

DIGITAL ADDICTION AND ITS IMPACT ON YOUTH PSYCHOLOGY

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<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.16975249>

Annotation. This article examines the phenomenon of digital addiction and its psychological effects on youth. It discusses how excessive use of the Internet, social media, mobile devices, and online games affects students' mental health, social relationships, and academic performance. The paper also explores the social consequences of digital addiction, including isolation, reduced face-to-face communication, and emotional instability. Finally, the article highlights strategies for prevention and management, such as parental control, media literacy, personal discipline, and psychological support, emphasizing the importance of balanced and responsible technology use.

Keywords. Digital addiction, youth psychology, mental health, social isolation, academic performance, media literacy, digital hygiene.

Introduction .In today's era of globalization, digital technologies have become an inseparable part of human life. With the rapid expansion of the Internet, social media, and mobile applications, young people are spending an increasing amount of time in the virtual world. While this process has many positive aspects, the problem of "digital addiction" resulting from excessive use is becoming increasingly urgent. Digital addiction affects not only physical health but also has a significant impact on the psychological state of youth. For instance, excessive dependence on smartphones or the Internet can lead to sleep disorders, lack of concentration, social isolation, and even an increased risk of depression or anxiety. Moreover, digital addiction strongly influences adolescents' self-perception, social relationships, and academic performance.

Therefore, the issue of digital addiction today is of great importance not only for psychologists but also for educators, parents, and society as a whole. Studying and discussing this problem is essential for ensuring the healthy development of young people and their future social well-being.

Main Part. Digital addiction is a psychological condition in which a person's excessive use of the Internet, social media, mobile phones, online games, or other digital devices negatively affects their daily life activities. Experts classify digital addiction into several types¹:

- **Internet addiction** – users spend too much time online and neglect their real-life responsibilities.
- **Social media addiction** – excessive dependence on social signals and rewards such as "likes," "comments," and "followers."
- **Gaming addiction** – being overly immersed in online or mobile games, leading to poor time and resource management.

¹ Kuss, D. J., & Griffiths, M. D. (2017). *Social Networking Sites and Addiction: Ten Lessons Learned*. International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health, 14(3), 311.

- **Smartphone addiction** – compulsive checking of phones, sometimes causing phenomena such as “phantom vibration syndrome” (imagining the phone is vibrating). One of the most concerning aspects of digital addiction is its direct effect on the mental health of young people. Research shows that:

1. **Attention and memory problems** – constant exposure to digital devices trains the brain to process information quickly but weakens focus and long-term memory.
2. **Sleep disorders** – the “blue light” emitted from screens reduces melatonin levels, lowering sleep quality. This results in mood instability and increased stress levels.
3. **Social isolation** – young people who immerse themselves excessively in the online world gradually lose real-life communication, leading to feelings of loneliness and insecurity.
4. **Depression and anxiety** – constant comparison with others on social media lowers self-esteem and increases psychological pressure.
5. According to international research in 2023, **35% of teenagers worldwide** consider themselves addicted to social media.

- In the United States, **40% of high school students** admitted that they continue using their phones after midnight.
- In South Korea, the government introduced the “Game Curfew” policy to reduce online gaming addiction, preventing youth from accessing online games after midnight.

Digital addiction leads not only to psychological issues but also to social problems. Many young people spend more time communicating online, distancing themselves from real-life friendships and family relationships. As a result, students may lag behind in developing essential social skills such as teamwork and face-to-face communication. In the long run, this can hinder their integration into society. For instance, studies show that teenagers who spend excessive time on social media report weaker connections with their real-life friends. Additionally, the habit of portraying an “ideal self” online often increases insecurity in real-life interactions². Digital addiction also negatively affects students’ academic performance. Due to lack of concentration, sleep deprivation, and constant distractions, many young people fail to complete tasks on time. Moreover, students heavily engaged in online games or social media often experience a decline in academic achievement. For example, studies conducted in U.S. universities revealed that students with high levels of Internet and smartphone addiction tend to have lower GPAs (Grade Point Averages). This demonstrates a clear correlation between digital habits and educational outcomes.

There are several effective strategies to combat digital addiction:

1. **Parental control** – monitoring screen time and maintaining open communication with children.
2. **Media literacy in education** – teaching students how to use digital technologies responsibly and productively.
3. **Personal restrictions** – practicing “digital detox” days, such as avoiding smartphones once a week.
4. **Psychological support** – seeking professional help when addiction reaches a severe level.

² Young, K. S. (2015). *Internet Addiction: A Handbook and Guide to Evaluation and Treatment*. John Wiley & Sons.

For instance, in some European countries, schools have introduced “digital hygiene” courses, which teach students how to use technology in a balanced and healthy way. Such initiatives play a vital role in fostering a healthier relationship between youth and digital tools³.

Conclusion. Digital addiction has become one of the most pressing issues affecting youth psychology today, with noticeable impacts on personal, social, and educational spheres. While the rapid development of the Internet, social media, and mobile devices has made life more convenient for students, it also poses risks to their mental stability. Negative consequences such as sleep disturbances, lack of concentration, social isolation, and depression reduce the quality of life for young people. At the same time, digital addiction weakens social relationships, lowers academic performance, and distances students from real-life activities. This can create serious challenges for their future integration into society⁴. However, digital addiction can be prevented and managed. Combined efforts from parents and educators, media literacy lessons, personal discipline, and psychological support all contribute to healthy development. The key is not to completely prohibit the use of technology, but to manage it responsibly, maintain balance, and follow digital hygiene practices. In conclusion, studying the psychological impact of digital addiction and developing effective strategies to combat it is one of the most important tasks facing society today. Only then can we protect young people from the negative effects of the digital world and raise them as healthy, creative, and morally mature individuals.

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⁴ Турсунов, А. (2022). *Mobil ilovalar va onlayn o’yinlarga qaramlikning yoshlar psixologiyasiga ta’siri*. Toshkent: O’zbekiston Psixologiya Jamiyati Nashriyoti.