



THE ROLE OF YOGA AND AYURVEDA IN REDUCING SCREEN TIME AND MITIGATING ITS HARMFUL EFFECTS IN CHILDREN

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ABSTRACT Excessive screen time in children is associated with multiple physical, psychological, and cognitive challenges, including poor posture, eye strain, obesity, and emotional disturbances. In India, rising digital exposure among school-aged children has created an urgent need for holistic interventions. Yoga and Ayurveda, two ancient Indian systems of health, provide comprehensive approaches that emphasize mindfulness, structured routines (Dinacharya), dietary regulation, and natural therapies. This paper reviews Indian data on screen use among children and proposes Yoga and Ayurveda as culturally aligned interventions to reduce screen dependency and mitigate its harmful effects.

KEYWORDS :

INTRODUCTION

The ubiquity of digital devices has made screen time an unavoidable part of children's daily lives. While online education has expanded access, it has also significantly increased recreational digital usage. Excessive exposure is strongly linked with developmental delays, obesity, anxiety, depression, and impaired sleep patterns.

According to the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR, 2022), nearly 35% of urban Indian children aged 5–15 years exceed 4 hours of daily recreational screen time, a figure well above the American Academy of Paediatrics recommendation of no more than 2 hours per day. Alarming, the prevalence is higher in metropolitan cities such as Delhi, Bengaluru, and Mumbai, where children also report lower physical activity. These findings call for culturally relevant strategies that not only restrict screen use but also promote balanced lifestyles.

Scientific Data on Screen Time and Its Effects

Indian studies highlight multiple consequences of screen overuse:

- A study in Kerala (2022) reported that 62% of children aged 6–12 exceeded recommended screen time, with mobile gaming being the most common form.
- In Delhi NCR (2021), school-based surveys found that 48% of children had sleep disturbances associated with prolonged late-night screen exposure.
- A Karnataka study (2023) showed that children using screens for more than 4 hours daily had significantly higher BMI levels, indicating increased risk of obesity.

These findings echo global evidence while emphasizing India-specific challenges, such as combined academic and recreational screen dependence in urban children.

Screen Time (hr/day)	Anxiety Symptoms (%)	Depression Symptoms (%)
< 4 hours/day	11.8	9.1
≥ 4 hours/day	26.7	23.4

Figure 1. Prevalence of Anxiety and Depression Symptoms by Daily Screen Time in Indian Teenagers (ICMR 2022)

Mental Health Symptoms vs Screen Time (India)

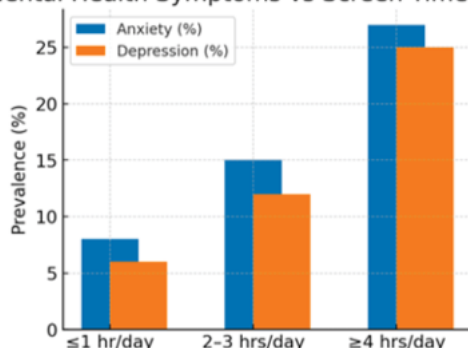


Figure shows significantly higher prevalence of anxiety and depression symptoms among teenagers with prolonged screen exposure.

Yoga and Ayurveda as Interventions

Yoga

- Enhances mindfulness and emotional regulation, thereby reducing impulsive digital engagement.
- Promotes physical activity, correcting posture-related issues from sedentary screen use.
- Offers structured breaks with engaging activities such as asana, pranayama, and dhyana that children can adopt in place of digital recreation.

Ayurveda

- Advocates structured daily routines (Dinacharya), which naturally limit unregulated digital use by allocating time for study, play, and rest.
- Emphasizes Rasayana therapies such as Brahmi (Bacopa monnieri), Ashwagandha (Withania somnifera), Shankhapushpi (Convolvulus pluricaulis), and Mandukaparni (Centella asiatica) to enhance cognition and resilience.
- Recommends Netra chikitsa (eye care) through herbal applications like Triphala ghrita for eye health and relief from strain.
- Encourages Sadvrta (ethical conduct) to instil discipline in digital use.
- Promotes Ratri charya (nighttime routines) such as oil massage (Abhyanga) and screen-free evenings to restore healthy sleep patterns.

Table 1. Comparison of Yoga and Ayurveda Interventions for Screen-Related Challenges in Children

Challenge	Yoga Approach	Ayurveda Approach
Anxiety & Irritability	Pranayama, Dhyana	Rasayana herbs like Brahmi and Ashwagandha
Postural Problems	Asana (e.g., Bhujangasana)	Abhyanga (oil massage) for musculoskeletal support
Eye Strain	Eye relaxation techniques	Netra chikitsa (e.g., Triphala ghrita)
Sleep Disturbances	Yoga nidra practices	Ratri charya with calming rituals
Excessive Digital Use	Structured breaks and mindfulness	Dinacharya and Sadvrta to regulate daily conduct

DISCUSSION

While Western models typically emphasize strict restrictions (e.g., “no more than 2 hours/day”), these rules are difficult to enforce consistently in Indian families. By contrast, the holistic Indian approach rooted in Yoga and Ayurveda prioritizes balance over prohibition. Instead of merely banning devices, it cultivates self-regulation, mindfulness, and healthier alternatives.

This model aligns well with the cultural context, offering sustainable practices that can be integrated at home and in schools. Moreover, the

National Education Policy (NEP-2020) already encourages wellness education, providing an opportunity to embed Yoga and Ayurveda practices for digital detox.

CONCLUSION

Excessive screen time among Indian children is a pressing public health issue with physical, psychological, and behavioral consequences. Yoga and Ayurveda present holistic, evidence-supported solutions by addressing not just the symptoms but also the root causes of digital overuse.

Integrating structured Yoga practices, Dinacharya, Rasayana therapies, and Netra chikitsa into school and family life can significantly reduce screen dependence. Future government collaborations between the Ministry of AYUSH and the Ministry of Education may institutionalize such practices within child health and education policies.

Thus, reviving ancient wisdom in modern contexts offers a culturally authentic pathway to safeguard children's well-being in the digital era.

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