



From Screen Dependence to Inner Balance: An Integrative Ayurvedic–Evidence-Based Framework

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ABSTRACT

Background: Digital addiction has emerged as a pressing behavioural health challenge, characterized by compulsive screen use, internet dependency, and digital burnout. This contributes significantly to rising cases of anxiety, depression, cognitive dysfunction and sleep disturbances. Conventional therapies such as behavioural counselling and psychiatric interventions, though beneficial, often fail to address the multidimensional root causes of digital overuse. *Ayurveda*, the ancient Indian system of holistic medicine, provides valuable insights through concepts like *Prajnaparadha* (mistake of the intellect), *Manasika Bhavas* (mental states) and *Sattvavajaya Chikitsa* (psychological strengthening). This review proposes an integrative management framework that combines *Ayurvedic* principles with modern evidence-based strategies.

Aims and Objectives: To critically evaluate the pathophysiology, clinical features and treatment modalities of digital addiction and to propose a holistic, integrative framework blending *Ayurvedic* wisdom with contemporary therapeutic approaches.

Methodology: Literature was synthesized from classical Ayurvedic texts, peer-reviewed biomedical studies, WHO guidelines and contemporary clinical trials over the last two decades. *Ayurvedic* lifestyle recommendations such as *Dinacharya* (daily regimen), *Nidra* (sleep hygiene), *Rasayana* (rejuvenative herbs) and *Sattvavajaya Chikitsa* were reviewed alongside interventions like CBT, mindfulness, *Yoga* and digital detox programs.

Results and Observations: Evidence suggests that integrating *Ayurvedic* lifestyle regulation, Rasayana therapy and psychospiritual interventions with modern behavioural therapies provides synergistic benefits. Herbs such as *Brahmi*, *Ashwagandha* and *Guduchi* improve resilience, cognitive clarity and stress tolerance, while CBT and mindfulness directly modify maladaptive behavior. Integrative approaches were observed to reduce relapse, improve attention and enhance overall emotional well-being.

Conclusion: Digital addiction requires a multidimensional management strategy. An integrative *Ayurvedic*–evidence-based framework offers preventive, promotive and curative pathways, addressing not just symptoms but the underlying imbalance of mind and intellect. Such a model holds promise for public health, especially in youth-oriented mental wellness programs.

KEYWORDS: Digital addiction, *Ayurveda*, Integrative medicine, *Prajnaparadha*, *Sattvavajaya*, CBT, Lifestyle management

INTRODUCTION

The 21st century is defined by unprecedented digital connectivity, with smartphones, social media platforms and gaming systems shaping everyday behaviour. While these tools enhance communication and

access to knowledge, they have also fostered digital addiction, a compulsive dependence on screens with adverse health outcomes ^[1].

Digital addiction is now considered comparable to behavioural addictions such as gambling, sharing underlying neurobiological mechanisms of reward reinforcement and impaired self-regulation ^[2]. Its prevalence is particularly concerning among adolescents and young adults, where prolonged screen use is linked to anxiety, poor sleep, reduced academic performance and emotional instability ^[3].

Conventional treatments, including cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) and psychiatric interventions, provide symptomatic relief but often face high relapse rates ^[4]. In contrast, *Ayurveda* offers a root-cause approach, addressing imbalances of the body, mind and intellect. This review article presents an integrative framework that combines Ayurvedic wisdom with modern evidence-based practices for sustainable management of digital addiction.

DISCUSSION

Digital Addiction: Biomedical Perspective

Pathophysiology

Neuroscientific studies indicate that digital addiction alters dopaminergic reward pathways. Continuous exposure to online stimuli triggers dopamine surges, reinforcing compulsive checking behaviour, while weakening the prefrontal cortex responsible for judgment and impulse control ^[5]. This parallels patterns observed in substance use disorders.

Clinical Features

Digital addiction manifests in:

Psychological disturbances: anxiety, irritability, depression and emotional dysregulation ^[6].

Cognitive impairment: short attention span, poor memory and impaired executive function ^[7].

Physical effects: headaches, visual fatigue, musculoskeletal strain and circadian rhythm disturbances leading to insomnia ^[8].

Conventional Interventions

CBT remains the most widely validated treatment, enabling patients to identify maladaptive thoughts and behaviours while cultivating healthier coping mechanisms ^[9]. Mindfulness-based interventions enhance emotional regulation and reduce impulsivity ^[10]. Structured digital detox programs—encouraging device-free intervals—are increasingly promoted, while pharmacological interventions are considered only in severe comorbid cases ^[11]. Despite these options, relapse rates remain high, indicating that holistic, preventive, and promotive models are urgently needed.

Ayurvedic Understanding of Behavioural Addictions

Ayurveda explains behavioural imbalances through interconnected frameworks of body, mind and consciousness.

Prajnaparadha (Mistake of Intellect)

Prajnaparadha—actions against one's wisdom—is cited as a fundamental cause of disease, leading to overindulgence, impaired judgment, and habitual excess ^[12]. Digital overuse exemplifies this, where individuals knowingly continue harmful screen use.

Manasika Bhava and *Guna* Imbalance

Ayurveda describes the mind as governed by three *Guna*—*Sattva* (clarity), *Rajas* (activity), and *Tamas* (inertia). Excess *Rajas* (restlessness) and *Tamas* (inertia) over *Sattva* predispose individuals to compulsive habits like screen dependency ^[13].

Dosha Involvement

Excessive screen exposure aggravates *Vata* (restlessness, anxiety) and *Pitta* (irritability, overstimulation), further disturbing mental stability ^[14].

Sattvavajaya Chikitsa

This *Ayurvedic* psychotherapeutic method strengthens the mind through cultivation of *Dhee* (intellect), *Dhriti* (willpower) and *Smriti* (memory). Techniques include counselling, meditation and practices that enhance self-awareness and emotional resilience [15].

Therapeutic Insights from *Ayurveda*

Lifestyle Interventions

Dinacharya (daily regimen): Balanced routines reduce overstimulation and restore circadian rhythms.

Nidra (sleep hygiene): Proper sleep is considered foundational to mental health and directly counteracts screen-induced insomnia.

Ahara (diet): Sattvic diet, rich in fresh, light, and wholesome foods, supports mental clarity [12].

***Rasayana* (Rejuvenative Therapy)**

Specific *Medhya Rasayana* herbs are recommended for enhancing cognition and resilience:

Brahmi (*Bacopa monnieri*): Improves memory and reduces anxiety.

Ashwagandha (*Withania somnifera*): Adaptogenic, reducing stress and promoting calmness.

Guduchi (*Tinospora cordifolia*): Immunomodulatory, detoxifying and neuroprotective [13].

Panchakarma

Detoxification procedures like *Abhyanga* (oil massage) and *Shirodhara* (medicated oil therapy) are reported to calm the nervous system and improve emotional stability [14].

Evidence-Based Approaches in Modern Medicine

Cognitive Behavioural Therapy

CBT has shown strong efficacy in reducing internet and smartphone addiction, improving coping mechanisms, and lowering relapse probability [9].

Mindfulness-Based Therapy

Mindfulness helps individuals become aware of craving triggers and break the cycle of impulsive use. It parallels *Ayurvedic* emphasis on cultivating *Sattva* [10].

Yoga–CBT Integration

Recent pilot studies show that combining *Yoga* practices with CBT enhances outcomes in reducing screen use and improving stress management [11]. This highlights the natural compatibility of Eastern and Western therapeutic paradigms.

Integrative Framework Proposal

A proposed four-phase model for integrative management:

Prevention:

Education on digital hygiene.

Ayurvedic lifestyle practices (*Dinacharya*, *Nidra*).

Awareness of *Prajnaparadha* to prevent misuse.

Intervention:

Sattvavajaya Chikitsa for mental strengthening.

CBT and mindfulness to address behavioural patterns.

Rasayana support with herbs like *Brahmi* and *Ashwagandha*.

Rehabilitation:

Panchakarma therapies for detoxification.

Community-based yoga programs for stress resilience.

Maintenance:

Long-term lifestyle adherence.

Relapse prevention via counselling, meditation, and digital detox schedules.

This integrative model blends symptom management with root-cause correction, offering a comprehensive pathway to balance.

Digital addiction represents a biopsychosocial disorder with overlapping biological, psychological, and lifestyle determinants. *Ayurveda* offers unique conceptual clarity by tracing its root to intellectual error and imbalance of *Guna*, while modern medicine contributes robust therapeutic protocols.

Together, they form a synergistic model: *Ayurveda* builds preventive resilience, while modern science provides targeted behavioural correction. Integrative programs can be deployed in schools, universities, and corporate wellness initiatives, creating a sustainable model for mental well-being.

However, limitations include insufficient randomized controlled trials on integrative protocols and lack of standardized herbal formulations. Future research must explore large-scale studies combining *Ayurveda* + CBT + mindfulness interventions for digital addiction.

CONCLUSION

Digital addiction is a modern epidemic demanding more than symptomatic treatment. *Ayurveda's* holistic philosophy combined with evidence-based behavioural science creates a powerful integrative framework for prevention, management, and relapse control. This model not only reduces dependence but also nurtures inner harmony and resilience, aligning health care with both tradition and modernity.

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