

Original Article

The Influence of Screen Time on the Psychological Well-being of Adolescents

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Abstract

The term “screen time” is used to refer to activities like watching television, working or playing on computer, playing video games or spending a lot of time on smart phones. Screen time is termed as a sedentary activity wherein a person remains physically inactive and a less amount of energy is utilized. Psychological well-being means the feeling that life is moving well. It is a combined notion of feeling worthy and functioning well. Too much of screen time is said to have a negative effect in adolescents like insomnia, attention problems, anxiety, depression and also physical issues like obesity. The current study focusses on the influence of screen time on the psychological well-being of adolescents. A correlation of Coefficient was used to find the influence of screen time on the psychological well-being of adolescents. A sample of 200 adolescents between age range of 12-17years is taken under this study. The scale PGI General Well-being Measure developed by Dr. Santosh K. Verma and Ms. Anita Verma was used to measure the psychological well-being of adolescents. The screen time of the participants varied from 2-3 hours a day to more than 4 hours a day. The results showed a negative correlation of coefficient between screen time and psychological well-being.

Keywords: Screen time; Psychological Well-being; Adolescents.

Introduction

Screen time means the time consumed watching television, playing video games, watching phones or computers. There have been concerns worldwide about children and adolescents becoming overdependent on “screen time”. Excessive watching of screen time is considered as an addictive behaviour. The alarming dependency on screen time was sensed and the 11th revised version of the International Classification of Diseases (ICD-11) considered excessive screen time

as a “Gaming Disorder” (WHO, 2018). In order to diagnose a person with gaming disorder, the person might exhibit behaviours like impaired control over gaming, it might hinder a person’s interest and other daily activities, continuous increase in hours of gaming despite of negative consequences. There has been growing evidences with reference to the side effects of screen time on physical health and psychological well-being. Research show that excessive screen addiction leads to health issues like insomnia, obesity, high blood pressure. (Lissak G., 2008). Various psychological problems

caused by excessive screen time are depression, ADHD, anxiety, behavioural issues due to lack of sleep, antisocial behaviours, reduced prosocial behaviours, lack of control of cognitive and emotional well-being. (Lissak G., 2018).

Psychological well-being is perceived as a combination of hedonic perspective that focuses on happiness and eudaimonic perspective – a person's capacity to live life in a satisfying way. (Deci E.L., Ryan R.M., 2008). Well-being also focuses on the fact that negative or painful emotions are a part of normal life but managing them effectively becomes important for long term well-being. (Huppert F.A., 2009). Psychological well-being of an individual is compromised when the negative emotions are extreme and long lasting. (Huppert F.A., 2009). Excessive screen time leads to turmoil of negative emotions because it is positively associated with psychiatric problems like deficit in attention, hyperactivity, anxiety disorders and depression. (Yen, J.Y., & et al. (2009), Maras, D., & et al. (2015)). According to American Academy of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry (AACAP), too much of screen time may also lead an adolescent exposed to violent and risk-taking behaviours, videos that may provoke unsafe behaviours, sexual content, pessimistic thinking, substance addiction, cyberbullies and misleading, inaccurate or inappropriate information. (AACAP, 2020).

Hence, it is worthy to note that for a better physical and mental health it becomes essentially important that the screen time should be managed effectively. American Academy of Pediatrics and World Health Organization have reported that children between age of 5-17 years should not spend more than 2 hours a day on screen. The AACAP says that children aged 6 and above should be encouraged with healthy activities and limited screen time. (AACAP, 2020).

Aim

This study aims to find the influence of screen time on the psychological well-being of adolescents.

Research Methodology

Design

The study is a quantitative research to understand the influence of screen time on the psychological well-being of adolescents.

Participants and Procedure

For the current study adolescents residing in the city of Ahmedabad and belonging to the age range between 12 to 17 years were approached. The total sample comprised of 200 adolescents. The test was administered, scoring was done as per manual and results were statistically analyzed.

Variables

Variables were treated as follows:

Independent Variable:

- Duration of Screen Time

Dependent Variables

The psychological well-being of the adolescents. Psychological well-being is measured through PGI General Well-being Measure.

Research Tool

The psychological well-being of the adolescents was measured by PGI General Well-being Measure developed by Dr. Santosh K. Verma and Ms. Anita Verma. The test consists of 20 statements. The statements would give an understanding about the subjects feeling in past one month. After having read the statement, the subject can put a tick mark under any of the three alternatives provided namely: "Fully True", "Somewhat True" and "Fully Untrue". The minimum score possible is 0 and the maximum is 40. Norms, Reliability and Validity of the scale was suitable to the Indian population.

Statistical Analysis

On the basis of the responses given by the adolescents, item wise scores were assigned. The scoring and interpretation of scores was done as per the instructions given in the manual.

Results and Discussion

Table of Results:

Results Showing correlation of co-efficient between the screen time and the psychological well-being of adolescents.

Mean	SD	Correlation (R)	Level of Significance
Screen Time (X)	5.78	1.77	-.908
Psychological Well-being (Y)	21.73	8.14	0.01

*p<0.05, **p<0.01

According to the above table there exists a very high negative correlation ($r = -.908$) between the increase in the hours of screen time and the psychological well-being of the adolescents.

The mean score of hours of screen time is 5.78 and for psychological well-being it is 21.73. The mean results are significant at 0.01 level which clearly indicates that the increase in hours of screen time affects the psychological well-being of adolescents.

The reason for the above finding could be that screen time being a sedentary activity, would make an adolescent physically inactive. Such sedentary activities are positively related to low psychological well-being, poor physical health. It affects self-esteem, leads to reduced life satisfaction and impaired cognitive performances. (Okely A.D., & et al., 2013, Hinkley T., & et al., 2014.)

A similar study was conducted on the adolescents in U.S. in 2016. The results of this study showed that high screen users were more likely to be diagnosed with depression and they were on medication for psychological or behavioural issues. (Twenge J.M., & Campbell W.K., 2018). In another study conducted in China on Middle and high school students showed that screen time was positively associated with anxiety. It had a negative effect on academic performances, lead to deviant behaviours and unfavourable state of psychological well-being leading to poor quality of life. (Yan H., & et al., 2017). A study on South Korean adolescents indicated that higher screen time was related to higher Body Mass Index (BMI). (Lee E.Y., & Spence J. C., 2016).

Conclusion

To conclude, the current study reveals that adolescents who spent more hours of time on screen were the ones who suffered from low psychological well-being as compared to adolescents who spent relatively fewer hours on screen.

Adolescents with more screen time suffered from low self-respect, lacked control over their behaviour and feelings and were dissatisfied with personal life. They were the ones who found themselves to be emotionally instable, felt dejected, depressed, nervous and exhibited worrisome behaviour. They would get easily tired, had doubts about their health, lacked productivity and creativity in life. They also frequently showed feelings of worthlessness and lack of belongingness.

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