

Impact of Excessive Digital Engagement on the Psychological Well-Being of Adolescents

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Abstract - Adolescents' lifestyle, communication habits, learning habits and psychological experiences have been greatly changed by the rapid development of digital technology. The digital world (social media, online games, online communication systems, etc.) offers education, information and entertainment, and there is growing concern in the adolescent's mental health and overall well-being in excessive use of the digital world. This is a review paper, which critically overviews the psychological, emotional, cognitive, physical and behavioural impacts of over-digitalising the adolescent. It is discussed with the consequences of too much time spent on screen, overuse of social media, and online gaming, which can cause emotional distress, anxiety, impulsive behaviour, sleep disturbances, social isolation, reduced physical activity and cognitive decline. The unhealthy coping mechanisms that are destroying and a preference for virtual interaction over real-life social interaction are also discussed in the paper. In line with the literature and psychological approach, the study emphasises the importance of maintaining a balance between the use of digital media and parental supervision and guidance, emotional management strategies and awareness of mental health among adolescents. Lastly, the paper highlights the importance of promoting healthy coping, responsible online conduct and all-around development of adolescents in the digital era.

Keywords: Adolescents, Digital Addiction, Social Media, Psychological Well-Being, Online Gaming, Coping Strategies, Emotional Health, Cognitive Health and Mental Health.

I. INTRODUCTION

The digital revolution has more than ever affected current societies. In areas like education, health, communication, entertainment, commerce and social interaction, technology has been enhancing the convenience, accessibility, connectivity and efficiency of human life in almost every aspect. Smartphones and social media apps, online games and internet services, are part and parcel of everyday life, particularly for the young. The use of digital

technology has increased the opportunities for learning and communication regardless of geographical location, and created new ways to socialise and share information.

But the overuse and overuse of digital devices is a big psychological and social issue. Adolescents are one of the most vulnerable populations at risk of excessive use of digital technology as they are at the stage of rapid emotional, cognitive, behavioural and social development. With greater use of social media, games and digital entertainment, concerns about the mental and emotional health and well-being of young people, as well as their physical activity, coping and relationship building have increased.

Digital engagement – communicating, entertaining, learning, socialising, and seeking information via digital devices and platforms. While digital technology can be positive and moderate, it can cause addictive behaviours, emotional dependency and psychological distress when there is a high level of digital engagement. Teens are spending more time on social media, video-sharing apps and online gaming spaces and less time in outdoor and real-world settings with people.

Studies have shown that going overboard with digital device usage can lead to anxiety, depression, poor sleep, emotional instability, short attention span, impatience and social isolation in adolescents (Przybylski & Weinstein, 2017). Social media has also caused an increase in the amount of peer comparisons, cyberbullying, fear of missing out (FOMO), and emotional insecurities in the youth population. However, online gaming addiction also leads to behavioural issues, aggression, a drop in academic performance and social isolation.

Furthermore, overdependence on digital technology decreases adolescents' coping skills and emotional resilience. Slowly, physical activity, social

interaction, emotional expression, mindfulness and creativity are becoming virtual escapism and dependency on the internet. This can sometimes result in the teens not being able to deal with stress, frustration, school pressure and emotional conflicts.

This is a review paper with the theme "Over Digitalisation in the life of an Adolescent – Psychological impact". It explores the psychological, emotional, behavioural and physical consequences of digital addiction, and the importance of developing effective coping strategies, parental supervision, education and a healthy balance of digital consumption.

II. CONCEPTUAL UNDERSTANDING OF DIGITAL ENGAGEMENT AND PSYCHOLOGICAL WELL-BEING

Digital engagement is defined by the number, length, and intensity of the interactions that people have with digital technology like smartphones, social media, online games, digital communication and internet-based content. Teens of today's age use digital media to enjoy, learn, play, connect, express themselves and get emotional support.

Psychological well-being is the emotional stability, mental health, self-esteem, social adjustment, cognitive functioning and overall life satisfaction of an individual. It is made up of positive feelings, positive relationships, stress management, emotion regulation and adaptive coping skills.

Too much Digital Engagement: When the use of digital technology becomes compulsive, out of control and psychologically dependent. This overdependence can have a detrimental effect on emotional regulation, cognitive functioning, physical activity, sleep, social interactions and mental health. Digital addiction can include excessive use of social media, online games, excessive internet use or emotional dependency on the internet.

The communication, recreation and emotional interaction process, which has been happening since time immemorial, is affected by the digitalisation of the lives of adolescents. Digital platforms provide convenience and interaction, but can have a detrimental impact on offline relationships as well as emotional reliance on online validation and connections.

III. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

There has been a significant amount of research that has identified the impact of digital technologies on young people's mental health and behaviour. Other studies have found that excessive use of social media can result in emotional distress, low self-esteem, emotional and anxiety symptoms and depression in adolescents.

Moderate digital use does not appear to be dangerous; however, excessive screen time is dangerous for adolescents' psychological well-being (Przybylski and Weinstein, 2017). Similarly, Oberst et al. (2017) indicated that addiction to social networks can cause fear of missing out (FOMO), which leads to emotional instability and loneliness in adolescents.

The Joshi, Woltering and Woodward (2023) study findings suggest there is a strong relationship between cell phone usage and poor psychological well-being amongst the youth. They were taught about the role of Social Media Addiction in raising emotional dependence, social comparison and stress.

Dresp-Langley and Hutt (2022) discussed the connection between digital addiction and sleep problems. Excessive use of digital devices is associated with poor sleep health, lack of concentration, mood swings and reduced thinking abilities in youth.

According to Marin et al. (2021), internet addiction is one of the factors that lead to attention deficit and impulsive behaviour in adolescents. Similarly, there are connections between online gaming addiction and increased aggression, hyperactivity, social isolation and school performance.

However, Indian studies reveal that digital addiction is an issue in the country's youth. Gangadharan et al. (2022) emphasised that 'Smartphone Addiction' is a new emerging behavioural addiction among Indian Adolescents. Bhardwaj and Rani (2018) found that there was a significant correlation between sedentary digital behaviour and anxiety and depression in adolescents.

Although numerous studies have focused on the nature of the addictive aspects of social media and internet overuse, a more comprehensive research into the cognitive, emotional, behavioural and physical

consequences of excessive social media use among young people is needed.

IV. PSYCHOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVES ON DIGITAL ADDICTION

4.1 Behavioural Addiction Theory

Behavioural addiction theory suggests that excessive use of digital devices may be a type of addiction, like drug and alcohol abuse. It can be a notification on social media, a win in a game or instant gratification on the Internet, and when released, dopamine makes one want to repeat it again. Teens become dependent on the Internet over a period of time and become emotionally attached.

4.2 Social Learning Theory

Bandura's social learning theory is that the adolescent observes, imitates and reinforces behaviours. Social media influencers, gaming communities and online peer groups are a major determinant of the attitudes, behaviours, words and lifestyle of adolescents.

4.3 Cognitive Behavioural Perspective

A theory of digital addiction is a cognitive behavioural approach that digital addiction is due to cognitive distortions. A socially very uncomfortable, low self-esteem, stressed out and lonely teenager might use the Internet as a means of coping with emotional distress.

V. IMPACT OF EXCESSIVE DIGITAL ENGAGEMENT ON ADOLESCENTS

5.1 Emotional and Psychological Impact

Too much digital time can lead to emotional and psychological issues, which are the most harmful side effects. The beauty, success, popularity and lifestyles on social media can be unrealistic. Adolescents tend to compare themselves to others that they see online, feel they are not good enough, have low self-esteem, are jealous, and anxious.

Overuse of Social Media has also led to emotional needs of validation via likes, comments and followers. When the attention and social approval they were seeking online don't happen, adolescents can be emotionally unstable.

Other than that, the effects of depression, stress and emotional trauma involving the cyberbullying, online harassment and social exclusion experienced are a significant element for adolescents. The Internet can also make people psychologically vulnerable,

aggressive and numb via over-exposure to upsetting content.

5.2 Cognitive Impact

Digital addiction causes poor concentration, forgetfulness, lack of attention span and poor thinking. Adolescents use memory and problem-solving skills less to remember information; instead, they use a digital device.

Frequent app-switching, for notifications or for games or social media, reduces the amount of focused attention and learning. Too much screen time can have a negative impact on adolescents' capacities to learn in-depth, reflect and think, and be cognitively flexible.

5.3 Physical Health Impact

Too much online activity is associated with a decrease in physical activity for teens. Too much screen time (Smartphones, Gaming consoles, Computers) = sitting in front of screens, obesity, sleep issues, eye strain and headaches, neck pain and fatigue.

The amount of outdoor activities, sports and face-to-face contact has decreased as a result of virtual communication and entertainment. The lack of physical activity not only impacts a person's physical health but also their emotional and psychological health.

5.4 Social and Behavioural Impact

Digital addiction can lead to deterioration of families and social relations. Adolescents prefer online interaction over offline, thus increasing their sense of isolation and decreasing interpersonal skills.

Excessive amounts of video games and social media use can result in aggressive behaviour, impulsiveness, irritability, impatience, and social distancing. In real life, teens can also have problems controlling their feelings and conflicts.

VI. COPING STRATEGIES AND EMOTIONAL RESILIENCE

Adolescents need to have healthy coping mechanisms to help manage stress, anxiety, academic pressures, emotional conflicts and social issues, so that coping can be healthy. But, too much of the digital experience can lead to having less healthy coping behaviours among adolescents.

Emotion coping skills include meditation, being mindful, journaling, music, movement, yoga,

relaxation and socialisation to help regulate emotions and develop resilience.

Emotional and social development are also very important factors in adolescence, and they should be encouraged to play sports, be creative, read, go outside and help in the community.

While there are countless negative effects of digital addiction, its effects can be greatly reduced by learning digital self-control, time management and emotional awareness.

VII. ROLE OF PARENTS, SCHOOLS, AND SOCIETY

Parents are an integral part of the youth's digital life. Having open communication, emotional support, supervision and healthy family interactions aids in developing responsible digital behaviours.

Pupils should have the skills of being digitally literate, know about mental health and become responsible digital citizens. Schools can organise counselling, awareness sessions, stress management sessions and physical exercise sessions to enhance the coping skills of adolescents.

There's a responsibility on society and media organisations to create awareness about the psychological risks of excessive use of digital media. Digital culture, the responsible use of social media and mental health promotion are the key to the protection of the well-being of adolescents.

VIII. EDUCATIONAL IMPLICATIONS OF EXCESSIVE DIGITAL ENGAGEMENT

Adolescents' dependency on digital technology is an ever-growing challenge for learning environments and schools. The time spent in excess of screen and digital addiction reduces students' focus, participation in class, learning motivation, and effective thinking. Excessive use of social media platforms and online gaming has been associated with shortened attention span, poor time management, academic procrastination and decreased academic performance in adolescents.

Digital overuse poses behavioural and psychological issues for educational institutions. The teachers feel like it is challenging to keep children's attention during lessons, as the youths are accustomed to fast-moving stimuli in digital products and multitasking. The overconsumption of short-form digital content

hinders the ability of youth to read, think and concentrate for lengthy periods.

Furthermore, their digital dependency causes sleep and emotional fatigue, thus directly affecting their academic success and behaviour in class. Late-night digital activity has a negative impact on students who are not getting adequate sleep: they are often irritable, tired, have poor memory and are not very engaged in school.

There is also a negative effect on adolescents when it comes to cyberbullying and social comparison, both through the use of digital media, which affects their self-esteem at school. Emotional upset, loss of self-esteem or disinterest in attending school and/or loss of peer relationships due to harassment via the Internet.

Therefore, digital wellness programmes, emotional counselling on the use of technology and the responsible use of technology by students should be encouraged in schools. Digital literacy education should be introduced in the education pedagogy of schools and colleges to enable adolescents to learn the skills of handling digital media, such as healthy behaviours in online media, moderation and awareness of their digital habits.

IX. SOCIAL MEDIA, IDENTITY FORMATION, AND ADOLESCENTS

Adolescence is a time of life during which identity, emotion and social adjustment are paramount. A big influence on the adolescent's self-perception and perception of others is social media. The Internet provides opportunities for adolescents to develop image, popularity, lifestyle and social acceptance identities online.

The online validation that is represented by likes, comments, shares and followers can lead adolescents to addiction. This dependency frequently leads to feelings of insecurity, low self-esteem, dissatisfaction with the body and social anxiety. Comparing myself to others, whether it be my friends, celebrities, influencers or other people I like online, is something that many teenagers can't help but do, and as a result, feel bad about themselves.

Keeping up a desirable online image can also cause emotional exhaustion and mental stress. Perhaps

teens are hiding their own feelings, putting on a show and trying to gain acceptance from others through social media.

Furthermore, the use of digital media can have a negative impact on teens' in-person communication skills and self-efficacy in person-to-person communication. Emotional warmth, empathy and social learning through human interaction are not fully conveyed through virtual interactions.

This is therefore a growing concern amongst adolescents overuse of social media and confusion of identity and emotional instability. Healthy development of identity requires a supportive family environment, emotional stability, social engagement, and emotional balance.

X. DIGITAL WELLNESS & PREVENTATIVE MEASURES

It is no exaggeration to say that in this society, promoting the digital wellness of youth is a must. Digital wellness is a balance between technology and physical, emotional, social and psychological wellness.

One of the most effective ways of avoiding them is to establish a digital activity program. Encourage children and teens to avoid using screens too much and to avoid late-night screen time. Encourage families to set up device-free meal, social, and family time.

Mindfulness, exercise, meditation, yoga and other outdoor activities are all ways to regulate emotions, and they have a measurable impact on the hope of reducing reliance on digital platforms. It is also important to encourage adolescents to engage in hobbies as well, such as reading, music, painting, sports, creative writing and volunteering.

Parent supervision is very important when it comes to preventing digital addiction. Parents need to stay in constant communication with adolescents and educate them on online safety, cyberbullying, their emotional health and social media responsibility.

The integration of Digital addiction and Mental health education as workshops, counselling sessions and awareness creation campaigns in educational institutions. Teacher interventions and counselling can help students recognise unhealthy behaviours when using the Internet and to develop healthy coping strategies.

Further, there is a need to have digital wellness policies and mental health programs for adolescents

by governments and policymakers. Public awareness campaigns can be set up to educate the public on the possible risks of using digital devices and the importance of a healthy lifestyle.

XI. RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Adolescents should have healthy screen time and spend time focusing on social activities without screens
2. Parents are to monitor and promote healthy communication with regard to digital use.
3. Digital Wellness education should be a part of the school curriculum.
4. Enhance the mental health counselling services in the school.
5. The adolescents should be encouraged to perform sports, yoga, meditation and creative works.
6. Governments and policymakers need to create awareness programs about Digital Addiction.
7. There is a need for social media platforms to have ethical means of digital engagement with adolescents.

XII. CONCLUSION

Digital technology has been a key aspect of the lives of today's young people. It has numerous educational and communicative benefits, but it has also become a psychological and social issue due to overuse. Social media and overuse of online games/digital platforms by adolescents hurt the emotional stability, cognitive functioning, physical health, behaviour, and coping mechanisms of adolescents.

Common signs for a need for a healthy digital lifestyle and mental health awareness among youth include increased prevalence of mental health issues (anxiety), emotional well-being, feelings of loneliness, sleep problems, impulsiveness and decreased physical activity.

To avoid the harmful impacts of digital addiction among adolescents, it is crucial to foster healthy coping mechanisms, emotional well-being, parental supervision, educational programs, and responsible digital behaviour. A balance between technological advancements and emotional well-being, physical fitness, and face-to-face social interaction is crucial to ensure a well-rounded development of teenagers in today's digital era.

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