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“Perceived Effects of Electronics Use”

Electronics use has become a prevalent part of everyday life. Electronics may include smartphones, tablets, videogaming devices, television, streaming media, and computers. Electronics use has been associated with both positive and negative effects on wellness. Potential benefits include social support and connection, while negative effects may include depression, obesity, and sleep problems. Although recently there has been increased interest in the wellness effects of electronics use, there is a lack of research in this area focusing on psychiatric patients. In this cross-sectional study, we surveyed 85 patients of an outpatient behavioral health clinic ages 13-75 regarding trends in their electronics use and their perceptions of the personal wellness effects of electronics use. Participants were recruited in the clinic and administered an anonymous, five-minute survey consisting of 30 self-report questions designed by the researchers. Participants were asked to provide demographic information including age, gender, race, and ethnicity. Further, participants are asked to estimate daily time spent on social media, video/TV viewing, and gaming using a multiple-choice scale. The survey also included a range of questions asking participants how electronics use impacts different aspects of their personal wellness such as relationships, performance at work/school, sleep, and attention. Participants responded using a five-point Likert scale. Completed surveys were analyzed to describe response frequency distributions. The mode for social media time was 3 hours on both weekdays and weekends. The mode for TV/video time was 3 hours on weekdays and 2 hours on weekends. Most participants spent no time gaming. 49% (42 of 85 respondents) agreed or strongly agreed that they spend too much time using electronic devices, while 26% selected “neutral” and 25% disagreed or strongly disagreed. 48% (39 of 82 respondents) agreed or strongly agreed that electronic device use negatively impacts their mental health (23% selected “neutral” and 29% disagreed or strongly disagreed). These findings suggest that users may be spending a significant portion of their day on social media and TV/video watching. Further, users may view electronic devices as negatively impacting their wellness in some areas of life while supporting their wellness in others.