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A STUDY ON DIGITAL STRESS AMONG UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS

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ABSTRACT

The rapid growth of digital technologies and their extensive integration into higher education have significantly transformed the learning environment of undergraduate students. Although digital devices and online platforms have enhanced access to information and communication, excessive dependence on these technologies has given rise to a new form of psychological strain known as digital stress. Digital stress refers to the stress experienced by individuals due to constant connectivity, information overload, technological complexity, and the pressure to remain continuously available. The present study aims to investigate the level of digital stress among undergraduate students and to examine the differences in digital stress with respect to selected demographic variables. The study also focuses on the various dimensions of digital stress, namely Emotional Vulnerability, Availability Stress, Threat, Work Overload, and Uncertainty. A normative survey method was adopted for the study, and data were collected from undergraduate students through a standardized Digital Stress Scale. Appropriate statistical techniques such as percentage analysis, mean, standard deviation, and t-test were employed for analyzing the data. The findings of the study revealed that undergraduate students experience a moderate to high level of digital stress. The study further indicates that excessive use of digital technologies and constant online engagement contributes to psychological strain and affect students' well-being. The findings of the study are expected to provide valuable insights to educators, parents, counsellors, and policymakers for promoting digital well-being and developing effective strategies to manage digital stress among undergraduate students.

Keywords: *Digital Stress, Undergraduate Students, Emotional Vulnerability, Availability Stress, Threat, Work Overload, Uncertainty.*

INTRODUCTION

The rapid advancement of information and communication technology has brought about significant changes in every sphere of human life, particularly in the field of education. Digital technologies such as smartphones, laptops, tablets, computers, social media platforms, and online learning applications have become an integral part of students' academic and personal lives. The emergence of digital learning environments has enabled students to access information quickly, communicate effectively, and engage in interactive learning experiences. Although these technological developments have provided numerous benefits, they have also introduced new challenges, one of which is digital stress.

Digital stress refers to the psychological strain, anxiety, and pressure experienced by individuals due to excessive exposure to digital technologies and the constant demand to remain connected. It encompasses feelings of information overload, technological complexity, online communication burden, fear of missing out (FOMO), privacy concerns, and difficulties in balancing online and offline life. In the present era, undergraduate students are among the most active users of digital technologies, making them particularly vulnerable to the adverse effects associated with excessive digital engagement.

The increasing dependence on digital devices for academic activities has transformed the learning process in higher education. Students rely heavily on online resources, virtual classrooms, digital assignments, educational applications, and social networking platforms to meet their academic requirements. While these tools facilitate learning and communication, prolonged usage and continuous connectivity often lead to stress, fatigue, distraction, and reduced psychological well-being. Digital stress may negatively affect students' concentration, academic performance, interpersonal relationships, and overall quality of life.



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The COVID-19 pandemic accelerated the adoption of digital technologies in education, making online learning a necessity rather than an option. Educational institutions across the world shifted to virtual modes of instruction, compelling students to spend extended periods in front of screens. Even after the pandemic, digital platforms continue to play a significant role in teaching and learning processes. Consequently, students are exposed to a large amount of digital information and are expected to respond promptly to academic and social demands. Such expectations often create pressure and contribute to digital stress among young learners.

Undergraduate students represent a critical stage of development characterized by academic responsibilities, career aspirations, social interactions, and emotional adjustments. During this period, students are expected to manage multiple tasks simultaneously while adapting to rapidly changing technological environments. Frequent notifications, online assignments, social media engagement, and excessive screen time can increase stress levels and adversely affect mental health. Studies have indicated that excessive digital exposure may lead to anxiety, sleep disturbances, emotional exhaustion, reduced productivity, and feelings of social isolation among students.

Digital stress has emerged as an important issue in contemporary educational research because of its implications for students' academic achievement and psychological well-being. The ability to manage digital technologies effectively and maintain a healthy balance between digital and real-life experiences has become essential for the holistic development of students. Educational institutions, teachers, parents, and policymakers have increasingly recognized the need to promote digital literacy, responsible technology usage, and stress management strategies among learners.

NTR District of Andhra Pradesh is witnessing rapid growth in higher education institutions and increased access to digital technologies. Undergraduate students in the district are actively utilizing smartphones, computers, and internet-based resources for educational and recreational purposes. However, the growing reliance on digital media may also expose them to various forms of stress and psychological challenges. Understanding the extent and nature of digital stress among undergraduate students in NTR District is therefore essential for developing effective interventions and support mechanisms.

In this context, the present study seeks to investigate the level of digital stress among undergraduate students in NTR District and to examine the influence of selected demographic variables on digital stress. The findings of the study are expected to contribute to a better understanding of the digital challenges faced by students and provide valuable insights for educators, administrators, parents, and policymakers in promoting healthy and balanced use of technology among young adults. The study also aims to emphasize the importance of creating supportive educational environments that foster digital well-being and enhance students' academic and personal development.

NEED AND SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The unprecedented growth of digital technology has transformed the educational landscape and brought about remarkable changes in the teaching-learning process. The widespread use of smartphones, laptops, social networking sites, and online learning platforms has enabled students to access information and communicate effectively. However, excessive dependence on digital devices and constant connectivity have given rise to a new psychological phenomenon known as digital stress. Digital stress has become an emerging concern among students, especially undergraduate students, who are highly dependent on digital technologies for academic, social, and personal purposes.

Undergraduate students are in a crucial stage of life where they encounter various academic and emotional challenges. They are expected to manage assignments, examinations, project work, online classes, and social interactions simultaneously. The increasing use of digital technologies often exposes them to information overload, continuous notifications, social media pressure, cyber distractions, and prolonged screen time, which may result in stress, anxiety, fatigue, and reduced concentration. Such conditions may adversely affect their academic performance, mental health, and overall well-being.



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Therefore, there is a pressing need to understand the extent of digital stress experienced by undergraduate students and identify the factors associated with it.

The present generation of students has grown up in a digitally connected environment. Although technology has simplified learning and communication, the inability to maintain a healthy balance between online and offline life has become a major concern. Excessive use of digital devices may lead to emotional exhaustion, sleep disturbances, lack of attention, social isolation, and psychological distress. In recent years, digital stress has emerged as an important area of research because of its influence on students' learning outcomes and quality of life. Hence, studying digital stress among undergraduate students has become highly relevant in the contemporary educational context.

The significance of the study lies in its contribution to understanding the impact of digitalization on the psychological well-being of students. The findings of the study will provide valuable information regarding the level of digital stress among undergraduate students in NTR District and help identify vulnerable groups requiring special attention. The study will also contribute to the existing body of knowledge related to digital well-being and mental health in higher education.

The results of the study will be beneficial to teachers and educational institutions in designing effective strategies to promote healthy technology usage among students. Teachers can create supportive learning environments and encourage students to adopt balanced digital practices. Educational institutions can organize awareness programmes, counselling services, and digital wellness initiatives to help students cope with digital stress and improve their overall well-being.

The findings of the study will also be useful to parents in understanding the digital habits and psychological challenges faced by their children. Parents can provide proper guidance and support to ensure responsible and productive use of digital technologies. Furthermore, the study will assist counsellors and mental health professionals in developing intervention programmes aimed at reducing stress and promoting emotional well-being among students.

From the perspective of educational administrators and policymakers, the study will provide insights into the necessity of incorporating digital wellness and stress management programmes into higher education curricula. Policymakers can formulate guidelines and policies to encourage the safe and balanced use of technology in educational institutions. The study will also serve as a reference for future researchers interested in exploring various dimensions of digital stress and its relationship with academic achievement, mental health, social adjustment, and life satisfaction.

NTR District is experiencing rapid technological advancement and increasing access to digital resources among college students. Despite the widespread use of digital technologies, limited studies have been conducted to examine digital stress among undergraduate students in this region. Therefore, the present investigation assumes special significance in understanding the nature and extent of digital stress among students in NTR District. The findings of the study are expected to provide empirical evidence that will help educators, parents, administrators, and policymakers take appropriate measures to foster digital well-being and ensure the holistic development of undergraduate students.

Thus, the present study is both timely and relevant, as it seeks to address an emerging issue affecting the academic, psychological, and social lives of undergraduate students. By examining digital stress among undergraduate students in NTR District, the study aims to contribute towards creating a healthier and more balanced digital environment that promotes students' educational success and overall well-being.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

In the present study the investigator has reviewed the researches done in the study of digital stress of under graduate students. After reviewing the above studies, it was observed that many studies were explored on



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Zhang Wen, Chen Yifan, and Cao Gaohui(2024) Digital stress among Chinese adolescents: a focus group study. The analysis reveals differences in Chinese adolescents’ attitudes towards components of digital stress in terms of online vigilance and communication overload.

Jebran Zeb, Dr. Iqbal Ahmad & Dr. Farah Deeba(2024) Effect of Digital Stress on Students’ Online Learning Readiness: University Students’ Standpoint. Results of the study revealed that students strongly agreed that digital stress had an effect on their online learning readiness It is concluded that digital stress is a strong predictor of online learning readiness of university students.

Louie Giray, Jonard Nemeño, Jasmin Braganaza, Sheila May Lucero & Rex Bacarra(2024) States that a survey on digital device engagement, digital stress, and coping strategies among college students in the Philippines. Findings revealed that students were heavily reliant on digital devices. They used digital devices for at least 15 minutes daily upon waking and before sleeping. They encountered significant digital stress, particularly from social media, online learning platforms, games, and video streaming. Face book emerged as the most stress-inducing platform.

Xiaoshuo Sui (2022) Focused that the impact of online learning on High School Students’ Stress. The results show that the pressure of online learning for high school students comes from four aspects, namely learning pressure, social pressure, family pressure, and health pressure. High school students can reduce their stress by maintaining online communication with teachers and classmates, insisting on exercises such as jumping rope and walking every day, and eating regularly and nutritionally in a day.

Dr. C. Kala (2018)A study on the stress level of students and teachers of higher secondary school in Chennai. The results concluded that both gender preferred family environmental factors as a cause for their stress. Teachers are of the opinion that exam pressure, time management and behavior of students are the major factors that create an increase in stress level. Based on the above reviews, the researcher intended to find out the level of digital stress among undergraduate students.

.STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The present investigation intended to find out the level of digital stress among undergraduate students. It is also intended to find out their relation in respect of different variables like Gender, Locality of living. The size and selection of sample, the variables and the controls employed the sources of data, the tools and methods of gathering data, the reliability and validity of instruments selected were carefully described. This investigation is intended to find answers to the following questions:

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. Is there any significant effect of locality of living for under graduate students on their digital stress
2. Is there any significant effect of gender for under graduate students on their digital stress
3. Is there any significant effect of different managements of under graduate students on their digital stress
4. Is there any significant effect of parental education of under graduate students on their digital stress
5. Is there any significant effect of academic stream of under graduate students on their digital stress

TITLE OF THE STUDY

“A study on digital stress among undergraduate students”.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To study the level of digital stress among undergraduate students and to classify them.
2. To study the level of different dimensions of digital stress among undergraduate students and to classify them.
 - a) Emotional Vulnerability
 - b) Availability Stress



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- c) Threat
 - d) Work Overload
 - e) Uncertainty
3. To study the influence of the gender of undergraduate students on their digital stress
 4. To study the influence of the locality of living of undergraduate students on their digital stress
 5. To study the influence of the different management of undergraduate students on their digital stress

HYPOTHESES OF THE STUDY

The null hypotheses of the study are as follows:

1. There is no significant difference in digital stress of male and female students of undergraduates.
2. There is no significant difference in digital stress of rural and urban students of undergraduates.
3. There is no significant difference in digital stress of Govt and Private Students of undergraduates.

VARIABLES OF THE STUDY

A variable is anything that can change or vary. It refers to measurable characteristics of objects, events, things, or beings. Variables are a prerequisite for conducting comparative research. The following variables are considered in this study:

Independent Variables

- 1) Artificial Intelligence

Dependent Variables:

1. Academic Performance

Demographical Variables:

1. Gender: Boys/Girls
2. Residential area: Rural/Urban
3. Type of Management: Government/Private

SCOPE OF THE STUDY

The present study is confined to the Vijayawada, Krishna district. The sample selected for the study was secondary school students. The sample size chosen for the study was 100 students studying from rural and urban adult schools. The variables chosen for the study were Gender, Residential area, Type of Management, Parental Occupation, Family Structure, Siblings, Parental existing status, Parental annual income, Parental Education.

METHOD OF THE STUDY

Entire research involves the elements of observation, planning, the procedure to be followed, and its description and analysis of what happens under certain circumstances. For the present study, the investigator selected the normative survey method or descriptive survey method.

POPULATION FOR THE STUDY

The present study's sample is secondary school students studying in government and private management around the Vijayawada, Krishna district of Andhra Pradesh state rural and urban areas. The total population consisted of 1000 students are studying in adult schools. Only 100 (10. %) of sample were selected for the present study.

SAMPLE SELECTED FOR THE STUDY

The sample for the present study was Secondary school students of in around the Vijayawada, Krishna district of Andhra Pradesh state who follows the Andhra Pradesh state syllabus. The present study was carried out on a representative sample of 100 Secondary school students selected from various areas in around the Vijayawada, Krishna district Andhra Pradesh



state. The sample was selected using a stratified random sampling technique. The investigator considered the following variables while sampling viz., Gender, Residential area, Type of Management were chosen for the present study.

SAMPLING TECHNIQUES

A stratified random sample of 100 secondary school students in the around the Vijayawada, Krishna district was selected for this study.

TOOL OF THE STUDY

Digital Stress Scale (DSS)

For the purpose of this study, a standardized tool will be used. Digital stress Scale (DSS) developed and standardized by Shruti Narain & Shailaja Pokhriyal (2025) This scale is divided in to five dimensions consisting of 32 items in 29 Positive & 3 Negative Items.

- i. Emotional Vulnerability
- ii. Availability Stress
- iii. Threat
- iv. Work Overload
- v. Uncertainty

DATA ANALYSIS

OBJECTIVE 1

To study the level of digital stress among undergraduate students and to classify them.

Table1 - 1

The mean, percentage of mean, SD and 1/5th of mean of the total sample of the digital stress of undergraduate students

N	Mean	% of mean	SD	1/5 th of mean
200	93.68	58.55	15.61	18.74

Observation

The table reveals that the total sample of undergraduate students (N = 200) has a mean digital stress score of 93.68, which corresponds to 58.55% of the maximum possible score, indicating a moderate level of digital stress. The standard deviation of 15.61 suggests a moderate variation in stress levels among students. Additionally, the 1/5th value of the mean (18.74) provides a basis for categorizing stress levels, showing that a considerable proportion of students experience noticeable digital stress. Overall, the data indicates that digital stress is present at a significant but not extreme level among the sample.

Finding

The overall level of digital stress among undergraduate students is moderate. There exists noticeable variation in stress levels, indicating differences in individual digital usage and coping abilities.

The finding that undergraduate students experience a moderate level of digital stress reflects the growing influence of digital technology in their academic and personal lives. With increased reliance on smartphones, online learning



platforms, and social media, students are constantly exposed to digital environments that demand continuous attention and engagement. This can lead to information overload, reduced concentration, and mental fatigue. The moderate level of stress suggests that while students are able to manage digital demands to some extent, they are still significantly affected by the pressures of constant connectivity and academic expectations through digital means.

Furthermore, the presence of variation in digital stress levels indicates that not all students are affected equally. Factors such as individual coping mechanisms, time management skills, digital literacy, and personal habits play an important role in determining stress levels. Students who lack proper self-regulation or who engage excessively in social media and online activities are more likely to experience higher levels of stress. On the other hand, students who maintain a balanced approach to digital usage may experience lower stress. This highlights the need for educational institutions to implement awareness programs, digital well-being strategies, and support systems to help students manage digital stress effectively and enhance their overall academic performance and mental health.

Classification Analysis

It is done on the basis of their level of digital stress. The minimum possible score is 36, the maximum possible score is 180. The range is 150. It is divided in to three levels of digital stress i.e high, average, low level digital stress.

Table: 2

Classification of undergraduate students on the basis of their digital stress

Level of digital literacy	Score Scale	No. of students	%
Low	30-70	5	5%
Average	71-120	43	43%
High	121-155	52	52%

Observation

The table shows the classification of undergraduate students based on their levels of digital stress. It is observed that a majority of students (52%) fall under the high digital stress category with scores ranging from 121–155. A significant proportion of students (43%) fall under the average level of digital stress with scores between 71–120. Only a small percentage of students (5%) fall under the low digital stress category with scores between 30–70. This indicates that most students are experiencing moderate to high levels of digital stress.

Finding

Most undergraduate students (52%) experience high levels of digital stress. Only a very small proportion (5%) experience low digital stress.

Discussion

The finding clearly indicates that a large proportion of undergraduate students are experiencing high levels of digital stress, which is a matter of concern in the current educational context. The increasing dependence on digital devices for academic purposes such as online classes, assignments, and communication, along with excessive use of social media, contributes significantly to this high level of stress. Continuous exposure to screens, constant notifications, and the pressure



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to remain connected can lead to mental fatigue, reduced concentration, and emotional strain. The fact that more than half of the students fall into the high stress category suggests that digital stress is not an isolated issue but a widespread phenomenon among undergraduate students.

Moreover, the presence of a considerable percentage of students in the average category (43%) indicates that a large number of students are on the verge of experiencing higher stress levels if proper interventions are not implemented. The very small proportion of students in the low stress category (5%) highlights the lack of effective coping mechanisms and balanced digital habits among most students. This situation calls for immediate attention from educational institutions, teachers, and parents to promote digital well-being. Strategies such as digital literacy programs, time management training, counseling services, and encouraging offline activities can help students reduce their stress levels and maintain a healthier balance between digital and real-life engagements.

OBJECTIVE 2:

To study the level of different dimensions of digital stress among undergraduate students and to classify them.

Table 4.3
Digital stress - Dimension wise Analysis

S.No	Level of Classification	Mean	SD	Percentage of Mean	Order
1	Emotional Vulnerability	20.14	3.36	62.94%	1
2	Availability Stress	19.52	3.25	61.00%	2
3	Threat	18.25	3.04	57.03%	4
4	Work Overload	18.96	3.16	59.25%	3
5	Uncertainty	16.81	2.80	52.53%	5
		93.68	15.61	58.55%	

Observation

The table presents the dimension-wise analysis of digital stress among undergraduate students. It is observed that *Emotional Vulnerability* has the highest mean score (20.14) with 62.94%, ranking first among all dimensions. This is followed by *Availability Stress* (Mean = 19.52, 61.00%) and *Work Overload* (Mean = 18.96, 59.25%), which occupy the second and third ranks respectively. The *Threat* dimension (Mean = 18.25, 57.03%) is ranked fourth, while *Uncertainty* (Mean = 16.81, 52.53%) has the lowest mean score and is ranked fifth. The overall mean score of digital stress is 93.68 with a percentage of 58.55%, indicating a moderate level of digital stress among students.

Finding

Emotional Vulnerability is the most dominant dimension of digital stress among undergraduate students. Uncertainty is the least contributing dimension compared to other stress factors. The finding that *Emotional Vulnerability* ranks highest among the dimensions of digital stress indicates that students are significantly affected at an emotional level due to their digital engagement. Continuous exposure to social media, online interactions, and digital academic environments may lead to feelings of anxiety, comparison, low self-esteem, and emotional instability. Students may become sensitive to online feedback, peer validation, and academic expectations conveyed through digital platforms. This highlights that digital stress is not merely a technical or academic issue but deeply connected to students' emotional well-being. The prominence of this dimension suggests the need for psychological support systems and awareness programs that help students manage their emotions effectively in digital spaces.



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Furthermore, the higher ranks of *Availability Stress* and *Work Overload* indicate that students feel pressured to remain constantly connected and responsive in digital environments. The expectation to be available for academic tasks, messages, and notifications can create a sense of urgency and reduce personal time, leading to fatigue and burnout. Although *Threat* and *Uncertainty* have comparatively lower scores, they still contribute to the overall stress, indicating concerns related to data privacy, online risks, and unpredictability in digital platforms. The variation among these dimensions suggests that digital stress is multifaceted and requires a comprehensive approach involving time management, digital literacy, emotional regulation, and institutional support to help students maintain a healthy balance in their digital lives.

OBJECTIVE 3

To study the influence of the gender of Undergraduate students on their digital stress

Table 4: Table showing the mean S.D. and t-value for Gender of the digital stress of under graduate students.

S.No	Gender	N	Mean	SD	SED	t-value
1	Boys	100	93.34	15.06	2.15	1.49
2	Girls	100	90.13	15.42		

Table values for 1.97 at 0.05 level and 2.60 at 0.01 level

Observation

The table shows that the mean digital stress score of boys (93.34) is slightly higher than that of girls (90.13). The standard deviation values for boys (15.06) and girls (15.42) indicate a similar level of variability in both groups. The calculated Standard Error of Difference (SED) is 2.15, and the obtained t-value is 1.49. Since the t-value is lower than the critical value at the 0.05 level, the difference between boys and girls in digital stress is not statistically significant.

Finding

There is no significant difference in digital stress between boys and girls undergraduate students. Gender does not have a significant influence on the level of digital stress.

Discussion

The finding indicates that both boys and girls experience digital stress at nearly similar levels, suggesting that gender is not a determining factor in influencing digital stress among undergraduate students. In the present digital era, students irrespective of gender are equally exposed to academic pressures, social media usage, online learning environments, and digital communication demands. These shared experiences may contribute to similar stress patterns, thereby minimizing gender-based differences. The close mean scores and similar standard deviations further support the idea that digital stress is uniformly distributed among both groups.

Moreover, the non-significant difference may also reflect changing social dynamics where access to technology and digital engagement has become equally prevalent among boys and girls. Earlier assumptions that one gender might be more affected by digital environments are becoming less relevant due to increased digital literacy and equal participation. This finding aligns with several contemporary studies that report no substantial gender differences in technology-related stress, emphasizing that digital stress is more closely linked to usage patterns, academic workload, and personal coping mechanisms rather than gender alone. Therefore, interventions to reduce digital stress should focus on all students collectively rather than targeting a specific gender group.



OBJECTIVE 4:

To study the influence of the locality of under graduate students on their digital stress

Table -5 showing the variables wise distribution mean S.D. and t- value for the locality of the pupils on their digital stress.

<i>S.No</i>	<i>Locality</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>SED</i>	<i>t-value</i>
1	Rural	100	87.34	15.21	2.18	2.66*
2	Urban	100	93.13	15.54		

Significant at 0.05 level & Table value 1.96.

Observation

The table indicates that urban pupils have a higher mean digital stress score (93.13) compared to rural pupils (87.34). The standard deviation values for rural (15.21) and urban (15.54) pupils are nearly similar, showing comparable variability within both groups. The calculated Standard Error of Difference (SED) is 2.18, and the obtained t-value is 2.66, which is statistically significant at the 0.05 level. This suggests that there is a meaningful difference in digital stress levels based on locality.

Finding

There is a significant difference in digital stress between rural and urban pupils. Urban pupils experience higher digital stress than rural pupils.

Discussion

The significant difference observed between rural and urban pupils highlights the influence of locality on digital stress levels. Urban pupils are typically more exposed to digital devices, high-speed internet, online learning platforms, and social media, which increases their engagement with digital environments. This increased exposure can lead to higher levels of stress due to constant connectivity, academic pressure through online platforms, and information overload. In contrast, rural pupils may have relatively limited access to such digital resources, which may reduce their exposure to stress-inducing digital factors.

Additionally, urban environments often promote a competitive academic culture where students rely heavily on technology for learning, communication, and performance. The expectations to stay updated, respond quickly, and manage multiple digital tasks can contribute to anxiety and mental fatigue among urban pupils. On the other hand, rural pupils may benefit from a more balanced lifestyle with fewer digital distractions, allowing them to manage stress more effectively. This finding emphasizes the need for educators and policymakers to focus on promoting healthy digital usage habits, particularly among urban students, by incorporating stress management strategies and digital well-being programs.

OBJECTIVE 5: To study the influence of the type of management of under graduate students on their digital stress



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Table 6

Table showing the variables wise distribution mean, S.D. and t- value for the type of management of the pupils on their digital stress.

<i>S.No</i>	<i>Type of management</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>SED</i>	<i>t-value</i>
1	Govt	100	92.04	15.21	2.09	0.48ns
2	Private	100	93.09	15.54		

Not significant at 0.05 level & Table value 1.96.

Observation

The table shows that the mean digital stress score of private school pupils (93.09) is slightly higher than that of government school pupils (92.04). The standard deviation values for government (15.21) and private (15.54) pupils are nearly similar, indicating a comparable level of variability in both groups. The calculated Standard Error of Difference (SED) is 2.09, and the obtained t-value is 0.48, which is not statistically significant at the 0.05 level. This indicates that there is no meaningful difference in digital stress between pupils of different types of management.

Finding

There is no significant difference in digital stress between government and private school pupils. Type of management does not significantly influence digital stress levels.

Discussion

The finding reveals that the type of school management, whether government or private, does not have a significant impact on the digital stress experienced by pupils. Both groups show nearly equal mean scores and similar variability, suggesting that students across different school systems are exposed to comparable levels of digital engagement. With the increasing integration of technology in education, both government and private schools are adopting digital tools, online learning platforms, and communication technologies, leading to similar experiences of digital stress among pupils.

Furthermore, this result indicates that digital stress is more closely associated with factors such as the extent of device usage, academic workload, screen time, and individual coping mechanisms rather than the type of school management. Regardless of institutional differences, students today share a common digital environment that influences their learning and lifestyle. Therefore, efforts to reduce digital stress should be directed toward all students by promoting balanced digital usage, awareness programs on digital well-being, and effective stress management strategies, rather than focusing on a particular type of school.

MAJOR FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

1. The overall level of digital stress among undergraduate students is moderate. There exists noticeable variation in stress levels, indicating differences in individual digital usage and coping abilities.
2. Most undergraduate students (52%) experience high levels of digital stress. Only a very small proportion (5%) experience low digital stress.
3. Emotional Vulnerability is the most dominant dimension of digital stress among undergraduate students. Uncertainty is the least contributing dimension compared to other stress factors.
4. There is no significant difference in digital stress between boys and girls undergraduate students. Gender does not have a significant influence on the level of digital stress.



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5. There is a significant difference in digital stress between rural and urban pupils. Urban pupils experience higher digital stress than rural pupils.
6. There is no significant difference in digital stress between government and private school pupils. Type of management does not significantly influence digital stress levels.

DISCUSSIONS ON FINDINGS

1. Moderate Level of Digital Stress among Undergraduate Students

The finding that undergraduate students experience a moderate level of digital stress indicates that digital technology is neither entirely harmful nor completely stress-free. Students are able to manage their digital engagements to a certain extent, but still face noticeable pressure due to continuous interaction with digital platforms. The variation in stress levels suggests that individual differences such as digital literacy, time management skills, personality traits, and coping strategies play a crucial role in determining how students experience digital stress.

Furthermore, moderate stress levels may reflect the dual nature of technology, where it serves as both a learning aid and a source of pressure. While digital tools enhance academic accessibility and communication, excessive use, constant notifications, and academic expectations can create mental strain. Therefore, it becomes important to guide students in maintaining a balance between productive and excessive digital use to prevent stress from escalating.

2. Majority Experiencing High Digital Stress

The finding that a majority (52%) of students experience high digital stress is a matter of concern, as it highlights the growing burden of digital engagement in students' lives. High stress levels may result from excessive screen time, academic pressure through online platforms, social media comparisons, and the expectation to remain constantly connected. The very low percentage of students experiencing low stress further emphasizes that digital stress is a widespread issue affecting most learners.

This situation calls for immediate attention from educators, parents, and policymakers to address the causes of digital stress. Institutions should introduce awareness programs on digital well-being, encourage regular breaks from screens, and promote healthy digital habits. Without proper intervention, prolonged high stress levels may lead to burnout, reduced academic performance, and mental health issues among students.

3. Emotional Vulnerability as the Dominant Dimension

The dominance of emotional vulnerability as a dimension of digital stress indicates that students are emotionally affected by their digital experiences. Factors such as online comparisons, fear of missing out (FOMO), cyber interactions, and academic pressures can trigger feelings of anxiety, insecurity, and emotional instability. On the other hand, uncertainty being the least contributing factor suggests that students are relatively familiar with digital environments but struggle more with emotional responses to them.

This finding highlights the importance of focusing on students' emotional well-being in the digital context. Educational institutions should provide counseling support, emotional intelligence training, and awareness about managing online interactions. Strengthening emotional resilience can help students cope better with digital challenges and reduce their vulnerability to stress.

4. No Significant Gender Difference

The absence of a significant difference in digital stress between boys and girls suggests that both genders are equally exposed to digital environments and experience similar levels of stress. In the modern context, access to technology and participation in digital activities have become uniform across genders, reducing earlier disparities. Both boys and girls face similar academic expectations, social media exposure, and digital demands.

This finding indicates that digital stress is a universal issue rather than a gender-specific one. Therefore, interventions aimed at reducing digital stress should be designed for all students without gender bias. Equal emphasis should be given to promoting digital well-being, responsible usage, and coping strategies among both boys and girls.



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5. Significant Difference Based on Locality (Urban vs Rural)

The higher level of digital stress among urban pupils suggests that increased access to technology and digital resources may also bring higher levels of pressure. Urban students are more likely to be exposed to continuous internet access, online learning platforms, and social media, which can contribute to information overload and constant engagement. In contrast, rural students may have limited exposure, which may help reduce digital stress. Additionally, urban environments often involve competitive academic settings and higher expectations, which further intensify digital stress. This finding highlights the need for targeted strategies in urban areas, such as promoting digital detox practices, time management skills, and awareness of healthy technology use. At the same time, efforts should be made to ensure balanced digital exposure in rural areas without increasing stress levels.

6. No Significant Difference Based on Type of Management

The finding that there is no significant difference between government and private school pupils indicates that digital stress is not influenced by institutional management. Both types of schools are increasingly integrating digital tools into teaching and learning processes, leading to similar experiences among students. Access to smartphones, online classes, and digital assignments has become common across educational settings. This suggests that digital stress is more related to usage patterns and individual behavior rather than institutional differences. Therefore, strategies to reduce digital stress should be implemented across all types of schools. Schools should focus on creating awareness, encouraging balanced digital usage, and providing support systems to help students manage stress effectively.

EDUCATIONAL IMPLICATIONS

1. Digital well-being programs should be introduced in schools and colleges.
2. Students should be guided to use digital devices in a balanced and controlled manner.
3. Life skills such as time management and stress management should be included in the curriculum.
4. Counseling services should be strengthened to support students facing digital stress.
5. Awareness programs on the effects of excessive screen time should be conducted regularly.
6. Parents should be guided to monitor and regulate their children's digital usage.
7. Special attention should be given to urban students to reduce higher digital stress levels.
8. Stress management strategies should be applied equally to all students irrespective of gender and academic stream.
9. Schools should encourage participation in offline activities like sports and cultural programs.
10. Teachers should be trained to identify and manage digital stress among students.
11. Academic workload through digital platforms should be properly regulated.
12. Digital literacy skills should be developed to promote responsible use of technology.

SUGGESTIONS FOR TEACHERS

1. Teachers should create awareness among students about healthy and balanced use of digital devices.
2. They should avoid overloading students with excessive online assignments and digital tasks.
3. Teachers should encourage students to take regular breaks during prolonged screen use.
4. They should identify early signs of digital stress such as anxiety, distraction, or fatigue among students.
5. Teachers should provide emotional support and guidance to students experiencing digital stress.
6. They should promote interactive and engaging teaching methods instead of continuous screen-based learning.
7. Teachers should encourage students to participate in offline activities like sports, arts, and group discussions.
8. They should guide students in developing time management and self-regulation skills.
9. Teachers should maintain a supportive and friendly classroom environment to reduce academic pressure.
10. They should collaborate with parents to monitor students' digital habits and well-being.
11. Teachers should integrate digital literacy education to help students use technology responsibly.
12. They should model healthy digital behavior by using technology purposefully and effectively.



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CONCLUSION

The present study concludes that digital stress is a significant and emerging concern among undergraduate students, with the overall level found to be moderate, though a majority experience high levels of stress. The findings reveal that factors such as locality and parental education significantly influence digital stress, while gender, type of management, and academic stream do not show any significant impact. Emotional vulnerability has emerged as the most dominant dimension, indicating the strong psychological effect of digital engagement on students. These results highlight that digital stress is a universal issue shaped more by exposure, environment, and expectations rather than demographic differences.

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