



SCREEN DEPENDENCY AND MENTAL HEALTH CRISIS: A NEW PANDEMIC IN THE MAKING

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Abstract

Background

With the prevalence of internet- based applications and mobile devices, for studying, gaming, social networking, chatting, shopping and gambling, there has been a massive increase in the use of the internet. Phones, tablets and computers have become an indispensable part of school, college and social life. The present generation is growing amidst an increasingly digitalized society where their interaction with different screen devices is intensive and pervasive. Concerns about negative impacts of excessive screen time on physical and mental health of young minds are routinely voiced among stakeholders of education, policy makers and media circles. It is indeed a matter of concern to see the youth being engulfed in the addictive world of technology. Does this over indulgence of digital device pave a path for a new pandemic in the making?

Objective:

To reveal recent findings on the relationship between excessive screen use and mental health outcomes in young adults.

Materials and Method

Systematic reviews, meta-analyses and key studies are reviewed to provide insights into the state of current research linking excessive screen use with the mental health outcomes of young adults.

Findings:

The articles that were included, mostly found associations between screen dependency and mental health in young adults.

Conclusion:

This paper provides a framework for future research to develop suitable interventions that can lessen potential adverse effects of excessive screen exposure on mental well-being of young adults.

Keywords: Screen dependency, young adults, excessive screen use, mental health

Introduction

Excessive usage of screen devices has brought in various social problems across the globe. This technological infiltration and dependency on screens have been quite remarkable in the lives of young students. The pleasure-inducing dopamine due to screen usage activates the brain and makes one into an addictive state and as a result the person is trapped in the cycle of screen addiction. The term “screen dependency disorder” has been coined by A. Sigman to describe the addiction like behaviour and problematic manner of children engaged in a variety of screen activities. (Sigman, A, 2017). It is one of the latest health and social problems among the general mass of people. (Sarojini,K. et al, 2019 & Yasmeen,A.2018). Screen dependency refers to an uncontrollable urge and obsessive use of screen related devices for diverse activities. Screen dependency disorders are seen among people as a newly emerging disorder, who have an unhealthy dependency on social media and screen devices. (Apostolides, A. 2018). Phones, tablets and computers have become an indispensable part of school, college and social life. Screen timing has now become a lifestyle factor, the increase in the level of which acts as an independent risk factor to cardio metabolic disease, unfavorable child development outcomes, adult morbidity and mortality. (Sigman, A. 2014). The digital life has created many challenges and has given rise to many opportunities. The net has invented virtual connectivity or life on screen and also brought the world at one’s finger tips, with an explosion of information of all sorts. (McCamey, 2015). The internet can be used intelligently or be overused by many. (McCamey,2015). Physical recreation has taken the place of online recreation. The toxic relationship of people with digital devices has made us to think whether people use phones or phones are using people. The companies advertising the social media applications have adopted the persuasive techniques to lure the present generation towards digital life through manipulation of human behaviour and emotions. The apps are purposefully designed to promote addiction among people. They do not want people to do anything meaningful and lead a social life. These applications have taken away our sleep and attention. Attention has become the new currency for these advertising companies. Constant onslaught of information and messages affect our mental peace. It is indeed a matter of concern to see the youth being engulfed in the addictive world of technology and negative impacts of excessive screen time on their physical and mental health. During the pandemic, screen time had gone through the roof, and life became digital by default. (Livingstone,2020). These new technology-driven practices have now become a part of the new normal. (Carroll & Conboy,2020). Additionally, due to the rise in the use of personal computing technologies like smartphones and social media, face- to- face social interactions have become very rare and as a result contributed in the rise of distress among youth. (Lattie et al.,2019).

Method

Narrative Literature review method has been adopted and the study is based on secondary data which are published journals and books related to screen addicted behaviour of young adults and mental health across the globe with a special emphasis to Indian journals. Around 21 articles have been identified for the study

This review was conducted in compliance with Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews, Meta- analyses and key studies. A search was performed with the following question: Is there any association between excessive use of digital devices and mental health in young adults? For this, the following keywords were used: “screen addiction,” “young adults,” and “mental health.” The study population is composed of individuals between 18years – 30 years and as outcomes, any aspects related to mental health will be considered.

Research Through Innovation

Table- 1 Showing the narrative review of the current study:

Author, year&country	sample	Screen type	outcomes
1. Johnson AR et al. (2022) India	adolescents (10-19 years) total 323 samples	Television, smartphones, laptop	Restlessness, mood swings, irritation, depression
2. Kumar AK & Sherkhane MS (2018) India	Under-graduates (18 – 28 years) Total 200	Television, smartphones, computer	Sleep disturbances, depression
3.. Muduli, J. R. (2014). India	Engineering students 18 to 26 years. Total 150	Cell phone, laptop/computer, smartphones	Depression, Anxiety, nervousness, worry, low consciousness, sleep related issues.
4.Devi, C.et al.(2019) India	Intermediate, B. Pharm/B. Tech to IT professionals. 15 to 25 years Total 200	Laptop, computer, Smartphones, Television, I pad	Anxiety, nervousness, stress, sleep related issues, worry
5.Acharya JP et al. (2013) India	College students 17- 23 years Total 459	Cell phone	Anxiety, irritation, anger, sleeplessness, apprehension, poor concentration
6. Bhatt S& Gaur A (2019) India	Undergraduate Dental students 17- 24 years Total 320	Cell phone	Depression, anxiety, stress, insomnia
7. Gladson SRA et al. (2022) India	undergraduate students 17–24 years Total 487	mobile phones, computers, I-pads, and laptops	anxiety, sleep disturbances, depression, irritation, restlessness
8. Marskole P et al. (2022) India	Undergraduate MBBS students(19- 24 years) Total 200	Laptop, computer, smartphone, television, tab	anxiety, sleep disturbances, depression
9.. Kulkarni et al. (2019) India	polytechnic students (16-19 years) total 469 samples	Television, smartphones, laptop	Restlessness, mood swings, irritation, depression
10. Batool S. et al (2018) Pakistan	Undergraduate Medical students 18- 26 years Total 342	mobile phones, computers, I-pads, and laptops, television	anxiety, sleep disturbances, depression, nervousness

Table- 1 continued... Showing the narrative review of the current study:

Author, year &country	sample	Screen type	outcomes
11.Ali et al (2019) Pakistan	Undergraduate Medical students 17- 21 years Total 500	cellphones	Disturbed sleep pattern
12. G. Zhang, et al. (2020) china	Undergraduate college students 17- 24 years Total 265	Mobile phones	Anxiety, depression
13. Ithnain N. et al. (2018) Malaysia	Undergraduate college students 19 to 30 years. Total 369	smartphones	Depression, anxiety
14. Matar Boumosleh, J., & Jaalouk, D. (2017). Lebanon	Undergraduate college students 19 to 25 years. Total 688	Smartphones	Anxiety, depression
15. Wu, X., Tao et al. (2016) China	College students 18- 24 years Total 2521	Computer, television	Depression, anxiety, stress, psychopathological symptoms
16. Ahmadi J et al. (2014), Iran	High school students 18–20 years Total 1020	computers, television DVD, video CD	anxiety, depression
17. Tamura H et al. (2017), Japan	High school students 15- 19 years Total 295	Mobile phones	Depression, insomnia
18. Abuhamdah, S.A. &Naser, A.Y (2023), Jordan	University students 18 + Total 385	Smartphones	anxiety, depression
19. Višnjić A. et al. (2018) Srebia &I taly	University students 21+ Total785	Smartphones	anxiety, depression
20. Kim HJ et al. (2019) Korea	College students 18- 26 years Total 608	Smartphones	stress, depression,
21. Kim, M. O et al. (2015)S.Korea	College students18- 24 years Total 353	smartphones	Depression, aggression, impulsion

Discussion

The extracted data include the author, publication year, sample size, age range, screen type and mental health outcomes which were presented and summarized in the Table-1. The literature search showed that there is a vast and increasing number of studies on mental health problems associated with excessive use of electronic screen devices across the globe. The review explored links between screen related device usage and mental health from a psychological or behavioral point of view across globe with a special emphasis to Indian journals. Around 21 journal articles have been identified for the study and among them 9 studies are from India and the rest from different countries. A relatively large proportion of the studies examined screen related device usage was associated with, ill- mental health outcomes like depression, anxiety, stress, sleep related issues, irritation, restlessness, mood swings, irritation and other related issues. A relatively large number of the studies have smartphones and mobile phones as one of the screen related devices along with other screen related devices. It must also be pointed out that smartphones and mobile phones are the only devices used in most of the studies. However, it seems that applications that log smartphone usage are becoming more available, user friendly, portable hand- held devices and thus are increasingly used in research and dominated the research field.

Conclusion

Associations between screen device usage and adverse mental health outcomes are found in studies that take a psychological or behavioral perspective on the exposure. This study provides a framework for future research to examine these interactions and to develop targeted interventions that can mitigate potential adverse effects of screen related devices on mental well-being.

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