

# Revealing the impact of parental tech use on adolescent mental health and behavior

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A new review titled "Parental technoference and adolescents' mental health and violent behaviour: a scoping review" carried out by Bangor University and Public Health Wales and [published](#) in the journal *BMC*

*Public Health* has shown how parent's use of technology can interfere with the relationship between parents and adolescents and influence adolescents' mental health and behavioral outcomes.

This interference or disruption caused by technology in our daily lives, particularly in our [interpersonal relationships](#) is termed "technoference." It refers to the negative impact that technology such as smartphones, computers, and other [digital devices](#), can have on our face-to-face interactions, communication, and overall well-being.

Technoference can include things such as prioritizing attention paid to devices over spending quality time with others, constantly checking phones during conversations, or getting distracted by notifications and [social media](#) while in the company of friends or family. This has previously been found to lead to decreased interpersonal connections, reduced attention and engagement in real-world interactions, and increased feelings of isolation and disconnection.

The review showed that adolescents recognize that some level of parental technoference is a typical part of the digital environment we live in. However, studies consistently show when parents show increased technoference, this is associated with an increased likelihood of engaging in violent behaviors (e.g., cyber-bullying) and poorer mental health outcomes (e.g., depression and anxiety) in adolescents. Some studies showed that adolescents' risks of experiencing poorer mental health were influenced by parental warmth and personal psychological factors (e.g., self-esteem, agreeableness, neuroticism).

The study highlights the importance of contextual factors, such as frequency of device use and duration of device use, when exploring this area of research.

Donna Dixon, Lecturer in Education, childhood and Youth Studies at

Bangor University, who contributed to the research said, "The disruptive influence of technology in the daily lives of families, particularly within interpersonal relationships, can have far-reaching consequences.

"Our study reveals that proactive measures are crucial, emphasizing the importance of considering contextual factors like the frequency and duration of device use. Parents should critically examine their screen use while in the presence of children, to minimize distractions and set a positive example for the next generation."

Dr. Catherine Sharp, one of the authors of the paper, emphasizes, "Our study underscores the need for an informed approach to technology use within the family environment. It is vital for adults to be aware of the guidance offered by the U.K. Chief Medical Officers and to implement strategies that bring about healthier digital habits for the well-being of all family members."

**More information:** Donna Dixon et al, Parental technoference and adolescents' mental health and violent behaviour: a scoping review, *BMC Public Health* (2023). [DOI: 10.1186/s12889-023-16850-x](https://doi.org/10.1186/s12889-023-16850-x)

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