

The Impact of Digital Media Consumption on Mental Health and Well-Being Among Young Adults: Exploring Patterns of Indulgence and Coping Mechanisms

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Abstract

Digital media has become an integral component of young adults' daily lives, influencing communication, learning, entertainment, and social interaction. While digital platforms provide opportunities for connectivity and information access, concerns have emerged regarding the psychological consequences of excessive and passive engagement. The present study examined the relationship between digital media consumption patterns and mental health outcomes among young adults, with particular emphasis on anxiety, depression, stress, sleep quality, and coping strategies. A cross-sectional quantitative design was employed, and data were collected from 600 participants aged 18–25 years using a structured digital media usage questionnaire, the Depression Anxiety Stress Scales (DASS-21), coping measures, and a sleep quality assessment. Statistical analyses included reliability testing, descriptive statistics, correlation analysis, multiple regression, analysis of variance, and moderation analysis. The findings revealed that greater digital engagement was significantly associated with higher levels of anxiety, depression, and stress, as well as poorer sleep quality. Participants characterized by passive engagement patterns reported significantly higher anxiety and depression compared to active users. Adaptive coping was associated with lower psychological distress, whereas maladaptive coping was associated with poorer mental health outcomes. However, moderation analyses indicated that coping strategies did not significantly alter the relationship between digital media consumption and mental health outcomes. The findings suggest that digital media consumption is associated with poorer psychological well-being among young adults, while coping strategies exert independent effects rather than moderating effects. These results contribute to the growing literature on digital well-

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being and highlight the need for evidence-based interventions promoting healthier patterns of digital engagement among emerging adults.

Keywords: Digital Media Consumption | Mental Health | Coping Strategies | Digital Well-Being | Anxiety | Psychological Adjustment.

I. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

Digital technologies have become deeply embedded in contemporary life, transforming how individuals communicate, learn, work, and maintain social relationships. Young adults represent one of the most digitally connected populations, relying extensively on smartphones, social networking platforms, streaming services, messaging applications, and online communities for daily interaction and information exchange. While these technologies provide unprecedented opportunities for connectivity and convenience, growing concerns have emerged regarding their potential implications for psychological well-being.

The rapid expansion of digital media usage has generated considerable scholarly interest in understanding its influence on mental health. Young adulthood is a critical developmental stage characterized by identity formation, academic and career transitions, social relationship development, and increasing independence. During this period, individuals are particularly sensitive to environmental influences and psychosocial stressors. Digital environments offer opportunities for self-expression, social support, and information access; however, they also expose users to social comparison, information overload, constant connectivity, and online evaluation. These experiences may significantly affect emotional functioning and psychological adjustment.

Recent studies have reported associations between excessive digital engagement and

adverse mental health outcomes, including anxiety, depression, stress, and sleep disturbances (Keles et al., 2020; Valkenburg et al., 2022). The increasing prevalence of psychological distress among young adults has intensified the need to understand how digital media consumption contributes to emotional well-being. Consequently, examining the relationship between digital engagement and mental health has become an important area of investigation within psychology and behavioral sciences.

1.2 Digital Media Consumption and Mental Health

Digital media consumption encompasses the use of internet-enabled technologies for communication, entertainment, learning, and social interaction. Although digital technologies provide numerous benefits, research suggests that excessive or maladaptive patterns of engagement may contribute to psychological difficulties.

One explanation involves Social Comparison Theory, which proposes that individuals evaluate themselves by comparing their achievements, appearance, and experiences with those of others (Festinger, 1954). Social networking platforms often present idealized portrayals of lifestyles and accomplishments, increasing opportunities for unfavorable comparisons and feelings of inadequacy (Appel et al., 2020). Such experiences may contribute to anxiety, depressive symptoms, and reduced self-esteem.

Fear of Missing Out (FoMO) represents another mechanism linking digital engagement and psychological distress. Individuals experiencing FoMO frequently monitor social media platforms to remain informed about social events and peer

activities. This constant need for connectivity may increase anxiety and emotional dependency on digital environments (Roberts & David, 2020).

Digital engagement may also influence psychological well-being through information overload and continuous connectivity. Frequent notifications, multitasking demands, and exposure to large volumes of information may increase cognitive burden and perceived stress. Consequently, digital media consumption has become an important variable in understanding contemporary mental health challenges among young adults.

1.3 Sleep Quality and Digital Engagement

Sleep quality is an essential component of psychological well-being and has increasingly been associated with digital media use. Excessive screen exposure, particularly during evening hours, may interfere with sleep through both physiological and behavioral mechanisms. Exposure to blue light emitted by digital devices suppresses melatonin production and delays sleep onset, while engaging online content may increase cognitive arousal and prolong wakefulness (Elhai et al., 2017).

Poor sleep quality has been consistently linked to anxiety, depression, stress, and emotional dysregulation. Young adults frequently engage with digital media late into the night, making sleep disruption a particularly relevant concern. Understanding the relationship between digital engagement and sleep quality is therefore important for explaining broader mental health outcomes.

1.4 Coping Strategies and Psychological Adjustment

Coping strategies refer to the cognitive and behavioral efforts individuals employ to manage stress and challenging circumstances (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). Adaptive coping strategies such as problem-solving, positive reframing, and seeking social support are generally associated with improved psychological adjustment, whereas

maladaptive coping strategies including avoidance, denial, and self-blame are often linked to greater emotional distress (Carver, 1997).

Within digital environments, coping strategies may influence how individuals respond to social comparison, information overload, and online stressors. Although previous research suggests that coping may affect psychological well-being, findings regarding its role in the relationship between digital engagement and mental health remain inconsistent. Consequently, further investigation is required to determine whether coping functions as a direct predictor of psychological adjustment or as a moderating factor influencing digital media effects.

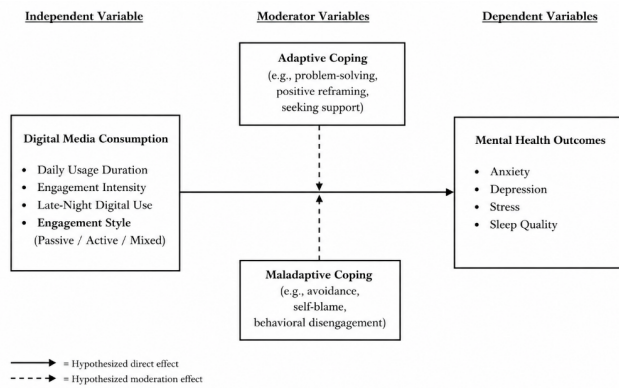
1.5 Research Gap

Despite the growing body of literature examining digital media and mental health, several gaps remain. First, many studies focus primarily on screen time while overlooking qualitative aspects of engagement, such as passive and active usage patterns. Second, relatively few investigations simultaneously examine anxiety, depression, stress, sleep quality, and coping strategies within a single conceptual framework. Third, evidence regarding the moderating role of coping strategies remains inconclusive. These gaps highlight the need for a comprehensive examination of digital media consumption and psychological well-being among young adults.

1.6 Conceptual Framework

The present study proposes that digital media consumption influences psychological well-being through patterns of engagement and usage intensity. Digital engagement, daily usage duration, and late-night digital use are expected to influence anxiety, depression, stress, and sleep quality. Coping strategies are included as important psychological variables that may contribute to emotional adjustment.

Figure 1. *Conceptual Framework of Digital Media Consumption, Coping Strategies, and Mental Health Outcomes*



Note. The framework illustrates the proposed relationships among digital media consumption, coping strategies, and psychological outcomes including anxiety, depression, stress, and sleep quality among young adults.

1.7 Research Objectives

The study was guided by the following objectives:

1. To examine the relationship between digital media consumption and mental health outcomes, including anxiety, depression, stress, and sleep quality among young adults.
2. To investigate differences in psychological outcomes across passive, active, and mixed digital engagement patterns.
3. To examine the relationship between coping strategies and psychological well-being among young adults.
4. To explore whether coping strategies moderate the relationship between digital media consumption and mental health outcomes.

1.8 Research Hypotheses

Based on the conceptual framework and reviewed literature, the following hypotheses were formulated:

H1: Digital media consumption is significantly associated with anxiety, depression, stress, and sleep quality among young adults.

H2: Young adults exhibiting passive engagement patterns report higher levels of anxiety,

depression, stress, and poorer sleep quality than those exhibiting active engagement patterns.

H3: Adaptive coping strategies moderate the relationship between digital media consumption and psychological distress such that higher adaptive coping weakens the negative effects of digital engagement.

H4: Maladaptive coping strategies moderate the relationship between digital media consumption and psychological distress such that higher maladaptive coping strengthens the negative effects of digital engagement.

1.9 Significance of the Study

The study contributes to the growing literature on digital well-being by providing empirical evidence regarding the psychological implications of digital media consumption among young adults. The findings have practical relevance for educators, mental health professionals, policymakers, and young adults themselves. By identifying digital engagement patterns associated with psychological distress and sleep disruption, the study may inform the development of digital wellness initiatives, psychoeducational interventions, and mental health promotion strategies aimed at fostering healthier technology-use behaviors.

II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

2.1 Introduction

Digital media has become an integral component of modern life, particularly among young adults who frequently engage with social networking platforms, messaging applications, streaming services, and online communities. The widespread adoption of smartphones and internet-enabled technologies has transformed communication patterns, educational practices, and social interactions. Although digital technologies offer substantial benefits, increasing attention has been directed toward their potential psychological

consequences. Researchers have examined the influence of digital media consumption on emotional well-being, identifying associations with anxiety, depression, stress, and sleep disturbances. This chapter reviews the literature related to digital media consumption, mental health outcomes, sleep quality, and coping strategies among young adults.

2.2 Digital Media Consumption and Psychological Well-Being

Digital media consumption refers to the use of internet-based technologies for communication, entertainment, information seeking, and social interaction. Young adults constitute one of the most active groups of digital media users, often spending several hours per day engaging with online platforms. The increasing integration of digital technologies into daily routines has generated considerable interest in understanding their psychological effects.

Existing research presents mixed findings regarding the relationship between digital media use and well-being. Some studies suggest that digital technologies enhance social connectedness, facilitate access to information, and provide opportunities for emotional support. Conversely, other studies indicate that excessive digital engagement may contribute to psychological distress, emotional exhaustion, and reduced well-being (Odgers & Jensen, 2020).

The complexity of digital environments makes it difficult to classify digital media as inherently beneficial or harmful. Instead, psychological outcomes appear to depend on the intensity, frequency, and nature of engagement. Consequently, researchers increasingly focus on understanding how specific patterns of digital behavior influence mental health outcomes.

2.3 Digital Media Consumption and Anxiety

Anxiety is among the most frequently investigated psychological outcomes associated with digital media use. Several studies have reported positive associations between excessive digital

engagement and anxiety symptoms among adolescents and young adults (Keles et al., 2020; Vannucci et al., 2023).

One explanation for this relationship involves continuous social evaluation within digital environments. Social media platforms expose users to peer feedback, public visibility, and opportunities for social comparison. Such experiences may increase self-consciousness and concerns regarding social acceptance. Individuals who frequently compare themselves with others online often report elevated anxiety and emotional vulnerability (Beyens et al., 2020).

Fear of Missing Out (FoMO) further contributes to anxiety by encouraging constant monitoring of social media activities. Individuals experiencing FoMO may feel compelled to remain continuously connected, leading to excessive checking behaviors and emotional dependence on digital platforms (Roberts & David, 2020). Consequently, digital engagement may function as a source of psychological strain among young adults.

2.4 Digital Media Consumption and Depression

Depression has emerged as another important outcome associated with digital media use. Research suggests that intensive engagement with social networking platforms may contribute to depressive symptoms through mechanisms such as social comparison, loneliness, and reduced life satisfaction (Appel et al., 2020).

Social Comparison Theory provides a useful explanation for these findings. Social media platforms frequently present idealized portrayals of individuals' lives, achievements, and relationships. Repeated exposure to such content may lead users to evaluate themselves negatively, resulting in dissatisfaction and depressive symptoms (Festinger, 1954).

The distinction between passive and active engagement has received increasing attention within the literature. Passive engagement, characterized by browsing and observing content without interaction, has been associated with

higher levels of depression and loneliness. In contrast, active engagement involving communication and content creation may facilitate social support and positive interaction (Verduyn et al., 2021). These findings suggest that engagement style may be an important determinant of psychological outcomes.

2.5 Digital Media Consumption, Stress, and Sleep Quality

The concept of technostress has gained prominence in research examining the psychological consequences of digital technologies. Technostress refers to stress arising from excessive reliance on technology, continuous connectivity, and information overload (Tarafdar et al., 2019). Young adults frequently encounter pressures to remain accessible, manage multiple communication channels, and respond rapidly to digital interactions. Such demands may increase cognitive burden and contribute to perceived stress.

Sleep quality represents another critical outcome associated with digital media consumption. Exposure to digital screens, particularly during evening hours, may interfere with sleep through physiological and behavioral mechanisms. Blue light emitted from digital devices suppresses melatonin production and disrupts circadian rhythms, while stimulating online content may increase cognitive arousal and delay sleep onset (Elhai et al., 2017).

Research consistently demonstrates associations between prolonged digital engagement and poorer sleep quality (Scott et al., 2019). Sleep disturbances have subsequently been linked to anxiety, depression, and emotional dysregulation, suggesting that sleep quality may represent an important pathway through which digital media affects psychological well-being.

2.6 Coping Strategies and Psychological Adjustment

Coping strategies play a significant role in determining how individuals respond to stress and

challenging situations. Lazarus and Folkman (1984) conceptualized coping as the cognitive and behavioral efforts employed to manage perceived stressors. Coping strategies are generally categorized as adaptive or maladaptive.

Adaptive coping strategies include problem-solving, planning, positive reframing, and seeking social support. These approaches are associated with resilience, emotional regulation, and improved psychological functioning. In contrast, maladaptive coping strategies such as avoidance, denial, and self-blame are often linked to greater psychological distress and poorer adjustment (Carver, 1997).

Within digital contexts, coping strategies may influence how individuals respond to online stressors, social comparison, and information overload. Previous studies have reported significant associations between adaptive coping and positive mental health outcomes. However, evidence regarding the extent to which coping alters the relationship between digital engagement and psychological well-being remains inconsistent, indicating the need for further empirical investigation.

The literature indicates that digital media consumption is associated with multiple dimensions of psychological well-being, including anxiety, depression, stress, and sleep quality. Research suggests that excessive digital engagement, passive usage patterns, and continuous connectivity may contribute to emotional distress among young adults. Sleep disruption and technostress have emerged as important mechanisms linking digital behavior and mental health outcomes. The literature further highlights the importance of coping strategies in psychological adjustment, although their precise role within digital environments remains unclear. These findings provide the theoretical foundation for examining the relationships among digital media consumption, coping strategies, and mental health outcomes in the present study.

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter describes the methodological procedures employed to examine the relationship between digital media consumption and mental health outcomes among young adults. The study adopted a quantitative approach to investigate associations between digital engagement, coping strategies, anxiety, depression, stress, and sleep quality. This chapter outlines the research design, participants, sampling strategy, instruments, data collection procedures, ethical considerations, and statistical techniques used for data analysis.

3.2 Research Design

The study employed a cross-sectional quantitative research design. This design was considered appropriate because it allows the examination of relationships among variables at a single point in time while facilitating the collection of data from a relatively large sample. The study was correlational in nature and aimed to identify associations between digital media consumption and mental health outcomes rather than establish causal relationships.

A quantitative approach was selected because it enables objective measurement of psychological constructs and supports statistical evaluation of relationships among study variables.

3.3 Participants and Sampling

The study consisted of 600 young adults aged between 18 and 25 years. Participants included undergraduate students, postgraduate students, and young professionals who regularly used digital media platforms.

A combination of convenience sampling and purposive sampling techniques was employed. Convenience sampling facilitated access to participants through educational institutions, social networking platforms, and online communities, while purposive sampling ensured

that participants met the predefined inclusion criteria.

Inclusion Criteria

Participants were required to:

- Be between 18 and 25 years of age.
- Use digital media regularly.
- Provide informed consent.
- Complete all survey items.

Exclusion Criteria

Participants were excluded if they:

- Were outside the specified age range.
- Submitted incomplete responses.
- Declined consent for participation.

The final dataset contained 600 complete responses and was considered adequate for multivariate statistical analyses.

3.4 Measures

Digital Media Consumption Questionnaire

A structured questionnaire was developed to assess digital media behavior. The instrument measured:

- Daily usage duration
- Engagement intensity
- Frequency of phone checking
- Late-night digital use
- Engagement style (active, passive, or mixed)

Higher scores indicated greater levels of digital engagement.

Depression Anxiety Stress Scales (DASS-21)

Mental health outcomes were assessed using the Depression Anxiety Stress Scales–21 (DASS-21) developed by Lovibond and Lovibond (1995). The instrument consists of three subscales measuring anxiety, depression, and stress.

Participants responded on a four-point Likert scale ranging from 0 ("Did not apply to me at all") to 3 ("Applied to me very much or most of the time"). The DASS-21 has demonstrated strong psychometric properties across diverse populations.

Brief COPE Inventory

Coping strategies were assessed using selected dimensions of the Brief COPE Inventory (Carver, 1997).

Adaptive coping dimensions included:

- Planning
- Positive reframing
- Problem-solving
- Seeking support

Maladaptive coping dimensions included:

- Avoidance
- Denial
- Self-blame
- Behavioral disengagement

Higher scores reflected greater use of the respective coping strategy.

Sleep Quality Scale

Sleep quality was measured using a structured self-report scale assessing sleep duration, sleep satisfaction, restfulness, and sleep disturbances. Higher scores indicated better perceived sleep quality.

3.5 Reliability and Validity Assessment

Internal consistency reliability was evaluated using Cronbach's alpha coefficient. All constructs demonstrated satisfactory reliability exceeding the recommended threshold of .70.

Table 3.1. *Reliability Statistics*

Construct	Cronbach's α
Digital Engagement	.805

Anxiety	.866
Depression	.885
Stress	.858
Adaptive Coping	.819
Maladaptive Coping	.792
Sleep Quality	.808

The results indicate good internal consistency across all measurement scales.

Construct validity was assessed using Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA). The Kaiser–Meyer–Olkin (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy was .951, indicating excellent suitability for factor analysis. Bartlett's Test of Sphericity was statistically significant ($p < .001$), confirming sufficient intercorrelations among variables.

Seven factors emerged and collectively explained 54.69% of the total variance, supporting the proposed measurement structure. Additional analyses of Composite Reliability (CR), Average Variance Extracted (AVE), and Heterotrait–Monotrait Ratio (HTMT) provided evidence of acceptable convergent and discriminant validity.

3.6 Assessment of Common Method Bias

Since all study variables were collected through a single self-report questionnaire, the possibility of common method bias (CMB) was assessed. Harman's Single-Factor Test was conducted by loading all measurement items into an unrotated exploratory factor analysis to determine whether a single factor accounted for the majority of variance.

The analysis revealed that the first unrotated factor explained 28.4% of the total variance, which is substantially below the commonly accepted threshold of 50% (Podsakoff et al., 2003). The emergence of multiple factors with eigenvalues greater than one further indicated that no single factor dominated the covariance structure of the data.

These findings suggest that common method bias was not a significant concern in the present study

and that the observed relationships among digital media consumption, coping strategies, and mental health outcomes are unlikely to be attributable to measurement method effects.

Table 3.2. *Assessment of Common Method Bias Using Harman's Single-Factor Test*

Indicator	Value
Total Factors Extracted	7
First Factor Variance Explained	28.4%
Threshold	< 50%
Common Method Bias	Not Evident

3.7 Data Collection Procedure

Data were collected using an online survey platform. The questionnaire was distributed through educational networks, social media platforms, and online communication channels targeting young adults.

Participants received information regarding the purpose of the study and were required to provide informed consent before participation. Responses were collected anonymously to protect participant confidentiality.

The data collection process involved:

1. Instrument development and review.
2. Online questionnaire distribution.
3. Participant consent.
4. Survey completion.
5. Data screening and cleaning.
6. Statistical analysis.

Only fully completed responses were included in the final dataset.

3.8 Ethical Considerations

The study adhered to established ethical principles for research involving human participants.

Participation was voluntary, and respondents were informed about the purpose and nature of the study prior to participation. Confidentiality and anonymity were maintained throughout the

research process. No personally identifiable information was collected, and participants were informed of their right to withdraw at any stage without penalty.

Data were used solely for academic and research purposes.

3.9 Statistical Analysis

Data were analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS).

The following analytical procedures were employed:

Descriptive Statistics

Means, standard deviations, frequencies, and percentages were calculated to summarize participant characteristics and study variables.

Reliability Analysis

Cronbach's alpha coefficients were computed to evaluate internal consistency reliability.

Correlation Analysis

Pearson correlation coefficients were calculated to examine relationships among digital media consumption, coping strategies, and mental health outcomes.

Multiple Regression Analysis

Multiple regression analyses were conducted to determine whether digital engagement variables predicted anxiety, depression, stress, and sleep quality.

Analysis of Variance (ANOVA)

One-way ANOVA was performed to compare psychological outcomes across passive, active, and mixed engagement groups.

Moderation Analysis

PROCESS-style moderation analyses were conducted to examine whether adaptive and maladaptive coping strategies influenced the relationship between digital media consumption and mental health outcomes.

Statistical significance was evaluated at the .05 level.

This chapter described the methodological framework adopted to investigate the relationship between digital media consumption and psychological well-being among young adults. A cross-sectional quantitative design was implemented using data collected from 600 participants. Reliable and valid instruments were employed to assess digital engagement, coping strategies, anxiety, depression, stress, and sleep quality. Appropriate statistical procedures were utilized to test the proposed hypotheses and address the study objectives. The next chapter presents the results of the statistical analyses.

IV. RESULTS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the findings of the statistical analyses conducted to examine the relationship between digital media consumption and mental health outcomes among young adults. The analyses included reliability assessment, descriptive statistics, correlation analysis, multiple regression analysis, analysis of variance (ANOVA), and moderation analysis. Results are presented in relation to the study objectives and hypotheses.

Table 4.1. *Demographic Profile of Participants (N = 600)*

Variable	Category	Frequency (n)	Percent age (%)
Gender	Male	278	46.3
	Female	314	52.3
	Prefer Not to Say	8	1.4

Age Group (Years)	18–20	212	35.3
	21–23	247	41.2
	24–25	141	23.5
Educational Status	Undergraduate	338	56.3
	Postgraduate	187	31.2
	Young Professionals	75	12.5
Occupational Status	Student	467	77.8
	Employed	106	17.7
	Self-Employed/Freelance	27	4.5
Daily Digital Media Usage	Less than 2 Hours	54	9.0
	2–4 Hours	138	23.0
	4–6 Hours	198	33.0
	6–8 Hours	129	21.5
	More than 8 Hours	81	13.5
Primary Digital Engagement Style	Active User	198	33.0
	Passive User	174	29.0
	Mixed User	228	38.0
Late-Night Digital Use	Rarely	98	16.3
	Occasionally	192	32.0
	Frequently	210	35.0
	Very Frequently	100	16.7

Interpretation

The sample consisted of 600 young adults aged between 18 and 25 years. Female participants constituted the largest proportion of the sample (52.3%), followed by males (46.3%). Participants

aged 21–23 years represented the largest age category (41.2%). Undergraduate students formed the majority of respondents (56.3%), while 31.2% were postgraduate students and 12.5% were young professionals. Most participants were students (77.8%), reflecting the study's focus on young adult populations.

Regarding digital media behavior, approximately one-third of participants (33.0%) reported using digital media for 4–6 hours daily, while 35.0% indicated frequent late-night digital engagement. Mixed engagement users constituted the largest group (38.0%), followed by active users (33.0%) and passive users (29.0%). These characteristics suggest a digitally engaged sample suitable for examining relationships between digital media consumption and mental health outcomes.

4.2 Preliminary Analysis

Prior to hypothesis testing, the dataset was screened for completeness, reliability, and suitability for multivariate analysis. The final dataset consisted of 600 complete responses with no missing values.

Reliability analysis demonstrated satisfactory internal consistency across all constructs. Cronbach's alpha coefficients ranged from .792 to .885, indicating acceptable to good reliability.

Table 4.2. *Reliability Statistics*

Construct	Cronbach's α
Digital Engagement	.805
Anxiety	.866
Depression	.885
Stress	.858
Adaptive Coping	.819
Maladaptive Coping	.792
Sleep Quality	.808

The reliability coefficients exceeded the recommended threshold of .70, supporting the internal consistency of the measurement scales.

Exploratory Factor Analysis further supported construct validity. The Kaiser–Meyer–Olkin (KMO) value of .951 and a significant Bartlett's Test of Sphericity ($p < .001$) indicated excellent suitability for factor analysis. Seven factors emerged, collectively explaining 54.69% of the total variance, supporting the proposed measurement framework.

4.3 Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive statistics were calculated to summarize participant responses across the major study variables.

Table 4.3. *Descriptive Statistics of Study Variables*

Variable	Mean	SD
Digital Engagement	17.50	5.11
Anxiety	16.47	4.97
Depression	16.42	5.19
Stress	16.48	4.87
Adaptive Coping	14.12	4.19
Maladaptive Coping	14.08	4.03
Sleep Quality	14.38	4.47

Participants demonstrated moderate levels of digital engagement and moderate levels of psychological distress. Anxiety, depression, and stress scores exhibited comparable mean values, indicating a relatively consistent pattern of emotional experiences within the sample.

4.4 Correlation Analysis

Pearson correlation analysis was conducted to examine the relationships among digital media consumption variables, coping strategies, and mental health outcomes.

Table 4.4. *Selected Correlations Among Study Variables*

Variable	Anxiety	Depression	Stress	Sleep Quality

Digital Engagement	.40**	.42**	.34* *	-.35**
Daily Usage Hours	.27**	.29**	.26* *	-.28**
Adaptive Coping	-.36**	-.41**	-.39* *	.34**
Maladaptive Coping	.36**	.39**	.39* *	-.36**

Note. $p < .01^{**}$.

The results revealed significant positive relationships between digital engagement and psychological distress indicators. Higher digital engagement was associated with increased anxiety, depression, and stress, while demonstrating a negative association with sleep quality.

Adaptive coping exhibited negative relationships with anxiety, depression, and stress and a positive relationship with sleep quality. Conversely, maladaptive coping was positively associated with psychological distress and negatively associated with sleep quality.

These findings suggest that both digital engagement and coping strategies represent important correlates of psychological well-being among young adults.

4.5 Multiple Regression Analysis

Multiple regression analyses were conducted to determine whether digital media variables significantly predicted anxiety, depression, stress, and sleep quality.

Table 4.5. Regression Model Summary

Outcome Variable	R ²	F	p
Anxiety	.168	39.97	< .001
Depression	.181	43.84	< .001
Stress	.127	28.96	< .001
Sleep Quality	.131	30.06	< .001

The regression models were statistically significant across all outcome variables, indicating that digital media variables explained meaningful proportions of variance in psychological well-being.

Digital engagement emerged as the strongest predictor in all four models.

Table 4.6. Significant Predictors Across Regression Models

Outcome	Predictor	β	p
Anxiety	Digital Engagement	.357	< .001
Depression	Digital Engagement	.364	< .001
Stress	Digital Engagement	.260	< .001
Sleep Quality	Digital Engagement	-.271	< .001

The findings indicate that higher digital engagement was associated with increased anxiety, depression, and stress, while simultaneously predicting poorer sleep quality.

These results provide support for Hypothesis 1, which proposed a significant relationship between digital media consumption and mental health outcomes.

4.6 Differences Across Engagement Types

To examine whether psychological outcomes differed according to engagement style, one-way ANOVA was conducted comparing passive, active, and mixed users.

Table 4.7. ANOVA Results by Engagement Type

Outcome	F	p
Anxiety	3.78	.023
Depression	5.18	.006
Stress	2.02	.134
Sleep Quality	2.33	.098

Table 4.8. Effect Sizes for Significant ANOVA Results

Outcome	Partial η^2	Interpretation
Anxiety	.021	Small
Depression	.029	Small-to-Moderate

Significant differences emerged for anxiety and depression. Participants classified as passive users reported higher anxiety and depression scores compared with active users. Although passive users also reported greater stress and poorer sleep quality, these differences did not reach statistical significance.

Post hoc analyses indicated that passive engagement was associated with significantly poorer psychological outcomes than active engagement, particularly for anxiety and depression.

These findings partially support Hypothesis 2 and suggest that engagement quality may be an important determinant of psychological well-being.

4.7 Moderation Analysis

Moderation analyses were conducted to examine whether adaptive and maladaptive coping strategies altered the relationship between digital media consumption and mental health outcomes.

Table 4.9. Moderation Analysis Summary

Outcome	Moderator	Interaction p-value	Decision
Anxiety	Adaptive Coping	.378	Not Supported
Anxiety	Maladaptive Coping	.920	Not Supported
Depression	Adaptive Coping	.397	Not Supported
Depression	Maladaptive Coping	.422	Not Supported

Stress	Adaptive Coping	.810	Not Supported
Stress	Maladaptive Coping	.668	Not Supported
Sleep Quality	Adaptive Coping	.356	Not Supported
Sleep Quality	Maladaptive Coping	.149	Not Supported

Contrary to expectations, none of the interaction effects reached statistical significance. The change in explained variance attributable to interaction terms was negligible, indicating that coping strategies did not significantly alter the relationship between digital media consumption and mental health outcomes.

These findings suggest that coping strategies function as independent psychological factors rather than moderators of digital media effects.

Consequently:

- Hypothesis 3 was not supported.
- Hypothesis 4 was not supported.

4.8 Hypothesis Testing Summary

Table 4.10. Summary of Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis	Decision
H1: Digital media consumption is significantly associated with anxiety, depression, stress, and sleep quality among young adults	Supported
H2: Young adults exhibiting passive engagement patterns report higher levels of anxiety, depression, stress, and poorer sleep quality than those exhibiting active engagement patterns.	Partially Supported
H3: Adaptive coping strategies moderate the relationship between digital media	Not Supported

consumption and psychological distress such that higher adaptive coping weakens the negative effects of digital engagement	
H4: Maladaptive coping strategies moderate the relationship between digital media consumption and psychological distress such that higher maladaptive coping strengthens the negative effects of digital engagement	Not Supported

The results indicate that digital engagement plays a significant role in explaining psychological well-being among young adults. However, coping strategies did not function as moderators as originally hypothesized.

The findings indicate that digital media consumption is significantly associated with anxiety, depression, stress, and sleep quality among young adults. Digital engagement emerged as the strongest predictor across all outcome variables, while passive engagement patterns were associated with greater psychological distress than active engagement.

Although adaptive and maladaptive coping strategies demonstrated significant direct relationships with mental health outcomes, moderation analyses did not support their role as moderators. Instead, coping strategies exerted independent effects on psychological well-being.

Overall, the results suggest that digital media consumption is associated with poorer mental health outcomes, while coping strategies function as important but independent psychological correlates of adjustment.

anxiety, depression, stress, sleep quality, and coping strategies. The findings revealed that digital engagement was significantly associated with psychological distress and poorer sleep quality. Furthermore, passive engagement patterns were linked to higher anxiety and depression compared with active engagement. However, contrary to expectations, coping strategies did not significantly moderate the relationship between digital media consumption and mental health outcomes.

The discussion interprets these findings in relation to existing literature and theoretical perspectives.

5.2 Digital Media Consumption and Mental Health

The results demonstrated significant positive relationships between digital engagement and anxiety, depression, and stress, while exhibiting a negative relationship with sleep quality. These findings are consistent with previous studies reporting that excessive digital media use may contribute to emotional distress through social comparison, information overload, and continuous connectivity (Keles et al., 2020; Valkenburg et al., 2022).

The strongest relationships emerged between digital engagement and depression, followed closely by anxiety. This finding supports Social Comparison Theory, which suggests that repeated exposure to idealized online content may encourage unfavorable self-evaluations and emotional vulnerability (Festinger, 1954). Young adults frequently encounter carefully curated portrayals of success, attractiveness, and social acceptance, which may contribute to dissatisfaction and reduced psychological well-being.

The findings also align with contemporary research suggesting that excessive digital engagement may increase cognitive load and emotional exhaustion (Montag & Reuter, 2017). Frequent notifications, multitasking, and constant online availability may contribute to perceived stress and psychological strain.

V. DISCUSSION

5.1 Introduction

The present study examined the relationship between digital media consumption and mental health outcomes among young adults, focusing on

Importantly, the observed effect sizes were small to moderate, indicating that digital media consumption represents one of several factors influencing mental health. This finding supports recent perspectives emphasizing that technology use should be viewed as a contributing factor rather than a sole determinant of psychological well-being (Odgers & Jensen, 2020).

Contrasting Evidence from Previous Research

Although the present findings support studies linking digital engagement with poorer mental health outcomes, some researchers have reported weaker or negligible effects. For example, Coyne et al. (2020) found limited longitudinal evidence supporting substantial adverse effects of social media use on psychological well-being. Similarly, Orben and Przybylski (2019) reported that technology use explained only a small proportion of variance in adolescent well-being. These contrasting findings suggest that digital media effects may depend on individual characteristics, contextual factors, patterns of engagement, and broader psychosocial environments rather than usage alone. Consequently, the present findings should be interpreted within a multifactorial framework in which digital media represents one of several influences on psychological adjustment among young adults.

5.3 Digital Engagement and Sleep Quality

The study found that greater digital engagement was associated with poorer sleep quality. This finding is consistent with previous research demonstrating that excessive screen exposure may disrupt sleep through physiological and behavioral mechanisms (Scott et al., 2019).

Digital devices emit blue light that suppresses melatonin production and delays sleep onset. Additionally, engaging online content may increase cognitive arousal and interfere with healthy sleep routines. Poor sleep quality is itself associated with emotional dysregulation, anxiety, and depression, suggesting that sleep may represent an important pathway linking digital engagement and mental health.

The findings reinforce growing concerns regarding late-evening digital activity among young adults and highlight the importance of sleep hygiene in digital wellness interventions.

5.4 Passive Versus Active Engagement

One of the most notable findings involved differences across engagement styles. Passive users reported significantly higher anxiety and depression than active users. These findings are consistent with studies suggesting that passive engagement encourages social comparison and feelings of exclusion, whereas active engagement facilitates social interaction and support (Verduyn et al., 2021).

Passive engagement often involves browsing and observing others' activities without meaningful participation. Such behavior may increase exposure to idealized content while reducing opportunities for reciprocal communication. In contrast, active users engage in content creation, communication, and relationship maintenance, which may enhance perceived social support and connectedness.

These findings suggest that the quality of digital engagement may be more important than the quantity of use alone. Consequently, future research and intervention programs should focus not only on reducing screen time but also on promoting healthier forms of online interaction.

5.5 Role of Coping Strategies

Adaptive coping was associated with lower anxiety, depression, and stress and with better sleep quality, whereas maladaptive coping demonstrated the opposite pattern. These findings support extensive psychological literature emphasizing the importance of coping processes in emotional adjustment (Carver, 1997).

However, moderation analyses indicated that coping strategies did not significantly alter the relationship between digital media consumption and psychological outcomes. The interaction effects were consistently non-significant and

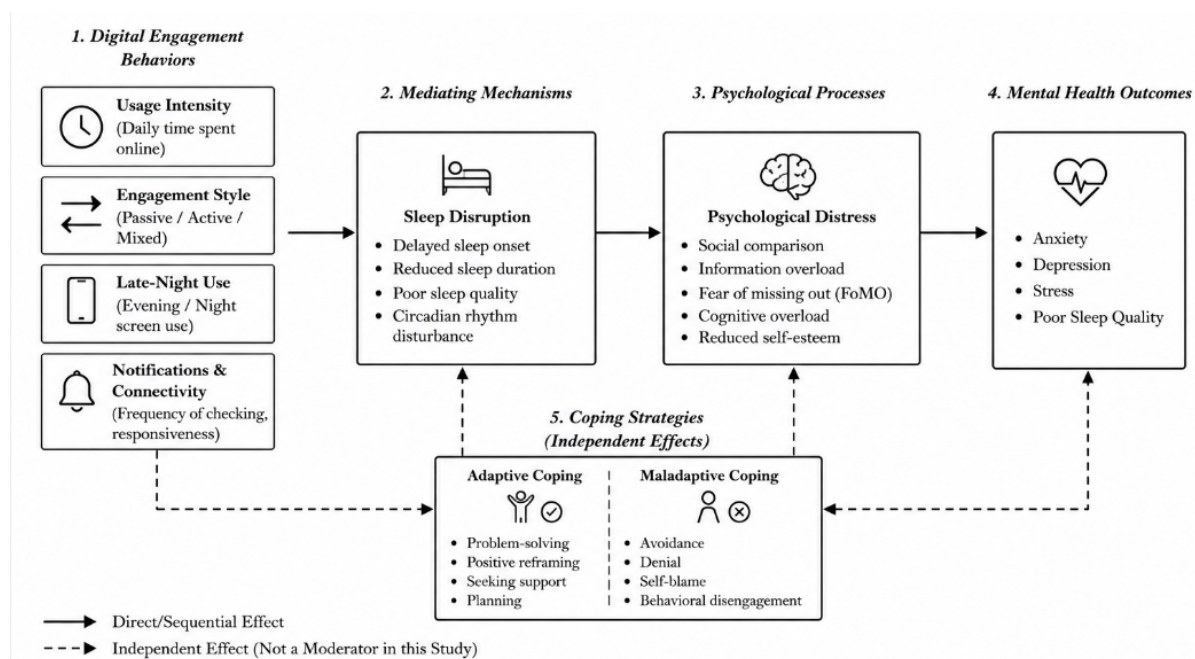
contributed negligible additional explanatory power.

This finding suggests that coping strategies function as independent predictors of psychological well-being rather than mechanisms that strengthen or weaken the effects of digital engagement. Individuals with stronger adaptive coping skills reported better mental health overall, but these coping skills did not substantially change the relationship between digital media consumption and distress.

The findings suggest that digital engagement influences mental health through a combination of behavioral and psychosocial pathways. Based on the empirical results and the theoretical

foundations of the study, a Digital Engagement Vulnerability Framework (DEVF) is proposed to illustrate the relationships among digital engagement behaviors, psychological processes, and mental health outcomes. The framework emphasizes that digital engagement contributes to psychological distress through mechanisms such as social comparison, information overload, constant connectivity, and sleep disruption. Importantly, coping strategies appear to exert independent effects on psychological well-being rather than functioning as moderators of digital media effects. Figure 2 presents the proposed DEVF model derived from the study findings.

Figure 2. *Digital Engagement Vulnerability Framework (DEVF)*



Note. The Digital Engagement Vulnerability Framework (DEVF) illustrates how digital engagement behaviors (usage intensity, engagement style, late-night use, and connectivity demands) contribute to mental health outcomes through psychosocial mechanisms including social comparison, information overload, fear of missing out (FoMO), cognitive overload, and sleep disruption. Consistent with the study findings, adaptive and maladaptive coping strategies exert independent influences on psychological well-

being but do not significantly moderate the relationship between digital media consumption and mental health outcomes. Solid arrows represent direct or sequential pathways, whereas dashed arrows indicate independent effects identified through empirical analysis.

As shown in Figure 2, the Digital Engagement Vulnerability Framework (DEVF) proposes that psychological distress emerges through interconnected behavioral and psychosocial pathways. The framework highlights sleep disruption, social comparison, FoMO, and

cognitive overload as mechanisms through which digital engagement may influence mental health outcomes. Consistent with the empirical findings, coping strategies appear to function as independent contributors to psychological adjustment rather than moderators of digital media effects. The framework offers a parsimonious representation of digital vulnerability among young adults and provides a foundation for future theoretical development.

5.6 Theoretical and Research Implications

The findings provide partial support for the theoretical framework guiding the study. The results support Social Comparison Theory and Behavioral Reinforcement perspectives by demonstrating significant associations between digital engagement and psychological distress.

The findings also extend the Transactional Model of Stress and Coping by indicating that coping strategies influence mental health directly rather than through moderation effects. This suggests that coping remains an important psychological resource but may not always function as a buffering mechanism in digital contexts.

Overall, the study contributes to the growing literature on digital well-being by emphasizing the importance of engagement patterns and by clarifying the role of coping strategies in psychological adjustment.

The findings indicate that digital media consumption is significantly associated with anxiety, depression, stress, and sleep quality among young adults. Passive engagement appears to be particularly associated with psychological distress. Although coping strategies were strongly related to mental health outcomes, they did not moderate the relationship between digital media consumption and psychological well-being. These findings highlight the importance of balanced and purposeful digital engagement.

VI. FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

6.1 Practical Implications

The findings have important implications for educational institutions, mental health professionals, families, and policymakers.

Educational institutions may benefit from incorporating digital wellness programs that promote healthy technology-use behaviors, sleep hygiene, and responsible social media engagement. Counseling services should consider assessing digital media habits when addressing anxiety, depression, and stress among students.

Mental health professionals can integrate discussions regarding digital behavior into assessment and intervention processes. Particular attention should be given to passive social media use, social comparison experiences, and sleep-related digital habits.

Young adults may benefit from monitoring screen time, reducing passive engagement, prioritizing meaningful online interactions, and developing adaptive coping skills such as problem-solving, positive reframing, and support seeking.

Policymakers and public health practitioners may consider promoting digital literacy and mental health awareness initiatives aimed at encouraging balanced technology use and psychological well-being.

6.2 Limitations

Several limitations should be acknowledged.

First, the cross-sectional design prevents causal conclusions regarding the relationships among variables. Second, all measures relied on self-report responses, which may be influenced by recall and social desirability biases. Third, convenience sampling limits the generalizability of the findings. Fourth, digital engagement was measured through self-reported behavior rather than objective usage data. Finally, other potentially relevant variables such as personality traits, social support, and pre-existing mental health conditions were not examined. Additionally, the study focused on a non-clinical young adult population; therefore, findings may

not generalize to clinical populations experiencing diagnosed psychological disorders.

6.3 Future Research Directions

Future studies should employ longitudinal designs to better understand causal relationships between digital engagement and psychological well-being. The inclusion of objective smartphone usage metrics would improve measurement accuracy.

Researchers may also investigate additional psychological variables such as resilience, emotional intelligence, loneliness, self-esteem, and social support. Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) and longitudinal mediation analyses may provide deeper insights into the mechanisms linking digital media consumption and mental health outcomes.

Cross-cultural investigations involving diverse populations would further enhance understanding of digital well-being in different social and cultural contexts.

The study offers practical recommendations for promoting healthier digital engagement while acknowledging several methodological limitations. Future research employing advanced designs and objective measurement approaches may further strengthen understanding of the psychological implications of digital media consumption.

VII. CONCLUSION

The present study examined the relationship between digital media consumption and mental health outcomes among young adults. Using data collected from 600 participants, the study investigated associations among digital engagement, anxiety, depression, stress, sleep quality, and coping strategies.

The findings revealed that digital media consumption was significantly associated with higher anxiety, depression, and stress and with poorer sleep quality. Digital engagement emerged

as the strongest predictor across all psychological outcomes. Additionally, passive engagement patterns were associated with significantly higher anxiety and depression compared with active engagement patterns, highlighting the importance of engagement quality.

Adaptive coping strategies were associated with better psychological well-being, whereas maladaptive coping strategies were associated with poorer outcomes. However, contrary to theoretical expectations, coping strategies did not significantly moderate the relationship between digital media consumption and mental health outcomes. Instead, coping exerted independent effects on psychological adjustment.

Overall, the findings support the conclusion that digital media consumption is associated with poorer mental health outcomes among young adults, while coping strategies function as important but independent psychological factors. The study contributes to the growing field of digital psychology by emphasizing the importance of engagement style, sleep quality, and coping processes in understanding digital well-being.

As digital technologies continue to shape modern life, developing evidence-based approaches that encourage balanced, mindful, and purposeful digital engagement will remain essential for promoting psychological health among young adults.

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