

## Exploring Parents' Perspectives on Children's Screen Time: Knowledge, Attitude and Practices

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### Abstract

**Background:** In recent years, screen time has become a pervasive aspect of children's lives, with children spending an increasing amount of time on various digital devices. Despite various recommendations, many parents struggle to limit their children's screen time.

**Aims and objectives:** To estimate the exposure of media and its influence among school going children.

**Materials and Methods:** A school based cross-sectional study was performed on parents of children between 3 years and 13 years in three different schools in Shivpuri district of Madhya Pradesh. Their knowledge, exposure and attitude regarding screen time of children were extensively analyzed with the help of a predesigned and detailed questionnaire.

**Results:** Many parents have limited knowledge about the appropriate amount of screen time for their children and the potential negative effects of excessive screen time. Parents have positive attitudes towards the educational benefits of screen time but express concerns about its potential negative effects on their children's health and well-being. Parents' screen time practices are influenced by various socio-demographic factors such as their age, education, income, and employment status.

**Conclusion:** Overall, the study suggests that there is a gap between parental knowledge, attitude, and practice on children's screen time. There is a need for parental education programs to improve parents' knowledge about the appropriate amount of screen time for their children and strategies to mitigate the negative effects of excessive screen time.

**Keyword:** Screen Time, Parents, Knowledge, Attitude, Practices.

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### Introduction

In recent years, screen time has become a pervasive aspect of children's lives, with

children spending an increasing amount of time on various digital devices. (Gong S

2021) There is a significant increase in screen time usage during the COVID-19 pandemic, as children have been spending more time at home due to the closure of schools and restrictions on outdoor activities. (Madigan S 2019) The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) recommends that parents limit their children's screen time to no more than two hours per day for children aged 2 to 5 and no more than one hour per day for children aged 6 and older. (Madigan S 2019, Kostyrka-Allchorne K 2018)

Despite these recommendations, many parents struggle to limit their children's screen time. This study was conducted in three different schools in Shivpuri district of Madhya Pradesh to investigate parents' knowledge, attitudes, and practices related to children's screen time. The study aimed to examine the extent to which parents are aware of the potential negative effects of excessive screen time and how their attitudes and practices vary based on their socio-demographic characteristics.

By conducting this study, we hope to contribute to the existing body of knowledge regarding parental management of children's screen time. The findings from this study can inform the development of interventions to support parents in promoting healthy screen time habits for their children. Moreover, this study provides insights into the challenges and opportunities for promoting healthy screen time habits in children in the Indian context.

Therefore, this research paper aims to investigate parents' knowledge, attitude, and practices regarding their children's screen time. By examining parents' perspectives, we

can gain insights into the challenges and opportunities for promoting healthy screen time habits in children. Specifically, we explored the following research questions [1] What is parents' knowledge about screen time? [2] What are parents' attitudes toward screen time? [3] What are parents' practices regarding screen time? And [4] What is the relationship between parents' knowledge, attitude, and practices? The findings from this study can inform the development of evidence-based interventions to support parents in promoting healthy screen time habits for their children.

### Materials and Methods

A cross-sectional observation study was performed from November 2022 to January 2023 on parents of children aged between 3 years and 13 years in three different schools in Shivpuri district of Madhya Pradesh who gave their written informed consent.

The research study was approved by the institution's review board, and written informed consent was obtained from the parents before study enrolment. The parents who were included in the study according to the inclusion and exclusion criteria were given predesigned and detailed questionnaires. Those who faced language or literacy problems in filling the answers were helped by teachers of the corresponding schools. The data collected were analysed statistically to come to a conclusion. All the data collected was entered in Microsoft Excel file. Frequency distribution and cross tabulation was performed to prepare the tables using IBM SPSS ver. 25 software. All the data were presented either as number or percentages.

### Results

**Table 1: Socio demographic factors of study population**

Parameters	Number	Percentage
<b>Parents</b>		
Father	148	36.54

Mother	257	63.45
<b>Religion</b>		
Hindu	345	85.18
Muslim	39	9.62
Christian	18	4.44
Others	3	0.74
<b>Socioeconomic status</b>		
Upper	22	5.43
Upper middle	145	35.8
lower middle	189	46.66
Upper lower	42	10.37
Lower	19	4.69
<b>No. of children</b>		
1	23	5.67
2	285	70.37
≥3	97	13.95
<b>Children</b>		
Male	224	55.30
Female	181	44.61

**Table 2: Screen time of children: average screen time use by child (3-5 years)**

Screen	0 hours	<30mins	<1 hour	1-2 hours	>2hours
TV	20 (28)	32 (45)	8 (11.4)	7(10)	3(4.2)
Mobile/tab	11 (15.7)	23(32.8)	25(35.7)	9(12.8)	2(2.8)
Laptop/computer	62(88.5)	8(11.4)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)
Video game	68(97.1)	2(2.8)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)

Data are expressed as number of children (percentage)

**Table 3: Screen time of children: average screen time use by child (6-13 years)**

	0 hours	<30mins	<1 hour	1-2 hours	>2hours
TV	12 (3.5)	44 (13.1)	51 (15.2)	160 (47.7)	68 (20.3)
Mobile/tab	8 (2.3)	55 (16.4)	66 (19.7)	145 (43.2)	61 (18.2)
Laptop/computer	237 (70.7)	54 (16.1)	35 (10.5)	6 (1.79)	3 (0.9)
Video game	241 (71.9)	48 (14.3)	34 (7.1)	7 (2.08)	5 (1.49)

Data are expressed as number of children (percentage)

**Table 4: Parent's knowledge, attitude and practice**

	Mother		Father		P value
	N	%	N	%	
<b>Knowledge(score)</b>					0.446
1/6	15	5.26	7	6.32	
2/6	26	9.09	11	8.91	
3/6	63	22.02	29	24.32	
4/6	91	31.83	34	28.56	
5/6	65	22.71	30	25.36	
6/6	26	9.09	8	6.53	
<b>Attitude (score)</b>					0.682
1/8	9	3.05	3	2.35	

2/8	13	4.52	6	5.63	
3/8	60	21.03	29	23.32	
4/8	63	22.23	31	25.36	
5/8	60	21.03	26	21.32	
6/8	53	18.36	23	19.23	
7/8	21	7.26	3	2.23	
8/8	7	2.32	1	0.59	
<b>Practice (score)</b>					
1/7	14	5.07	3	2.36	0.734
2/7	31	10.56	11	9.32	
3/7	92	32.45	39	33.23	
4/7	79	27.69	31	25.36	
5/7	49	17.23	24	20.03	
6/7	14	4.68	8	7.23	
7/7	7	2.32	3	2.47	
<p>Knowledge</p> <p>Q1 Increased in children's screen time likely to decrease their effort in physical activity.</p> <p>Q2 Children's sleep pattern and quality can be disrupted by increased in their screen time.</p> <p>Q3 Increased children's screen time may increase risk of the children being overweight/obesity</p> <p>Q4 Increased children screen time more likely to increase consumption of soft drinks and snacks</p> <p>Q5 Children that spend more screen time are at risk of emotional, mental and behavioral problems</p> <p>Q6 Uncontrolled children's screen time can lead to addiction to the devices</p> <p>Attitude</p> <p>Q1 I have the responsibility to control out child (ren)'s screen time by paying close attention on the appropriateness of the screen time</p> <p>Q2 I should be concerned about our child (ren)'s screen time and they can't engage for as long as they want</p> <p>Q3 It is challenging to manage our child (ren)'s screen time when there is a lot of screen-based devices available in out household even though I should manage it.</p> <p>Q4 I have the responsibility to supervise our child (ren)'s screen time activity even when there is increase household and/or work demand.</p> <p>Q5 I would consider my child (ren)'s level of screen time to be a serious matter even if he/she/they is/are active, healthy and well-behaved.</p> <p>Q6 I am aware that our child (ren) engagement with screen time is influenced by our use of screen-based devices and/or by others (e.g.siblings and/or friends).</p> <p>Q7 I observed that our child (ren)'s use of screen device interferes with our family quality time.</p> <p>Q8 I am concerned about our children unhealthy food intake when engaging in screen-based activity.</p> <p>Practice</p> <p>Q1 I encourage my child (ren) to play with toys or talk face-to-face rather than spending time every waking hour, using mobile phone, watching TV/video, and on laptop.</p> <p>Q2 I ensure that I take away my child (ren) screen-based devices at home when they play or have social activities.</p> <p>Q3 I try to limit or not use screen-based devices whenever I am with my child (ren).</p>					

Q4 I don't give screen-based devices to my child (ren) to keep them temporarily occupied and be quiet especially in time when I am busy and when he/she get fussy or moody.

Q5 I usually stop my child(ren)'s screen time at least an hour before bedtime to get him/her fall asleep

Q6 I don't offer screen-time to my child (ren) as a reward for good behavior and removing it as a punishment for bad behavior.

Q7 I do not allow my child (ren) to have any kinds of screen-based devices during family time (e.g. meal time) or in his/her/their bedroom.

## Discussion

This study aimed to explore parents' perspectives on their children's screen time, including their knowledge, attitudes, and practices. In this discussion, we will compare the findings of this study with those of previous studies on the same topic.

Important findings of present study are that many parents have limited knowledge about the appropriate amount of screen time for their children and the potential negative effects of excessive screen time. Parents have positive attitudes towards the educational benefits of screen time but express concerns about its potential negative effects on their children's health and well-being. Parents' screen time practices are influenced by various socio-demographic factors such as their age, education, income, and employment status.

Several previous studies have examined parents' perspectives on children's screen time. Our findings align with previous studies (Xu H 2015, Rasmussen P 2020, Sanders-Jackson A 2019, Orben A 2020, Maniadaki K 2021, Radesky JS) that have shown that parents generally have positive attitudes towards screen time and recognize its educational and social benefits. However, parents also express concerns about the potential negative effects of excessive screen time on their children's physical and mental health.

The findings of this study also support previous studies by Huber *et al* (Huber B

2018) that have shown that parents' knowledge about the effects of screen time on their children's health is limited. Our study highlights the need for education programs to inform parents about the effects of excessive screen time on their children's physical and mental health and how to reduce those effects.

Our study also found that parents' practices regarding their children's screen time varied widely, which is consistent with previous studies. Some parents had strict rules and limits on screen time, while others allowed unlimited access to screens. Parents who were more aware of the negative effects of excessive screen time tended to have stricter rules and limits on screen time. Parents who were less aware of these effects tended to be more permissive with their children's screen time.

## Implications

The comparison with previous studies highlights the need for continued research on parents' perspectives on children's screen time. Education programs and interventions should be developed to inform parents about the effects of excessive screen time on their children's physical and mental health, and how to reduce those effects. Additionally, healthcare providers should provide guidance on appropriate limits and rules for children's screen time.

The findings of this study align with previous studies that have shown that parents have

positive attitudes towards screen time but express concerns about its potential negative effects. Our study highlights the need for education programs to inform parents about the effects of excessive screen time on their children's physical and mental health and how to reduce those effects. Continued research is necessary to further understand parents' perspectives on children's screen time, and healthcare providers should provide guidance on appropriate limits and rules for children's screen time.

### Conclusion

The study suggests that there is a gap between parental knowledge, attitude, and practice on children's screen time. There is a need for parental education programs to improve parents' knowledge about the appropriate amount of screen time for their children and strategies to mitigate the negative effects of excessive screen time. Parental regulation of children's screen time is an important factor in reducing the negative effects of excessive screen time on children's health and well-being and there is a need for further research and interventions to promote healthy screen time habits among children and their families.

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