Research Article

Indian Journal of Extension Education
Vol. 61, No. 4 (October–December), 2025, (14-18)

ISSN 0537-1996 (Print)
ISSN 2454-552X (Online)

Disruptions in Lifestyle Due to Escalating Screen Time: A Behavioural Perspective

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HIGHLIGHTS

- Highlights a strong association between increased screen time and significant difficulties in managing household responsibilities.
- Screen time was higher on weekends than on weekdays, and no notable gender differences in the tendency to remain engaged with screen media.
- There was a significant association between increased screen time and a decrease in outdoor activities, with no gender difference.

ARTICLE INFO

Keywords: Screen time, Outdoor activities, Adolescents, Household activities.

https://doi.org/10.48165/IJEE.2025.61403

Citation: Gupta, R., & Vatta, L. (2025). Disruptions in lifestyle due to escalating screen time: A behavioural perspective. *Indian Journal of Extension Education, 61*(4), 14-18. https://doi.org/10.48165/IJEE.2025.61403

ABSTRACT

Heavy reliance on screen media can negatively affect the daily lives and activities of adolescents and youth. The study aims to find out the association between increased screen time and its impact on lifestyle among adolescents and youth. Cross-sectional descriptive research was conducted for this purpose between March and August of 2023. The stratified random sampling method was used to select 200 participants from the age group of 14-18 years. After getting a permission letter from the District Inspector Officer of Schools (DIOS), participants were approached from various selected schools in Varanasi District, Uttar Pradesh. In this study, a self-structured questionnaire with twenty-two closed-ended questions was included. The study findings highlighted that increased screen time was found to be negatively associated with outdoor activities, backlogs from household activities, and the inability to draw attention from the screen. The results also indicated that there were no distinct gender differences in the tendency to continue using screens after using them and that screen use was higher on weekends than on weekdays.

INTRODUCTION

The establishment of habits and behaviours during adolescence is a crucial developmental stage that lays the foundation for future health outcomes. Lifestyle decisions that one adapts during these formative years can extend long-term behavioural effects that persist into adulthood (Lioret et al., 2020). Adolescents often prefer to spend their time with their friends or alone as they seek independence. During this developmental phase, digital media plays a crucial role, offering easy access through a variety of screen-based devices that are the easy to "escape" from their parents and they easily partake in extremely satisfying activities like online gaming (Wong et al., 2019). This somehow becomes the daily routine for individuals and results in increased screen time. It has significantly increased across all age groups due to the widespread integration of digital technology into daily life, which has raised concerns about its possible effects on health, especially in behavioural changes such as an individual's involvement in their social activities. Recent data suggests that people use screens for an average of six hours and forty minutes per day worldwide; this amount has increased consistently over the past decade (Alarming Average Screen Time Statistics, 2025).

By offering an abundance of information and services, the internet has greatly enhanced people's lives and brought at ease. The widespread usage of the internet and technology, which is especially noticeable among young people, it has become an essential part of adolescent education, professional endeavours, and daily life. Excessive use of digital devices interferes with learning, which

Received 24-06-2025; Accepted 19-08-2025

lowers motivation for achievement and attentiveness in the classroom (Yadav & Dube, 2025). People's lives, jobs, leisure activities, and social interactions are all being altered by the ongoing development of internet technology. Although these technological developments have made communication and information gathering easier, there has also been an increase in psychological problems associated with excessive internet use (Scott et al., 2017).

Increased social media use is linked to mental health issues, including body surveillance, online harassment, poor sleep, low self-esteem, rejection, loneliness, sadness, anxiety, and despair (Coyne et al., 2019). Time spent on social media correlates with mental health problems among late adolescents and emerging adults (Yamini & Pujar, 2022). The negative impacts of social media also become apparent when it is used excessively. Malpractices such as logging into others' accounts, sharing irrelevant photos and videos, hacking accounts, and the lack of privacy in online transactions are among the primary concerns for internet users. Pandey et al., (2020), conducted an investigation into social media usage among college students, emphasizing the prevalent use of social media platforms, particularly WhatsApp and Facebook. The study found that students dedicated a substantial amount of time to these platforms and reported experiencing various health issues as a result of engaging in non-essential activities on digital devices. The purpose of this study is to determine whether there is an association between increased screen usage and its effects on lifestyle.

METHODOLOGY

A cross-sectional descriptive research design was employed to examine the lifestyle changes associated with increasing screen time. Based on its demographic traits and relevance to the study's objectives, the Varanasi district was chosen for the purpose of this study. The survey was administered in March 2023 to August 2023 as a cross-sectional study involving 200 adolescents, studying in different schools in the Varanasi District of Uttar Pradesh. Consent was obtained from the school Principals and students for their voluntary involvement in this study. A stratified random sampling method was used to ensure representation of key subgroups within the population. The strata were formed on the basis of school type 9 government and private and gender (male and female). A self-structured tool was developed and validated by different subject matter specialists. The interview schedule comprised twenty two close-ended questions related to internet using patterns and lifestyle changes. The target population for this research was selected based on the criterion that the sample would consist of adolescents and who use the screen as a part of their daily lives. A permission letter was granted from the District Officer of Schools (DIOS). Participants in the age group of 14-18 years were approached from different selected schools. Participants were directly approached in their respective schools during the data collection process. Participants received clear instructions on how to complete the items, and any uncertainties were addressed prior to their progression. The research was split into two parts: Initially participants read the information sheet, and completed the demographic details; then they were asked to fill information regarding their internet related behaviour. Data was entered in MS Excel spreadsheet and analysis was done using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) V.21.0. To compare quantitative variables among groups, χ^2 test was used in bivariate analysis at p=<0.05 to examine variables related to internet using pattern and behavioural changes among participants.

RESULTS

Demographic analysis revealed that the gender distribution of the 200 participants was nearly equal, with 49.5 per cent (99) of girls and boys making up half 50.5 per cent (101), while in academic levels were mainly intermediate students (38.8%), followed by 9th (27) majority of the respondents belonged to rural (39.8%) and urban area (40.2%), and the least belonged to towns (19.4%). The mean age group of the respondents was 16.16 ±1.15 years (Range: 14-18 years). Adolescents were more likely to 91% (N=200) of the participants, accounted for had their smartphone, and those who did not have their smartphone, were using their parents' smartphone. It was interesting to note that no one ever said that he did not use the digital gadgets.

Table 1. Association between gender and tendency to stay on screen after phone use (N=200)

Gender	Yes (%)	No (%)	Sometimes (%) χ^2/P-value
Male	34	39	28.680/.712
Female	28	41	30

Table 1 illustrates association between gender and tendency to stay on screen after phone use. Participants were asked about whether they continued paying the attention after using their devices like completing an initial task, such as browsing social media or using a specific app. Responses showed that 34 per cent of male respondents reported continued use their screens, 39 per cent denied, and 27.7 per cent did so occasionally. For the female respondents, 28.3 per cent selected "yes," 41.4 per cent selected "no," and 30.3 per cent selected "sometimes."

To determine whether there is a significant correlation between gender and the frequency of subsequent staying on the screen, a chi-square test was used. The findings indicate that there is no discernible gender difference in this behaviour ($\chi^2 = 0.680$, $p > 0.05$).

The study explores the correlation between screen time duration and the reduction in outdoor activities. The data, as summarized in the accompanying table, reveal a statistically significant relationship between these variables, as indicated by the

Table 2. Association between screen time and reduction in outdoor activities (N=200)

Time spent on Screen	Reduction in outdoor activities (%)			χ^2/ P-value
	Yes	No	Sometimes	
Up to 1 hour	7.4	77.8	14.8	77.59/
2 to 4 hours	48.5	29.1	22.3	0.0001
5 to 8 hours	76.5	3.9	19.6	
9 to 12 hours	100	0	0	
Throughout the day/ multiple times in a day	23	46.1	30.7	

$\chi^2 = 77.59$, $p < 0.0001$. This suggests a strong association between the amount of time spent online and the extent of reduction in physical outdoor engagement. The findings illustrate that screen usage profoundly impacts outdoor activities, with clear trends emerging across different time intervals. For individuals who spend up to 1 hour per day on screen, the majority (77.8%) reported no reduction in their outdoor activities, while only a small proportion (14.8%) indicated a potential decrease. As screen usage increases to 2 to 4 hours per day, a noticeable shift occurs. Approximately 48.5 per cent of respondents in this category reported a reduction in outdoor activities, while 29.1 per cent indicated no change and 22.3 per cent were uncertain. The data showed a more pronounced effect for those using the screen for 5 to 8 hours per day. In this category, a significant 76.5 per cent of participants reported a reduction in outdoor activities, with only 3.9 per cent noting no change and 19.6 per cent remaining uncertain.

Table 3. Association between current screen time and perceived increase in usage (N=200)

Time spent on screen	Self-reported increase in screen timing (%)			χ^2/ P-value
	Yes	No	Sometimes	
Up to 1 hour	11.0	74.0	14.8	
2 to 4 hours	42.7	32.0	25.2	43.36
5 to 8 hours	53.0	23.5	23.5	/<0.01
9 to 12 hours	100.0	0.0	0.0	
Throughout the day/ multiple times in a day	92.0	7.0	0.0	

The results reveal a clear and significant association with a chi-square statistic of $\chi^2 = 43.36$ and p-value = <0.01, indicating a highly significant relationship between the duration of screen and an increase in screen time. Individuals who report spending up to 1 hour on the internet predominantly indicate no increase in screen time, with 74 per cent of respondents falling into this category. This suggests that limited screen time usage was less likely to significantly affect overall screen time. Conversely, those who spend between 2 to 4 hours online exhibit a notable association with increased screen time, with 42.7 per cent reporting such an increase. This association became more pronounced for individuals who spend between 5 to 8 hours online, where a substantial majority (53%) report an increase in screen time. This trend showed a distinct pattern: Longer daily screen time was associated with a higher likelihood of excessive use. For individuals who spend between 9 to 12 hours on screen, the relationship became absolute, with 100 per cent of respondents reporting an increase in screen time. Similarly, among those who use the screen media throughout the day or multiple times a day, 92 per cent reported an increase in screen time. This finding reinforces the observed trend and underscores the strong relationship between prolonged internet use and increased screen time.

The results revealed a clear and significant trend (χ^2= 46.26/ P-value <0.01) indicating that increased internet usage was associated with a greater likelihood of experiencing a backlog in household responsibilities. Individuals with minimal use (up to 1 hour) on the screen reported lower disruption with nearly half

Table 4. Association between screen time and backlog from household activities (N=200)

Time spent on Screen	Backlog from household activities (%)			χ^2/ P-value
	Yes	No	Sometimes	
Up to 1 hour	29.6	48.1	22.2	
2 to 4 hours	21.1	42.3	36.5	46.26/
5 to 8 hours	29.4	35.2	35.2	<0.01
9 to 12 hours	92.3	0	7.6	
Throughout the day/ multiple times in a day	100	0	0	

reporting no backlog of household activities. This suggests that minimal screen time had a relatively moderate effect on household management, with a substantial portion of individuals not perceiving significant disruption in their ability to handle household tasks. A notable proportion of respondents reported occasional issues with managing household responsibilities, reflecting the potential for moderate screen time to impact household management. Although the data indicate that a substantial proportion of respondents still did not perceive a significant backlog, there was a noticeable trend towards increased reports of backlog with extended time on screen The data become more pronounced for individuals who spend between 9 to 12 hours on screen with 92.3 per cent reporting a backlog of household activities and none reporting no backlog. Only 7.6 per cent experience a backlog sometimes. For individuals using the screen throughout the day or multiple times daily, 100 per cent reported a backlog of household activities, with no respondents reporting no backlog or occasional backlog. This absolute association underscores the severe impact of continuous and frequent screen use on household management, indicating a complete disruption of daily routines.

The findings of Table 5, revealed a clear trend between increased screen time and psychological stress or a feeling of boredom. As screen time increased, especially beyond 9 hours per day or with continuous use throughout the day, the percentage of respondents who claimed they felt psychological discomfort increased dramatically to 92.3 per cent and 100 per cent, respectively. Conversely, those who spent one to four hours a day reported less discomfort and a larger spectrum of responses. A chi-square test (χ^2= 49.83, $p < 0.001$) shows that screen time has a statistically significant psychological impact. For individuals spending up to one hour online, 29.6 per cent reported experiencing psychological discomfort due to their screen time, while 48 per cent

Table 5. Association between screen time and feelings of stress/ boredom/ anxiety/ inescapability (N=200)

Time spent on the screen	Psychological discomfort (%)			χ^2/ P-value
	Yes	No	Sometimes	
Up to 1 hour	29.6	48.0	22.2	
2 to 4 hours	21.0	42.3	36.5	49.83/
5 to 8 hours	29.4	35.2	35.2	<0.001
9 to 12 hours	92.3	00.0	7.6	
Throughout the day/ Multiple times in a day	100.0	00.0	0	

did not encounter such a discomfort and 22.2 per cent experienced it occasionally. This suggests that for relatively short durations of screen time, the experience of psychological discomfort was moderate, with a significant proportion of users not perceiving it.

DISCUSSION

The study findings reveal that increased screen time is significantly associated with lifestyle disruptions. Greater screen usage is associated with more pronounced lifestyle changes. No significant gender differences ($\chi^2 = 0.680$, $p = > 0.05$) were observed in terms of continued screen engagement or persistent attention on devices even after usage. Previous study reported mixed results: Moitra et al., (2021) found that girls reported excessive screen time, whereas another study by Maurya et al., (2022) found that adolescent males spent more time on smartphones than adolescent females. These findings align with another study of China by Cui et al., (2022), who also reported no significant gender-based differences in screen time. That may be because of their common motivations, such as the need to connect with others, be entertained, or take a break from the real world, behind-screen engagement. Several empirical studies (Chen et al., 2017) support the idea that, even if there are differences between males' and females' screen activity, the strength of the desire to remain involved following phone use is similar for both genders. Additionally, the current study reveals that screen time tends to be higher on weekends than on weekdays, which is consistent with the findings of Hodes & Thomas (2021). There is a significant association between time spent on screen and impact on decrease in outdoor activities ($\chi^2 = 77.59$, $p < 0.0001$). This result is consistent with previous literature (Moitra et al., 2022; Zong et al., 2024) showing that excessive screen time is associated with outdoor activities among both genders. These inequitable use patterns stem from significant demographic disparities and correlate with reduced nature connection and potential youth development implications. Larson et al., (2019) found a significant inverse correlation between screen time and outdoor time ($r = –. 292$, $p <. 001$), indicating that outdoor activities were less frequent with more screen exposure. However, this study also finds there is no significant gender difference between an increase in screen time and a decrease in outdoor activities ($\chi^2 = 3.78$, $p = >0.05$). Additionally, this study found that the respondents recognised that they were spending more time in front of screens. Those who reported spending more time on screens were also more likely to report that their consumption of screens had increased. And those who had less exposure to screens did not notice a significant change. A number of reasons have led to this rising surge of screen time, such as dependence on digital media for entertainment, academic study, and social media involvement. The ubiquity of online content and the limitless access to it, together with habitual scrolling and the Fear of Missing Out (FoMO), could also support screen time among youth. The current study also emphasizes how increased screen time, particularly in adolescents and young adults, interferes with the backlog of household activities. This finding is consistent with Scheerder et al., (2019), who noted that as digital technologies become more commonplace, it's getting harder to manage and distinguish household chores from other activities, particularly those that include screens, such as social media, internet surfing, and video viewing. The study found that increased internet usage is strongly associated with stress, boredom, anxiety, and a sense of inescapability. These findings align with Keles et al., (2020), who reported that excessive internet use, especially among youth, leads to psychological distress and compulsive behaviour driven by emotional coping mechanisms.

CONCLUSION

The study highlights the significant impact of lifestyle changes among adolescents and youth due to increased screen time. The findings suggest that prolonged exposure to screen time can had a negative effect on their outdoor day-to-day activities and elevate their anxiety, a sense of inescapability, and their urge to use more screens. The findings also suggest that the screen time tends to be higher on weekends than on weekdays. Overall, the study shows that we need to be more aware of balanced screen use. It calls for actions that promote time management, digital skills, and lifestyle adjustments, especially for young people. These are important findings for any policy considerations regarding the balance between digital consumption and real-world participation, especially for adolescent and youth well-being.

DECLARATIONS

Ethics approval and informed consent: Informed consent was sought from the school Principals and students for their voluntary involvement in this study during the course of the research.

Conflict of interest: The authors declare that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.

The authors declare that during the preparation of this work, they thoroughly reviewed, revised, and edited the content as needed. The authors take full responsibility for the final content of this publication.

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