

Knowledge and practices on screen time use and the association between screen time use and social intelligence of G.C.E Advanced Level students of selected boys' schools in the Colombo District

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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 selected boys' schools in the Colombo District. A descriptive cross-sectional study with an analytical component was conducted among 263 conveniently sampled students using a structured, self-administered questionnaire. Socio-demographic data and knowledge about screen time use were collected using an expert-validated tool. Students self-reported screen use, we categorized into use for 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. Associations were analysed using independent sample t-tests via SPSS. Most students used smartphones at home (97.7%, n=257), and displayed good (60.1%, n=158), and very good (27.4%, n=72) knowledge about screen time use. Majority (68.4%, n=180) were aware of recommended recreational screen time limits. Mean total screen time was 8 h 6 min/day (academic: 3 h 39 min; non-academic: 4 h 26 min). Mean social intelligence score was 102.5, with no statistically significant association between total screen time and social intelligence (p=0.933). Although knowledge scores were good, students reported high screen time use for non-academic purposes. Limits should be placed on smartphone use, and interventions should be introduced to manage excessive recreational screen time.

Keywords: *Screen time, Social intelligence, Knowledge, Adolescents*