

Digital Alcoholism: A Growing Challenge in The Modern World (With Special Reference to India)

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Abstract- Digital alcoholism is an emerging behavioural issue characterized by excessive and uncontrolled use of digital devices such as smartphones, televisions, and online platforms. With the rapid growth of internet accessibility and digital media, individuals are increasingly becoming dependent on screens for communication, entertainment, and work. While technology has brought numerous benefits, its overuse has led to serious problems such as cybercrime, accidents, mental health issues, and social isolation. Continuous exposure to social media has also contributed to the rapid spread of rumours and misinformation, which can create panic and confusion in society. This paper discusses the causes, impacts, and most affected age groups, along with the advantages, disadvantages, and possible remedies to reduce digital alcoholism. It emphasizes the importance of balanced and responsible use of technology.

Keywords: Digital Addiction, Cybercrime, Screen Time, Social Media, Rumours, OTT Platforms, Mental Health, Digital Detox

I. INTRODUCTION

In today's digital age, technology has become an essential part of everyday life. People rely heavily on smartphones, computers, television, and online platforms for communication, education, and entertainment. However, excessive and unnecessary use of these devices has given rise to a condition known as digital alcoholism. It refers to the uncontrollable urge to use digital devices even when there is no real need. This habit not only wastes time but also affects a person's physical health, mental well-being, and social relationships. As digital usage continues to increase, this issue is becoming more serious and widespread, especially among young people.

Research Objective

1. To examine the impact of digital alcoholism on physical and mental health.

2. To analyze the effect of digital addiction on productivity and academic/work performance.

Hypothesis

- H₀₁: Digital alcoholism has no significant impact on physical and mental health,
H₁₁: whereas digital alcoholism has a significant impact on physical and mental health.
H₀₂: Digital addiction has no significant effect on productivity and academic/work performance,
H₁₂: whereas digital addiction has a significant effect on productivity and academic/work performance.

II. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The present study adopts a descriptive and analytical research design to examine the issue of digital alcoholism. The descriptive aspect focuses on understanding the patterns, extent, and nature of digital addiction among individuals, while the analytical approach is used to evaluate the relationship between digital usage and its impact on health and productivity. This combination of research design helps in providing both a detailed description and a critical analysis of the problem.

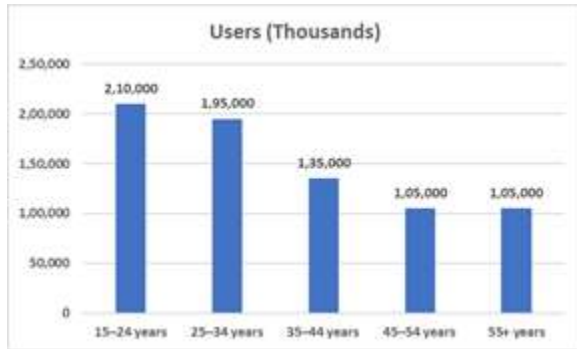
Data Collection

The study is based on both primary and secondary data. Primary data has been collected through a structured questionnaire designed to gather information about respondents' digital usage patterns, addiction behavior, and its impact on their daily lives. Secondary data has been collected from various sources such as books, research journals, articles, and online reports to support the theoretical framework and provide background information for the study.

Causes of Digital Alcoholism

Digital alcoholism is mainly caused by the easy availability of smartphones and internet services, which allow people to stay connected at all times. Social media platforms play a major role by creating a desire for validation through likes, comments, and followers. In addition, unlimited entertainment through television and OTT platforms encourages prolonged screen time. Many individuals also use digital devices as a way to escape stress, loneliness, or boredom, which gradually turns into addiction. Academic and professional demands further increase screen time, making it difficult for individuals to maintain a healthy balance.

Age Groups Most Affected



Age Group	Users (Thousands)
15-24 years	210,000
25-34 years	195,000
35-44 years	135,000
45-54 years	105,000
55+ years	105,000

In India, smartphone ownership among the 15-29 age group is extremely high, indicating that youth are the most vulnerable group to excessive digital consumption.

Digital alcoholism affects people of all age groups, but it is most common among teenagers and young adults. Children below the age of twelve are also increasingly exposed to digital devices through online classes and games. Teenagers are highly influenced by social media trends and peer pressure, while young adults depend on digital platforms for work, communication, and entertainment. Among

these groups, teenagers and young adults are the most affected because they spend the maximum amount of time online and are more vulnerable to digital influence.

Impacts of Digital Alcoholism

Health Problem	Research Evidence
Smartphone Addiction	39% – 44% adolescents
Depression/stress	Higher among heavy users
Sleep disturbance	High phone use related
Emotional ill-being	Significant association

Studies in India show that smartphone addiction among adolescents ranges between 39% and 44%, with significant impacts on psychological and emotional well-being.

The effects of digital alcoholism can be seen in physical, mental, and social aspects of life. Physically, it causes eye strain, headaches, poor posture, and sleep disturbances due to excessive screen exposure. Mentally, it leads to anxiety, depression, reduced concentration, and increased stress levels. Socially, it weakens real-life relationships, reduces face-to-face communication, and increases feelings of loneliness and isolation. It also negatively affects academic and professional performance by reducing productivity and focus.

III. DIGITAL ALCOHOLISM AS A CAUSE OF CYBERCRIME

Digital alcoholism plays a significant role in increasing cybercrime. People who spend excessive time online are more exposed to cyber threats such as hacking, phishing, and identity theft. Addicted users often behave carelessly by sharing personal information, clicking on suspicious links, and using weak passwords, making them easy targets for cybercriminals. Moreover, prolonged exposure to digital platforms may influence individuals to engage in illegal activities such as cyberbullying, online fraud, or hacking. In some cases, exposure to harmful content can encourage negative behavior. Therefore, digital alcoholism not only increases the risk of becoming a victim of cybercrime but also raises the possibility of becoming involved in such activities.

Digital Alcoholism Leading to Accidents
 Road Accident Data

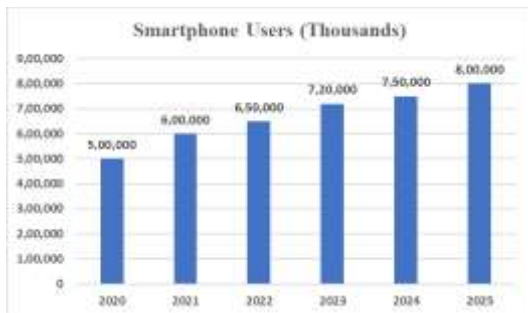


Indicator	Data (Thousands)
Total road accidents per year	470,000
Total deaths per year	170,000

Observational studies in India indicate that approximately 16.49% of motorized two-wheeler drivers use mobile phones while driving, contributing to distracted driving risks.

Another serious consequence of digital alcoholism is the increase in accidents. Many people use mobile phones while driving or walking, which reduces their attention and awareness of their surroundings. This distracted behaviour often leads to road accidents and injuries. In addition, lack of sleep caused by excessive late-night screen use reduces alertness and reaction time, further increasing the risk of accidents in daily life.

Unnecessary Use and Carrying of Smartphones



Year	Smartphone Users (Thousands)
2020	500,000
2021	600,000
2022	650,000

2023	720,000
2024	750,000
2025	800,000

India has approximately 800,000 thousand smartphone users, making it the second-largest smartphone market globally.

A common behaviour associated with digital alcoholism is the constant use and carrying of smartphones even when they are not needed. People frequently check their phones for notifications without any purpose and feel uncomfortable when the device is not nearby. This habit of unnecessary usage during meals, conversations, or short breaks reflects a strong psychological dependency. It not only wastes time but also reduces productivity and meaningful interaction with others.

Side Effects on Social Media, Television, and OTT Platforms (Including Rumours)

Excessive use of social media, television, and OTT platforms has several negative effects. On social media, people often become addicted to likes, comments, and followers, leading to low self-esteem and comparison with others. One of the most serious issues is the rapid spread of rumours and misinformation. Due to digital alcoholism, users tend to forward messages without verifying facts, which can create panic, confusion, and even social unrest. Cyberbullying and online trolling are also common problems. Similarly, excessive television watching reduces productive time and exposes individuals to inappropriate content. OTT platforms encourage binge-watching, which disturbs sleep patterns and reduces social interaction. All these factors together contribute to unhealthy digital habits.

Advantages and Disadvantages of Digital Usage

When used properly, digital technology offers many advantages such as easy communication, access to information, online education, and entertainment. However, excessive usage leads to addiction, health issues, time wastage, and reduced real-life interaction. Therefore, the impact of digital technology depends on how responsibly it is used.

IV. REMEDIES TO REDUCE DIGITAL ALCOHOLISM

Digital alcoholism can be controlled by adopting healthy habits and maintaining discipline. Setting daily screen time limits and practicing digital detox can help reduce dependency. Engaging in offline activities such as sports, reading, and hobbies is also beneficial. Avoiding phone usage before bedtime and creating no-phone zones during meals or study time can improve focus and relationships. Awareness and education about the harmful effects of digital addiction are essential, especially among young people.

Findings

In India, digital alcoholism is reflected in rapidly increasing smartphone usage and its consequences, with the country having around 750–800 million smartphone users as per Pew Research Center, while access begins early, as nearly 60–70% of children below 12 years use smartphones and 90–95% of teenagers are active users, spending 5–7 hours daily on screens, and young adults showing almost complete usage in urban areas; this excessive use has serious safety implications, as data from the National Crime Records Bureau indicates that out of more than 1.5 lakh annual road deaths in India, about 5–10% are linked to mobile phone usage during driving or even while walking, highlighting the dangers of digital distraction, while its impact on mental health is equally concerning, as studies by the World Health Organization and American Psychological Association show that excessive smartphone use increases the risk of anxiety and depression by 2–3 times, causes sleep disturbances in nearly 70% of youth, reduces concentration, and leads to social isolation, clearly demonstrating that digital overuse has become a significant public health and social issue in India.

V. CONCLUSION

Digital alcoholism is a serious issue that is silently affecting individuals and society as a whole. While digital technology has made life easier and more connected, its excessive use can lead to cybercrime, accidents, misinformation, and various health problems. The key to overcoming this challenge lies

in responsible usage and maintaining a balance between digital and real life. By developing awareness and practicing self-control, individuals can enjoy the benefits of technology without falling into addiction.

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