Gender Differences and the Relationship Between Digital Habits and Psychological Well-Being among Secondary School Students in Delhi

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INTRODUCTION

In today's interconnected world, digital technologies have become an integral part of daily life, profoundly influencing how individuals communicate, learn, and engage with their surroundings. The proliferation of smartphones, social networking platforms, and instant messaging applications has created a culture where online engagement shapes personal identity, relationships, and lifestyle. This constant connectivity has led to the emergence of digital habits, recurring patterns of technology use that may be either conscious or automatic (LaRose, Lin, & Eastin, 2003). For adolescents, who are among the most active users of digital technologies, these habits play a pivotal role in shaping cognitive, emotional, and social development.

Digital habits can be defined as repetitive and often automatic behaviours related to the use of digital devices and platforms (Oulasvirta, Rattenbury, Ma, & Raita, 2012). Such behaviours range from purposeful activities like academic research, skill-building, or creative expression to passive scrolling and prolonged social media use. As these habits become deeply ingrained, they influence attention spans, interpersonal communication, and even self-concept formation (Valkenburg & Peter, 2011). While digital engagement offers substantial benefits, including access to information, social connectedness, and creativity, excessive or unregulated usage has been associated with negative psychological outcomes such as anxiety, depression, poor sleep quality, and decreased well-being (Twenge, 2019; Boer et al., 2021).

In the field of psychology, psychological well-being (PWB) is widely recognised as a multidimensional construct encompassing emotional balance, life satisfaction, purpose, and the capacity to manage life's challenges effectively. Unlike the traditional view of mental health as merely the absence of illness, psychological well-being reflects the presence of positive mental states such as self-acceptance, autonomy, and meaningful social relationships (Ryff, 1989). It represents how individuals perceive and evaluate their lives both cognitively and affectively, and it serves as a vital indicator of overall mental health and quality of life.

The relationship between digital habits and psychological well-being has become a central theme in contemporary behavioural research. Studies suggest that the quality and purpose of digital engagement, rather than mere screen time, determine its impact on well-being (Przybylski & Weinstein, 2017). Mindful digital use can enhance emotional resilience and social belonging, whereas compulsive or habitual use can foster dependency and social isolation. For adolescents, who are navigating identity formation and peer relationships, the boundary between healthy and unhealthy digital habits is particularly delicate (Kushlev, Proulx, & Dunn, 2016).

Furthermore, gender differences play a significant role in how digital habits manifest and affect mental health. Research indicates that adolescent girls are more likely to engage in social networking activities and report emotional consequences of online interactions, while boys are often drawn to gaming or informational use (Twenge & Martin, 2020). These gender-based variations not only shape the type and intensity of digital engagement but also mediate its psychological effects.

In the context of secondary school students, especially in urban centres like Delhi, understanding digital habits is essential for educators, parents, and policymakers. The academic and social environments of these students

are increasingly intertwined with digital media, making it imperative to assess how habitual digital behaviours influence learning outcomes, self-esteem, and psychological well-being. By examining the patterns and correlates of digital habits among adolescents, researchers can better identify strategies to promote psychological well-being, which include a balanced, mindful, and healthy relationship with technology.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Studies related to psychological well-being

Matud et al. (2019) examined gender and psychological well-being in a sample of 3,400 Spanish individuals. Their findings revealed small but significant gender differences in some categories. Men demonstrated greater levels of autonomy and self-acceptance, but women scored higher on personal growth and healthy interpersonal interactions. Gender influences specific rather than general aspects of well-being, as seen by the lack of significant gender differences in environmental mastery or life purpose. Likewise, a meta-analysis evaluated a sample of multicultural university students (N = 378).

In several well-being dimensions, Roothman et al. (2003) found small to moderate gender differences. Men performed better in physical self-concept, constructive thinking, cognitive flexibility, fortitude, and overall self-concept, while women showed more affect expression, somatic symptoms, and religious well-being. However, there were no notable differences in life satisfaction, emotional intelligence, self-efficacy, or social dimensions of self-concept. These findings suggest that gender disparities are domain-specific and impacted by socialisation processes rather than being universal variations in psychological well-being.

Gender differences in teenage psychological distress and well-being are examined by Visani et al. (2011). A total of 572 youths (313 girls and 259 boys; M = 13.63 years, SD = 1.94) from various middle and high schools in Northern Italy were recruited. The results showed that there was no significant gender difference in the overall psychological well-being of teenagers. Women generally scored lower than males on the self-acceptance dimension of the Psychological Well-Being (PWB) Scales, although this difference was not statistically significant. Overall psychological well-being did not differ between the sexes during adolescence, indicating that boys and girls had comparable levels of well-being.

Research conducted by Nor Ezdianie (2010) to assess the psychological well-being of students in private higher education institutions in Kelantan revealed that boys had a higher mean score for psychological well-being than girls. Meanwhile, gender differences were demonstrated by Perez (2012) in terms of autonomy, positive interactions with others, father-child relationships, peer relationships, daily spiritual experience, and life purpose. Positive affect, negative affect, mother-teacher interactions, environmental mastery, personal growth, and self-acceptance, however, did not differ by gender among Filipino college students. Additionally, Joanne and Ferlis (2014) found significant gender differences in the positive aspects of interpersonal interactions and autonomy.

Studies related to Digital habits

In a cross-sectional study conducted in North Delhi, India, Bhave et al. (2023) found that 86.2% of 377 schoolchildren aged 11 to 16 used the Internet, primarily for social networking (24.62%), gaming (37.23%), and surfing (30.77%), with minimal use for academic objectives. Despite having Facebook accounts, only 62.76% of them understood what cyberbullying was, and only 69% of them used privacy settings. This implies that people participate in dangerous online behaviour and lack digital literacy. Similar to this, Hazarika et al. (2024) found that Indian youths frequently used the Internet for leisure and social media, logged on for long stretches of time and displayed early warning signs of problematic use.

Aslanidou and Menexes (2008) found that communication and entertainment were the main reasons Greek teenagers used the Internet, followed by education. The study also identified socioeconomic differences, with wealthy and urban children having more access. Tsitsika et al. (2008) emphasised that problematic Internet use was significantly predicted by time spent online, peer influence, and parental supervision.

In a number of situations, gender disparities in Internet usage have been frequently noted. Chandel and Lakhani (2018) discovered that in India, girls prefer social media and communication, whereas boys spend more time on gaming and recreational activities. Similar findings were noted by Devi and Devi (2023) among Manipur's higher secondary students, who noted that while women tended to utilise the Internet for educational objectives, men were more likely to engage in leisure web browsing. In a similar vein, Kaur and Kaur (2019) found significant gender disparities among Punjabi university students. Globally, Dufour et al. (2016) discovered that while boys were more likely to have internet-related problems and engage in addictive behaviours, girls used social networking more than boys.

According to Mari et al. (2023), emotional and behavioural aspects regulate gender's critical role in vulnerability to internet addiction. These gendered usage trends were also confirmed by studies conducted in China by Hu et al. (2012) and Taiwan by Lin and Yu (2008).

Correlation studies related to Digital Habits and Psychological Well-being

Przybylski and Weinstein (2017) demonstrated through a large-scale correlational study that moderate levels of digital screen use are associated with optimal mental well-being, while excessive or minimal use tends to correlate with lower well-being. This "Goldilocks hypothesis" emphasises that moderate engagement supports social connection and cognitive stimulation, whereas overuse contributes to stress, fatigue, and emotional dysregulation. Similarly, Orben and Przybylski (2019) analysed extensive datasets and concluded that although the effect size is small, excessive technology use has measurable negative associations with adolescent well-being.

These findings align with Huang's (2010) meta-analysis, which revealed a small but consistent negative correlation between internet usage and well-being. The author suggested that problematic internet behaviours, such as compulsive checking or emotional dependence on online interactions, exacerbate anxiety and depressive symptoms. Boer et al. (2021) also noted that social media stress mediates the relationship between heavy digital use and poor sleep quality, an important determinant of psychological health.

Twenge (2019) highlighted that prolonged screen exposure correlates with higher depressive symptoms, reduced happiness, and decreased sleep quality, particularly among teenagers. Dienlin and Johannes (2020) added that while digital connectivity may improve social inclusion, it also promotes constant comparison and information overload, reducing subjective well-being.

Sharma and Sharma (2018), in a cross-sectional study among Indian college students, found significant negative correlations between internet addiction and psychological well-being indicators such as autonomy, environmental mastery, and self-acceptance. Similar trends were reported by Alaswad, Hassan, and Abdullah (2025), who found that internet addiction negatively predicted psychological well-being, with emotional intelligence mediating this relationship.

Lesinskienė et al. (2024) extended this line of inquiry to adolescents, demonstrating that frequent and unregulated internet use is positively correlated with internalised psychological issues such as anxiety, low happiness, and emotional withdrawal. These patterns suggest that the digital ecosystem, while offering cognitive and social benefits, also creates vulnerabilities when usage becomes habitual or compulsive.

Marciano, Ostroumova, and Schulz (2022), in a meta-analysis of studies conducted during the COVID-19 pandemic, found moderate correlations between social media overuse and increased levels of depression, loneliness, and anxiety. They suggested that digital environments often amplify social comparison and fear of missing out (FOMO), which undermines adolescents' emotional stability.

Supporting this, Pal (2017) reported that problematic internet use among Swedish adolescents correlated positively with emotional distress and negatively with self-esteem. The study underscored that the direction of this relationship is often bidirectional: poor mental health can drive maladaptive digital habits, which in turn worsen emotional outcomes.

Sharma and Sharma's (2018) findings, set in Central India, resonate with global patterns but suggest stronger associations due to higher emotional involvement with digital media. Such contextual differences highlight the need for localised studies, particularly in metropolitan regions like Delhi, where digital lifestyles are deeply interwoven with education, peer relations, and identity formation.

Need and Significance of the Study

In recent years, the proliferation of smartphones, online learning platforms, and social networking sites has dramatically reshaped the daily lives of adolescents. For secondary school students, especially in Delhi, a city characterised by high digital access, academic pressure, and social diversity, technology functions as both a learning tool and a social space. However, this growing digital dependency has also raised concerns regarding its implications for mental health, emotional balance, and overall psychological well-being. The need to examine these influences systematically has become increasingly urgent.

While numerous studies have investigated the impact of digital media on youth globally, relatively few have focused on urban Indian adolescents and even fewer on gender-specific patterns of digital engagement. In Delhi, where secondary students are exposed to intense academic and social pressures, digital media can serve as both a coping mechanism and a source of psychological strain. Understanding these patterns is therefore crucial for identifying early signs of digital overuse, emotional distress, and social comparison behaviours among adolescents. Also, the tool used in previous studies to assess both digital habits and psychological well-being is adapted from Western countries. As those tools did not provide the proper result for this research, so researcher has decided to develop the tool on her own, which focuses on the pattern of digital habits and psychological well-being with respect to secondary school students.

The significance of this study lies in its potential to illuminate the complex, gendered dynamics between digital habits and psychological well-being. By identifying differences in social media engagement and online interaction patterns between boys and girls, this research can inform educators, parents, and policymakers about targeted intervention strategies. Insights derived from the study can guide the development of digital literacy programs, school-based mental health initiatives, and gender-sensitive counselling approaches that encourage healthier, more balanced use of technology.

Objectives of the study

1. To study the level of digital habits of secondary school students in Delhi.
2. To study the level of psychological well-being of secondary school students in Delhi.
3. To compare digital habits between boys and girls of secondary school students in Delhi.
4. To compare psychological well-being between boys and girls of secondary school students in Delhi.
5. To find out the relationship between digital habits and psychological well-being among secondary school students in Delhi.

Null Hypotheses of the study

1. **H01:** There exists no significant difference between boys and girls in digital habits.
2. **H02:** There exists no significant difference between boys and girls in psychological well-being.
3. **H03:** There exists no significant correlation between digital habits and psychological well-being.

Research Methodology

The current study uses a descriptive survey design and is quantitative in nature. Its goal is to describe the gender differences in digital habits and psychological well-being among secondary school students in Delhi.

Sample and Sampling technique of the study

Students in class IX of Delhi's government secondary schools are included in the study. Using a stratified random sampling technique, 260 students, 130 boys and 130 girls, were chosen as a sample**.**

Research Tool

A self-constructed rating scale titled *"*Digital Habits Scale*"* and "Psychological Well-being Scale" for Secondary School Students is used to collect data. The Digital Habits Scale consists of 27 items, and 30 items are in the Psychological Well-being Scale. Each item was rated on a 3-point Likert scale, where Always = 3, Sometimes =2, Never = 1.

Experts in psychology and education verified the tool, and Cronbach's Alpha for *"*Digital Habits Scale*"* is 0.78 and for "Psychological Well-being Scale" it is 0.86, which indicates strong internal consistency and good reliability.

Norms for the tool

1. **For Digital Habits Scale:** Norms are calculated by using z-scores. The norms of scoring for items related to the "Digital Habits Scale", which consisted of 27 items, are given below.

Table 1: Norms of scoring of items related to Digital Habits

Category	Scores
Low Digital Habits	Below 49 (49 included)
Average Digital Habits	50-64 (50 included)
High Digital Habits	Above 65 (65 included)

2. **For Psychological Well-being Scale:** Norms are calculated by using z-scores. The norms of scoring for items related to the "Psychological Well-being Scale", which consisted of 30 items, are given below.

Table 2: Norms of scoring of items related to Psychological Well-being

Category	Scores
Low Psychological Well-being	Below 33 (33 included)
Average Psychological Well-being	52-72 (52 included)
High Psychological Well-being	Above 73 (73 included)

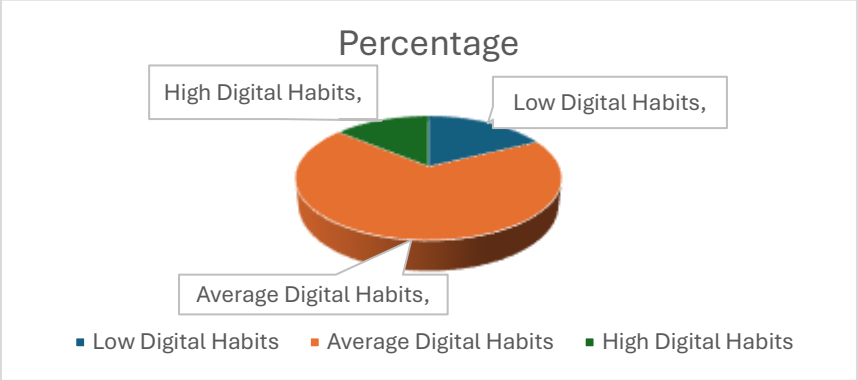
Analysis and Interpretation of collected data

Objective 1: To study the level of Digital Habits among secondary school students in Delhi.

Table 3: Level of Digital Habits among Secondary School Students in Delhi.

Category	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Low Digital Habits	47	18.07%
Average Digital Habits	181	69.61%
High Digital Habits	37	14.23%

Pie Chart: Showing the level of Digital Habits among secondary school students



Interpretation

Table 3 shows and is further supported by the pie chart on the level of digital habits among secondary school students in Delhi. From this, it can be observed that the majority of the students fall into the average level of digital habits. Of the total respondents, 181 students, or 69.61%, fall into the average level of digital habits, meaning that the majority of the students use digital devices and the internet in a balanced way.

A relatively small percentage of students display low digital usage, which amounts to a total of 47 students (18.07%). That would mean very nearly one-fifth of the students have limited exposure to or engagement with digital technology. Conversely, 37 students exhibit high digital habits, representing the smallest group with a proportion of 14.23%. From this, it is apparent that few students are highly engaged in the use of digital media.

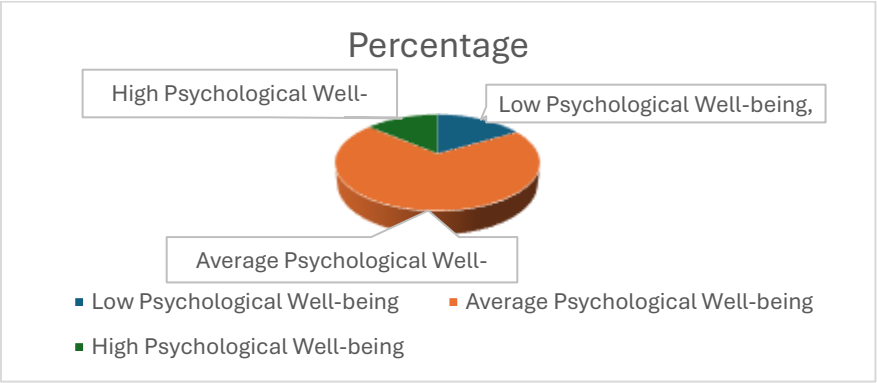
The findings broadly indicate that, though digital technology has become an integral part of students' lives, a majority of the secondary school students in Delhi reflect a balanced digital habit.

Objective 2: To study the level of Psychological Well-being among secondary school students in Delhi.

Table 4: Level of Psychological Well-being among Secondary School Students in Delhi.

Category	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Low Psychological Well-being	**43**	**16.53%**
Average Psychological Well-being	**181**	**69.61%**
High Psychological Well-being	**36**	**13.84%**

Pie Chart: Showing the level of psychological well-being among secondary school students



Interpretation: Data on the psychological well-being of secondary school students in Delhi, presented in Table 4, are further represented by a pie chart. The results identified that the level of psychological well-being among the majority of the students is average. In fact, 181 students, or 69.61%, fall in the average

category, which denotes that a majority of the students are neither too high nor too low on their emotional balance, self-acceptance, and coping abilities.

The students who reported low psychological well-being are 43 in number, which accounts for 16.53%. Stressors, emotional difficulties, or challenges related to academic pressure, peer relationships, or adjustment at a personal level may be higher in this group, indicating the need for psychological support and intervention at the level of the school.

Another 36 students, comprising 13.84% of the sample, showed high psychological well-being. This represents the least proportion of the sample. Such students are most likely to show positive functioning, better emotional regulation, and higher levels of life satisfaction and resilience.

Objective 3: To compare the digital habits across genders among secondary school students in Delhi.

Table 5: Comparison of the digital habits across genders

Gender	N	Mean	SD	df	t-value	p-value	Remark
Boy	130	55.96	7.39	258	-2.008	0.046	Significant
Girl	130	57.75	6.98				

Interpretation: Table 5 compares the digital habits of secondary school students in Delhi by gender. An independent samples t-test was conducted to determine if there is a significant difference between boys and girls regarding digital habits. The results indicated that there were equal numbers of respondents in both groups, N = 130 boys and N = 130 girls. The average digital habits score for girls was higher (M = 57.75, SD = 6.98) than for boys (M = 55.96, SD = 7.39). It means that girls tend to show slightly higher digital engagement compared to boys. The t-value obtained, t = –2.008 with 258 degrees of freedom, is significant at the 0.05 level, since the p-value of 0.046 is less than 0.05, and that means the difference in digital habits among boys and girls is significant and not a result of chance.

Therefore, the null hypothesis (**H01**) of no significant difference in digital habits across genders is rejected.

Objective 4: To compare the psychological well-being across genders among secondary school students in Delhi.

Table 6: Comparison of psychological well-being across genders

Gender	N	Mean	SD	df	t-value	p-value	Remark
Boy	130	64.43	9.44	248	3.955	0.000	Significant
Girls	130	59.53	10.50				

Interpretation: Table 6 compares the psychological well-being of boys and girls among secondary school students in Delhi. An independent samples t-test was conducted to determine if boys and girls differ significantly in their level of psychological well-being. The sample consisted of an equal number of boys, N = 130, and girls, N = 130. The results showed that boys reported a higher mean score of psychological well-being, M = 64.43, SD = 9.44, than girls, M = 59.53, SD = 10.50, indicating better overall psychological well-being among boys in the present sample. The obtained t-value of t = 3.955 for 248 degrees of freedom is significant at the 0.01 level, since the p-value of 0.000 is less than 0.01. Thus, the gender difference in psychological well-being is highly significant and not due to chance.

Therefore, the null hypothesis (**H02**) of no significant difference in psychological well-being between boys and girls is rejected.

Objective 5: To find out the relationship between digital habits and psychological well-being among secondary school students in Delhi.

Table 7: Result (Correlation Table Summary)

Correlations			
		Digital Habits	**Psychological well-being**
Digital Habits	Pearson Correlation	1	-.195**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.002
	N	260	260
Psychological well-being	Pearson Correlation	-.195**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.002	
	N	260	260
****. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).**			

Interpretation

Table 7 presents the results of the Pearson product-moment correlation analysis conducted in order to see the relationship between digital habits and psychological well-being among secondary school students in Delhi.

The findings show that digital habits and psychological well-being go in opposite directions, as indicated by the value of r = –0.195. It is true that with an increased level of digital habits comes a tendency for a decreased level of psychological well-being, and vice versa. Although the magnitude of the correlation is low, it reflects a definite inverse relationship between the two variables. The correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (p = 0.002, two-tailed) with a sample size of 260 students in total. This means that a relationship observed here would have little possibility of occurring by chance and thus would be meaningful within this study.

Therefore, the null hypothesis (**H03**) of no significant relation between digital habits and psychological well-being is rejected.

DISCUSSION

1. Level of Digital Habits

The analysis revealed that the majority of students (69.61%) exhibit an average level of digital habits, suggesting that most adolescents engage with digital media in a relatively balanced manner. This aligns with Przybylski and Weinstein's (2017) *Goldilocks Hypothesis*, which argues that moderate levels of technology use can be beneficial for psychological well-being, while overuse or underuse may be detrimental. The presence of a smaller group (14.23%) showing high digital habits, however, signals potential risks of digital dependency, in line with Sharma and Sharma's (2018) findings from Central India, where excessive internet use correlated with reduced psychological well-being.

The minority of students (18.07%) with low digital habits might represent those with limited access, restrictive home environments, or personal disinterest, reflecting the digital divide that persists even in urban centres. However, their balanced representation suggests that Delhi's adolescents are navigating the digital environment with moderate engagement, neither fully immersed nor detached.

2. Level of Psychological Well-Being

A parallel trend was observed in psychological well-being, where 69.61% of students reported average levels. This finding indicates that while students are coping adequately with daily academic and emotional demands, many are not thriving. The smaller group (16.53%) with low well-being deserves attention, as it may indicate stressors related to academic competition, social pressure, or digital overuse is consistent with findings by Marciano et al. (2022), who noted that heavy social media engagement was associated with anxiety and emotional fatigue.

Conversely, only 13.84% of students demonstrated high psychological well-being, reflecting a minority who experience optimal emotional regulation and resilience. This mirrors Keyes' (2006) concept of flourishing, which suggests that only a small portion of adolescents achieve full psychological wellness, underscoring the need for structured well-being interventions in schools.

3. Gender Differences in Digital Habits

The independent samples t-test showed a significant gender difference in digital habits ($t = –2.008$, $p < 0.05$), with girls reporting higher mean scores than boys. This finding is consistent with Twenge and Martin (2020), who found that adolescent girls are more likely to engage in social networking and online communication, often for relational or academic purposes. In contrast, boys tend to use digital platforms for gaming or informational browsing.

The higher digital engagement among girls in this study may reflect their greater reliance on social media for communication and peer connection, a pattern also observed by Mihajlović et al. (2023). However, this difference, while statistically significant, must be interpreted cautiously: higher engagement does not necessarily imply problematic use but could reflect evolving social and educational patterns among female adolescents in urban India.

4. Gender Differences in Psychological Well-Being

The second t-test indicated a highly significant difference in psychological well-being between boys and girls ($t = 3.955$, $p < 0.01$), with boys scoring higher. This result is in line with earlier studies showing that female adolescents often report greater emotional distress and lower subjective well-being (Matud, 2004; Twenge & Martin, 2020). The difference may arise from gendered socialisation, greater emotional expressivity among girls, and higher perceived academic or social pressures.

In the Indian context, these gender disparities might also reflect societal expectations and differential coping resources. Boys may enjoy slightly higher autonomy and lower emotional scrutiny, contributing to higher self-perceived well-being. The finding underscores the importance of gender-sensitive mental health initiatives in schools, focusing on empowering girls with coping and resilience-building strategies.

5. Relationship Between Digital Habits and Psychological Well-Being

The correlation analysis revealed a significant negative relationship between digital habits and psychological well-being ($r = –0.195$, $p = 0.002$). Although the correlation is weak, it is statistically significant, indicating that as digital engagement increases, psychological well-being tends to decline slightly. This inverse relationship echoes global findings (Orben & Przybylski, 2019; Huang, 2010) and reinforces the argument that excessive or unregulated digital engagement can contribute to stress, sleep disruption, and social comparison — factors known to impair well-being.

Importantly, the modest correlation suggests that digital habits are not inherently harmful but become detrimental when they interfere with balanced lifestyle activities. Boer et al. (2021) highlighted that social media stress mediates this association, suggesting that it is the quality of digital engagement — not merely its quantity — that determines psychological outcomes. Hence, promoting mindful, purposeful, and time-regulated digital practices among adolescents is crucial.

CONCLUSION

The present study provides empirical evidence on the relationship between digital habits and psychological well-being among secondary school students in Delhi, offering a nuanced understanding of how adolescents engage with technology and how such engagement affects their mental health.

The findings reveal that most students maintain average levels of both digital engagement and psychological well-being, suggesting a balanced adaptation to the digital environment. The limited exposure of digital habits is perhaps due to reasons such as restricted access, parental control, or lesser interest in digital media. Students who actively engage in digital usage might raise concerns regarding excessive screen time and its possible effect on academic performance and psychological well-being.

However, gender-based analyses highlight that girls exhibit higher digital habits but lower psychological well-being compared to boys, a finding that echoes global trends and emphasises the need for gender-responsive digital education and mental health support. The findings indicate that gender functions in shaping the digital habits of secondary school students, with girls showing comparatively higher digital habit scores than boys. The difference might be explained by differences in the pattern of digital usage, preferences, or academic and social engagement through digital platforms.

Also, the results indicate that gender is a salient factor in the psychological well-being of school children, and boys have a higher degree of psychological well-being compared to girls. This could be due to differences in social expectations, academic pressures, ways of expressing emotions, and coping mechanisms. These findings point to targeted mental health support, especially for girls, to enhance emotional resilience and, in turn, psychological well-being within school settings.

The negative correlation between digital habits and psychological well-being underscores the potential psychological costs of excessive digital use. While digital media has become indispensable for learning and communication, unchecked or emotionally driven use can diminish well-being by fostering stress, distraction, and reduced offline social interaction. The findings indicated that with increasing digital engagement, the psychological well-being of secondary school students may decrease. This finding has brought to the fore the need to promote balanced and healthy digital usage practices that support students' psychological well-being. Schools, parents, and educators should encourage responsible digital habits and ensure adequate offline activities, social interaction, and emotional support for adolescents.

Implications

Schools should incorporate digital wellness education into the curriculum to guide students toward balanced screen time and responsible online behaviour. Also, there must be school-based programs on mental health, counselling, and a supportive environment to improve psychological well-being among students, ensuring positive mental health outcomes. The digital literacy programs in school must be integrated, which would promote healthy and purposeful use of digital resources to avoid both underuse and overuse.

Parents should encourage open communication about digital experiences and model healthy technology habits. Also, the policymakers should develop school-based mental health programs that integrate psychological support and digital literacy to promote holistic adolescent well-being.

Limitations

1. The sample of the present study comprised only 260 secondary school students, which may not be sufficiently representative of the entire population of school students in Delhi. The restricted sample size limits the generalizability of the findings to a broader population, especially considering the vast diversity of educational institutions in the region.
2. The data were collected from schools located in a specific region of Delhi. Consequently, the findings may not accurately reflect the digital habits and psychological well-being of students from other areas of Delhi or from different states in India. Variations in socio-economic status, school type, parental

education, and cultural environment may influence both digital behaviour and mental health outcomes, thereby limiting the external validity of the results.

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