School Psychologists’ Perception of the Impact of Digital Media on Academic Performance and Student Wellbeing

Children and Screens: Institute of Digital Media and Child Development conducted a survey in November 2021 in collaboration with the National Association of School Psychologists. The main aim of the survey was to assess the perceptions of school psychologists on the impacts of digital media use on academic performance and student wellbeing, especially within the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. Fifty-five school psychologists between the ages of 25-55 years responded to the survey. The results below provide insights into the perceptions about screen time effects on students among this sample of primarily high school psychologists.

- A majority of sampled school psychologists were concerned that academic outcomes were impacted by in-school (71%) and out-of-school (89%) screen use. Similarly, they were concerned that mental health outcomes were affected by both in-school (67%) and out-of-school (91%) screen use.
- When asked about in-school device use, the vast majority of sampled school psychologists were worried about social media’s impact on both academic performance (69%) and mental health (74%). A smaller percentage also expressed concern about gaming and internet browsing in school.
- Perceptions that media is harmful to child development were prevalent, with many respondents (43%) seeing adverse effects during the pandemic. A majority (78%) also reported that students or parents spoke about experiencing problematic device usage during the pandemic.
- At least 20% of respondents had spoken with their students about the following screen-related risks:
  - Cyberbullying (80%)
  - Video Gaming (58%)
  - Privacy Concerns (55%)
  - Addiction or Problematic Internet Use (46%)
  - Social Comparison/Body Image Concerns (40%)
  - Sexting (27%)
  - Pornography (20%)
- Fifty-two percent reported they were moderately to a great deal concerned about cyberbullying between students and 32% said they were moderately to a great deal concerned about sexting.
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- When working with a student who had experienced a digital-media-related issue, 35% reported seeking the assistance of law enforcement. Additionally, 30% had seen a student deal with legal ramifications of sexting and/or sharing explicit material online.
- Despite the aforementioned media use concerns, fewer than 20% of sampled school psychologists reported that their school curriculums covered these screen-related risks.


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