Overcoming Screen Addiction among Indian Youths through Mindfulness Practices

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Abstract

This research paper explores the core insights regarding the most prevalent problems among all age groups i.e., Screen Addiction. The digital era has sunk the population into the ocean of World Wide Web further leading to over usage of screen resulting in Screen Addiction. The prevalence of Internet addiction is on the rise among youth. This research paper provides with valuable data and statistics based on the real time research of Screen Addiction among youth. The analysis is based on age specific internet addiction test, authored by Kimberly Young, which is a valid and internationally recognized test. Samples of 800 students across India, from varied colleges, institutions, schools and youth camps was collected to categorize them among the normal, moderate and severely addicted individuals. Various terminologies such as technology addiction, internet addiction, and social media addiction are employed in this study, encompassing devices like mobiles, computers, laptops, tablets, and televisions. Further the research paper also provides with a very practical and pragmatic approach to overcome this Screen Addiction through Mindfulness.

Keywords- Screen Addiction, Social Media Addiction, Mindfulness, Digital Detox.

1. Introduction

Over the past few years, screen addiction has emerged as a significant research area due to its increasing prevalence. The prevalence of screen addiction differs globally, varying between 8.90% in Eastern countries and 4.60% in Western countries. The 21st century has fostered scientific innovations along with technological advancements, 21st century is the age of information, where use of screen is not merely to watch cinema, but exist in every small household, village, town or city, capturing the eyes of every community, professionals, students, and even children. Screen addiction refers to disturbance in daily routine, which causes behavioral changes. Screen Addiction also known as Digital or technological addiction is a compulsive use of electronic devices like smartphones, tablets, computers to such an extent of time that it interferes your daily social life, physical health, emotional health, familial relations or school work. The average daily online time has reached 6.7 hours. However, persistent or recurrent engagement with digital media, encompassing various devices like computers and smartphones, as well as activities such as gaming and social media interactions, poses the risk of developing digital addiction (Christakis, 2019; WHO, 2014).

Screen Addiction is the outcome of excessive use of screen, however there is a scientific reason behind screen addiction, which connects to the hormone Dopamine. Dopamine, also regarded as the feel-good hormone, is secreted every time an individual feel pleasure in any activity. And using screen for purposes like gaming, entertainment, social media scrolling, prompting AI, etc., releases dopamine, which gives a feeling of happiness to the user, and as a result the user attempts to use the screen again for the same specific purpose, and likewise it becomes a habitual pattern, causing screen addiction. Screen addiction is not specifically only about, mobile addiction but it refers to a wide umbrella covering every type of screen, right from the 90s black and white television, to the latest super computers, from mobile phones to video games, Screen Addiction has it all. Screen addiction encompasses various forms of addictive behaviours related to technology use, including the well-established issue of Internet addiction, the widely discussed problem of gaming addiction, and the emerging concern of social media addiction. Thus, Screen Addiction is the main head from which branches numerous other terminologies which fall under the sub heads of screen Addiction.

- Technology Addiction- In 2013, Griffiths introduced the concept of technology addiction, defining it as non-chemical but behavioural actions characterized by intense human-machine interaction. Technology addiction is often manifested in passive behaviours such as watching TV, playing video games, and engaging in online chat sessions. Technology addiction is a trending type of screen addiction, where individuals use screen for more than normal time limit due to technology.

- Internet Addiction- As of January 2024, the global number of active digital users stands at 5.35 billion for the Internet, 4.32 billion for mobile Internet. Internet Addiction demonstrates the over usage of internet for unimportant activities of least importance. Online shopping, watching useless you tube videos, shorts, reels, stem from Internet Addiction.

- Social Media Addiction- Social Media Addiction refers to the excessive use of social media sites such as Instagram, WhatsApp, Facebook, twitter, TikTok. Aimless scrolling, continuously opening social media apps, are the signs of social media addiction.

Effects of Screen Addiction on Youth

- Behavioral changes like Anger issues, FOMO, lack of focus
- Mental health issues like Anxiety, stress, depression, sleep disturbances
- Physical health issues like eye strain, obesity, musculoskeletal pain
- Adversely affects academic performance
- Lack of Social development due to isolation and prolonged time over screen
- Lack of knowledge of real world, due to living in a virtual world

Key Research

The paper is based on real-time, ground research consisting of the samples of 800 youths collected from across India, from a number of colleges, institutions, schools, and youth camps within the age group of 15-25 years, through the questionnaire, circulated among them.

Key Findings

Following is the tabular representation complied out of the raw data collected from 800 youths, from different places around India. The data is segregated into three heads namely, normal usage, representing students with 20-49 points, the second Moderate stage, ranging between 50-79 points, and finally the severe stage, which suggests the all-time highest use of screen ranging between 80-100 points.

Table 1.1: Data of level of addiction among youths

Level of Addiction	Range of points in test	No. of Students (in %)
Normal Usage	20-49	42.625
Moderate Addiction	50-79	52.25
Severely Addicted	80-100	5.125

Diagram 1.1: Pie chart of the Data
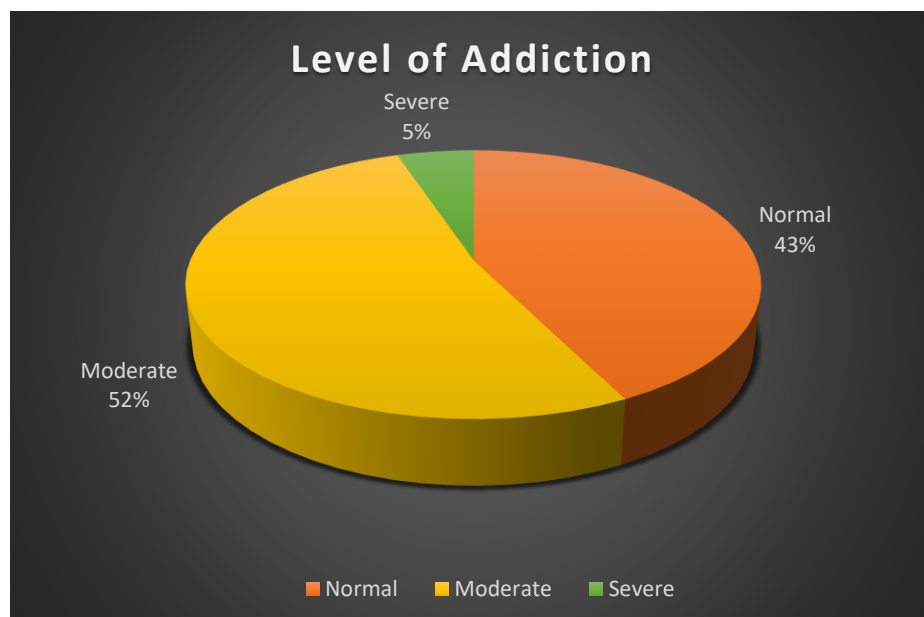
Key Observations

From the above presentation of data the observations are as follows: -

- Normal Usage- 42.625% students scored between 20-49 in the test, hence they fall under the category of normal screen usage. This signifies that they are not highly addicted to screens but use the screen only for useful and required purposes, for a limited or less period of time.

- Moderate Addiction- 52.25 students scored between 50-79 in the test, thus they fall under the category of Moderate Addiction and they need to work on themselves. Here the students/ youths make moderate use of screen, meaning they make a high use of screen for a period of time ranging between 3-4 hours. However, moderately addicts are on the border line of getting addicted, they are in the dependant stage, where one is totally dependant on mobile phones. Studies show that withdrawl symtoms are common for both the stages dependant as well as addiction. Hence, taking counselling and therapy to reduce the screen use is necesarry for the moderately addicted individuals

- Severly Addicted- 5.125 students scored between 80-100, therefore they fall under the category of severe addicts of screen, this demonstrates that they make use of screen for more than 4 hours on daily basis, and are highly addicted to screen. They need to focus on themselves and work harder in screen time management. Their behavious becomes more impulsive and aggressive, so they might also need a proper guided intervention such as behavioural therapies and professional help.

- From the above data, the observation marks that maximum no. of youth are moderately addicted to screens and they need to work on themselves. Screen addiction brings out the compulsive behaviour of the individual. 52% is a huge number, almost more than 50% of youth is moderately addicted, which signifies the border line of addiction, and it is not a good sign for the future of the youth themselves, the nation and the world.

Key Solutions

1. Mindfulness
   Rooted in the ancient vedic times, mindfulness is a holistic and yoga based practice. Overviewing the above findings and outcomes of the given data, it is predicted that the best way to reduce the screen time and make an efficient use of screen is through mindfulness. Mindfulness is the practice of intentionally focusing on a particular task at a time with full concentration and living in present. Mindfulness allows one to be creative, and perform extraordinary tasks, making an efficient use of their brilliant minds and precious time. Mindfulness encompasses a number of practices such as Mindful eating, mindful gaming, mindful watching of television, mindful bathing, mindful walk in the nature, mindful studing etc. Yet the most effective of all to elevate yourself is mindfulness meditation. For tackling screen addiction, Mindfulness has a number of branches like, Mindful use of technology, mindful scrolling, mindful screen use, mindful net surfing and mindful viewing of television.

- Screen addiction causes behavioural changes and an emotional hijack of the mind. Social media leads to a down trend of self esteem, which causes a person to live in either past or future, furthermore, the fake news trending on social media causes an individual to worry about the future which they have not even seen. Information overload is another reason for over thinking, and dilemma in decision making. So here mindfulness is a tool that helps one to take a pause and live in the present. Mindfulness is the pause between the stimulus and response as well as it helps one to filter the information to enhance one's decision making power. Mindful use of technology is a

technique to overcome the issue of excessive screen use, by intentionally keeping an account of no. of hours spent on screen for the use of technology. It involves to limit the use of technology and instead exploring traditional and creative means of recreation.

- Mindful Scrolling is a technique to tackle the aimless scrolling habits pushing youths into the catergory to social media addicts. Mindful scrolling demands one to keep a check of his/her no. of hours of scrolling without any purpose over various social media sites. Mindful scrolling do not disable one from scrolling over social media but it definitely limits the time span of scrolling, resulting in limiting the screen time and thereby breaking the habitual pattern of scrolling.

- Mindful Screen usage enables one to go through the daily routine and watch out for his/her use of screen in a day. If the time exceeds the limit of more than normal, then taking a step forward one should mindfully avoid the use of screen whenever possible, by reminding oneself over and over again to avoid screen.

- Shifting the social media apps like whatsapp, facebook, instagram, twitter, gaming apps, online shopping apps, to desktop or laptop from the mobile phones, can be a quick solution to reduce the use of mobile phone. As we clean our houses regularly, cleaning up the gadgets and clearing their memory storage is also necessary, so delete the unwanted apps which are time-consuming, addictive and not useful.

- Mindful practices involve, intentionally focusing on the task one is doing in the moment, so to avoid any hinderances in the way of mindfulness due to continue buzzing of notifications poping up on the screen, on should mute all the notifications and keep the mobile phones upside down, such that the screen is facing down towards the table. This simple practice will allow one to disable the obstacles and distractions.

- Mindfulness Meditation is the most suggested practice for not just tackling Screen addiction but also to shape ones personality. Mindfulness meditation helps one to enhance focus and attention, increase the overall cognitive performance which is very importamt for youth. On a larger scale mindfulness meditation is a valuable tool in combating screen addiction by helping individuals develop self awareness, emotional regulation and a greater ability to resist impulsive behaviours which are all outcomes and effects of screen addiction.

2. Digital detox is characterized as a "duration wherein an individual abstains from the utilization of their electronic devices, such as smartphones, seen as a chance to alleviate stress or concentrate on in-person social interaction" (Oxford Dictionaries, 2019). This interpretation presents digital detox as a temporary break from electronic devices, akin to a period of fasting. Digital detox emphasizes an effort to raise awareness of excessive use and boost self-optimization to reduce stress.

2. Conclusion

From the above research the observations can be drawn that, screen addiction, can prove to be fatal, but by taking corrective measures, like regular practice of mindfulness, screen free hours, spending time with near and dear ones, then it can prove to be an effective and efficient tool to tackle the issue of screen addiction. Mindfulness allows one to focus on a particular task at a time, concentrating solely over that job, and this mechnaism allows one to keep a check of his/her activities, and thereby sort out the differences between overusage of screen and efficient as well as limited use of screen. Mindfulness works

as an insulator from the currents of screen addiction. It is a positive sign that no. of severe screen addiction is low to 5%, but on the other hand, considering the high statistics of moderately addicted youths, it is a crucial stage, as more than half of the youth population is on the border line of getting screen addicts. Thus overcoming screen addiction is the need of the time.

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