipes. This type of watching shorter videos may also change their pinion and interest on the traditional forms of learning and activities.

Livingstone and colleagues (2011) said that the accessibility of online content has resulted in a rise in the overall media exposure of children. It is estimated that around seventy-five percent of screen time for young children is dedicated to viewing videos. For example, children below the age of eight typically spend an average of one hour and forty minutes each day engaged in watching television or films, while they utilize tablets or other mobile devices for an additional twenty-one minutes during that time. This may hinder the development of social skills in the children’s and also make them to lose attention span. Recent researchers found that children are unlike to the face to face contact and also the addiction to the screening time gives lesser chance for them to communicate and impedes in their developing language and communication skills also.

Ahmad Susanto (2011) quoted in his study that Cognitive thinking refers to the manner in which individuals associate, assess, and contemplate an occurrence. Consequently, cognitive processes are associated with the level of intelligence that differentiates individuals with diverse interests, especially those cantered on the acquisition of knowledge. The cognitive development of children plays a vital role in their educational success, as certain learning activities are inherently connected to cognitive challenges. Intellectual thinking, presence of mind and problem-solving skills are very essential for the children’s. When YouTube videos are often accompanied with crispy and catchy videos and music, children get attracted to that and psychologically they themselves find difficult to come away from the screen and finds themselves getting impact in having good sleep, health and communication.

Boerman and Van Reijmersdal (2020) declared that the impact of audio visual elements in YouTube videos on children's memory is significant. Short video formats with rapid transitions may hinder the encoding of information into long-term memory. Furthermore, the

sheer volume of content can overwhelm children, making it difficult for them to retain information. Instead of playing and engaging in physical activities, children get addicted to these short videos which leads to narrow down cognitive and innovative skills and put them down in thinking creatively.

Research objective

1. To know the parent perspective on their children's usage of YouTube videos and shorts.
2. To know the impact of YouTube videos on pre-schoolers' cognitive development skill.
3. To know the impact of YouTube videos on pre-schoolers' language and communication skills.

Research Questions

1. How do parents perceive the impact value of YouTube videos in shaping their children's knowledge and skills?
2. What concerns do parents have regarding the potential negative effects of YouTube videos on their children's mental health and social behaviour?
3. How do parents regulate and monitor their children's YouTube viewing habits, and what factors influence their decision-making in this area?

3. Research method

The research methodology explores parental perceptions of YouTube's impact on the creativity and communication skills of preschool-aged children, utilizing AMOS software alongside the Structural Equation Model (SEM). This technique can estimate the relationship between observed and latent variables (Li, 2021). The researchers aimed to analyse inferential statistics related to parents' views on YouTube's effect on the imaginative communication abilities and skills of preschoolers through SEM. The study involved a sample of 100 parents, adhering to the principles of maximum likelihood estimation for SEM. A purposive sampling approach was implemented, targeting parents of preschoolers who frequently engage with YouTube content.

Table 1. Indicators of Questionnaires on Preschoolers Cognitive development

VARIABLES		**INDICATION**
Perspective of parents on YouTube utilisation	X1	Limit in usage time
	X2	Selecting quality YouTube content
	X3	Involving in other activities
Cognitive development of Pre-schoolers	X4	Social interaction of pre-school children's
	X5	Language skill of pre-school children's
	X6	Speaking skill of pre-school children's
	X7	Creative skill of pre-school children's

Development of language and attention skill of pre-schoolers	X8	Problem solving skill of pre-school children's
	X9	Attention span of pre-school children's

The instrument employs a questionnaire. This approach converted the responses from the questionnaire into quantitative data utilizing a Likert Scale methodology. The scoring system spans from 1 to 5 for each response, addressing the development of pre-schooler's communication skills, cognitive skills, and their parents' perspectives on YouTube usage. The statements from the questionnaire are presented in Table 1 above. Tests for validity and reliability conducted on the indicators developed by the researchers demonstrate that their use in this study is appropriate. The researchers employed Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) to formulate a statistical hypothesis based on the questionnaire indicators presented in Table 1. After establishing the statistical hypotheses, the researchers utilized AMOS software to generate the visualization depicted in Figure 2 below.

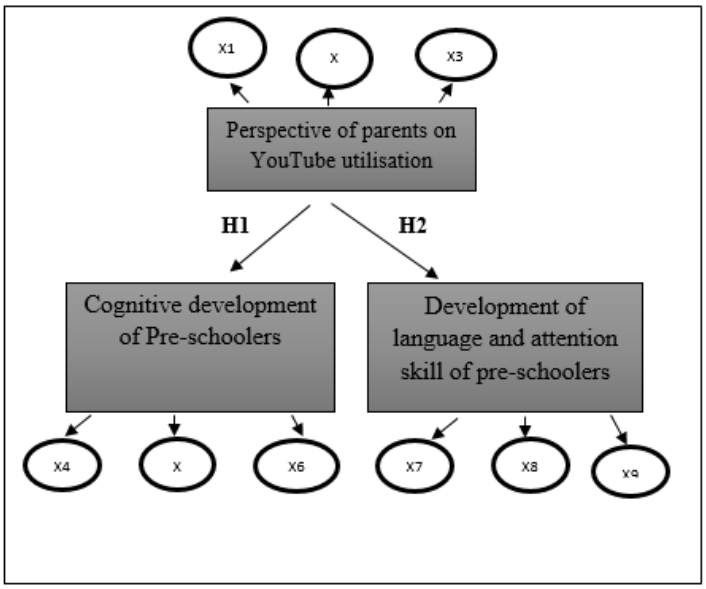

Figure 1. Visualisation of Hypothesis

H1: According to parents, the YouTube viewing habits of preschoolers significantly influence their communication skills.
H2: According to parents, the YouTube viewing habits of preschoolers significantly affect their imaginative capacity.

4. Result and analysis

4.1 Validity

The results of the validity assessment, utilizing the loading factor values obtained from the AMOS software output, are presented in Table 2 below. A loading factor value exceeding 0.5 indicates that the decision is estimated validity.

Table 2. Result of Validity with Loading Factor

	INDICATION	ESTIMATION
X3	Perspective of parents on YouTube utilisation	0.693
X1		0.645
X2		0.691
X6	Development of language and attention skill of pre-schoolers	0.858
X4		0.745
X5		0.788
X9	Cognitive development of Pre-schoolers	0.800
X7		0.706
X8		0.810

The expected loading factor exceeding 0.5 is presented in Table 2, which signifies the validity of indicators X1 to X9. Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) analysis can be conducted for the nine indicators enumerated in Table 1.

4.2. Normality

The results pertaining to normality, derived from the critical ratio (c.r.) of Kurtosis and Skewness as indicated in the AMOS program output, are presented in Table 3 below. According to Huriyah & Hidayat (2022), a normal distribution of data is indicated when the kurtosis and critical ratio (c.r.) skewness values range between -2.60 and 2.60.

Table 3. Result of Normality

Indication	Skewness	C.r	Kurtosis	C.r
X9	-0.342	-2.150	-0.572	-1.721
X7	-0.158	-1.507	-0.706	-2.208
X8	-0.269	-1.855	-0.682	-1.740
X6	-0.317	-2.158	-0.438	-1.645
X4	-0.215	-1.499	-0.805	-2.248
X5	-0.408	-2.285	-0.695	-1.993
X3	-0.177	-1.672	-0.754	-2.323
X1	-0.201	-1.984	-0.706	-2.207
X2	-0.334	-2.063	-0.805	-2.255

Table 3 indicates that the nine indicators related to YouTube usage from a parent's perspective, the development of communication skills in preschool children, and cognitive

development of preschool children's exhibit a normal distribution, making them suitable for SEM analysis.

4.3. Hypotheses Test

The researchers assessed the Goodness of Fit criteria before conducting the statistical hypothesis tests for H1 and H2**.** The SEM method's minimal requirements are used (Sahoo, 2019). The results derived from the data processing utilizing AMOS output are as follows: 1) Chi-square = 32.725 (satisfies the criterion: small); 2) Probability = 0.714 (satisfies the criterion: greater than 0.05); 3) GFI = 0.917 (satisfies the criterion: greater than 0.9); 4) AGFI = 0.911 (satisfies the criterion: greater than 0.9); 5) RMSEA = 0.016 (satisfies the criterion: less than 0.08); 6) RMR = 0.045 (satisfies the criterion: less than 0.05); 7) NCP = 0.003 (satisfies the criterion: minimal). The AMOS report confirms that all values meet the minimum requirements for Goodness of Fit. In other words, it is suitable to advance with the SEM analysis to evaluate the proposed statistical hypotheses for H1 and H2.

Table 4. Result of AMOS – Hypothesis test

Hypothesized Variable		**CR**	**P**	**H**	**Hypothesis Decision**	
					Yes	**No**
Development of language and attention skill of pre-schoolers	Parents perspective on usage of YouTube shorts and videos	**3.001**	**0.002**	**H1**	✓	
Development of cognitive skill of pre-school children’s		**3.062**	**0.003**	**H2**	✓	

The results presented in Table 4 indicate a CR of 3.001 and a P value of 0.002, which is less than 0.005, thereby supporting H1. This suggests that parents perceive a significant influence of pre-schoolers’ YouTube viewing habits on their communication skills. Furthermore, with a CR of 3.062 and a P value of 0.003, which is also less than 0.005, H2 is validated. This finding reflects parent’s belief that pre-schooler’s engagement with YouTube significantly affects their cognitive development.

5. Discussion

Parents perceptive on the language and attention skill of preschoolers of YouTube usage:

YouTube offers a diverse selection of videos suitable for children, encompassing both entertaining and educational content. However, parents often notice a significant impact on

their children's cognitive and communication skills. Excessive viewing of YouTube shorts and video may hinder children's social interactions with their peers. Engaging in games and face-to-face interactions with friends, which are essential for the development of social skills, is often supplanted by the consumption of entertaining video material.

The researcher conducted SEM path analysis on each variable indicator, leading to the following conclusions from parents' perspectives: 1) Parental restrictions on pre-schooler's YouTube usage negatively impact their social interactions, supporting Aulia's (2024) recommendation for time limits to enhance social engagement. 2) Such restrictions also affect pre-schoolers' speaking abilities, aligning with Yudaninggar's (2021) assertion that monitoring YouTube consumption is crucial for communication development. Parental controls can prevent overreliance on digital media (Theopilus et al., 2024) and encourage interaction with parents and peers, essential for developing communication skills (Pashevich, 2022; Reith-Hall & Montgomery, 2022; Wati et al., 2023). However, overly strict limitations may hinder children's access to valuable knowledge and learning opportunities.

Table 4 reveals that, from parents' perspectives: 1) The selection of high-quality YouTube videos significantly impacts pre-schooler's social interactions, highlighting the need for parental guidance in choosing content that promotes positive engagement (Adwiah & Diana, 2023). 2) Parents' choices of high-quality videos influence pre-schoolers' speaking skills, with YouTube being a valuable tool for enhancing language skills, especially in English, though careful content selection is crucial (Osias Kit T. Kilag et al., 2023). 3) Preschoolers' language comprehension is also affected by the high-quality YouTube videos chosen by their parents.

Table 4 reveals that, from parents' perspectives: 1) Pre-schooler's social interactions are shaped by parental involvement, with Ramadhan et al. (2024) noting that parents must engage in their children's online experiences to maintain social connections on YouTube. 2) Parental participation impacts pre-schooler's language development, as Malik & Nurhadi (2024) argue that such engagement helps sustain speaking skills. 3) Parental involvement also affects language comprehension, with Harining & Suardana (2023) emphasizing the need for active parental engagement to support children's language understanding.

Prolonged YouTube viewing without active engagement can hinder pre-schooler's language and speech development. Unlike interactive face-to-face interactions, passive video watching lacks opportunities for practicing speaking and listening skills (Putri et al., 2024). To foster communicative growth, parents should actively participate in their children's YouTube activities by discussing content and helping select appropriate, educational videos. This involvement not only promotes effective communication but also ensures that media experiences are safe and beneficial.

Parents perceptive on the Development of cognitive skill of pre-school of YouTube usage:

Pre-schooler's creativity and imagination are also greatly influenced by YouTube. YouTube's highly structured programming frequently provides all the answers and solutions, which can

limit kids' ability to think creatively and come up with their own ideas. Children may be less inclined to imagine or make their own games if they are exposed to extremely specialized content. Nevertheless, not every YouTube video has a bad effect. Numerous media, including tale videos or arts and crafts projects, are made to encourage kids' imaginations and creativity. A child's imagination can be stimulated and fresh concepts for creative inquiry can be generated by the appropriate selection of content.

Researchers can perform SEM path analysis on the indicators from Table 4 to conclude the following from a parental perspective: 1) Restrictions on YouTube usage negatively impact preschoolers' creativity, as noted by Aulia (2024), who stresses the need for parental self-discipline despite YouTube's potential to inspire creativity. 2) Parental limits on YouTube access affect pre-schooler's abstract thinking, with Yunia (2022) emphasizing the importance of regulating viewing time for cognitive development. 3) Parental restrictions on YouTube usage influence children's reliance on visual stimuli, suggesting that reducing screen time can enhance their imaginative and creative skills. Regulating children's screen time and replacing it with reading, outdoor play, or art activities can enhance their inventive skills by fostering imagination and creativity.

The SEM path analysis in Table 4 reveals that parents' selection of high-quality YouTube content positively influences pre-schooler's creativity, abstract thinking, and reliance on visual stimuli. Parents play a crucial role in curating content that fosters their children's imagination by choosing informative and engaging videos, such as scientific experiments and educational narratives. This careful selection also helps children avoid inappropriate or harmful content, as noted by Alqahtani et al. (2023) and Ochoa & Reich (2020).

Researchers can use SEM path analysis to derive insights from parents, as shown in Table 4: 1) Pre-schooler's creativity is influenced by parental involvement in activities. 2) Parental participation shapes pre-schooler's abstract thinking skills. 3) Engagement affects pre-schooler's reliance on visual aids. Active parental involvement in children's YouTube activities significantly enhances their imaginative capabilities. Ihza et al. (2024) note that when parents watch videos, discuss content, or create together, they guide children to valuable resources and foster positive relationships. This support allows children to explore new ideas, deepen their understanding, and enhance their critical and creative thinking skills, broadening their perspectives and sense of belonging.

6. Suggestions

Restrictions on age: Government should implement restrictions on adult content videos by collaborating with the online platforms like YouTube. Considering the well-being of the children and their faraway view of the inappropriate content, government can also add on age restrictions options before optimisation. YouTube has the option called "Report" in all the reels video. But sometimes it is not being working out if the audience report that the video is abusive or inappropriate for children, so the platform can take it to concern and response to the reported issues.

Awareness campaigns: The government can provide an awareness campaign to educate the parents and caregivers related on the safety usage of online platforms. They can also conduct medical campaign on making awareness on the negative impact on the excessive screen time of the children.

Associating with technical concerns: It is essential for the government to keep a close contact with tech companies to develop the topographies which encourage technological development in the safety usage of social platforms among the young children's. Setting up the time limits in the usage, parental control option, and providing educational and informative content recommendations is really creates effective strategies.

Encouraging research and development: It is essential for the government to encourage and invest certain investments on the development for the long-term Research to create new and effective policies on appropriate content consumption. This maintains as the evidence-based policies in order to safeguard the young children's mind.

7. Conclusion

This research study explored the negative impact of YouTube reels on the development of children's cognitive skills. The research findings reveal the strong negative correlation between the children's time span in excessive screening and its influence in their attention skill, language skill and cognitive development. Children's who spend more time on watching YouTube reels or short videos were prone to lesser attention and increased distraction and also disrupt in live communication and language developing skills. This research study also contributes important insights into the relationship between children's over usage of social media platforms like YouTube and impact in cognitive development. Parents believe that pre-schooler's YouTube viewing habits significantly impact their creativity and communication skills. It's crucial for parents to monitor and guide their children's YouTube engagement. By taking a balanced approach, they can leverage YouTube's educational benefits while minimizing its negative effects. In today's digital landscape, parents can create engaging educational content that connects technology with child development. This research highlights the role of digital media in early childhood education and shows how parents can use technology to foster essential life skills in their children. Simultaneously government should also support by collaborating with technical concerns and also with the resource persons to conduct several campaigns, often on the awareness on the safety usage of social media platforms and the health issues on children's excessive screen time. It is imperative to address the adverse effects of YouTube Reels and pave the way for an era in which our children can thrive both intellectually and emotionally on the development of their cognitive skills.

It is important to acknowledge its limitations. The sample size of the research study is comparatively small and it is limited to few children's, which may restrict to the extent to which the study findings. Moreover, the study dependent on the self - reported data of parents of the pre-schoolers, which could be in reporting bias. Therefore, study didn't include socio-economic background, usage of other social media platforms and effective time management

skill for children to avoid screen time. Hence, future studies could be framed by addressing these limitations with higher samples for more effective result. Therefore, overall study ensure that it is important for parents and caretakers to employ a careful and fair method towards the pre-schoolers age children's in consuming and utilising the social media platforms and gadgets.

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