

InterMUN 2025

World Health Organization (WHO)

**The cognitive and behavioral
issues regarding social media
and electronic devices with the
correlation in the lowering attention
span in children.**



Moderator: Sara Covarrubias

Director: Santiago José León Fuentes

Welcoming message from the chair:

Dear delegates,

Welcome to InterMUN 2025. It is a great honor to be part of the World Health Organization (WHO) committee, where we will tackle the critical issue of the use of social media and electronic devices and the impact they have on children's attention spans and behavior.

As delegates, you have the vital responsibility to seek solutions that promote healthy digital habits and maintain mental well-being. The WHO chair encourages you to put in your best effort, actively engage, and work with others in a respectful and creative manner.

We wish you the best of luck and success.

Sincerely,

Chair, WHO Committee

Committee's Background:

The World Health Organization (WHO) was founded in 1948, and it is a major influence on the direction of global health policy, as it is the United Nations' specialized health body. WHO's impact is found in its capacity to coordinate scientific research, establish global health norms, and direct nations toward shared standards in disease prevention, health equality, and system resilience, despite its wide acceptance for its emergency response capabilities. The organization's function goes beyond managing emergencies, and its charter upholds health as a fundamental human right.

The structure of WHO is a reflection of this dual identity. The World Health Assembly (WHA) assembles all 194 nations that are members to endorse budgets, authorize resolutions, and discuss goals. The Executive Board, which is made up of 34 health specialists, converts the suggestions into viable proposals. The Director-General commands the Secretariat, which oversees daily operations, coordinates research, and manages emergencies through more than 150 national offices. WHO is able to strike a balance between scientific management and political representation due to its multi-layered governance, yet conflicts between the two frequently arise during global crises.

WHO operates a hybrid financial approach. Less than 20% of its funding is provided by assessed contributions, which are required payments determined by a nation's GDP (gross domestic product). GDP is the market value of all goods and services from a nation in a given year. The other 80% of its budget is made up of voluntary donations,

many of which are designated for particular initiatives. A substantial amount of WHO's operations and focuses are determined by significant donors such as the United States, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, and the European Commission. WHO's leadership is still crucial for promoting equitable health policies and inclusive discourse in all areas.

The World Health Organization has contributed to the infrastructure of global health in methods that extend beyond crisis management. It has aided nations by setting up disease surveillance systems, training medical personnel, and founding national health ministries. WHO's Essential Medicines List directs the acquisition and distribution of life-saving pharmaceuticals, while the International Classification of Diseases (ICD) provides an international standard for recognizing and reporting ailments. The organization spearheads international campaigns to raise awareness of mental health, child and maternal wellness, and medical literacy, ensuring that public health is proactive and inclusive rather than merely reactive.

The World Health Organization has shifted its approach to global health. For a long time, global health was mostly about fighting diseases. But the WHO has now placed mental well-being and child development at the center of its mission. These initiatives prove that the WHO understands health begins in our earliest years. It now states that the environments children grow up in shape their health for life. This is why the issue of attention span isn't just a parenting problem or school issue. For WHO, it is a health priority.

Topic Background:

The global rise of social media and electronic device usage among children has raised global concern over its cognitive and behavioral consequences, particularly the large amount of attention span that has been reduced. Children today are immersed in a digital

world, from an early age being exposed to serious risks to cognitive development. One of the most concerning outcomes is the decline in attention span among children, which researchers increasingly link to prolonged and unstructured screen time. The unlimited use of electronic devices and social media leads to the issue of making it harder for kids to engage deeply in tasks that require patience, focus, and skills that are foundational for learning and emotional growth, due to the constant notifications and fast-paced content that young minds expect.

Neurological research continues to highlight the deep impact of digital exposure on children's brain development. Instead of supporting deep focus and emotional regulation, constant interaction with fast-moving digital content can disrupt the growth of essential cognitive systems. For example, children who spend long periods scrolling through short clips often show delays in problems such as language development, problem-solving, and motor coordination. A study published in All Research Journal found that children aged 2-6 exposed to non-child-directed content showed delays in communication and motor skills. Children struggle to focus, control their emotions, and persevere in the face of difficulties as a result of these cognitive changes.

Behavioral research further confirms the growing concern around screen time and its effect on children. In a 2023 study published in BMC Pediatrics, researchers observed 2,452 preschoolers in China and found that those who spent more than 90 minutes per day on screens were significantly more likely to show symptoms of ADHD, including impulsivity and difficulty focusing. On a broader scale, a global analysis of 117 studies involving over 292,000 children revealed a consistent link between excessive screen use and emotional challenges such as anxiety and mood swings. These emotional disruptions often tend to push children to retreat further into digital spaces. This cycle increases the issue by making it more difficult for kids to concentrate, exercise self-control, and participate in offline activities.

Social media platforms like TikTok, Instagram, and YouTube have a huge influence on this problem. These apps expose children to rapid content and online validation. According to OxJournal, 42% of children using electronic devices report negative impacts on their mental health, often driven by overstimulation and unrealistic social standards. Additionally, screen use before bedtime disrupts melatonin production, leading to poor sleep quality. Sleep deprivation further impairs attention, memory, and other things that compound the effects of digital overexposure.

Over the years, children's capacity for concentration, self-control, and meaningful connection has started to decline as screen habits have become a daily habit. Sleep habits have also been affected due to the excessive use of electronic devices. The attention span of children has shortened, causing immense damage to their well-being. Several factors have contributed to a vicious cycle that affects several aspects of the child's development. Families and educators have recently been taking action by promoting healthy digital habits and offline activities.

Current Situation:

The current situation regarding social media, electronic devices, and children's attention spans is described by researchers and educators as an "attention crisis". The problem is way more than just children being distracted; it's that the excess of digital content is programming their brains to expect constant and rapid stimulation, making staying focused on activities like reading or classroom lessons very difficult. The excessive engagement with digital platforms has been associated with heightened impulsivity, attention deficits, and an increased risk of addiction-like behaviors.

In previous observational studies and meta-analyses, childhood attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) is found to have a significant association with screen

time. However, the casual associations between them remain unclear. This study performed a bidirectional two-sample Mendelian randomization analysis to confirm the causality between screen time and childhood ADHD. The MR analysis revealed that the length of mobile phone use and the time spent watching television increased the risk of childhood ADHD. This study provides some evidence for the causality of screen time and childhood ADHD. Given the limitation of the study, further research is required to comprehensively investigate this relationship.

Globally, the reaction to this issue has been uneven and uncoordinated. While a few countries have taken strong actions, most have not. For example, China limits minors to just three hours of online gaming per week. France has banned smartphones in schools for students under 15. In the United States, the Surgeon General has proposed warning labels for social media platforms, and several states are suing tech companies for their role in the youth mental health crisis.

However, these examples are not the usual. Most countries still lack a clear and comprehensive national plan. Without strong government leadership, the heavy duty of managing children's screen time falls on parents and teachers. They are often left alone to fight a battle against highly engaging apps and games designed by some of the world's smartest engineers. And considering that many parents aren't well informed about the consequences of engaging with these apps, that brings up another important issue.

The problem is even worse in poorer countries. In these regions, access to smartphones and the internet is growing very quickly. However, public health advice and safety rules about digital technology are not spreading as fast. This risks creating a new global inequality, where children in less wealthy nations suffer the most from the negative effects on their attention and mental health, without the resources or support to help them.

Chair/Moderator Conclusion:

In the last years, several concerns about the effects of children's growing usage of social media and electronic gadgets on their attention span and cognitive development have risen. Numerous studies have demonstrated that children who are constantly exposed to fast-paced digital content may experience issues that endanger their mental health. This situations affect essential skills that are critical for academic success and emotional regulation.

In conclusion, children's cognitive and behavioral health are endanger by the unrestrained use of technology, even though it may provide beneficial social and educational opportunities. Young brains adjust to their surroundings, this has been shown in numerous studies that link screen usage and shorter attention spans. Parental supervision, as well as other solutions, proposes the idea of encouraging healthier digital habits and the idea of future generations developing without health problems.

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