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LONG SCREEN TIME WEAKENING THE FUTURE

Eliya Wayda Essau and Christopher Alexander Maula
Ilboru Secondary School

Introduction

Long screen time hours has become a norm for many children today, and studies have shown that it can negatively impact their overall growth and development. Simply because this prolonged exposure to digital devices, has negative effects on children's cognitive, social, and emotional development; furthermore, can impact these young minds and weaken their future potential.

Therefore, this study aims to explore the negative effects of excessive screen time or exposure to digital devices, and identify the problems associated with it on the cognitive, social, and emotional development of children aged below 18; And finally, provide strategic solutions to mitigate the adverse effects of excessive screen time on children.

Method

The prevalence of excessive screen time among children has become a growing concern. Research suggests that prolonged screen time might negatively affect cognitive abilities, social interactions, and emotional well-being, raising questions about its long-term impact on children's development and future prospects.

Based on preliminary observations, it is hypothesized that extended screen time negatively correlates with cognitive performance and emotional well-being in children aged 5 to 18. Additionally, excessive screen time may lead to reduced social interactions, potentially hampering the development of essential life skills.

Participants were purposefully selected from a diverse range of Tanzanian socio-economic backgrounds and educational settings to ensure the study's point of focus and enhance the generalizability of our findings. The sample comprised 300 children, carefully balanced with 150 participants aged between 5 to 13 and another 150 aged between 13 to 18 years.

Data collection was conducted using two primary methods, apart from various case studies. Firstly, we employed screen time tracking apps, specifically "Screentime" for iPhone users and "Digital Well-being" for Android users, to gather objective data on children's screen time habits. These apps provided valuable insights into the duration and patterns of digital device usage among the participants.

Secondly, we utilized structured questionnaires to gather subjective information from both parents and select children. The questionnaires were thoughtfully designed to explore various aspects related to screen time behaviors, outdoor activities, cognitive abilities, emotional well-being, and observed changes in social behavior.

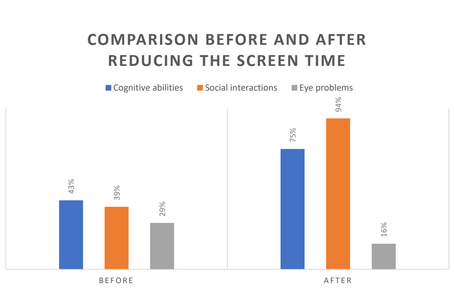
By combining objective data from screen time tracking apps and subjective responses from the structured questionnaires, in addition to some case studies, we aimed to obtain a comprehensive understanding of the impact of prolonged screen time on children's development.

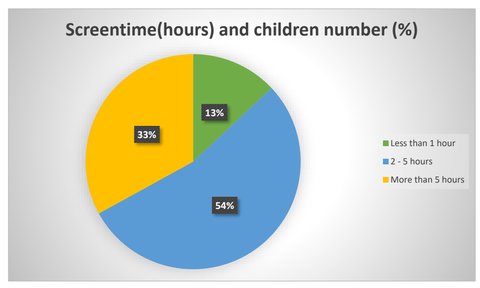
Results

Through the data we collected we came up with some ways that were solutions to the problem:

I. Tabulated results showing the purpose of having screentime (or engage in while using screen media) which included the following activities:

PURPOSES FOR THE SCREEN TIME	NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS
Watching educational content or programs	77
Playing non-educational games	64
Social media interaction	100
Watching entertainment programs	59





II. The following pie chart shows the distribution of participants based on their screen time categories (less than 1 hour, 2-5 hours, more than 5 hours) as collected from the sample of 300 children. And the collected data was:

a) 39 children spend Less than 1 hour on digital devices.
b) 99 children spend 2-5 hours on digital devices.
c) 162 children spend More than 5 hours on digital devices.

Conclusion

The study provides compelling evidence that excessive screen time negatively affects the cognitive, social, and emotional development of children aged 5 to 18, potentially weakening their future potential. Limiting screen time and promoting a healthy balance between digital and non-digital activities are essential for the well-being of young minds.

References

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Acknowledgments

Words cannot express our gratitude to the Almighty GOD who helped us through this, plus prayers that we made and those made upon us by our fellow students profoundly from UKWATA among others. We would also want to kindly thank the STEM club for their material support whenever we needed it.