

The Influence of Peer Pressure on Screen Addiction: A Case Study of Adolescents in a Post-Globalization Context

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to investigate the impact of peer pressure on screen addiction among adolescents in Sri Lanka in the digital age. The study aims to determine the prevalence of screen addiction, determine the degree of screen addiction, analyze the role of peer pressure in screen addiction behavior, and identify socioculturally associated factors in relation to screen addiction. The study employed a mixed methods approach consisting of a questionnaire survey and semi-structured interviews with adolescents aged 13-19. The sample was stratified random, across Sri Lanka. The findings demonstrated that a large majority of adolescents suffer from screen addiction. These adolescents report that they spend an overwhelming amount of time on screens, often prioritizing screens over tasks of necessity, and experience withdrawal symptoms when denied access to screens. Peer pressure is a dominant factor in screen addiction behaviors, and adolescents feel that they are pressured by peers to increase their time spent on screens and measure their screen usage against their peers. Social and cultural factors also play a role in determining adolescent screen addiction patterns. As such, recommendations were made in this study such as: to raise awareness of excessive screen use and its risks and consequences, and to address the issue among both adolescents and their caregivers. Interventions must provide guidelines to help individuals maintain a balance between their usage of screens and other daily routines. Screen addiction also needs to be tackled in terms of peer pressure by empowering adolescents with the ability to recognize their behavior patterns and the choices and consequences of such behavior. This approach of working on the personal level and on the family level should go hand in hand so as to encourage the behavior change. We recommend to involve parents to influence adolescents positively in terms of screen usage patterns and behaviors so as to build a conducive family environment that favors productive use of technology. Schools can play a role in integrating digital wellness information within their curriculum and promote the usage of alternative leisure activities as an alternative for recreational time, instead of spending it on the screen. Furthermore, this should also involve policymakers, who can look at societal norms and traditions to develop effective policies that promote positive use of technologies and the betterment of adolescent screen habits in Sri Lanka. This study proves that screen addiction has a strong correlation with peer pressure among adolescents in Sri Lanka

Keywords: Adolescence, Peer Pressure, Screen Addiction, Sri Lanka

INTRODUCTION

Simply, addiction to excessive or obsessive use of screens like smart-phones, computers, televisions and tablets to the degree where it severely impacts most areas of life. Technology addiction or screen addiction are often used as synonyms for each other. In today's society screen addiction can be considered one of the worst addictions and many individuals of all age ranges around the world are subject to its overwhelming powers. Screens can easily draw users into them as their usage has enabled quick access to information, social life and unlimited entertainment. These devices offer irresistible attractions when browsing through the networks, playing games, viewing videos or keeping up with work-related emails. Nevertheless, extreme usage can also bring many unwanted and devastating effects to an individual.

Excessive screen time can lead to serious issues. Many physical and mental health problems including sedentary lifestyle and the problems that result from it, such as obesity, sleep disorders, eye problems, social isolation, anxiety and depression has been recorded to result from excessive screen usage. In addition, screen addiction negatively impacts school and work life, social relationships etc.

However, several factors influence the onset of screen addiction; peer pressure has recently become a notable contributor. In this study, we analyze the impact of peer pressure on screen addiction among adolescents in Sri Lanka in the age of globalization.

Peer pressure is the result of a social influence placed upon a person by peers and has a tendency to form an individual's values, attitudes and behaviors which can have either a negative or positive effect on a person. (Lu & Brown, 2023). Screen addiction can be seen as a prime example of this because adolescents are likely to develop

this habit when influenced to be dependent on screens and adopt the behaviors shown by their peers to engage in screen activities, when they find others are more inclined to be active on their devices, especially during the Covid pandemic. (Nathaniel Udoumoh, 2022). The social need for their peers to like and accept them forces them to adopt their way of behavior with screens, and hence addiction to screens sets in.

However, globalization magnifies the role of peer pressure on screen addiction as it enables and allows increased global interconnectivity among individuals. The rapid global expansion of internet usage has led to a change in global and local attitudes to the use of devices. The constant connection enables a wider array of screen usage opportunities for adolescents in Sri Lanka that have exposed them to a larger global audience and influenced them into different lifestyles and cultures, which has positively or negatively impacted their personal screen usage habits. The question now is how to take advantage of globalization, to promote change and curb screen addiction and enhance adolescent's digital well-being by taking positive peer pressure to an advantage.

PEER PRESSURE AND SCREEN ADDICTION

There have also been several research conducted in terms of influential impact of peer pressure towards the adolescent's screen addiction. The peer's influence are mostly accepted by adolescents because at adolescent's stages, they always want to fit with their friend groups and behave according to what is been stated as well as being like other individuals (Gn, 2016). When adolescents see that their friends are using their devices for many hours, they are most likely to copy their behaviors. In addition to, this would results to excessive usage of screen as well as screen addiction (Kwak et al., 2019).

Kwak et al. (2019) also discovered that the relation between social anxiety, loneliness, and smartphone addiction has been strongly influenced through the impact of peer pressure on adolescents. The wish to be socially accepted by friends and FOMO (Fear Of Missing Out) is one of the main factors which trigger adolescent's obsessive usage on screen. Furthermore, interventions aimed at lowering peer influence as well as developing good screen usage are proposed.

GLOBALIZATION AND PEER INFLUENCE

Globalization further adds a layer of complexity to peer pressure's effect on screen addiction. Globalization leads to greater interpersonal interaction among young people across different cultures and, consequently, greater exposure to variations in screen use norms, values and behaviors (Escardbul et al., 2012). Cross-cultural influences and screen use patterns can either enhance or decrease screen addiction among adolescents.

The study done by Wartberg et al. (2021) aimed to investigate the interactions of multi-level factors of adolescent internet addiction, among others, peer attachment, depression and risk-taking. Results indicate that level of culture and cultural openness moderated the relation between peer pressure and internet addiction. Adolescents engaging with peers from diverse cultural backgrounds are inclined to adopt screen usage behavior that is contrary to their home culture, thus, increasing the power of peer pressure.

IMPLICATION FOR INTERVENTION

To formulate appropriate interventions that can combat the effects of peer pressure on screen addiction in globalization contexts, the role of peer pressure should be addressed when developing these interventions. Intervention approaches aimed at reducing adolescent screen addiction should acknowledge the role of social norms and social interaction. Peer-based interventions such as peer mentoring programs and support groups could play a significant role in mediating the effects of negative peer influences and promote healthy screen behaviors (Moreno et al. 2016).

Additionally, interventions designed for the globalized world should incorporate cultural differences and sensitivities in using screen technologies. Adolescents should be taught about the potential dangers associated with prolonged screen time and be equipped with skills in digital literacy to allow them to make informed screen time choices (Esen, 2010). Involving parents, teachers and other stakeholders in these interventions is important in providing adequate support for adolescents.

Therefore, this study aims to examine the influence of peer pressure on the prevalence of screen addiction among adolescents in Sri Lanka under post globalization, which presents challenges to developing targeted prevention and intervention strategies. To comprehend the above stated issues, the following four research questions have been selected.

1. To what extent does peer pressure contribute to the prevalence and severity of screen addiction among adolescents in Sri Lanka?
2. What are the specific types of peer pressure (e.g. Conformity, social comparison) that influence screen addiction behaviors among adolescents in Sri Lanka?
3. What are the underlying socio-cultural factors (e.g. Cultural norms, family dynamics) that shape the relationship between peer pressure and screen addiction among adolescents in Sri Lanka?
4. How globalization has influenced peer pressure dynamics and its association with screen addiction among Sri Lankan adolescents.

OBJECTIVE

The objective of this research is to examine the influence of peer pressure on screen addiction among adolescents in Sri Lanka and understand the role of globalization in this context.

SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES

1. To assess the prevalence and severity of screen addiction among adolescents in Sri Lanka using standardized measures and diagnostic criteria.
2. To investigate the influence of different types of peer pressure (e.g., conformity, social comparison) on adolescent screen addiction behaviours, employ qualitative and quantitative research methods.
3. To explore the socio-cultural factors (e.g., cultural norms, family dynamics) that mediate or moderate the relationship between peer pressure and screen addiction among adolescents, utilizing in-depth interviews and survey questionnaires.
4. To examine how globalization has influenced peer pressure dynamics and its association with screen addiction among Sri Lankan adolescents.

METHODOLOGY

For this study, a mixed method approach has been adopted to answer the research questions. Quantitative data has been gathered from a sample of adolescents in Sri Lanka using a questionnaire survey on them, through the process of stratified random sampling in order to achieve representation of various regional areas and social classes. Qualitative data was collected from a small group selected purposefully, for getting an in-depth understanding on social-cultural variables contributing to peer pressure and screen addiction in adolescents. Adolescents aging from 13-19 years old, studying in a school/college in Sri Lanka and having a variation in degree of screen addiction (checked by preliminary screening tests). It has ensured that ethical considerations like informed consent, right of withdrawal and ensuring confidentiality of participants are met.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The findings indicated a significant positive association between peer pressure and screen addiction among Sri Lankan adolescents. The results confirmed that peer influence can significantly play a vital role in the onset and maintenance of screen addictive behavior, thus making adolescents with a high pressure of peer influence tend to increase screen usage and addictive behaviors. It further reiterates the need of interventions and preventive programs with a focus on the effect of peer influence on screen addiction.

Additionally, various forms of peer pressure influence screen addiction to a varying degree. More particularly, adolescents with higher levels of pressure of conformity was more prone towards screen addictive behavior than other factors that influence it. Therefore, the factor of "fitting in with peer groups" plays an integral role to escalate screen addictive behaviors. Identification of specific types of peer pressure can lead to targeted interventions to combat screen addictive behaviors.

Specific factors which was influenced by peer pressure leading to screen addiction were also identified such as too much involvement in social networking, extended periods of online gaming and reliance for validation from screen mediated activities. These behaviors represent the need for belonging and acceptance among peer group which ultimately contributes to the development of screen addiction behaviors.

Socio-cultural factors play a mediating and/or moderating role in the peer pressure and screen addictive behaviors among Sri Lankan adolescents. The role of culture and family traditions influence the level of peer pressure, as an example of cultures that value conformity will make the individual vulnerable to peer influence while cultures that emphasize open communication in between parent-child relationship provide greater protection. So, cultural and family aspects are very important in the intervention program designed to target the problems faced by adolescents.

Certain demographic factors also play a vital role in the vulnerability to peer pressure and screen addiction. Females were susceptible to social comparison pressure and adolescents belonging to low socio-economic class were more vulnerable to conformity pressure. The differences can help design targeted interventions in order to cater for each subgroup of the adolescents effectively.

It was interesting to note that the study identified possible protective factors/resilience factors which can buffer the harmful effect of peer pressure on the addiction behavior among adolescents. Factors such as high self-esteem, better self-regulation skills and positive parent-child relationship reduce the negative impact of peer pressure among adolescents which lead towards a stronger foundation to prevent screen addictive behavior.

It can be concluded that interventions and education programs should be designed to cope with the issue of peer pressure on screen addictive behavior among adolescents in Sri Lanka by focusing on different types of peer pressure, socio-cultural factors and protective factors identified in the study, in order to effectively promote appropriate screen usage habits and reduce the incidence and severity of screen addiction among adolescents. Furthermore, the findings of the study provide useful information about the potential impact of screen addiction on several aspects of adolescent life and thus establish the significance of early detection and treatment to prevent serious repercussions on academic performance, psychological and social functioning.

Also, the study revealed the disparity of peer pressure and screen addiction between urban and rural settings. Urban adolescents seemed to be more vulnerable and also had a higher rate of screen addiction than those in the rural settings. The likely factors behind this observation might be attributed to the differing level of access to technology, culture and social practices between urban and rural environments. Higher accessibility of technology may be linked to higher screen exposure and peer pressure as compare to rural parts of Sri Lanka.

In addition to the above mentioned factors, the influence of globalization on the social influences of peers and consequently, on screen addictive behaviors of the adolescents can no longer be ignored as connectivity is growing worldwide through the medium of the technology. Therefore, the effect of globalization on peer dynamics and screen addictive behaviors should be identified as well when proposing a remedial strategy for this pervasive issue among Sri Lankan adolescents.

CONCLUSION

Overall, this research provides useful insight into the role of peer pressure on adolescent screen addiction in Sri Lanka in post-globalized world. As can be seen, there appears to be a positive relationship between peer pressure on adolescent screen addiction with social media abuse and seeking validation from screens as crucial elements that may contribute. The study has shown that, there are differences between rural and urban setting and interventions must be contextual and sensitive. Globalization also played an evident role in the relation between peer pressure on screen addiction. With such findings the researchers recommend that, policymakers and all stakeholders must be aware and understand the dynamics so as to formulate useful intervention programs.

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