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Conceptual study of Shashir (physical), Manas (Mental) effect due to increased screen time

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Abstract

The rapidly increasing use of digital devices has transformed human lifestyle, work patterns, and communication. However, excessive engagement with screens has led to serious concerns regarding physical health, mental well-being, and social behavior. Prolonged screen exposure causes physical (Shashir) conditions like musculoskeletal disorders, digital eye strain, obesity, sleep disturbances, and mental (Manas) conditions such as anxiety, depression, mood instability, and reduced attention span. Ayurveda views excessive screen usage as Ati-yoga of sensory organs and mind, leading to vitiation of Vata and Pitta Dosha and disturbance in Agni, ultimately resulting in physical and mental imbalance. This article explores the impacts of excessive screen time and correlates them with Ayurvedic concepts including Manyastambha, Kati shool, Sthaulya, Chakshurendriya Ati-yoga, Manovaha Srotas Dushti, Nidranasha.

Keywords: Screen time, digital eye strain, mental health, lifestyle disorder, Chakshurendriya Ati-yoga, Manovaha Srotas Dushti, Nidranasha, Vata-pitta imbalance

Introduction

In the modern digital era, screen-based technologies such as smartphones, computers, and tablets have become indispensable tools for education, communication, and entertainment [1]. However, the growing dependence on these devices has significantly increased daily screen time across all age groups [2]. Prolonged exposure to digital screens has been associated with a range of physical, mental, and social health disturbances, including digital eye strain, musculoskeletal pain, sleep disturbances, impaired concentration, anxiety, and reduced face-to-face interactions. These issues represent a major emerging public health concern [3]. Ayurveda offers a classical framework to understand the causation and progression of such disorders. The foundational principle of disease formation in Ayurveda is based on Hetu (causative factors) [4]. Acharya Charaka states:

हेतुर्लिङ्गलक्षणं च रोगाणां परिवृश्यते। (Ch. Ni. 1/1)

indicating that diseases arise from observable causes, signs, and symptoms. Excessive screen use aligns with multiple types of Hetu described in Ayurveda [5].

Firstly, continuous exposure to bright screens constitutes Asatmya Indriyartha Samyoga, specifically Ati-yoga of Chakshurendriya [5]. Charaka explains:

अतियोगो हि चाक्षुषस्य तीक्ष्णानलप्रकोपणः। (Ch. Su. 8/15)

suggesting that excessive visual stimulation aggravates Pitta and leads to ocular strain [5]. Secondly, knowingly engaging in harmful screen habits despite awareness of their negative impact is classified under Pradnyaparadh [8].

Charaka defines it as:

धीनां धृतिनां स्मृतीनां विपर्ययः प्रज्ञापराधः। (Ch. Sha. 1/102)

where impaired judgment and lack of self-regulation contribute to disease formation [9]. Thirdly every disease or imbalance arises due to a cause (Hetu) which brings about a transformation (Parinama) in the body or mind [10]. As stated in Charaka Samhita

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हेतुश्वेष विपरीतांश्च परिणम्यानि शरीरिणाम्।

नारायणः स विवेकी तैः सम्पद्यते रोगः प्रजाः ॥(Ch. Su. 1/9)

This means that favorable or unfavorable causes induce changes in the body, resulting in the manifestation of disease. Understanding this cause-effect relationship is fundamental to analyzing the health impacts of excessive screen time, which acts as a modern *Hetu* leading to various physical and mental *Parinama*^[11].

Additionally, late-night screen usage disrupts the natural sleep-wake cycle, leading to *Vata* aggravation and *Nidranasha*^[12]. Ayurveda emphasizes sleep as a pillar of health:

निद्रा स्वास्थ्यसुखायुषी। (Ch. Su. 21/36)

निद्रायत्तं सुखं दुःखं पुष्टिः काश्य बलाबलम् ।

वृषता क्लीबता ज्ञानमज्ञानं जीवितं न च ॥ (Ch.Su. 21/35)

Happiness and sorrow, nourishment and emaciation, strength and weakness, potency and impotence, knowledge and lack of knowledge, and even life itself—all these depend upon the quality of sleep^[13].

Thus, excessive screen time can be understood through both modern mechanisms and Ayurvedic principles. It represents a complex interaction of sensory overuse, behavioral misconduct, and disturbance of biological rhythm, collectively resulting in deterioration of physical health, mental balance, and overall well-being^[14].

Table 1: Physical Health Effects of Excessive Screen Time

Sr. No.	Physical Issue (Sharir)	Modern View	Ayurvedic Correlation
1	Digital eye strain	Dry eye, blurred vision, eye fatigue	Netra Shosha, Netra Daha (Vata-Pitta Dushti)
2	Headache	Visual strain-related headache	Shirashoola (Vata-Pitta Prakopa)
3	Neck & shoulder pain	Cervical spondylosis, muscle fatigue	Manyastambha, Greeva Shoola (Vata Vyadhi)
4	Back pain	Poor posture, spinal strain	Kati Shoola (Vata Dushti)
5	Obesity	Sedentary lifestyle	Sthaulya, Medo Dushti, Kapha Vruddhi
6	Sleep disorder	Melatonin suppression	Nidranasha, ANidra (Vata-Pitta imbalance)
7	Indigestion	Irregular eating	Agni Mandyā, Ajeerna
8	Fatigue	Physical and mental exhaustion	Klama, Daurbalya
9	Palpitations	Anxiety-mediated	Hrid Spandana (Vata)

Table 2: Mental Health Effects of Excessive Screen Time

Sr. No.	Mental Issue (Manas)	Modern View	Ayurvedic Correlation
1	Anxiety	Stress, digital overload	Chittodvēga (Raja Vruddhi)
2	Depression	Mood disorder	Vishada, Avasada (Tama dominance)
3	Attention deficit	Short concentration span	Dhee Vibhrama
4	Memory loss	Cognitive overload	Smriti Bhramsha
5	Addiction	Dopamine stimulation	Pradnyaparadh
6	Insomnia	Blue light effect	Nidranasha
7	Irritability	Mental exhaustion	Krodha, Udvega
8	Lack of motivation	Emotional blunting	Utsaha Kshaya
9	Loneliness	Reduced social contact	Sattva Kshaya

Material and method

This study is primarily conceptual and descriptive in nature, based on a thorough review of classical Ayurvedic literature and modern medical references. Ayurvedic concepts such as *Asatmya Indriyartham Samyoga* (improper sensory contact), *Pradnyaparadh* (intellectual error), and *Parinama* (pathological transformation) were explored in relation to the health effects of excessive screen time. Modern articles and research studies on the physical and mental health impacts of prolonged screen exposure were reviewed from reputed databases including PubMed and Google Scholar. Comparative analysis was conducted to correlate Ayurvedic principles with contemporary scientific findings, aiming to provide a holistic understanding of the adverse consequences of excessive screen use.

Source of Data

1. Classical Ayurvedic Texts

Primary information and concepts were derived from authentic classical texts such as *Charaka Samhita*, *Sushruta Samhita*, *Ashtanga Hridaya*.

2. Modern Medical Textbooks

Contemporary biomedical knowledge regarding the physical and mental health effects of excessive screen time was

referenced from standard medical textbooks in physiology, psychiatry, and occupational health.

3. Research Articles

Peer-reviewed research papers, systematic reviews, and clinical studies published in reputed journals accessed through databases such as PubMed, Google Scholar, and Scopus were used to gather up-to-date evidence on screen time impacts.

Discussion

1. Multisystem Impact of Excessive Screen Time

Modern studies highlight neurological and hormonal imbalances caused by prolonged screen exposure. Ayurveda explains this through *Dosha* imbalances, particularly aggravation of *Vata* and *Pitta*, which govern nervous system functions and inflammatory processes.

2. Role of Blue Light and Circadian Rhythm Disruption

Exposure to blue light from screens suppresses melatonin production, disturbing sleep (*Nidra*). Ayurveda associates good sleep with balanced *Sattva* and *Kapha*, and disrupted sleep often relates to aggravated *Vata-Pitta*, which increases *Raj guna* and decreases *Tam guna* leads to increasing mental stress.

3. Psychosocial Consequences

Excessive and inappropriate sensory input, described as Asatmya Indriyarth Samyoga, overloads the senses and reduces meaningful social interactions, leading to mental imbalances like grief (Shoka) and anxiety (Chinta) which reflects Vat Dosh vitiation and Rasavaha Srotas Dushti Hetu.

गुरुशीतमतिस्तिर्गधमतिमात्रं समक्षताम्।
रसवाहीनि दुष्पन्ति चिन्त्यानां चातिचिन्तनात् । (Ch. Vi.5/13)

4. Behavioral and Cognitive Effects

Constant digital stimulation negatively affects intellect (Medha) and memory (Dhi). Ayurveda views this as a form of Pradnyaparadh (intellectual error), where neglect of wise behavior leads to cognitive decline, which ultimately vitiates Vat Dosh.

5 Integrative Perspective on Sensory Overload

Asatmya Indriyarth Samyoga causes Dosha imbalance and disrupts physical and mental health. Balanced sensory engagement and adherence to daily routines (Dinacharya) are emphasized as remedies.

a. Importance of Nidra

निद्रायत्तं सुखं दुःखं पुष्टिः काश्य बलाबलम् ।

वृष्टा क्लीबता ज्ञानमज्ञानं जीवितं न च ॥ (Ch. Su. 21/35)

Happiness and sorrow, nourishment and emaciation, strength and weakness, potency and impotence, knowledge and lack of knowledge, and even life itself—all these depend upon the quality of sleep.

b. Bramhamuhurta Utishtet:

ब्रह्ममुहूर्ते उत्तिष्ठत् स्वस्थो रक्षार्थमायुषः ।

शरीरचिन्तां निर्वर्त्य कृतशौचविधिः शुचिः ॥ (Ash. H. Su. 2/1)

A healthy person should wake up during Bramhamuhurta in order to protect and preserve life. After waking, one should attend to bodily needs, perform cleansing activities, and maintain personal purity.

c. Tratak

Trataka is a yogic cleansing technique involving steady, uninterrupted gazing at a fixed point or object (usually a candle flame) to improve concentration and cleanse the eyes.

Method of Trataka

1. Sit comfortably in a quiet place with a candle or small light placed at eye level about 2–3 feet away.
2. Keep your spine straight and relax your body.
3. Gaze steadily at the flame without blinking as long as comfortable.
4. When the eyes begin to water, gently close them.
5. Visualize the flame in your mind with closed eyes.
6. Repeat this process for 1–3 minutes initially, gradually increasing with practice.

Benefits of Trataka

1. Improves eye concentration and reduces eye strain.
2. Strengthens the eye muscles and enhances vision clarity.
3. Helps relieve dry eyes, blurred vision, and eye fatigue caused by prolonged screen time.
4. Reduces watering of eyes and eye irritation.
5. Calms the nervous system, reducing stress-related eye problems like headaches and strain.

6. Integrative Preventive and Lifestyle Choices

Pradnyaparadh, meaning intellectual lapse, results in neglecting health despite knowing the risks. Excessive screen use is a modern example, countered by cultivating ethical conduct (Sadvritta) and mental awareness.

a. Eye exercises

- 20-20-20 Rule: Every 20 minutes, look at something 20 feet away for 20 seconds to reduce eye strain.
- Palming: Rub your palms together to warm them, then gently cup your eyes without pressure for 30 seconds to relax eye muscles.
- Eye Rolling: Slowly roll your eyes clockwise and then counterclockwise 10 times to improve circulation and reduce fatigue.

b. Shoulder exercises

- Shoulder Rolls: Sit or stand straight, slowly roll your shoulders forward in a circular motion 10 times, then backward 10 times to relieve stiffness and improve blood flow.
- Arm Across Chest Stretch: Extend one arm across the chest and use the other arm to gently pull it closer, holding for 20 seconds; repeat on the other side to stretch shoulder muscles and reduce tension.

c. Lumbar exercises

- Cat-Cow Stretch: On hands and knees, alternate arching your back up (Cat) and dipping it down (Cow) slowly 10 times to improve spine flexibility and relieve lower back tension.
- Child's Pose: Sit back on your heels, stretch your arms forward on the floor, and relax your lower back for 30 seconds to gently stretch and release lumbar muscles.

7. Integrative Preventive Approaches

Ayurveda recommends daily routines (Dinacharya), yoga, pranayama, and techniques like Brahmarishi pranayama to restore mental and physical balance. When combined with responsible technology use, these support holistic well-being.

8. Need for Public Health Policies

Ayurveda stresses lifestyle regulation for health. Thus, public policies promoting screen time limits, mental health awareness, and digital detox periods are essential for community wellness.

Conclusion

The growing dependence on digital screens has profound implications for both physical and mental health, often leading to discomfort, psychological stress, and decreased quality of life.

According to Ayurvedic principles, imbalance in sensory inputs (Asatmya Indriyarth Samyoga) and intellectual negligence are key Nidanas (causative factors) that contribute to these health issues. Recognizing excessive screen time as a modern-day Nidana highlights the importance of Nidana Parivarjan—avoiding or regulating the cause—through measures such as regulated usage, ergonomic adjustments, and avoidance of prolonged exposure to digital devices. Restoring natural daily routines and practicing timely Nidra (sleep), proper diet, and physical activity can further support mental and physical well-being. Future efforts should focus on raising awareness, encouraging mindful habits, and integrating Ayurvedic lifestyle practices with contemporary

health guidelines to foster sustainable well-being in the digital era.

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