

## **WARNING: Internet Public Health Challenges Looming - BCJ**

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Young people looking online for validation, families being torn apart due to online porn addiction, and children being neglected by parents consumed with virtual-reality games are just a few of the new public-health challenges which Jamaica could face with the increased access to the Internet and the Broadcasting Commission of Jamaica (BCJ) is sounding the alarm.

"We do know that in the digital age, we are confronted now with depression and self-esteem issues brought about by digital isolation. People actually need digital validation and that is affecting a lot of young people," Green told editors and reporters during the forum at the newspaper's North Street office.

"We hear a lot about revenge porn and cyberbullying, but very little about sleep deprivation. You have children who are going to sleep now with their headphones in and it appears quite innocent, but that is because they cannot afford to miss the ping, because they have to get the latest information," said Green.

While he noted that there are no empirical data to indicate the extent of these issues locally, Green pointed to other countries like South Korea, where young people spend several hours at Internet caf es feeding their addiction for video games.

He also pointed to couples being arrested in other countries for neglecting their children because they were consumed with the Internet.

"We are prototypes of human system interaction, so pretty much anything that is happening with technology engagement externally, you can extrapolate that in Jamaica," said Green.

## **OTHER SPIN-OFFS**

Poor nutrition, lack of interest in other activities, and the inability to maintain a job for very long are some of the other negative spin-offs from Internet addiction disorder.

"There are men who are addicted to Internet pornography and if they do this at work, then they risk getting fired, and if they do it at home, they risk getting a divorce," he said.

Green said that the commission has been embarking on a series of media-literacy campaigns in schools to discuss, among other things, how students "can manage their digital selves".

"They have to be able to recognise problematic content in spaces that are now not regulated," warned Green.

The BCJ has argued that a well-needed reform in the institutional framework for the regulation of the communications sector in Jamaica must be informed by a 'next generation' conception of its purpose, nature, scope, and breadth so that the new regulatory mechanisms can effectively address all challenges.