

Knowledge and practices on screen time use and the association between screen-time use and social intelligence of Advanced Level students of selected boy schools in the Colombo District

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Introduction - Excessive screen time has been linked to various health issues such as visual defects, headaches, and sleep disturbances. International studies also reveal associations with violence, antisocial behaviour, and lack of empathy.

Social intelligence is the ability to understand, manage, and interact effectively with others using social skills and social cues in diverse situations. Despite its significance for academic and personal success, research on the impact of screen-time on social intelligence remains limited.

This study assesses knowledge and practices related to screen-time, and the association between self-reported screen-time and social intelligence among Advanced Level students in two selected boys' schools in the Colombo District.

Materials and Methods - A descriptive cross-sectional study with an analytical component was conducted among 263 (Ananda college=138, Nalanda college=125) conveniently sampled students using a structured, self-administered questionnaire. Socio-demographic data and knowledge on screen-time use were collected using an expert-validated tool. Students self-reported screen use, which we categorized into academic and non-academic (leisure) purposes. Each was further classified as above or below the median of the cohort. Social intelligence was assessed using the Tromsø Social Intelligence Scale. Questionnaire was validated by a consultant child psychiatrist of Colombo south teaching hospital. Associations were analysed using independent sample t-tests via SPSS.

Results - Most students used smartphones (97.7%, n=257), and displayed good (60.1%, n=158), and very good (27.4%, n=72) knowledge on screen-time use. Majority (68.4%, n=180) were aware of recommended recreational screen-time limits. Mean total screen-time was 8 hours 6 minutes/day (academic: 3h 39m; non-academic: 4h 26m). Mean social intelligence score was 102.5, with no statistically significant association between total screen time and social intelligence ($p = 0.933$).

Discussion - Although knowledge scores were good, students reported high screen-time use for non-academic purposes. Limitations should be considered for smartphone use, and interventions introduced to manage excessive recreational screen-time.

Key Words - Screen-time, social intelligence, knowledge, adolescents