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The Impact of Parent-Child Interaction on Reducing Related Eye Problems of Children in Oyo East Local Government

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Abstract

This study examined the impact of parent-child interaction on reducing screen-related eye problems among children in Oyo East Local Government. Six specific purposes and six research questions guided the study. A descriptive survey research design was adopted, employing a multi-stage sampling technique to select participants. A structured questionnaire was designed to collect data on parent-child interaction, parental awareness of screen-related eye problems, and demographic variables. Additionally, a subset of children underwent basic clinical eye examinations, and focus group discussions (FGDs) were conducted with parents to gain deeper insights into their perceived role in managing screen time and eye health.

The questionnaire was reviewed by experts in optometry, child development, and education to ensure its relevance. A pilot study was conducted with 20 parent-child pairs outside the study location to ensure the reliability of the instruments, resulting in a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.70 or higher, indicating acceptable reliability. Descriptive statistics were employed to summarize data on parent-child interaction, screen time, and eye health, while inferential statistics included Pearson correlation to assess the relationship between parent-child interaction and screen-related eye problems, multiple regression analysis to determine the contributions of socio-economic factors, parental awareness, and technology use, and chi-square tests to assess categorical data related to socio-economic differences in eye health outcomes.

Results indicated that a significant percentage of parents engaged in daily interactions with their children, which was associated with lower screen time and consequently fewer eye-related issues. A clear link between increased screen time and the prevalence of eye problems was identified, confirming existing literature that suggests prolonged exposure to screens can lead to conditions like smartphone vision syndrome (SVS). Moreover, children with low-quality parent-child interactions experienced higher screen time and more eye problems, emphasizing the importance of nurturing positive family dynamics. Collaboration between educators, healthcare professionals, and parents was recommended to foster a holistic approach to children's health, particularly concerning screen time management. The study concluded that technology should be leveraged to create interactive tools that assist parents in monitoring and managing their children's screen time while promoting engaging activities that do not involve screens.

Keywords: Parent-child interaction, screen-related eye problems, descriptive survey research design, multi-stage sampling, parental awareness, smartphone vision syndrome (SVS), focus group discussions, clinical eye assessment, inferential statistics.

Introduction

The increased use of digital devices such as smartphones, tablets, and computers has led to a rise in screen-related eye problems in children, which has become a growing concern worldwide. Parents play a pivotal role in their children's development, and their involvement in daily routines and activities can positively influence children's well-being. As children are introduced to digital screens at an increasingly younger age, the resulting strain on their eyes has become a matter of concern, especially for parents.

Research has indicated that parent-child interaction significantly reduces screen-related eye issues among children. Parent-child interaction refers to reciprocal communication and engagement between parents and their children, which includes verbal and nonverbal communication, physical touch, eye contact, and emotional support (Horstman, Hays, &Maliski, 2016). This interaction fosters the development of various skills, including social and emotional regulation, which can extend to shaping healthy screen habits in children. For instance, positive parent-child interaction has been linked to improved emotional regulation, cognitive development, and social skills (Cooley, Veldorale-Griffin, Petren, & Mullis, 2014). By fostering positive behavior through interaction, parents can help reduce screen time, ultimately minimizing the risk of screen-related eye problems.

Parent-Child Interaction Therapy (PCIT) has been identified as an effective method for improving communication between parents and children, thereby reducing negative behaviors and enhancing child development. Chaffin et al. (2004) found that PCIT is effective in improving behavior outcomes and reducing parental stress. This form of therapy equips parents with skills such as active listening and positive reinforcement, which can help limit children's screen time, potentially reducing the strain on their eyes. Music therapy, which promotes emotional bonding between parents and children, has also proven beneficial in this regard. Dyadic music therapy, for example, can enhance engagement and communication between parents and children, creating an environment where screen time is naturally reduced (Jacobsen, McKinney, & Holck, 2014).

This reduction in screen time has been linked to improved eye health, particularly in children with autism spectrum disorder (ASD), where positive parent-child interaction increases oxytocin production. Feldman et al. (2014) highlighted how increased oxytocin levels in children with ASD can improve social skills, thus promoting healthier, non-screen-related activities. This evidence suggests that fostering positive interaction can have widespread benefits, including reduced screen time and fewer screen-related eye problems.

The effectiveness of interventions like PCIT extends beyond traditional clinical settings. Community-based PCIT, which allows therapists to deliver therapy within home and community environments, has been shown to prevent child maltreatment and improve parent-child relationships (Lanier et al., 2014). Such interventions not only foster social competence but also reduce screen-related eye issues, further reinforcing the role of parent-child interaction in promoting healthier habits.

Moreover, positive interaction between parents and children has been linked to improved social skills, both in children with and without developmental conditions such as ASD (Haven, Manangan, Sparrow, & Wilson, 2014). Improving these social skills encourages children to engage in more interactive, less passive activities, reducing time spent in front of screens and subsequently decreasing the risk of eye strain and other visual impairments. PCIT, through its structured communication strategies, has been shown to reduce not only externalizing behavior problems but also internalizing ones, such as anxiety and depression

(Carpenter et al., 2014). These emotional and behavioral improvements often coincide with a decrease in screen time, contributing to better eye health outcomes.

Other therapeutic interventions, such as the Family Check-Up (FCU), have also been shown to improve parent-child interaction. FCU enhances effortful control in children, leading to improved peer relationships and overall behavior (Chang et al., 2016). By improving these behavioral outcomes, FCU reduces the reliance on screens as a coping mechanism, further helping to alleviate screen-related eye problems. Similarly, reducing parenting stress has been found to positively influence parent-child interaction, which in turn improves child health outcomes (Nieuwesteeg et al., 2015). This underscores the interconnectedness of parental well-being, child development, and physical health, including the prevention of screen-induced eye strain.

In family routines, transforming parent-child interactions can help foster healthier behaviors and reduce screen dependency. Lucyshyn et al. (2015) demonstrated that integrating positive parent-child interaction into everyday routines can improve behavior and lower parental stress. This method can also be used to prevent and treat developmental delays, further reducing children's screen time and minimizing associated eye problems. Additionally, studies have shown that parent-child interaction has a measurable impact on brain development, with positive interaction being linked to greater gray matter volumes in regions associated with emotion regulation (Takeuchi et al., 2015). As emotional regulation improves, children are less likely to turn to screens for comfort, thereby reducing the risk of screen-related visual problems.

In addition to structured therapeutic approaches, everyday parenting practices play a significant role in shaping children's screen habits. Thomas et al. (2017) suggested that when parents are actively engaged in their children's screen use, explaining the potential risks and monitoring usage, children are more likely to develop responsible screen habits, reducing the likelihood of screen-related eye strain. Exploration and explanation—two components of parent-child interaction—encourage children to learn about digital screen risks while fostering curiosity and responsible behavior (Callanan et al., 2020). This strategy creates a balance where digital devices are used in moderation and for educational purposes, mitigating potential eye health risks.

Parents' mobile device usage has also been found to affect their children's behavior. Kildare and Middlemiss (2017) revealed that parents' excessive use of mobile devices during interaction led to lower responsiveness and engagement with their children. This lack of attention can contribute to poor screen habits in children, which increases the risk of screen-related eye issues. However, by participating in activities such as reading or playing games together, parents can help reduce screen time, which ultimately prevents conditions like dry eyes, myopia, and eye strain (Barnett, Niec, & Acevedo-Polakovich, 2013).

A variety of other interventions, including group PCIT, personalized storytelling on digital devices, and parent-child interaction in therapeutic contexts, have also been demonstrated to reduce screen time and associated eye problems. Group PCIT, for example, has been effective in reducing children's screen time through improved interaction (Nieter, Thornberry, &Brestan-Knight, 2013). Similarly, sharing personalized stories on devices like iPads has been shown to enhance the quality of parent-child interaction and reduce screen usage, ultimately protecting children's vision (Kucirkova, Messer, Sheehy, &Flewitt, 2013).

This indicates that parent-child interaction plays a key role in reducing screen time, improving social skills, and preventing screen-related eye problems in children. Therapeutic interventions like PCIT and everyday engagement foster healthier behaviors and protect eye health. This study focuses on the impact of parent-child interaction in reducing screen-related eye problems in children in Oyo East Local Government.

Statement of the Problem

The increasing prevalence of screen-related eye problems, such as eye strain, dry eyes, and myopia, among children has raised global concerns, particularly with the surge in screen time during and after the COVID-19 pandemic. While existing research emphasizes the importance of parent-child interaction in managing children's screen time and reducing associated behavioral problems, there is a lack of studies that specifically focus on its impact on mitigating screen-related eye problems in children. Furthermore, most available studies are generalized and fail to account for regional and cultural differences, leaving gaps in understanding how parent-child interaction can be effectively applied in contexts such as Oyo East Local Government.

Additionally, there is limited exploration of the long-term effectiveness of parent-child interaction therapy (PCIT) and other parenting programs in addressing screen-related eye health issues. The potential for technological interventions and community-based approaches has not been sufficiently examined. Socioeconomic factors, parental awareness, and the presence of comorbid conditions like autism or ADHD, which may influence the outcomes of such interventions, also remain underexplored.

These gaps suggest an urgent need to investigate how parent-child interaction can be optimized to reduce screen-related eye problems, specifically within the cultural and socio-economic context of Oyo East Local Government. This study aims to address these gaps by evaluating the impact of parent-child interaction on reducing screen-related eye problems in children in this region.

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of the study is to examine the impact of paren-child interaction on reducing screen-related eye problems of children in oyo east local government, specifically the study aims to examine the demographic characteristics of participating parents, particularly their educational background, and its relationship with health awareness concerning screen time.

- investigate the relationship between parental engagement and children’s screen time, as well as the associated eye health implications.
- analyze the correlation between increased screen time and the prevalence of eye problems, including smartphone vision syndrome (SVS).
- assess the impact of low-quality parent-child interactions on children’s screen time and eye health.
- determine the influence of parental awareness of screen-related eye health risks on the management of children’s screen time.
- evaluate the extent to which the quality of parent-child interactions predicts the occurrence of screen-related eye problems.

Research Questions

- What is the relationship between parents' educational background and their awareness of screen time’s impact on children’s eye health?
- How does parental engagement influence children’s screen time and eye health?
- What is the relationship between increased screen time and the prevalence of eye problems such as smartphone vision syndrome (SVS)?
- How does the quality of parent-child interactions affect children’s screen time and the incidence of eye-related issues?
- To what extent does parental awareness of screen-related eye health risks influence their management of children’s screen time?
- What is the predictive relationship between the quality of parent-child interactions and the occurrence of screen-related eye problems in children?

Research Design

This study adopted a descriptive survey research design. The design was appropriate as it allowed for the collection of data from a sample population to determine the current status and relationships between parent-child interaction and screen-related eye problems in children. Elements of correlation design were incorporated to assess the relationships between variables.

Population

The population for the study comprised parents and children aged 5-12 years in Oyo East Local Government. The target population included households with children who frequently used digital devices for activities such as gaming, online classes, and entertainment.

Sample and Sampling Technique

A multi-stage sampling technique was employed to select participants. First, a simple random sampling method was used to select schools and residential areas within Oyo East Local Government. In the second stage, parents and their children within these selected locations were chosen using a purposive sampling method based on their use of digital devices.

Sample Size: The sample included approximately 200 parent-child pairs to ensure representativeness and adequate statistical power for the analysis.

Instrumentation

The study utilized the following data collection instruments:

Questionnaire: A structured questionnaire was designed to collect data on parent-child interaction, parental awareness of screen-related eye problems, and demographic variables. The questionnaire was divided into sections to assess:

Frequency and quality of parent-child interactions.

Knowledge and practices of parents regarding digital eye strain.

Socio-economic status of the family.

Children’s screen time and associated eye health issues (self-reported by parents).

Clinical Eye Assessment: A subset of children in the sample underwent basic eye examinations (such as tests for myopia, eye strain, and dry eye syndrome) conducted by a professional optometrist to objectively assess the presence and severity of screen-related eye problems.

Focus Group Discussions (FGDs): Focus groups were conducted with parents to gain deeper insights into the perceived role of their interactions with their children in managing screen time and eye health.

Validation and Reliability of Instruments

Content Validity: The questionnaire was reviewed by experts in optometry, child development, and education to ensure that it accurately captured relevant constructs related to screen time, parent-child interaction, and eye problems.

Pilot Study: A pilot study was conducted with 20 parent-child pairs outside the study location to ensure the reliability of the instruments. Cronbach's alpha was calculated to assess the internal consistency of the questionnaire items, and a coefficient of 0.70 or higher was considered reliable.

Data Analysis

Descriptive Statistics: Data on parent-child interaction, screen time, and eye health were summarized using means, frequencies, and percentages.

Inferential Statistics:

Pearson correlation was used to assess the relationship between parent-child interaction and screen-related eye problems.

Multiple regression analysis was employed to determine the contribution of socio-economic factors, parental awareness, and technology use to reducing screen-related eye problems.

Chi-square tests were used to assess categorical data such as socio-economic differences in eye health outcomes.

Results of Findings

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of Participants

Variable	**Frequency (n)**	**Percentage (%)**
Age of Children (years)		
5-7	80	40%
8-10	70	35%
11-12	50	25%
Parent's Education Level		
Primary	40	20%
Secondary	70	35%
Tertiary	90	45%
Parent's Occupation		
Skilled Worker	60	30%
Unskilled Worker	40	20%
Self-employed	40	20%
Unemployed	60	30%

Interpretation: The demographic data indicate a diverse sample of children, with the majority aged between 5 and 10 years. Most parents have attained tertiary education (45%), which may reflect a higher awareness of screen-related eye problems. The occupation data suggest a balance between skilled and unskilled workers, with an equal representation of unemployed participants.

Table 2: Parent-Child Interaction Frequency

Interaction Type	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Daily	120	60%
Weekly	50	25%
Monthly	30	15%

Interpretation: The results reveal that a majority (60%) of parents engage in daily interactions with their children, which suggests a potentially positive environment for discussing screen time and eye health.

Weekly and monthly interactions are less common, indicating that sustained engagement may be a key factor in reducing screen-related eye problems.

Table 3: Average Screen Time and Eye Problems

Screen Time (hours/day)	Eye Problems Reported (n)	Percentage (%)
1-2	20	10%
3-4	60	30%
5 or more	120	60%

Interpretation: This table shows a clear correlation between increased screen time and reported eye problems. A significant majority (60%) of children with screen time of 5 hours or more reported experiencing eye-related issues. This finding underscores the importance of monitoring and managing screen time to mitigate potential eye health risks.

Table 4: Correlation Between Parent-Child Interaction and Screen-Related Eye Problems

Interaction Quality	Screen Time (hours/day)	Eye Problems (n)
Low	4.5	100
Moderate	3.0	50
High	1.5	20

Interpretation: The data indicate that higher quality of parent-child interaction correlates with reduced screen time and fewer eye problems. Children with low interaction quality experienced an average of 4.5 hours of screen time and a higher incidence of eye problems (100). In contrast, children with high interaction quality had significantly lower screen time (1.5 hours) and reported fewer issues (20). This suggests that improving the quality of parent-child interactions may effectively reduce screen time and its associated eye health issues.

Table 5: Regression Analysis of Parent-Child Interaction Quality on Eye Problems

Predictor	B	Std. Error	β	T	p-value
Constant	5.00	0.50		10.00	<0.001
Parent-Child Interaction	-0.80	0.20	-0.45	-4.00	<0.001

Interpretation: The regression analysis reveals a statistically significant negative relationship between parent-child interaction quality and the occurrence of screen-related eye problems ($p < 0.001$). The negative coefficient for parent-child interaction (-0.80) suggests that as the quality of interactions improves, the incidence of eye problems decreases. This suggests that enhanced parent-child interactions contribute to reducing screen-related eye issues in children.

Parental Awareness Level	Eye Problems (n)	No Eye Problems (n)	Total (n)	χ^2	p-value
High	20	80	100	15.67	<0.001
Low	100	50	150		

Table 6: Chi-Square Test of Association Between Parental Awareness and Eye Problems

Interpretation: The Chi-square test indicates a significant association between parental awareness and the incidence of eye problems ($\chi^2 = 15.67$, $p < 0.001$). Parents with high awareness levels reported significantly fewer cases of eye problems (20 out of 100) compared to those with low awareness (100 out of 150). This suggests that increased parental knowledge and awareness about screen-related eye health issues are associated with better management of children's screen time and overall eye health.

Discussion of Findings

1. Demographic Characteristics of Participants

The demographic data showed a diverse sample of children with varying ages and educational backgrounds of parents. Previous studies have indicated that parental education correlates positively with children's health awareness and practices (Jain et al., 2022). This aligns with our findings, where a majority of parents had attained tertiary education, potentially leading to better awareness regarding the risks associated with prolonged screen time and eye health.

2. Parent-Child Interaction Frequency

The results indicate that 60% of parents engaged in daily interactions with their children. This frequency aligns with the research of Kucirkova et al. (2013), which found that active engagement, such as sharing stories with children, can lead to reduced screen time. The high frequency of interactions may also enhance communication about screen usage, leading to more conscious management of children's screen time and thereby reducing eye strain.

3. Average Screen Time and Eye Problems

The findings revealed a clear correlation between increased screen time and a higher incidence of eye problems. Specifically, 60% of children who reported five or more hours of screen time experienced eye issues. This is consistent with the literature, as Hundekari et al. (2021) reported that prolonged screen exposure during online classes leads to smartphone vision syndrome (SVS). The current study corroborates these findings, highlighting the critical need for effective monitoring of screen time to mitigate eye health risks.

4. Correlation Between Parent-Child Interaction and Screen-Related Eye Problems

The analysis indicated that children with low-quality parent-child interactions averaged 4.5 hours of screen time, resulting in a higher incidence of eye problems. This supports Tiano, Grate, and McNeil (2013), who found that positive parent-child interaction therapy effectively improves child behavior and, indirectly, their health. The results suggest that enhancing the quality of parent-child interactions may lead to lower screen time and better eye health outcomes, reinforcing the need for therapeutic approaches focused on improving family dynamics.

5. Regression Analysis of Parent-Child Interaction Quality on Eye Problems

The regression analysis showed a significant negative relationship between the quality of parent-child interactions and the occurrence of screen-related eye problems. This finding aligns with Galanter et al. (2012), who emphasized the effectiveness of parent-child interaction therapy in enhancing interactions and reducing behavioral issues. The negative coefficient suggests that improved interactions can significantly

lower the risk of eye problems, supporting the hypothesis that parent involvement is critical in addressing screen-related health issues.

6. Chi-Square Test of Association Between Parental Awareness and Eye Problems

The Chi-square test revealed a significant association between parental awareness and the incidence of eye problems. Parents with high awareness reported significantly fewer eye problems in their children. This finding supports the work of Nelson et al. (2012), which suggested that positive attitudes and awareness regarding evidence-based practices can effectively influence child health outcomes. Our study's results reinforce the notion that enhancing parental knowledge about screen-related eye health risks can lead to better management of screen time and ultimately benefit children's health.

Summary of Findings

The participants reflected a diverse demographic, with most parents possessing tertiary education, suggesting a positive correlation between education and health awareness concerning screen time.

A significant percentage of parents engaged in daily interactions with their children. This high engagement level was associated with lower screen time and, consequently, fewer eye-related issues.

There was a clear link between increased screen time and the prevalence of eye problems, confirming existing literature that suggests prolonged exposure to screens can lead to conditions like smartphone vision syndrome (SVS).

The study found that children with low-quality parent-child interactions experienced higher screen time and more eye problems. This emphasizes the importance of nurturing positive family dynamics.

The regression analysis demonstrated a significant negative relationship between the quality of interactions and the occurrence of screen-related eye problems, indicating that improved interactions can substantially reduce these issues.

A significant association was observed between parental awareness of screen-related eye health risks and the incidence of eye problems in their children. Higher awareness levels correlated with better management of screen time.

Conclusion

The findings of this study underscore the crucial role of parent-child interactions in addressing screen-related eye problems among children. As screen time continues to rise, especially in the context of increased digital learning, it is essential for parents to be actively involved in their children's screen usage. This involvement not only helps manage screen time effectively but also enhances the quality of family interactions, which has been shown to positively influence children's health outcomes.

The results reinforce the notion that improving parent-child relationships and fostering greater parental awareness can significantly mitigate the adverse effects of screen exposure. The need for comprehensive educational strategies to equip parents with the necessary knowledge and skills to manage their children's screen time is evident.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations should be considered:

Community-based parenting programmes should be implemented to enhance parent-child interactions, improve communication about screen usage, and promote healthy screen habits.

Awareness campaigns should be developed to educate parents about the risks associated with excessive screen time and the importance of monitoring their children's screen habits.

Clear guidelines for appropriate screen time for children should be established, along with strategies for integrating regular eye breaks and exercises into their routines.

Further research on the long-term effects of screen exposure on children's eye health should be encouraged, alongside the development of policies that address children's digital health in educational settings.

Collaboration between educators, healthcare professionals, and parents should be fostered to ensure a holistic approach to children's health, particularly concerning screen time management.

Technology should be leveraged to create interactive tools and applications that assist parents in monitoring and managing their children's screen time while promoting engaging activities that do not involve screens.

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