

Abstract

With the rapid advancement of technology and infrastructure, children are being exposed to screens and media earlier than ever before, often at the expense of time spent in nature. This growing trend raises concerns, as excessive screen use has been linked to higher rates of depression and anxiety among adolescents, while exposure to natural environments has been shown to improve mental health, focus, and overall well-being. This study investigates whether childhood exposure to nature correlates with levels of screen addiction later in life.

Understanding this relationship could inform preventative measures for screen addiction and guide interventions that promote healthier habits. While prior research has explored the benefits of nature exposure and the risks of excessive screen use independently, very few studies have directly examined the relationship between the two. Our study seeks to fill that gap. We collected data through a questionnaire using various scales measuring general health, stress, and screen addiction. Additionally, we conducted semi-structured interviews about exposure to nature and media across different life stages up to college age, as well as about socialization, screen habits, and the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. Our findings show no correlation between childhood exposure to nature and screen addiction. However, results show a correlation between: screen addiction and mindfulness, mental health and screen addiction, self control and screen addiction, mental health and stress, and nature exposure and an adverse childhood. These findings suggest that environmental and social contexts may play more of a role in shaping screen addictions than early nature exposure alone.