



# THE IMPACT OF DIGITAL TECHNOLOGY ON STUDENTS MENTAL HEALTH

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Technology is an integral part of our daily lives. The use of technology has been linked to a range of mental health issues, including anxiety, depression and sleep disorders. The constant barrage of notifications and the pressure to stay connected can lead students to feel overwhelmed and burned out. Social media use has also been associated with a higher risk of developing depression and anxiety, as well as decreased self-esteem and body image issues. Spending more time on social media interactions and less time on in-person connections can lead to feelings of isolation, which can impact mental well-being. However, technology can also have positive effects on mental health. It can provide a sense of community and social support, particularly for those who may not have access to it otherwise. Teletherapy has been an important resource for individuals seeking mental health support during the pandemic, and has allowed for greater access to mental health services in rural areas. While technological advancements bring numerous benefits, there is a growing concern about their impact on mental health. As we immerse ourselves in the digital age, it is crucial to explore the relationship between technology and mental well-being and identify strategies to navigate this evolving landscape.

**Keywords:** *Education, Digital Health, Healthy Habits, Telehealth, Mindfulness.*



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## 1. INTRODUCTION

In the 21st century, technology has influenced how we work, communicate, and entertain ourselves. Technology has revolutionized education, making learning more engaging, accessible, and personalized. Educational technologies like interactive whiteboards, online resources, and educational apps have transformed traditional teaching methods. For instance, platforms like Khan Academy provide free, high-quality educational

content that students can access anytime, anywhere, fostering self-paced learning.

Virtual classrooms and online collaboration tools have made it possible for students to connect with peers and teachers globally, breaking down geographical barriers. Technologies such as; virtual reality (VR) and augmented reality (AR) offer immersive learning experiences, enabling students to explore historical sites or conduct virtual science experiments, thereby enhancing their understanding and retention of complex

subjects. While this connectivity offers numerous benefits, it also poses significant challenges, particularly concerning mental health. It is crucial to address these impacts to ensure that technology enhances students' lives without compromising their well-being.

## 2. NEGATIVE IMPACT OF TECHNOLOGY ON MENTAL HEALTH

The integration of technology in education offers tremendous benefits, but it also poses significant mental health risks that must be addressed. The major negative impacts of technology on students' mental health are discussed below:

- **Social Isolation:** is one of the biggest negative impacts of technology on mental health. It means feeling lonely because you're not with other people. This can happen if students don't have many friends or family nearby, or if they feel like they are left out. Feeling socially isolated can make students sad, anxious, or have low self-esteem. It can even make them sick, like giving heart problems or making depressed. Talking to people on the phone or online can help students feel less lonely and better overall.
- **Dependency and Addiction:** In today's world technology affects mental health. Many students rely too much on technology and can become addicted to it. Using technology too much can mess up daily routines and how they interact with others. It might even make them forget to do important things and feel bad when they can't use it. The addictive nature of technology use especially social media and video games, can also lead to compulsive behaviors that detract from real-life responsibilities and relationships. Also to fix this, students need to realize they have a problem. Like setting limits on their tech use, and getting help if they need it to find a better balance in their lives.
- **Fear of Missing Out (FOMO):** is when students feels sad or worried because they think their friends are having fun without them, usually when they see posts on social media about parties or trips they weren't invited. As well as FOMO can make people feel lonely, not good enough, or jealous. This negative impact of technology on mental health will make students bad for society.

Sometimes, students spend too much time on social media trying to keep up with others, which can make FOMO worse. It helps them enjoy their experiences and take breaks from social media to feel better.

- **Increased Screen Time:** excessive screen time and constant digital connectivity can negatively affect students' mental health. Increased screen time has been linked to higher levels of anxiety, depression, and loneliness. Social media, in particular, can create pressure to conform to unrealistic standards, leading to decreased self-esteem and increased feelings of inadequacy.
- **Impact on Sleep Patterns and Physical Health:** is another concern, the blue light emitted by screens can disrupt sleep cycles, leading to sleep deprivation, which is associated with various mental health issues. Additionally, prolonged periods of screen use can contribute to sedentary lifestyles, increasing the risk of obesity and related health problems.
- **Cyberbullying and Online Harassment:** are significant risks associated with digital connectivity. Students can be exposed to harmful content and negative interactions online, leading to emotional distress and in severe cases, long-term psychological effects.
- **Reduced Attention Span:** means having trouble focusing on things for a long time, often because of using technology too much. Spending too much time on screens and trying to do many things at once can make this problem worse. It can make it harder to get things done and remember stuff. To fix it, try spending less time on screens, paying more attention to what you're doing, and using tricks to manage your time better.
- **Comparison Culture:** especially on social media, makes students feel bad about themselves. Because, they compare their lives to others' polished versions. This can lead to feeling anxious or sad. As well as it might even make some students do risky things. Like sharing too much personal stuff online or adopting unhealthy habits, just to fit in.
- **Sedentary Lifestyle:** using technology too much makes students to sit a lot, and not move much, which is bad for their health. Sitting a lot and not moving can make them gain weight, have heart problems, and have pains in their

muscles and bones. It can also make students feel lonely and sad and even make it hard for them to sleep. To feel better, they should use screens less and make sure to move their bodies regularly.

- **Information Overload:** having too much information from technology can make students tired and less productive. It can also make it hard for them to make decisions or think clearly. As well as this overload can lead to stress, anxiety, and trouble concentrating, which isn't good for mental health and there's a higher chance of believing wrong information. To deal with this, students can try managing their time better and taking breaks from technology to feel better.

By being mindful of our digital habits and setting boundaries, we can mitigate these effects and foster a healthier relationship with technology. Prioritizing mental well-being is increasing in the digital world.

### 3. STRATEGIES TO NAVIGATE THE NEGATIVE IMPACT OF TECHNOLOGY

#### 3.1. Strategies for Educators:

Educators play a crucial role in addressing the mental health impacts of digital connectivity. Incorporating digital literacy and mental health awareness into curricula can equip students with the skills to navigate the digital world safely and healthily. Lessons on identifying reliable sources, understanding the effects of screen time, and recognizing the signs of cyberbullying are essential. Promoting healthy technology habits in the classroom is vital. Setting limits on screen time, encouraging regular breaks, and integrating offline activities can help students maintain a balanced approach to technology use. Creating a supportive and inclusive school environment where students feel safe discussing their mental health concerns is equally important.

Professional development opportunities for teachers are crucial to address students' mental health needs effectively. Training in digital literacy, mental health awareness, and crisis intervention can empower educators to support their students better and create a positive learning environment.

#### 3.2. Strategies for Parents:

Parents also play a pivotal role in managing their children's technology use. Setting appropriate boundaries and guidelines for screen

time can help prevent excessive use. Implementing tech-free zones and times, such as during meals and before bedtime, can promote healthier habits. Open communication and active involvement in children's digital lives are essential. Parents should discuss the potential risks of digital connectivity, encourage their children to share their online experiences, and be vigilant about signs of cyberbullying or distress.

Encouraging offline activities and family bonding can provide a healthy balance to digital interactions. Engaging in physical activities, hobbies, and face-to-face social interactions can help mitigate the adverse effects of screen time. Various resources and support systems are available for parents. Online guides, workshops, and counseling services can provide valuable insights and assistance in managing technology use and supporting children's mental health.

#### 3.3. Leveraging Technology for Mental Health Support:

Technology can also be leveraged to support mental health. Numerous online resources and support networks offer valuable information and community support. Websites like Kids Health and Common Sense Media provide resources for both parents and children on managing digital health. Apps and digital tools designed to promote well-being and manage stress, such as Headspace for Kids and Smiling Mind, can help children develop mindfulness and relaxation techniques. These tools can be integrated into daily routines to support mental health proactively.

Teletherapy and virtual counseling services are becoming increasingly popular, offering convenient and accessible mental health support. Schools can partner with telehealth providers to ensure students have access to professional counseling services, particularly in areas where in-person resources are limited.

#### 3.4. Striking a Balance:

The key to managing the impact of technology on mental health is striking a balance between the benefits and negative effects. Here are some tips to help:

- **Set Boundaries:** Establish limits on screen time, particularly before bed, to improve sleep quality.
- **Unplug:** Take regular breaks from technology to reduce stress and improve mental clarity. Find activities that are tech-free such as walking or reading.

- **Practice Mindful Use:** Be intentional about your technology use. Consider setting specific goals for your time spent online, such as only checking e-mail or social media at designated times.
- **Seek out In-person Connections:** Prioritize face-to-face interactions with friends, family and colleagues. Engage in social activities that do not involve technology.
- **Seek Help When Needed:** If technology use is impacting your mental health, seek support from a mental health professional.

#### 4. IMPORTANCE OF BALANCE AND MODERATION

Finding a healthy balance between technology use and offline activities is crucial. Encouraging students to unplug and engage in face-to-face interactions can enhance their social skills and emotional well-being. Promoting digital detox practices, such as screen-free weekends or outdoor activities, can help students reset and recharge. Mindfulness practices can also play a significant role in managing digital stress. Teaching students' techniques like deep breathing, meditation, and mindful movement can help them develop resilience and coping strategies for dealing with the pressures of digital connectivity.

#### 5. CONCLUSION

As technology becomes increasingly integral to our daily lives, its presence in education continues to grow. Students today are more digitally connected than ever before, using technology for learning, socializing, and entertainment. As technology continues to advance, understanding its impact on mental health is crucial for individuals, communities, and societies at large. By embracing the positive aspects of technology and adopting mindful strategies to mitigate potential drawbacks, we can navigate the digital age while prioritizing and safeguarding our mental well-being. As we move forward, fostering a healthy relationship with technology will be key to creating a balanced and fulfilling life in the digital era. By fostering digital literacy, promoting healthy technology habits, and leveraging technology for mental health support, educators and parents can help students navigate the digital world safely and effectively. It is essential to find a balance between digital and offline activities, ensuring that technology

enhances, rather than detracts from, students' well-being. Together, we can empower our children to thrive in a connected world while safeguarding their mental health and overall well-being.

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