

# Extent of Digital Life and Social Well-being of College Students

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## ABSTRACT

With the advance of technology, life has become comfortable as we move to the digital world of interconnectedness with devices and apps which have become a sine quo non-factor in today's world. A life without internet and mobile phone is unthinkable. So, we are hooked to our smartphones and are continually interconnected with our smartphones and computers. With the current technologies continuously being designed to fulfil all our physical and emotional needs, there appears to be no excuse not to join the digital bandwagon. Consequently, digital media are integrated into the fabric of young people's lives today. This reality raises questions about the varied impacts of regular interaction on digital technologies, social networking sites, contact with friends and relatives through text messages and apps. Hence media literacy, digital skills and digital citizenship have become a topic of growing importance in the academic field, as well as among policy-makers and practitioners.

The focus of this research is to know the forms of technology used in the digital life of young people, to determine the degree to which digital technology has become part of today's youth life and to examine the level of positive and negative impacts on the digital life of college youth.

The research was undertaken on 242 undergraduate students, to study their digital life. From the main findings of the study, it was inferred that more than two- third (67.6%) of the respondents expressed a higher level of online digital activity, while the rest had a lower level of involvement and low level of social well-being.

**Key words:** College youth, Digital Life, Internet, Mobile phone, Technology

## Introduction

Many of our human needs are met by today's ever-evolving internet technologies. The internet satisfies our need to work, have fun, and learn; being online is the perfect mode of engagement with friends and family. People post content to gain popularity, promote visibility, and communicate their identity. While new technology and advances are transforming young people's lives and opening them to new vistas of opportunities, they can also pose risks to their health and well-being. Internet acts as the foundation for collaborative forums and new platforms offer amazing opportunities to communicate and inspire young people. Modern technologies would also include

platforms for learning, education, and career development. However, among the plethora of uses, the internet continues to impede our contact, which ensures we lose out on face-to-face interactions, among other things. These advances have hampered people's personal ability to communicate with one another. And they have no idea how to interact with others or what step they can take when they see them in person. This is a significant issue that has altered their daily lives.

## Objectives

1. To study the types of technology used for digital life by college students
2. To assess the extent to which digital technology has been part of the life of today's youth
3. To analyze the level of positive and negative impacts on the digital life of youth
4. To know the level of social well-being of college students
5. To find out the relationship between social well-being and the extent of the digital life of college students.

### Review of Literature

**Heverly, Robert A (2008)** When young people refer to emerging technologies, they often point to the ones they use, a tool called to perform a regular or special job or task. They show appreciation of modern technology's promise, common application, and possible abuse of themselves and others. They make use of the medium. It's not perfect, but they take it for granted because it's different and far away from them. It changes what they will do, how they do it, and how they work, but it does not transform them, though it can assist them in changing themselves.

**Moir Burke, (2010)** conducted a study on the relationship between social network behaviour and social well-being. The study aimed to verify the common self-report scale using empirical data from Facebook, to see whether previous results could be generalised to an older and foreign population. According to the study's results, communication was correlated with higher feelings of bonding, social capital and lower isolation. Users that access more content show lower bridging and bonding social capital and increased loneliness.

**Goswami, (2011)** Children's relationships and their subjective well-being are explored. The research looked into both the positive and negative aspects of social interactions. The Children's Society collaborated with the University of New York on this report. The data was collected using a questionnaire administered on 6744 young people. The key result was that young people of all ages are content in their relationship with their families.

**Dienlin & Johannes, (2020)** This research includes a review of the literature on the application of digital technology in youth-health. The overall findings suggest that advertising effects at the unfavourable end of the spectrum are extremely minor. Outcomes differ based on the level of use: while procrastination and inactivity have the worst consequences, public use and violence have the greatest. The use of new technologies has broader consequences for short-term hedonic well-being. Though young people are at a higher risk, the effects are the same for both young people and adults. High and excessive intake is often associated with reduced well-being, whereas medium consumption is associated with increased well-being.

**James, et al., (2017)** Youth well-being, social interaction, and personality characteristics such as sensitivity and narcissism are often raised as concerns about the consequences of digital life. Understanding the identified factors and learning gaps in these areas is a critical first step towards encouraging media consumption that leads to youth happiness, health satisfaction, and socially responsible behaviour. We discovered that strong associations with human causes, type of media presence, and media communication inform the consequences of well-being, social contact, empathy, and narcissism by looking at the present challenge of measuring these problems in all situations. At least 34% of young people have "somehow" acknowledged that using social media would minimise the amount of time they spend face-to-face with peers, although at least 44% have "somehow" agreed that using social media often bothers them personally.

**GÖK, (2015)** Technologies that allow fast and convenient online access to information and public events have unquestionably influenced the academic life of students. As a result, it was worthwhile to investigate what we knew about the effect of new technologies and social networking sites (SNSs) on education. This definition considers the effect of digital development and social media on student readers. The results revealed that automated technologies and social networking sites harmed students' ability to acquire information and learn as a result of departures from academic practises. According to research, most students devote more time on social media (Facebook,

Twitter, YouTube, and so on) than on academic topics. Based on student results, the report contains comprehensive recommendations and guidance.

**UNICEF, (2018)** The Internet and its application services, such as tablets and smartphones, social networking, and messaging apps, have been an indispensable feature of the lives of young people worldwide. They have altered their education and research, in shaping and supporting friendships, their use of leisure moments, and how they communicate with the larger world. According to UNICEF's 'Children in the Modern World' survey, one in every three internet users is under the age of 18, and 71% of 15-24-year-olds are online, making them the world's oldest population.

**Jisha K & Jebakumar, (2014)** WhatsApp, a mobile app, has now become an integral part of the lives of many young people. It has evolved into a communication request that young people find difficult to ignore, whether they agree with it or not. They use it to communicate with friends and family, as well as for information, entertainment, and education. They use it to share personal material, express themselves emotionally, and even schedule their everyday lives. It was discovered that students use WhatsApp for eight hours a day and are online for sixteen hours a day to chat with their friends, to exchange images, audio files, and videos with their friends. It was also discovered that WhatsApp is the only application that young people use while they spend time on their cellphones.

**Singla, (2010)** Cellphones have been rapidly adopted in recent years, not just in India but also globally. Cellphones have often been more common than fashion accessories. According to research, while price and features are important considerations while purchasing a new mobile phone, sound quality, and network connectivity are often regarded as the other important considerations while selecting a cellphone. The study's key goal is to understand the variations in the priority provided by the selection preferred by the various sex groups when purchasing mobile phones. According to the survey, 57 per cent of men chose mobile phone quality over price, features, device style, and cell design.

### Research Design and Methods

A descriptive research design was adopted which helped the researcher to describe the Extent of Digital Life and Social well-being of college students. The study was carried out among UG students of Sacred Heart College (Autonomous) situated in Tirupattur, Tamil Nadu numbering a sample of 241 respondents consisting of males (119) and females (122). Simple Random sampling was used to collect the data, with the help of an appropriate questionnaire. The researcher prepared the tool and data analysis was done using SPSS 21 version.

### Results and Analysis

Table – 1

Extent of Digital Life

S. No.	Extent of Digital Life	Frequency (n:241)	Per cent
1	<b>Order Food Online</b>		
	Low level of online activity	226	93.8
	High level of online activity	15	6.2
2	<b>Purchase Gadgets Online</b>		
	Low level of online activity	203	84.2

	High level of online activity	38	15.8
3	<b>Purchase Clothes Online</b>		
	Low level of online activity	199	82.6
	High level of online activity	42	17.4
4	<b>Online Learning</b>		
	Low level of online activity	34	14.1
	High level of online activity	207	85.9
5	<b>Online Prayer and Worship</b>		
	Low level of online activity	210	87.1
	High level of online activity	31	12.9
6	<b>Budget and Account Online</b>		
	Low level of online activity	195	80.9
	High level of online activity	46	19.1
7	<b>Interact with Parents Online</b>		
	Low level of online activity	184	76.3
	High level of online activity	57	23.7
8	<b>Interact with Friends Online</b>		
	Low level of online activity	64	26.5
	High level of online activity	177	73.5

9	<b>Listening to Music Online</b>		
	Low level of online activity	84	34.9
	High level of online activity	157	65.1
10	<b>Watch Movies Online</b>		
	Low level of online activity	122	50.6
	High level of online activity	119	49.4
11	<b>Financial Transfer of Money Online</b>		
	Low level of online activity	162	67.2
	High level of online activity	79	32.8
12	<b>Play Games Online</b>		

	Low level of online activity	180	74.7
	High level of online activity	61	25.3
13	<b>Booking Ticket</b>		
	Low level of online activity	203	84.2
	High level of online activity	38	15.8
14	<b>Overall Extent of Digital life</b> (Online Activity)		
	Low level of online activity	163	67.6
	High level of online activity	78	32.4

Food ordering online has almost become a standard norm among the youth of today. Food ordering apps have been a boon for people due to their convenience and user-friendly technology. The table denotes that the vast majority (93.8 %) of the respondents inferred a low level of activity in terms of ordering/purchasing food online, while less than one fifth (6.2%) indicated a high level about the same.

The findings from the above table concerning the purchase of gadgets online revealed that the majority (84.2 %) of the respondents stated that they do not buy any gadgets online, whereas, less than two-fifth (15.8. %) denoted a high level of online activity concerning purchase gadgets online.

The above table inferred that majority (82.6%) of the respondents do not purchase clothes online, whereas, less than two-fifth (17.4%) strongly acknowledged that they do online shopping for the purchase of garments/clothes. In terms of online learning, it was revealed that less than two-fifth (14.1%) of the respondents denoted a low level of online activity, while the majority (85.9%) inferred a higher rating based on the same.

The majority (87.1%) of the respondents stated a low level of preference concerning online prayer and worship, whereas, less than two-fifth (12.9%) inferred a higher level of inclination. A low level of budgeting and accounting online

activity was found among the majority (80.9%) of the respondents, while less than two-fifth (19.1%) inferred a high level of inference.

It further highlights that more than three fourth (76.3%) of the respondents do not interact with their parents online, while more than two-fifth (23.7%) refuted the same and inferred a higher level of parental interaction online. A low level of online interaction with friends was observed among more than two-fifth (26.5%) of the respondents, while less than three- fourth (73.5%) denoted a higher level of online participation.

One-third (34.9%) of the respondents stated that they do no listen to music online, whereas, more than one-third (65.1%) stated a higher level of online activity concerning listening to music online. More than half (50.6%) inferred a low level of activity concerning watching movies online, while a little less than half (49.4%) inferred a stronger preference about the same. A low level of online financial/money transfer was observed among more than one-third (67.2%) of the respondents, whereas, a higher level was seen among more than less than one-third (32.8%) of the respondents.

Concerning online gaming, it was observed from table that a high level of online gaming activity was seen among less than three-fourth (74.7%) of the youth, while only a little more than two-fifth (25.3%) inferred a lower rating.

It further highlights that the majority (84.2%) of the respondents do not book tickets online, while less than two-fifth (15.8 %) refuted the same and inferred a higher level of ticket booking online.

On drawing conclusive evidence from the table, it was found more than one-third (67.6%) of the respondents expressed a higher

level of online digital activity, whereas more than one-fourth (32.4%) denoted a lower level of involvement.

**Table – 2**

**Overall Social Well-being**

S. No.	Overall Social Well-being	Frequency (n:241)	Per cent
1			
	Low level of Social Well-being	82	34.0
	High level of Social Well-being	159	66.0

No one can live as an island as man is a social being and relationships with oneself and others make life more meaningful. More than a one-

third (34.0%) of the respondents had low level of social well-being while two-thirds (66.0%) had a high level of social well -being.

**Table – 3**

**Social Well-being of the Respondents Vs the Extent of Digital Life**

S. No	Variable	Correlation Value		Statistical Inference
1	Social Well-being	.141	.028	P >0.05 Significant Not
2	Extent of Digital Life	.141	.028	P >0.05 Not Significant

- Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed). network will help them to improve their level of social well-being.

There is no significant relationship between social well-being and extend of digital life. The fewer online activities a person has, the more social well-being a person can experience.

**Suggestion and Recommendations**

- To enhance the level of social well-being of college students, a more supportive

- Teachers are recommended to encourage their students to build healthy relationships.

- Parents should encourage their children to develop assertive skills.

- As students, they should nurture relationships with people who are respectful, positive, and supportive

- Teachers can instil in students to appreciate little things in life.
- College students should be trained to concentrate on the positive side of life.
- Special training can be given to find out the most passionate things in one's own life.
- Parents have to spend quality time with their children to reduce children spending time virtually.

## Conclusion

For better and for worse, digital technology is now an irreversible fact of our lives as it has profoundly changed adolescent life. Children and youth born since 1995 have grown up with internet, as an ever-present feature in their lives. Internet and the means to access it, such as tablets and smartphones, along with social media platforms and messaging apps, have become integral to the lives of youth around the world. They have transformed their education and learning, the way they make and maintain friendships, how they spend their leisure time, and their engagement with wider society.

In a digital world, our dual challenge is how to mitigate the harms while maximizing the benefits of the internet for every youngster with the click of a button. Hence along with the substantial opportunities that the digital age brings, comes a diverse range of risks and harms. What we have focussed on is not the obviously the downside of these technologies because they can also pose challenges to their health and well-being, but rather the fruitfulness of the same. Evidence suggests moderate use of digital technology can be beneficial to youngsters' mental well-being, whereas excessive use can be detrimental. Youngsters' social relationships seem to be enhanced by digital technology, especially since most of their social circle is now online.

The beneficial result is that the technologies we use will transform the way we live in the twenty-first century, making it easier to communicate, access and share knowledge. Google has all of the details we need and anything is attained by with a single click. However, the internet has a damaging effect as it distracts us from our daily lives and causes us to lose perspective on the real

world. Digital connections outnumber face-to-face interactions.

According to the findings of this research, social well-being and satisfaction, as well as online behaviours, are undoubtedly related. A high degree of social well-being is associated with a low level of online activity. Analysis of different dimensions of social well-being like social contacts, neighbourhood, and cohesion, material deprivation, social isolation, societal institutions, societal participation etc. propel the overall social well-being of the respondents. Students should be allowed to form positive partnerships, networks, and contacts. This would enable them to have a higher degree of social welfare while engaging in fewer online activities.

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