

## Psychological effects and changes in the lifestyle of young individuals due to exposure to digital media

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### ABSTRACT

**Background & Aim:** Digital media is the most recent form of media and has many features and characteristics. It has many facilities on the same channel as communicating, texting, images sharing, audio and video sharing, fast publishing, linking with all over the world, direct connecting. It is also the cheapest fast access to the world so it is very important for all ages of peoples. The aim of this study is to elucidate the effects of digital media on the psychological and lifestyle changes in young individuals.

**Materials and Methods:** A questionnaire containing 15 questions was created and validated. 350 responses were received. The responses were tabulated and graphical representations were made. Chisquare analysis was done.

**Results:** Three hundred and fifty individuals participated in this study, of which 58.2% (n= 203) were males and the majority of the respondents were students 58.8% (n=206). The common activities leading to excessive usage was to watch series/movies 42.2% (n=148) and keeping updated 34.5% (n=121). Of the 350 individuals, 61.6% (n= 216) of the individuals feel that the content they watch online affects their mood, and about 75.4% (n= 263) participants feel that it is very important to get likes on their posts. The need to procrastinate is also on the rise with almost 62.1% (n=217). Exposure to such globalized knowledge has brought in positive changes in 57.5% (n=201) of the individual's lifestyle and has also influenced some major decisions in life 43.7% (n=153). 77.65% (n=272) of individuals also feel that the exposure to digital media has widened their viewpoints about merchandise and products.

**Conclusion:** A healthy mind gets progress in a healthy physique. The youth should avoid excessive use of social media. They should be balanced in their life and give proper time to the co-curricular activities in their daily life routine.

**Key-words:** Digital Media, Screen Time, Psychological Effects, Lifestyle

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### Introduction

Digital media refers to an umbrella term for all types of electronic data that is created, edited, stored, or accessed in a digital form. This is intended to reach out and influence people widely. Digital media offers many features and characteristics. It has many facilities on the same channel as communicating, texting, images sharing, audio, and video sharing, fast publishing, linking with all over the world as well as directly connecting the two opposite poles of the earth. It is also the cheapest fast access to the world so it is a very essential part

of the lives of people of all age groups. The heightened use of social media platforms has led to many negative as well as positive criticisms. The World Health Organization (2010) recommends that adults should engage in more than 150 minutes of physical activity of moderate intensity (e.g., walking briskly) per week, or at least 75 min of vigorous physical

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activity (e.g., jogging, playing tennis, or soccer). However, one in four adults is too inactive held up to these standards. Given the imperative role of regular physical activity in maintaining mental and physical health and well-being in the community, the constant exposure to digital media which is available through various sources becomes the first roadblock to achieve physical and mental well-being of an individual. There are many studies that throw light on the deleterious effects of digital media, the amount of screen time that young individuals use leading to various health issues, the rates of anxiety and depression and the sedentary lifestyle led by young individuals (1).

Very few studies talk about the positive aspects of digital media (2). Exposure to digital media has led to a lot of changes in the lifestyle of individuals who have gained a lot from this exposure to more worldwide information. The diversified views on issues, globalization through cultural events, the unification of data, and all these factors influence a positive vibe to digital media; which is often foreshadowed by the pitfalls of the same. The aim of this study is to elucidate the effects of digital media on the psychological and lifestyle changes in young individuals. The negative, as well as the positive outcomes of the usage of digital media, is being discussed.

## Materials and methods

### Study population

This study was conducted with 350 individuals; these samples were selected based on the inclusion and exclusion criteria. Inclusion criteria included were young individuals from the ages of 11 to > 25 years of age, who resided in Chennai. The exclusion criteria included individuals who were not willing to participate in the survey.

### Data collection

A questionnaire consisting of 15 questions was created and circulated across institutes in Chennai and snowballing of the questionnaire

was done. The questionnaire consisted of questions that addressed the general usage, the content they stream, lifestyle changes, effects on mood, and decisions made by these individuals. Questions were also asked about habits such as procrastination, eating habits, and effect on studies and other work. 350 responses were received. All the received responses were tabulated and the results were represented graphically.

## Results

### Demographic data

Three hundred and fifty individuals participated in this study, of which 58.2% (n= 203) were males and the majority of the respondents were students 58.8% (n=206) while a smaller proportion were the people belonging to a much elder age group 40.5% (n=142). This shows that the use of social media is widely used by all the youngsters of society.

### Usage of digital media and screen time

Figure 1 shows the common activities leading to excessive usage of digital media forms to watch series/movies 42.2% (n=148), keeping updated 34.5% (n=121), meme 15.1% (n=53) and sharing their experiences in blogs and creativity 6.2% (n=22). And the average screen time is depicted in figure 2, which the maximum number of respondents using for more than 3 hours per day.

### Psychological effects

The type of content streamed by young individuals varies as shown in figure 3 and this has led to a diversified psychological effect. Of the 350 individuals, 61.6% (n= 216) of individuals feel that the content they watch online affects their mood.

The negative impacts of social media are typically attributed to unrealistic depictions and the obsessive need to be noticed and “liked”, in our study we found that about 75.4% (n= 263) participants feel that it is very important to get likes on their posts.

### Lifestyle changes

We also have noticed that the majority 75.9% (n=265) ignore their primary focus on their study and research-related activities while utilizing the facility of the internet in

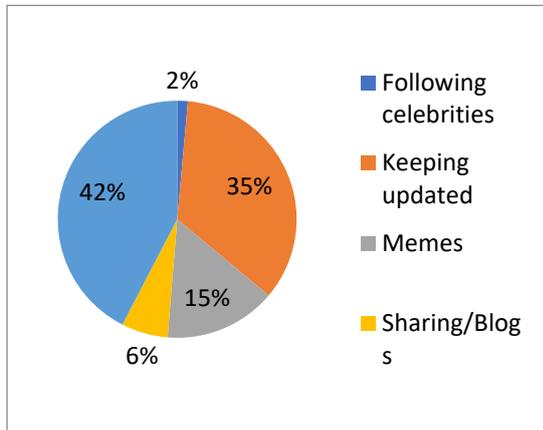


Figure 1: Common activities leading to excessive usage of digital media.

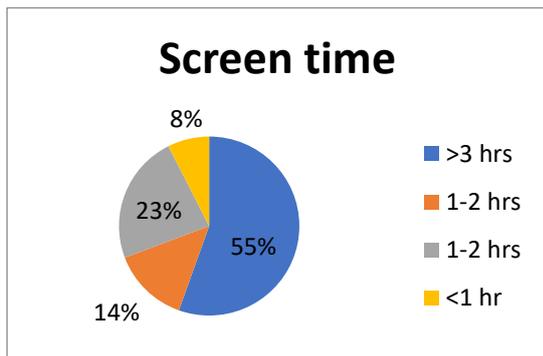


Figure 2: Average screen time.

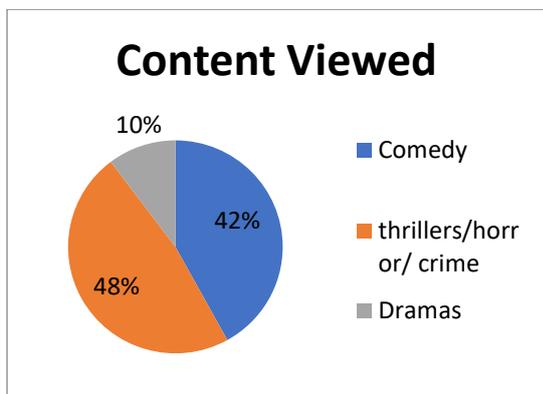


Figure 3: Content streamed by young individuals.

connecting with their friends and watching series/ movies. Of the 350 individuals 76% (n=266) of them often get influenced by their friends and associates to watch a particular series or movie. Almost 62.1% (n=217) of the participants agreeing to the fact that they often push-off work and often procrastinate since they are “hooked on” to the screens. Digital media has its pitfalls but with the optimum use of the internet, a lot of benefits can be extracted from this vast source of knowledge. Exposure to such globalized knowledge has brought in positive changes in 57.5% (n=201) of the individual’s lifestyle and has also influenced some major decisions in life 43.7% (n=153). The more recent effects include “binge eating” which is highly prevalent among the study group of 74.7% (n=261). 77.65% (n=272) of individuals also feel that exposure to digital media has widened their view points about merchandise and products, which again plays an important role in the psychological development of an individual. Since young adults were the majority of the study population it has to be taken note that there are many positive effects of digital media on the psychological development of the individual characteristics.

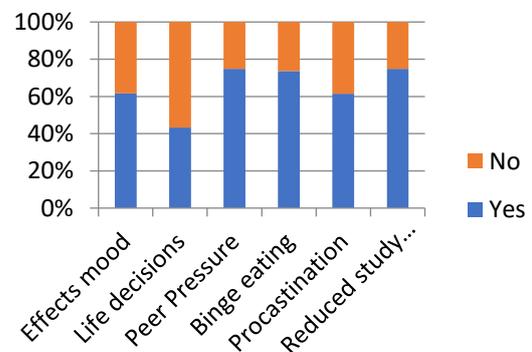


Figure 4: Life style changes and psychological changes seen due to exposure to digital media.

### Discussion

There are varying opinions concerning beneficial or harmful mental and physical health effects of digital media usage. Technology use patterns are changing from very distinct uses like TV viewing to more diverse uses of screens throughout the day.

While technologies like radio (3) or television (4) only support a small number of activities, digital devices such as smartphones or tablets are now the host of an increasingly diverse array of activities ranging from radio and television, to gaming, reading and social media browsing (5) (6). In our study, we found that majority of the respondents were students and young adults which is in coherence with the statistical data recorded in India which suggests that two-thirds of internet users in India are in the age group of 12-29 years. Most concerns about digital technologies, whether substantiated by evidence (7) or not (8), focus on the so-called 'screen time'. Screen time is the amount of time a user spends interacting with screens during a specific time frame. The amount of screen time engaged in has risen in the past years, while the amount of time spent solely watching TV has fallen (9).

In our study, we have found that the digital media is a source of information as well as a pastime, about 42.4% of the participants use digital media to watch movies and series and about 34.6% use the forum to keep updated. There is an everlasting list of series, movies, podcasts available that often distracts us and leads to a lot of negative effects that are often related to the overuse of digital media. We found that about 62.1% of the individuals often procrastinate and about 76% of the individuals also succumb under peer pressure. The type of content that we get exposed to plays an important role in the mood changes, behaviours, and psyche of the individual.

The negative impacts of social media are typically attributed to unrealistic depictions and the obsessive need to be noticed and "liked", in our study, we found that about 75.4% (n=263) participants feel that it is very important to get likes on their posts. This feeling of inadequacy and low self-esteem can lead to negative impacts that like increased levels of depression, anxiety and body image. The more recent side effects include "binge eating" which is highly prevalent among the study group 74.7% (n=261).

Thrillers are designed to create suspense and

terror, but the creation of these feelings is dependent not on the presence of mutilation, gore, or the supernatural but via more human devices. These boundaries, however, can be fuzzy. Bozzuto (1975) described four adults who developed abnormal stress behaviour within a day of watching the film; participants reported insomnia, excitability, hyperactivity, irritability, and decreased appetite. A horror film, while designed to evoke fear and panic has no significant long-term consequences that can impair an individual's mental, social, and occupational function (10). While there is no evidence that exposure to horror films has adverse or sustained effects on mental health in individuals with no pre-existing mental health issue, there is evidence that watching horror films can lead to self-reported short-term anxiety and disturbed sleep (11).

In spite of all the above ill effects of digital media, it has to be taken into note that digital media has led to a lot of lifestyle changes and also influenced some major decisions in life (n=153). 74.2% of the sampled population agrees with this argument that the positive use of digital media forms can bring socio-political awareness, enhance the different skills like increase language proficiency, develop online communication skills and create broader visionary power and connectivity.

This is the first study showing both the negative effects and the positive effects of digital media on young Indian individuals. Through this study we have elucidated on the fact that in spite of the negative effects of digital media; there is a multi-fold of positive effects and knowledge available on the internet.

Social media can easily make people feel as if they are not good enough which can then lead to negative feelings and desire to alter yourself or your life. These negative feelings and the desire to alter yourself or your life is harmful to one's mental health. Whereas, the growing awareness of physical health issues, as well as mental well-being and constant striving towards betterment has led to a lot of positive effects on young developing minds.

## Conclusion

A balanced lifestyle is important for a healthy mind. The youth should avoid excessive use of social media. They should be balanced in their life and give proper time to the co-curricular activities in their daily life routine. This study has elucidated the use of digital media in everyday life and its effects on the youth.

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