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Digital Detox : A Need of Present Time

Abstract : With 491 million Indian youth using social media, excessive digital engagement exacerbates anxiety, depression and cognitive strain. Digital detoxification is the deliberate reduction or cessation of social media and digital device use. Reviews and empirical trials show that Digital detox interventions improve well-being and self regulation by clearly reducing these symptoms. This research paper describes the psychological effects, evidence based advantages, and culturally relevant interventions. This study suggests policy integrations, such as NEP-aligned programs for long term mental health.

Keywords : Internet Addiction, Digital detox, Social media, Screentime, Anxiety, Depression, Cognitive impairment.

Introduction : With 806 million internet users in india, technology overload is a serious problem. Social media and Smartphones have revolutionized communication but they have also given rise to addictive behaviours. Digital addiction involves the obsessive use of digital devices, digital technologies, and digital platforms, i.e. internet, video game, online platforms, mobile devices, digital gadgets, and social network platform. Singh,A.K. and Singh P.K.(2019) said that digital addiction is an emerging domain of cyberpsychology which explore a problematic use of digital media, device and platforms by being obsessive and excessive. Digital detox refers to purposefully cutting back on or giving up social

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media and digital device use. The proliferation of Smartphones and social media has transformed communication but also lead to addiction like behaviour. Studies show that constant connectivity contributes to anxiety, reduced attention spans and sleep disturbances , making digital detox essential for well -being. Digital detox offers a voluntary break to re-evaluate technology and foster genuine human interactions. Digital detox is crucial for well being since research indicates that continuous connectivity causes anxiety, short attention spans and disturbed sleep. Many adults spend more than 7 hours a day on screen which is associated with higher levels of stress. Voluntary break to reconsider technology use and promote real human connections is provided by Digital detox. A digital detox is a period in which a person reduces or completely stops their use of electronic devices such as a Smartphone. Specifically people may limit their overall screen time or access to social media. Over use of digital devices impairs cognitive abilities like memory and focus while social comparisons on platform contribute to depression and low self –esteem .Blue light from screens disrupt sleep cycles, notifications lead to a state of constant distraction that hinders emotional control and productivity. Excessive smartphone use has been linked in studies to mental health problems like anxiety and compulsive behaviours. Sakira et al.(2019) in a cross- sectional study of 192 students in Assam found that 80.7% had internet addiction ,which was strongly associated with depression, anxiety and stress. Agarwal et al.(2024) in their study on Indian medical undergraduates showed that problematic internet use was positively correlated with loneliness and overall psychological morbidity. Excessive reliance on social media platforms was associated with dysfunctional coping and worsening mental health trajectories overtime. Digital addiction impact on mental health in Indian research journal (IJIRT) reports that compulsive digital device use (especially social media and gaming) is linked to higher levels of anxiety , depression , stress , and sleep disturbances across diverse Indian samples. It also highlights withdrawal like symptoms when access is restricted. Many Indian studies highlight high internet addiction prevalence among students linked to poor mental health while detox reduces the symptoms.

By interrupting the pattern of continuous information overload, digital detox improves mood, lowers stress and increases attention. After Detox period participants frequently report improved sleep, introspection and social connections, positive effects on eudaimonic wellbeing,such as habit reformation and decreased boredom have been confirmed by systematic reviews. According to a 2025 study anxiety symptoms and negative emotions decreased when screen time was cut in half. Tadpatrikar et al.(2024) conducted a meta- analysis using Young’s IAS, finding 21.5% internet addiction prevalence in Indian adults, correlated with depression and low self-esteem. A Chennai college study (JMSELEYON, recent) tested digital detox camps, reducing addiction scores and mindful tech use among students. Patel (2025) narrative review notes 19.9%

internet addiction in Indian college students, with physiological impacts like elevated heart rate. Radtke et al.(2022) in a systematic review of 23 studies found detox decreases smartphone use and depression but mixed results on cognition / wellbeing. Ramadhan et al.(2024) meta analysis showed social media detox improves mental health by reducing anxiety and alleviating mood, though effects fade post-intervention. Kohle and Naik (2025) in their systematic literature review approach guided by PRISMA found that digital detox offers cognitive and emotional advantages, such as improved attention, stress reduction, and enhanced self-reflection. The study concluded that digital detox practices significantly promote eudaimonic well-being by providing cognitive and emotional benefits.

Obstacles and Solutions : Digital Detox has advantages but it also has drawbacks, such as withdrawal symptoms and FOMO(Fear of Missing Out).While some people initially feel bored or alone, many find it manageable by substituting offline activities for screen time. Setting customised limits turning of notifications and making gradual cuts as opposed to sudden ones are all effective tactics. Supportive programs such as group challenges increase long term success and adherence. Pertinence in the current situation digital detoxification is more important than ever in 2026 as AI -driven feeds increase compulsive scrolling.In the face of growing mental health crises, it prevents digital dementia risk like memory loss and encourages self -control. Detoxification could be incorporated into Wellness practices through public health initiatives particularly for professionals and young people in high stress settings like India where smartphone adoption is accelerating.

Challenges and Strategies : While beneficial ,digital detox faces barriers like FOMO and withdrawal symptoms. Many find it manageable, replacing screen time with offline activities , though some experience initial boredom or isolation.Effective strategies include setting personalized limits, disabling notifications ,and gradual reduction rather than abrupt cuts.Programs with support ,like group challenges, boost adherence and long – term success.

Practical Strategies for Digital detox : People should begin with brief detoxes like evenings without electronics, and record their progress in journals.Legislators could raise awareness by using apps that are ironically made to provide Detox advice. To optimise effectiveness, future studies should investigate culturally specific interventions, such as fusing Indian traditions of mindfulness with detoxification.

What is phone addiction?

Phone addiction isn't just using your phone a lot.

It's when checking your phone becomes automatic (without thinking), compulsive (hard to resist), escapist(avoiding real feelings).

Addiction develops through :

Dopamine loops-endless scrolling rewards the brain,

Instant gratification -quick hits of entertainment,
Avoidance -phone replaces discomfort or boredom.

Why it's hard to stop :

Breaking it feels tough because :

Your brain craves micro- rewards.

Apps are designed to hook you

You have tied emotions (loneliness, stress, boredom) to screen use.

How it becomes a problem :

Excessive phone use slowly impacts:

Mental health – anxiety, restlessness, overthinking

Focus easily get distracted, reduced deep work ability

Breaking the cycle (4 Zones)

Visualize your phone use in zones:

Red zone- social media binge, mindless scroll

Yellow zone-necessary use but overextended

Green use- Intentional purposeful use

Blue zone – No phone, pure presence

Tip: Spend more time in green and blue zone

How to limit access

Reduce the trigger, not just willpower:

Delete addictive apps(or log out daily)

Turn phone grayscale to kill dopamine triggers

Keep your phone outside the room

Replace with offline rituals (books, journaling, walks)

One week reset

Try this challenge

- Day1-2: Track your screen time
- Day3-4:Set "two no phone hours " daily
- Day5-6: Social media fast for 24 hours
- Day 7: Phone free moving till noon

Final reminder

Breaking phone addiction isn't about no phones.

It's about :

- Taking back control
- -Protecting your attention
- Creating space for real life.

Pertinence in the current situation : Digital detoxification is more important than ever in 2026, as AI driven feeds amplifying addictive scrolling . In the face of growing mental health crisis, it counters " digital dementia" risks like memory loss and promotes

self-control .Public health initiatives could integrate detox into wellness routines, especially for youth and professionals in high stress environments like India, where smartphone penetration is rapid.

Recommendations : Individuals should start with short detoxes , such as device – free evenings, tracking progress via journals. Swap scrolling with reading, puzzles, exercise, or mindfulness like meditation. Outdoor walks boost endorphins and replace screen habits effectively. Policymakers might promote awareness through apps ironically designed for detox guidance. Future research should explore culturally tailored interventions , like combing detox with mindfulness from Indian traditions, to maximize efficacy. Digital detox interventions show short –term reductions in usage and symptoms but mixed long – term effects on well-being.

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