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DIGITAL AUTISM – THE IMPACT OF TECHNOLOGIES ON CHILDREN'S DEVELOPMENT

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Abstract. The widespread use of modern digital technologies has significantly influenced children's development. This article examines the concept of "digital autism" and its impact on children's psychological and cognitive development. Based on a review of scientific literature, the effects of screen time on speech development, attention span, and social interactions are analyzed. Additionally, recommendations for preventing digital autism are provided. The research findings indicate that excessive use of technology may lead to a decline in children's social communication skills, emotional detachment, and disruptions in developmental processes. Therefore, this article offers practical recommendations for parents, educators, and medical professionals.

Keywords: Autism Spectrum Disorder, digital environment, treatment, neurological, diagnosis, communication, WHO.

Аннотация. Широкое использование современных цифровых технологий существенно повлияло на развитие детей. В данной статье рассматривается понятие «цифровой аутизм» и его влияние на психологическое и когнитивное развитие детей. На основе обзора научной литературы анализируется влияние экранного времени на развитие речи, внимания и социальных взаимодействий. Кроме того, приводятся рекомендации по профилактике цифрового аутизма. Результаты исследования показывают, что чрезмерное использование технологий может привести к снижению навыков социального общения у детей, эмоциональной отчужденности и нарушениям процессов развития. Поэтому в данной статье предлагаются практические рекомендации для родителей, педагогов и медицинских работников.

Ключевые слова: расстройство аутистического спектра, цифровая среда, лечение, неврологический, диагностика, коммуникация, ВОЗ.

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Introduction. It is common to hear parents say, "My child knows everything and performs tasks but does not communicate, does not respond when called, does not play with other children, dislikes noise, has become irritable, repeats certain movements, and speaks very little." Such complaints indicate a lack of awareness among parents regarding child development characteristics and how certain conditions manifest. These concerns may suggest autism, particularly the increasingly prevalent form known as digital autism. In recent years, the rapid advancement of digital technologies and their deep integration into daily life have had a significant impact on children's development. From an early age, children are exposed to the digital environment through mobile phones, tablets, computers, and televisions. However, excessive use of these technologies has been linked to various cognitive and social issues. Research shows that increased screen time may hinder speech development, reduce attention span, and negatively affect social interactions. The term “digital autism” has recently gained attention in discussions among psychologists and neurologists. This concept describes autism-like symptoms that appear in children who spend excessive time in front of screens. Although digital autism is not yet an officially recognized clinical diagnosis, scientific communities are actively debating the potential link between technological exposure and developmental changes in children. Some studies suggest that children who become dependent on mobile devices from an early age struggle with real-world communication, display lower emotional engagement with parents and peers, and experience difficulties in language acquisition.

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Establishing communication with children diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) is crucial. Axrorova S.A. and Axrorov A.A. (2023) discuss communication strategies for children with autism in their research. They recommend sensory-based approaches that engage vision, hearing, touch, smell, and taste to facilitate interaction.

Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) is a neurological condition that affects an individual's social interactions, communication, and behavior. The severity of ASD is typically categorized based on the challenges it presents in daily life. There are three levels of ASD:

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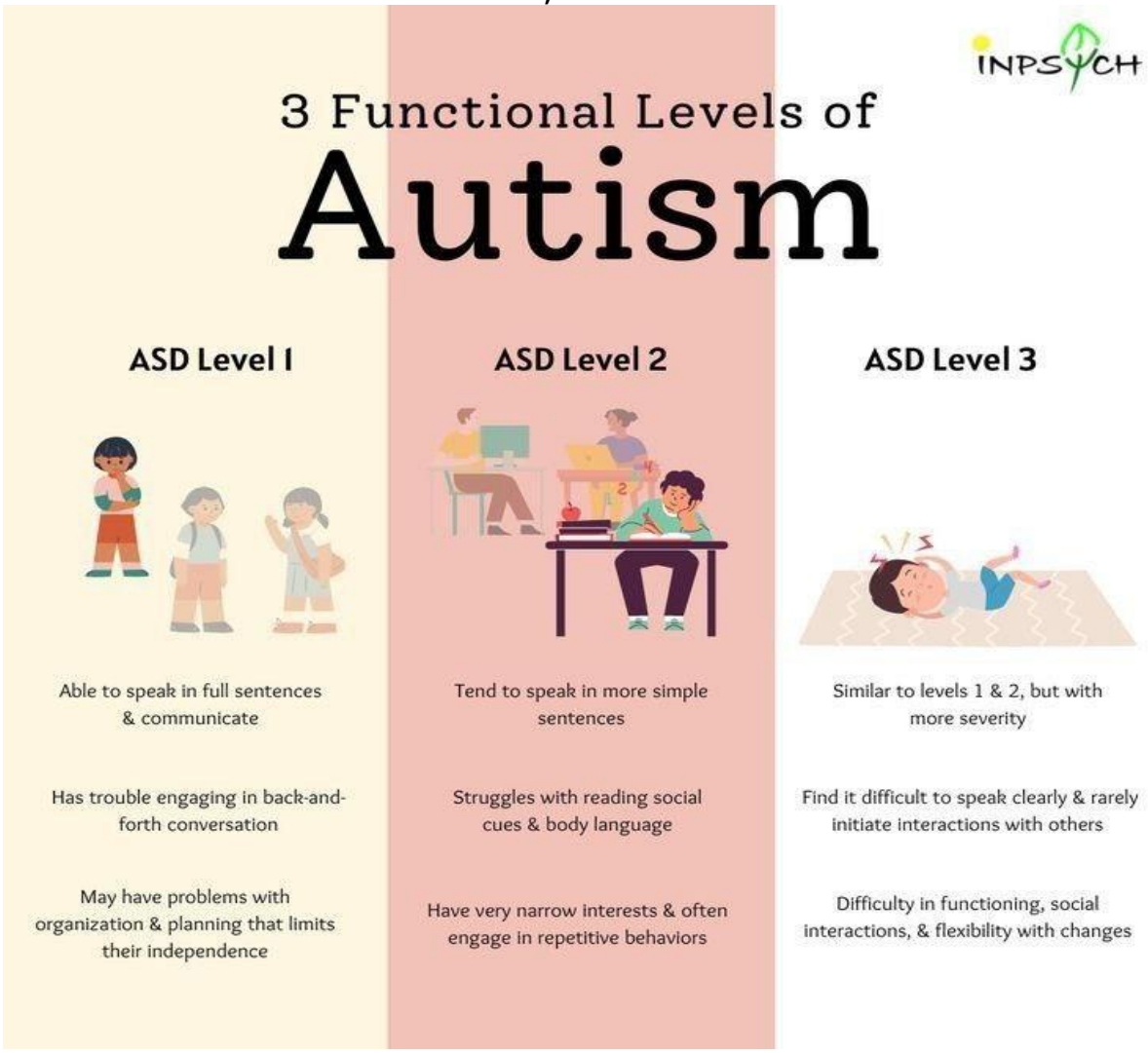

Autism treatment approaches vary widely and are individualized based on the patient's needs. The main treatment directions include:

1. Therapeutic Interventions: Social and Communication Therapy: Helps individuals develop social interaction skills. Behavioral Therapy (ABA – Applied Behavior Analysis): Focuses on reducing problematic behaviors and promoting positive behaviors. Speech and Communication Therapy: Aims to improve speech and language development.

2. Medications: While there is no specific medication for autism, certain drugs can be prescribed to alleviate symptoms such as anxiety or depression.

3. Education and Support: Special education programs and support services help children develop self-management skills. Treatment often requires active participation from parents, teachers, and social support networks. Early diagnosis and intervention play a crucial role in improving a child's development.

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), 3.4 billion people, or 43.1% of the global population, suffer from neurological disorders. Autism is among

these disorders and is one of the most prevalent neurodevelopmental conditions in children. In 2019, data showed that over 10 million children worldwide had been diagnosed with autism, and this number continues to increase by 11% annually. In the 1990s, 1 in 5,000 children was diagnosed with autism, whereas today, this figure has risen to 1 in 50 children. In Uzbekistan, more than 200 children have been diagnosed with autism, but the number of undiagnosed or untreated cases is likely much higher. These statistics highlight the global rise of autism and emphasize the importance of early diagnosis, treatment, and public awareness.

Although "digital autism" is not yet recognized as a formal medical diagnosis, excessive use of digital technology can negatively impact children's development. Therefore, monitoring screen time and encouraging creative and interactive activities involving technology is crucial for parents and educators. Future scientific research is needed to better understand the global effects of digital technologies on child development.

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