

Moderating the Effects of Screen Time on Youth Through a Mindfulness Program

Keywords

Mindfulness; youth; screen time; cohort study

Helpful Terms

Mindfulness: The practice of paying attention to the present moment, with a non-judgmental and accepting attitude.

Social-emotional competence: Skills that foster healthy relationships and sense of self. Includes self-awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making.

Project Title: *Screen time and social-emotional competence in youth: Can mindfulness play a role?*

Principal Investigator: [Soyeon Kim, PhD](#)

Funding: This project is supported in part by funding from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council, 2020-2024

Key Questions

- Can a 12-week mindfulness program foster social and emotional wellbeing among youth?
- Does mindfulness lessen the harmful impacts of excessive screen time in youth?

Project Aims

Most young people in Canada today own a smartphone and engage in texting, online gaming and social media daily. This is concerning, as too much screen time has been linked with low self-esteem, lower life satisfaction, and feelings of isolation and depression. This study investigates whether mindfulness can moderate the negative effects of excessive screen time, while increasing youth's social-emotional competence.

The study introduces a 12-week online mindfulness program for youth in rural areas of Ontario, including North Simcoe, Guelph Wellington, and Haliburton area. The Mindfulness Ambassador Program (MAP) was developed to help youth strengthen communication skills, foster peer-to-peer connections, build empathy and compassion, regulate emotions and develop resilience. This study brings an online version of MAP to the youth services offered by the Youth Wellness Hubs (North Simcoe and The Grove), Point in Time, and Catholic Family Services, Simcoe County. Our hope is that evidence from this study will promote future youth online mindfulness programs offered in Ontario to continue to build resiliency and support the mental wellbeing of youth across the province.

Activities

- Administering an online mindfulness program to a group of youth in North Simcoe County.
- Surveying youth to measure changes in social-emotional competence following the mindfulness program.
- Sharing findings with service providers and educators, including the Youth Wellness Hubs Ontario.