



# Digital Addiction and Its Effect on Family Relationships: A Review

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**Abstract :** Digital addiction is characterized by excessive and uncontrolled use of digital media, related tools, and techniques. The compulsive use of digital media affects the daily lives of individuals in our society. It makes an impact on all aspects of people's lives, including family relationships, education, employment, social interactions, and more. This review paper explores the concept of digital addiction and its impact on family relationships. The study aims to focus on how excessive screen use, online engagement, and digital distractions impair emotional bonds, communication, and overall family cohesion. The findings of this paper will provide valuable insights into the field of digital addiction and its impact on family relationships. It will not only enhance our understanding of digital addiction but will also inform stakeholders including educators, mental health professionals, and families about the detrimental effects of excessive digital media consumption on familial relationships. Ultimately, this paper endeavors to contribute valuable insights to the broader discourse surrounding digital addiction, emphasizing its profound impact on the foundational unit of society, the family.

**Key words -** digital addiction, family relationship and communication.

## INTRODUCTION

Digital addiction has profound effects on family relationship and its degree of cohesion. The widespread use of digital devices and digital platforms raises more concerns regarding digital addiction and its consequences among people. It also leads to spend more time in online and avoid the face to face interaction or communication between the family members. Due to the excessive use of digital platforms everyone changed their priorities according to the digital trends running on the digital platforms, especially social medias. Emotions of the so called social beings becomes digitalized as well. Nowadays, the feelings and emotional bonds between family members becoming undervalued by themselves. The addictive habits also spend more money for online activities, this will also affects family relationship in the form of financial concerns. Ultimately, the addiction in digital devices leads the family as disintegrated.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This narrative literature review paper focus on the effects of digital addiction in family relationship. Some academic databases used to collect the data. Peer reviewed journal articles, reports, books and empirical research studies were included. Thematic analysis was adopted to identity common themes, patterns and findings.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

With the advancement of digital resources and technologies, the internet and other social media platforms are become the indispensable part of individuals in their life. Internet use has increased recent years, especially after the introduction of attractive social medias. With its increased use, a new concept associated with uncontrolled internet use was born, namely addiction, which has become a public health issue since 1990. The concept of "internet addiction" was first used in 1995 by Graham, and he describes it as a behavioral addiction that leads to an inability to control internet use, which leads to pathological suffering, denial of the problematic behavior, dysfunction in daily activities, isolation, mood swings, tolerance, and relapses.

While digital addiction is not formally recognized in major diagnostic manuals like the DSM-5 (except for Internet Gaming Disorder as a condition for further study), its symptoms are widely acknowledged in behavioral studies. These symptoms include, preoccupation with digital content, loss of control over usage time, neglect of social, academic, or occupational responsibilities, withdrawal symptoms when not engaged.

Numerous studies have highlighted the beneficial impacts of Internet usage on cognitive development and overall well-being (Heo et al., 2015; Chopik, 2016; Zhou et al., 2022). However, inappropriate or excessive Internet use can result in digital addiction, which may lead to various neurological, psychological, and social issues (Cash et al., 2012). Digital addiction is recognized as a significant psychological disorder characterized by an individual's inability to appropriately regulate their engagement with the Internet and digital media, ultimately impairing their psychological health and functionality (Young, 1996; Young and Rogers, 1998). Research indicates that digital addiction adversely affects the healthy development of young children, contributing to issues such as diminished visual acuity, delayed physical growth, impaired social interaction, and slowed cognitive and language development, as well as a reduction in familial closeness (Liu et al., 2020).

### **Parent-Child Relationship**

Family dynamics, particularly parenting practices, significantly influence the growth and development of children and adolescents (Barker & Hunt, 2004). When examining instances of internet addiction among youth, it is essential to take into account familial factors and parental approaches to children's internet usage. This consideration is vital due to the family's fundamental influence on child development and the critical impact of family-related dynamics, along with parental attitudes and behaviors, on children's actions (Van den Eijnden, Spijkerman, Vermulst, Van Rooij, & Engles, 2010; Yu, 2003).

During the adolescent phase, individuals experience substantial changes across various domains, including physical, cognitive, psychosocial, and sexual development, alongside potential identity crises. Adolescent internet addiction can disrupt daily functioning, jeopardize familial relationships, foster increased introversion, and elevate the propensity for behavioral issues (Monteoro et al., 2023).

The family unit significantly influences the socialization process of children. It is anticipated that parents will cultivate a respectful and communicative atmosphere for their offspring. It is essential for children to have the opportunity to engage in discussions about the Internet with their parents (Fleming et al., 2006). Research indicates that fostering a respectful and open environment for discussing Internet-related topics (Young, 2008) and engaging in joint Internet activities with children reduces the associated risks of Internet use (Lee & Chae, 2007). Nevertheless, fewer than 67% of parents have conversations with their children about the Internet (Duimel & de Haan, 2007), and a limited number of parents participate in online activities alongside their children (Eurobarometer, 2008).

In attempting to comprehend the phenomenon of internet addiction among children, it is imperative to consider familial factors and parenting practices related to internet use, given the pivotal role of family dynamics in child development and the significant influence of parental attitudes and behaviors on children's actions (Van den Eijnden, Spijkerman, Vermulst, Van Rooij, & Engles, 2010; Yu, 2003).

### **Spousal Relationship**

Internet addiction can significantly impact romantic relationships by undermining both the emotional and physical bonds between partners. When one individual becomes excessively engaged with the internet, they may disengage from their partner on emotional and physical levels. If a partner conceals the extent of their online activities or the detrimental effects of their addiction, this can result in a substantial violation of trust. Such a violation may lead to conflicts, as the unaffected partner might feel misled or betrayed, thereby exacerbating tension within the relationship. Addressing internet addiction jointly necessitates a process characterized by understanding, cooperation, and transparent communication. The initial step involves recognizing the issue without casting judgment or assigning blame, while acknowledging its impact on the relationship. It is essential to establish boundaries regarding internet usage, with both partners agreeing on specific guidelines concerning the time allocated to online activities and acceptable usage scenarios. Prioritizing quality time together through shared activities that both enjoy can help re-establish emotional intimacy and connection (Ivanova 2024).

### **Siblings Relationship**

While the rate of change in child smartphone addiction was higher, both sibling and child smartphone addiction increased over time. Siblings hold a significant position in mitigating the adverse effects of stressful experiences faced by children and adolescents throughout their developmental journey. Research indicates that sibling conflict serves as a contributing factor to engaging in risky behaviors among adolescents, while sibling closeness has demonstrated a positive correlation with such behaviors exclusively within brother-brother relationships. Longitudinal studies examining the influence of the quality of sibling relationships on adolescent behavioral issues reveal that sibling support does not correlate with the level of externalizing problems, nor does it influence longitudinal changes in externalizing problems, anxiety, or depression. In contrast, the presence of sibling conflict has been recognized as a significant risk factor for externalizing issues.

### **Communication**

Family dynamics, particularly communication, play a crucial role in shaping adolescents' personalities. Early childhood experiences establish patterns that influence behaviour and interactions. As adolescents seek autonomy and identity, parent-child communication evolves, and technology-mediated communication becomes increasingly important. Effective parent-child communication can significantly impact adolescent development, including the risk of internet addiction, by fostering open discussion, confidence, and problem-solving skills (Monteoro et al. Al 2023).

The proliferation of smartphones, tablets, and laptops within domestic environments has significantly altered both verbal and non-verbal interactions among family members. Traditionally, family discussions at the dinner table have become frequently interrupted by notifications, emails, and the allure of social media, resulting in decreased attention spans. This persistent distraction not only reduces the quality of in-person dialogues but also impedes the capacity to interpret and respond to non-verbal signals, such as

facial expressions, body language, and vocal intonations. The transition from engaging in meaningful conversations to communicating via digital messages—even in close physical proximity—has established a barrier to authentic connection, thereby causing family members to feel more like mere cohabitants rather than a unified, cohesive entity.

In families characterized by high levels of conformity in communication, the presence of divergent opinions can lead to significant conflicts and pose various issues for the individual. Consequently, individuals may resort to excessive Internet use as a means of escaping their difficulties (Salehi et al., 2012). In contrast, families that emphasize high conversation orientation are effective in safeguarding their children from the onset of psychological and emotional issues (Tajalli & Latifian, 2008a) as well as a propensity for excessive Internet engagement (Salehi et al., 2012). While close relationships foster a supportive environment conducive to alleviating personal distress, communication serves as the crucial link among family members in addressing and resolving conflicts.

## DISCUSSION

Individuals engrossed in their digital environments may begin to experience a sense of detachment from the physical presence of their family members. This form of isolation manifests not only in a physical sense but also on an emotional level. The shared experiences and spontaneous interactions that are essential to the development of familial relationships are increasingly supplanted by time spent in solitude in front of screens. In conclusion, the implications of screen time on familial dynamics are significant and complex. The disruption of both verbal and non-verbal communication can lead to a deterioration of relational connections, while the diminishing of emotional comprehension and empathy contributes to a climate of emotional disconnection. In order to mitigate these adverse effects, it is imperative for families to adopt a balanced strategy regarding the use of digital devices, emphasizing the importance of face-to-face interactions and emotional engagement to maintain the core values of family life in the contemporary digital landscape.

The Influence of parents in shaping digital behavior is profoundly significant. Children frequently emulate the actions and routines of their caregivers, which encompasses their interaction with digital devices. When parents are consistently preoccupied with screens, whether for professional obligations or recreational activities, they inadvertently define a behavioral benchmark for their offspring. This scenario can result in an inconsistency regarding screen usage within the family, where children may be admonished for behaviors that are replicated by their parents. Recognizing this incongruity represents a crucial initial step toward fostering a more conducive digital atmosphere within the home. It is essential for parents to exemplify balanced screen time practices and to engage in collective digital detox initiatives that involve the entire family.

## CONCLUSION

To enhance familial connections, it is essential to participate in activities that do not involve screens. Such activities may include outdoor pursuits like hiking and cycling, as well as simpler indoor options, such as playing board games, cooking collaboratively, or engaging in arts and crafts. Promoting hobbies and interests that necessitate face-to-face interaction not only aids in the development of individual skills and passions but also cultivates a spirit of cooperation and achievement within the family unit. These experiences offer meaningful occasions for family members to learn from one another, exchange joy, and establish enduring memories.

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