Interventions to Promote Healthy Screen Use in Elementary School Children: A Scoping Review

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Introduction:

Over the last two decades, technology has become more prolific in our society, leading to early exposure to digital devices. With this premature introduction comes significant implications for a child's development, namely surrounding the mediating effects of screen time on health, developmental, academic, and psychosocial factors. Recent events such as the COVID-19 pandemic have further increased screen usage and has re-contextualized how technology is used within a school setting. Current research centers around the negative implications of screen time and emphasizes the need for interventions to foster balanced use of screen time. The objective of this scoping review is to identify best practices and understudied areas as it pertains to screen time interventions in elementary school children. We hope that by providing a better understanding of existing resources, this review can help researchers in future efforts to develop focused programs for healthy screen use.

Inclusion Criteria:

This review will include studies involving elementary school children aged 5-11 years, or broader samples where data for this age group are extractable, that evaluate interventions aimed at promoting healthy screen use. Screen use will be defined as goal-directed, developmentally appropriate digital media engagement, through approaches such as parent-mediated strategies, school-based programs, digital literacy curricula, policy measures, or device/app features, in home, school, or mixed settings worldwide. We will extract the information necessary to understand how researchers have defined screen time, whether positive or negative, how interventions have been created, and their results.

Methods:

The key information sources to be searched include MEDLINE, EMBASE, CENTRAL, PsycINFO, and ProQuest Dissertations & Theses, and national education or health ministry websites. Searches will not be restricted by date or language, and age-specific filters will be applied to identify studies including children aged 5-11 years. At least two reviewers will independently screen titles/abstracts and full texts in Rayyan using pre-piloted eligibility criteria, chart data using a structured extraction form, and map the evidence by intervention type, setting, and outcome domain, presenting results in tabular evidence maps, figures, and a narrative synthesis.