
DAILY SCREEN EXPOSURE AND BEHAVIORAL ADJUSTMENT AMONG INTERMEDIATE LEARNERS AS PERCEIVED BY THE TEACHERS

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ABSTRACT

Daily Screen Exposure and Behavioral Adjustment Among Intermediate Learners as Perceived by the Teachers. This study examined the relationship between daily screen exposure and behavioral adjustment among intermediate learners (Grades 4–6) in selected elementary schools within the Malaybalay City Division, Bukidnon, Philippines. Using a quantitative descriptive-correlational design, data were collected from 100 class advisers who assessed pupils' screen exposure and behavioral adjustment. The Teacher Screen Exposure Perception Questionnaire (TSEPQ) and the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) – Teacher Report were employed, with Cronbach's alpha of .718 indicating acceptable reliability. Results showed that pupils exhibit a moderate level of daily screen exposure, particularly through online video consumption. Behavioral adjustment concerns were generally low, with occasional worry and minor temper-related behaviors moderately observed. Pearson correlation analysis revealed no significant relationship between screen time duration and behavioral adjustment ($r = .157, p = .116$). While moderate screen use does not appear to negatively impact classroom behavior, regulated, age-appropriate, and supervised digital media use is recommended. Broader contextual factors, including family environment, school support, and peer interactions, likely influence behavioral outcomes.

KEYWORDS: *screen exposure, behavioral adjustment, intermediate grade pupils, digital media use, classroom behaviour.*

INTRODUCTION

The utilization of digital technology has become an essential part of children's daily lives. Screen-based activities for education, entertainment, or communication now make up a significant portion of school-aged children's waking hours. Screen time, interpreted as the number of hours spent in front of screens such as tablets, televisions, mobile phones, and computers, has emerged as an important variable related to child development and educational outcomes (Twenge & Campbell, 2018). As digital exposure expands both inside and outside the classroom, concerns have been raised regarding its influence on learners' school-related behavior.

Behavioral adjustment in the school context refers to a child's ability to effectively adapt to the expectations of the learning environment. This includes the capacity to pay attention, manage emotions, interact positively with classmates and teachers, and follow classroom rules. These behaviors are essential for children's academic achievement and psychosocial development. Children who struggle with behavioral adjustment may exhibit symptoms such as inattention, aggression, social disengagement, or emotional outbursts, which can disrupt not only their own learning but also the learning environment of others (Goodman, 2001).

An increasing amount of research has examined the connection between screen time and behavioral adjustment. Studies indicate that high levels of screen exposure are associated with behavioral issues such as hyperactivity, emotional difficulties, and decreased prosocial behavior (Rosen et al., 2014; Twenge & Campbell, 2018). However, some scholars note that moderate screen use may not necessarily be harmful. Przybylski and Weinstein (2017) proposed the "Goldilocks Hypothesis," suggesting that balanced screen time may support digital literacy and engagement, while excessive use may replace healthy lifestyle habits and real-world social interactions.

In the Philippine context, gadget usage has increased, particularly after the shift to online learning during the COVID-19 pandemic. Although face-to-face classes have resumed, reliance on online activities, digital learning materials, and screen-based entertainment remains common. Children in the elementary intermediate levels (Grades 4 to 6) are in a crucial developmental stage where habits, behaviors, and emotional responses continue to develop. At this stage, excessive screen exposure may begin to influence attention span, social behavior, and self-regulation (Hinkley et al., 2019).

Despite these developments, there remains a notable gap in empirical data examining the relationship between daily screen exposure and behavioral adjustment among intermediate learners in public elementary schools, particularly from the perspective of teachers. Most

existing literature is based on Western contexts where access to technology, supervision, and educational resources may differ from those in rural communities.

Hence, this study seeks to address this gap, as teachers' perceptions can provide valuable insight into learners' observable behavior within the classroom environment. Understanding the relationship between screen exposure and behavioral adjustment, as perceived by teachers, may contribute to the development of evidence-based classroom strategies, parental guidance initiatives, and school policies that promote responsible technology use.

This study will utilize two assessment tools: the Teacher Screen Exposure Perception Questionnaire (TSEPPQ), an adapted instrument based on the constructs of the SCREENS-Q (Screen Exposure Questionnaire), which gathers teachers' observations on learners' daily gadget use for recreational and educational purposes, and the Behavioral Adjustment Scale, particularly the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) TY1, which is commonly used to assess behavioral functioning among children. The SDQ measures emotional symptoms, peer relationships, prosocial behavior, hyperactivity/inattention, and conduct problems (Goodman, 2001).

By focusing on intermediate learners, this study examines a developmental stage in which children begin taking greater responsibility for managing their time and often gain more direct access to digital technology. Behavioral expectations in school also become more complex during this period, requiring greater focus, self-control, and cooperation. Understanding the connection between screen time habits and behavior during this stage may support early intervention strategies and school-based guidance initiatives.

Furthermore, this study aims to provide insights into programs and policies that promote responsible gadget use among children. The findings may assist teachers and school administrators in strengthening awareness campaigns or integrating digital wellness principles into values education. They may also guide parents in establishing appropriate screen-time boundaries at home based on evidence of how screen exposure relates to children's school behavior.

Framework of the Study

The study is anchored on the study of Gentile, Coyne, and Walsh (2011), which explored the influence of media exposure on the children's behavioral and social development. Their research highlighted that unmonitored and excessive screen time may affect children's emotional regulation, attention, and interpersonal behaviors significantly. According to their findings, the media operate as a socializing agent that models emotional and behavioral

responses, thereby influencing a child's social adjustment within both home and school settings.

This study is also grounded in the Social Learning Theory by Bandura (1997), which claims that learning occurs through imitation, modeling, and observation. Children frequently mirror behaviors they observe in their environment, including those shown in digital content such as social media platforms, television programs, and online games. Hence, the duration and the type of screen exposure may directly influence the behavioral adjustment of the children, depending on whether the observed models demonstrate prosocial or antisocial behavior.

Additionally, this study is guided by the Ecological Systems Theory of Bronfenbrenner (1979), which emphasizes that the development of a child is shaped by various environmental systems, including family, school, and media. Following this framework, daily screen exposure is a component of the child's microsystem, interacting with school and family contexts that influence behavioral outcomes. In this sense, the media environment is not isolated but rather integrated into the larger ecological context of the learning and social behavior of a child.

Guided by the above-mentioned theoretical foundations, this research explores the relationship between daily screen exposure and behavioral adjustment among intermediate-grade pupils. The independent variable, daily screen exposure, pertains to how much time a pupil spends on utilizing digital devices each day, whether for academic purposes, social media, or gaming. The dependent variable, behavioral adjustment, relates to how the pupils regulate their emotions, behave socially, and pay attention, both as perceived and evaluated by their teachers.

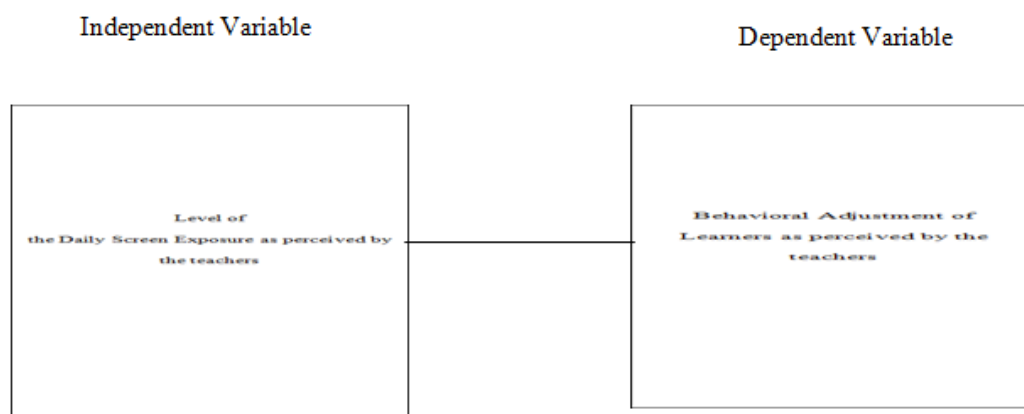


Figure 1. Schematic diagram of the study showing the relationship between independent and dependent variables.

Scope and Delimitation of the Study

This study examines how teachers perceive intermediate learners (Grades 4-6) in a few Malaybalay City Division elementary schools. This study's main goal is to ascertain how daily screen time—which includes social media, gaming, and academics relates to behavioral adjustment. It concentrated on the relationship between screen usage and the attention span, social behavior, and emotional regulation of intermediate-grade learners all of which are critical components of learning and social interaction in the classroom. Only the chosen public elementary schools in the Malaybalay City Division Sumpong Central School, Bangcud Central School, Malaybalay City Central School, Pat-pat Elementary School, and Dalwangan Elementary School are included in the study. Due to their developmental maturity, which reflected a higher level of self-report skill with regard to screen habits and easily observed behavioral adaptation in an academic setting, novices in Grades 4 through 6 were chosen for this study. The Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) TY1 behavioral adjustment scale and the instructor Screen Exposure Perception Questionnaire (TSEPQ) were used to collect data, and the instructor assessed the results to ensure consistency.

Review of Related Literature

The research offered various reviews of the literature on the relationship between learners' behavioral adjustment and their daily screen use. One such defining feature in this regard is the increasing incorporation of digital technology into children's daily lives. Due to the ubiquitous usage of TVs, laptops, tablets/iPads, and cellphones, parents are inevitably exposed to screen time at home and at school throughout the day. Parents, educators, and psychologists have expressed worry about the detrimental consequences that excessive screen time can have on children's behavior and psychological development, despite the fact that technology provides a way of pursuing knowledge (Twenge & Campbell, 2018).

Digital learning tools are therefore crucial in a Philippine setting, particularly after the COVID-19 pandemic, which saw increased internet usage among students even in elementary school (Department of Education [DepEd], 2022). However, this increased exposure raises concerns about potential behavioral effects, such as concentration problems and social disengagement (Anderson et al., 2017).

Research on the relationship between daily screen time and behavioral adjustment has shown promise, especially for school-age children who are in the prime of their social and emotional development (Rideout et al., 2019). The concept of behavioral adjustment was defined by Goodman et al. (2010) as a child's capacity to regulate their emotions, build healthy relationships, and engage in social and academic activities. While maladjusted students

exhibit conduct issues (overactivity and hyperactivity) or withdrawn behaviors, well-adjusted students exhibit cooperation, rule-following, and emotional stability in educational settings (Mash & Wolfe, 2019). As a result, this chapter presents both local and international studies that are relevant to everyday screen time and behavioral adjustments. It also discusses the scientific gaps that can be identified in current research.

Methodology

This study employed a quantitative correlational research design in examining the relationship between the daily screen exposure (independent variable) and behavioral adjustment (dependent variable) among the intermediate learners (Grades 4-6) based on the perception of their teacher. For school-based behavioral studies, a correlational design is suitable since it allows the researcher to ascertain the presence and degree of association between the two variables without manipulating them (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Fraenkel & Wallen, 2019; Gay et al., 2012). Statistical analysis will then identify the relationships and patterns that address the research questions.

Research Locale

This study was conducted in the selected elementary schools of the Malaybalay City Division, namely, Sumpung Central School, Bangcud Central School, Malaybalay City Central School, Pat-pat Elementary School, and Dalwangan Elementary School. The City of Malaybalay is in the central part of the Province of Bukidnon.

Findings

Learners in intermediate grades were found to be moderately exposed to screens on a daily basis, with online video consumption being the most common activity. The data collected indicates that while intermediate learners are not over exposed to digital media, they do have some exposure to it. This implies that their screen time is within a manageable range and could be a sign of a good balance between academic and recreational technology use. This is consistent with the theory known as "the Goldilocks effect" (Pryzbylski & Weinstein, 2017), which holds that moderate screen time is not always associated with negative consequences. This is in line with research showing that learning can benefit from moderate and supervised use of digital media (Kostyrka-Allchorne et al., 2017) and the American Academy of Pediatrics' guidelines (2016), which state that screen time may actually be beneficial for development when used purposefully and under supervision. Regarding behavioral outcomes, students show little worry for their adjustment behavior, suggesting that most behavioral

problems are not typically observed in the classroom. However, the few temper-related behaviors that were concerning were modest. This shows that they have good behavioral control within the school and are generally well-adjusted socially and emotionally. This result is in line with Mash and Wolfe's (2019) assertion that students who exhibit adequate social behavior and emotional stability are considered well-adjusted. Additionally, Pianta et al. (2012) highlight the importance of teacher-student connections and healthy school environments, both of which are strongly associated with behavioral adjustment.

Furthermore, the findings demonstrated that there is no significant correlation between the amount of time spent on screens each day and behavioral modification. According to our hypothesis (H1) for this study, this suggests that the amount of screen time per day does not significantly influence the intermediate learner's behavioral adjustment. As a result, screen time may not be the only factor influencing behavioral adjustment, family environment, screening, and social involvement. For example, this finding contradicts research that suggests increased screen time is associated with behavioral issues (Twenge & Campbell, 2018; Domoff et al. 2019). However, Gentile et al. (2011) clarify that the impact of media varies according to content, supervision, and setting. At the same time, this is consistent with Bandura's Social Learning Theory (1977), which states that the type of content and reinforcement provided by the environment, rather than just the existence or quantity of screen time, statistically explain these people's behavior.

Table 3 Level of Daily Screen Exposure Among Intermediate Grade Learners.

Indicator	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Interpretation
Learners talk about watching online videos or streaming content.	3.59	0.95	High Level
Learners access social media or online messaging platforms.	3.26	1.05	Moderate Level
Learners use digital devices for school-related tasks at home.	3.13	1.30	Moderate Level
Learners frequently relate classroom topics to online or digital content.	2.97	1.21	Moderate Level
Learners mention playing online or mobile games.	2.86	1.31	Moderate Level
Some learners show difficulty sustaining attention during non-digital tasks.	2.76	1.14	Moderate Level
Learners demonstrate reduced interest in face-to-face peer interaction.	2.76	1.15	Moderate Level
Learners display signs of fatigue or sleepiness during class hours.	2.74	1.17	Moderate Level
Learners show familiarity with trending online content.	2.73	1.30	Moderate Level

Learners appear restless or impatient when activities are not technology-based.	2.69	1.26	Moderate Level
Overall	2.95	0.61	Moderate Level

Table 3 presents the level of daily screen exposure among intermediate-grade pupils as perceived by the teachers. Overall, the result shows a moderate level of daily screen exposure (Overall Mean = 2.95, SD = 0.614). This means that, generally, pupils are exposed to screens on a regular basis, but not at an extremely high level. The indicator with the highest mean is “Pupils talk about watching online videos or streaming content” (Mean = 3.59, SD = 0.948) which falls under High Level. This means that many pupils frequently mention watching online videos, making it the most noticeable form of screen exposure among them.

Table 4 Level of Behavioral Adjustment Among Intermediate Grade Pupils.

Indicator	M	SD	Interpretation
Learners worry or often seem worried.	1.91	0.75	Moderate Level
Learners steal from home, school, or elsewhere.	1.72	0.84	Moderate Level
Learners often lose temper.	1.71	0.74	Moderate Level
Learners generally well behaved, usually do what adults request.	1.71	0.80	Moderate Level
Learners feel nervous in new situations, easily lose confidence.	1.70	0.61	Moderate Level
Learners have at least one good friend.	1.69	0.63	Moderate Level
Considerate of other learners’ feelings.	1.68	0.63	Moderate Level
Learners often complain of headaches, stomachaches, or sickness.	1.68	0.71	Moderate Level
Learners are restless, overactive, cannot stay still for long.	1.65	0.64	Low Level
Learners get along better with adults than peers.	1.61	0.57	Low Level
Learners are kind to younger children.	1.59	0.62	Low Level
Learners generally liked by other young people.	1.58	0.64	Low Level
Learners often unhappy, depressed, or tearful.	1.57	0.73	Low Level
Learners are helpful if someone is hurt, upset, or ill.	1.56	0.70	Low Level
Learners fear easily or are easily scared.	1.56	0.52	Low Level
Learners have good attention span and complete tasks.	1.55	0.67	Low Level
Learners easily distracted, concentration wanders.	1.54	0.54	Low Level
Learners picked on or bullied by other young people.	1.54	0.66	Low Level
Learners volunteer to help others.	1.54	0.69	Low Level
Learners often fight with or bully others.	1.52	0.61	Low Level

Learners often lie or cheat.	1.52	0.64	Low Level
Learners constantly fidget or squirm.	1.50	0.69	Low Level
Learners share readily with other young people.	1.48	0.52	Low Level
Learners would rather be alone than with peers.	1.47	0.66	Low Level
Learners think things out before acting.	1.45	0.64	Low Level
Overall	1.60	0.20	Low Level

Table 4 shows the level of daily screen exposure among intermediate grade pupils as perceived by the teachers. Overall, the result shows a moderate level of daily screen exposure (Overall Mean = 2.95, SD = 0.614). This means that, in general, pupils are exposed to screens on a regular basis, but not at an extremely high level. The indicator with the highest mean is “Pupils talk about watching online videos or streaming content” (Mean = 3.59, SD = 0.948). It falls under High Level. This means that many pupils frequently mention watching online videos, making it the most noticeable form of screen exposure among them.

The Pearson correlation analysis Between Daily Screen Exposure and Behavioral Adjustment shows that “Time Duration of Daily Screen Exposure” ($r = .157$, $p\text{-value} = .116$) has a very weak positive correlation with behavioral adjustment, and the p -value is higher than the usual 0.05 level of significance, this means that the relationship is not statistically significant.

This result aligns with broader research literature, which has reported mixed findings. Some studies have shown associations between high screen time and behavioral problems, including attention difficulties and increased externalizing behavior (Screen Time and Child Outcomes, Pediatric Research, 2021). Similarly, research involving school-aged children reported that greater screen time correlates with higher behavioral issues and lower academic performance.

However, other research emphasizes that screen time quality matters more than quantity, and that moderate use, particularly for educational or supervised purposes, may not be strongly linked to adverse behavioral outcomes. The lack of a significant relationship in the current study could reflect this nuance, moderate screen exposure is not sufficient by itself to cause observable behavior problems within the classroom. It also reinforces the importance of considering other mediating factors such as parental supervision, content type, and individual differences, which were beyond the scope of this study.

CONCLUSION

The study indicates that the average daily screen time for intermediate learners is modest, with online video being one of the most commonly mentioned activities.

Despite this high level of digital engagement, students typically express little worry about behavioral adjustment, suggesting that they behave appropriately and adaptably in the classroom.

The findings imply that children's daily screen usage did not significantly predict behavioral adjustment in this group, in addition to the limits and consequences mentioned above. Therefore, it appears that students' behavioral adjustment is not significantly impacted by moderate screen use in this study. Additionally, evidence suggests that screen time alone does not always result in negative behavioral outcomes; rather, the impacts of screen time are mitigated by broader contextual factors such as the family environment, school support systems, and interpersonal interactions.

Digital media usage needs to be properly regulated and guided, even though these studies suggest screen time is not a major predictor of behavioral issues. Age-appropriate content, balanced routines, and proper supervision are still necessary to guarantee that screen time promotes rather than hinders kids' general development. Therefore, even though there was no significant correlation between the factors in this study, it is recommended that people use digital screens responsibly and in moderation. This resulted in the null hypothesis being accepted based on the statistical results.

Recommendations

The researcher suggests the following in light of the data and conclusions:

Teachers should integrate technology into their lessons while creating a disciplined and dynamic flow in the classroom, even if students only sometimes interact with screens. Teachers can also help kids develop self-control when using technology and promote appropriate technology use in the classroom.

Learners showed a low degree of adjustment in terms of behavioral indicators. In addition to limiting the amount of time their children spend on screens, parents should keep an eye on the kinds of digital content their children are exposed to and steer clear of pointless apps and channels. Healthy behavioral and emotional adjustment can be fostered by daily routines, participation in offline social activities (like exercise and family time), and candid conversations about online activity.

In order to promote responsible, balanced, and age-appropriate use of technology among students, school administrators should continue to support the current digital literacy programs offered in schools, as the study found no statistically significant relationship between daily screen exposure and behavioral adjustment among learners (Jibrin et al., 2022).

To maintain technology as a helpful and developmentally appropriate teaching tool, school regulations may nevertheless emphasize monitoring, guidelines, and policies for teaching acceptable digital activities rather than outright prohibitions.

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