DIGITAL MINIMALISM AND PERCEIVED STRESS AMONG EMERGING ADULTS

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Abstract

One tactic to help people make the most of technology and avoid becoming overwhelmed by it is digital minimalism. Your subjective assessment of the degree of stress in your life is known as perceived stress. The purpose of the study is to investigate the connection between emerging adults' perceived stress and digital minimalism. A distinct developmental stage, emerging adulthood typically lasts between the ages of 18 and 29. The study used the survey method. 112 young adults from Karaikudi in the Sivaganga district make up the sample size. A straightforward random sampling method was used to gather the samples. The findings indicate a strong correlation between felt stress and digital simplicity. Although both digital minimalism and felt stress were common among young individuals, their responses were often moderate.

Keywords: Digital minimalism, perceived stress, emerging adults, quantitative study.

Introduction

Digital minimalism is an emerging approach to technology use that encourages people to be more intentional about how they engage with digital tools. Instead of rejecting technology outright, digital minimalism invites individuals to step back and ask which digital activities genuinely enrich their lives. This perspective has become especially relevant as smartphones, social media and constant online connectivity have become woven into daily routines. Many people find themselves checking notifications automatically, scrolling without intention or feeling mentally overwhelmed by the sheer volume of digital information competing for their attention. Digital minimalism is about reclaiming a sense of control. Modern digital platforms

are designed to be engaging using features like endless feeds, push notifications and personalized recommendations. While these tools can be convenient, they often lead to habits that fragment attention and reduce the ability to focus deeply. Over time, this can contribute to stress, decreased productivity, and a feeling of being constantly "plugged in." Digital minimalism responds to these challenges by encouraging mindful use of technology, helping individuals separate what is meaningful from what is merely distracting.

Perceived stress refers to the way individuals interpret and respond to events that they view as threatening, overwhelming or beyond their ability to manage. Rather than focusing on the objective nature of a situation, perceived stress emphasizes a person's subjective experience. Two people may encounter the same challenge, yet experience very different levels of stress depending on their coping resources, past experiences and personal beliefs about their ability to handle difficulty. Everyday responsibilities, academic pressures, work demands or interpersonal conflicts can all contribute to a sense of stress, but a person's perception plays a key role in shaping their emotional and physiological reactions. When people believe they lack control or feel unprepared to meet life's demands, stress tends to feel more intense and more difficult to manage. Research shows that high levels of perceived stress can influence both mental and physical well-being. Individuals experiencing elevated perceived stress often report symptoms such as anxiety, irritability, sleep disturbances and difficulties concentrating. Understanding perceived stress helps researchers and practitioners design interventions that promote healthier coping strategies, emotional regulation, and resilience. By recognizing how people interpret daily challenges, it becomes possible to support them in managing stress more effectively and improving their overall well-being.

Review of literature

Saheb Kumar and Dr. Lok Nath (2024) conducted a study on Digital Minimalism: Minimising the Ill Effects of Excessive Use of Digital Technologies. The researchers adopted a descriptive and analytical design to explore ways to minimise the ill effects of digitalisation. Methodology were a Survey method and secondary data analysis (books, research articles, reports, and online sources) data were collected using Google from (online survey) administered to a sample of 103 using Convenience sampling. Findings of the research revealed that Digital technology is an integral part of our lives. However, many users claim that excessive use has negatively affected their overall well-being. Digital Minimalism offers users the ability to use digital devices intentionally instead of mindlessly in order to increase their quality of life and productivity.

Milica Schraggeov and Daniel Bisaha (2025) conducted a study on the effect of digital detox through digital minimalism using the Minimalist Phone app on the behaviour of young users and their emotional experiences to evaluate the effectiveness of a digital detox Researcher adopted a pretest–post-test experimental design with control group. Methodology was a 14-day digital detox using the Minimalist Phone app reduced visual cues and habitual smartphone use. Pre- and post-intervention questionnaires and screen-time data measured changes.

Administered to a sample of 57 Participants. 29 in the Experimental group and 28 in the Control group. Findings of this study revealed that through utilization of the Minimalist Phone application, smartphone users reduced their frequency of smartphone usage and experienced lower levels of daily screen time compared to the control group; however, there was no statistically significant alteration to the affective states of the individuals in either group post study.

Sahithya et. al., (2025) conducted on Stressful life events, personality dysfunction and perceived stress: pathways to psychological well-being among young adult women in India to investigate SLEs' impact on psychological well-being. The Research Design used in this study was a Cross-sectional design. Methodology was a Cross-sectional Survey. The sample size was 190 Indian women aged 18-24 systematic random sampling technique was used in this study. The findings revealed that stressful life events are associated with higher levels of perceived stress and lower levels of well-being, whereas personality dysfunction has an intermediate effect between these two variables

Saurav Basu et. al., (2019) conducted on Perceived Stress and its Epidemiological and Behavioural Correlates in an Urban Area of Delhi, India: A Community-Based Cross-Sectional Study. To assess levels of perceived stress and its correlates among adults in an urban area of Delhi. The research design used in the study was a community-based cross-sectional study. The methodology was systematic household sampling. The sample was 480 adults (243 men, 237 women), aged 25–65 years. Community-based sampling technique was used; findings revealed that the highest levels of stress were reported by respondents aged 35 to 50 years. There was a statistically significant association ($p<0.001$) between being from a low socioeconomic background and having a white-collar job, and experiencing higher levels of stress.

Sekhar et. al., (2024) conducted on Perceived Stress and Depression Among Oral Cancer Patients – A Hospital-Based Cross-Sectional Study to assess the levels of perceived stress and depression among oral cancer patients and identify associated socio-demographic factors. The research design was a hospital-based cross-sectional study. Methodology used in this study was descriptive, and an inferential sampling technique was 126 convenience sampling technique was used in this study. Findings revealed that the average age of participants was 53 years (with a standard deviation of +/- 4.5) and that female participants had higher levels of depression than male participants.

Cobb et. al., (2024) conducted on Lifetime Stressor Exposure and Health in Autistic vs. Non-Autistic Adults Research Design used in this study were a Comparative cross-sectional study. Sampling Techniques were Convenience sampling. methodology were Used the Stress and Adversity Inventory to assess lifetime stress and conduct a moderated mediation analysis. The sample Size were 127 autistic and 104 non-autistic adults. Findings of this study revealed that Autistic adults had greater levels of stress than individuals without autism and the amount of

perceived stress was used to explain the outcomes related to their overall health. Loneliness exacerbated the effects of perceived stress on mental health.

Yilmaz et. al., (2022) conducted research on The Relationship Between Nomophobia, Emotional Intelligence, Interpersonal Problem-Solving, Perceived Stress, and Self-esteem Among Undergraduate Students Research Method was Path analysis was used to examine structural relationships among variables. Research Design were a Quantitative cross-sectional study. Convenience sampling was used in this study Sample Size was 543 students. The findings of this study revealed that Higher emotional intelligence improved problem-solving skills and lowered perceived stress, while better problem-solving skills reduced nomophobia.

Nedjar Ilyes Nadir (2020) conducted an investigation on the Necessity of Applying Digital Minimalism in Reducing Social Media Distraction in Online Education to examine whether digital minimalism can reduce social media distraction during online learning. The Research Method was an Online questionnaire; Research Design was a Case study. The Sample Size of this study was ten master two students of Language and Communication at Abdel Hamid Ibn Badis University's English department. The Sampling Technique was Convenience sampling. Findings revealed that Most students were distracted by social media and unaware of digital minimalism; 90% agreed it could reduce online study distractions.

Need for the study

Digital minimalism can cut down on how often we are on screens and contributes to decreased digital overuse. However, there aren't any studies that have looked at the connection between digital minimalism and stress levels in the Indian youth population (those who often experience high digital use) [Kumar and Nath, 2024] [Schraggeov and Bisaha, 2025]. Stress can result from life events, personality type, and fear of missing out on the latest technology; but digital minimalism is not usually considered as one way to combat stress [Elias et al., 2025] [Yilmaz et al., 2022]. Therefore, this research explores ways that digital minimalism can help reduce feelings of stress among Indian youth through straightforward, culturally relevant approaches for the enhancement of their health and welfare.

Objectives of the Study
- To assess the level of Digital minimalism among emerging adult.
- To assess the level of perceived stress among emerging adult.
- To identify the relationship between digital minimalism and perceived stress among emerging adult.

Hypotheses of the Study
- There is no significant difference in the level of digital minimalism among emerging adult.
- There is no significant difference in the level of perceived stress among emerging adult.

- There is no significant relationship between digital minimalism and perceived stress among emerging adult.

Methodology

The research employed a descriptive correlational research design. The population of the study was composed of 112 young adults aged 18 to 25 years from Karaikudi city in Sivaganga district. A simple random sampling method was used to provide every eligible participant with an equal opportunity to take part in the study, which in turn reduced sampling bias. Google Forms were set up as a data collection tool, which allowed for random participation and streamlined data gathering. The sample size that was selected was seen as sufficient for descriptive and correlational analyses that were intended to uncover the link between digital minimalism and stress perceived by young people.

Tools

Short Version of the Smartphone Addiction Scale (SAS-SV).

The Smartphone Addiction Scale – Short Version was developed by Kwon and colleagues in 2013 to estimate the probability of smartphone addiction. The ten items in the short version are rated using a 6-point Likert scale (from strongly disagree to strongly agree). The scale has achieved excellent internal consistency and high reliability with reported Cronbach's alpha values exceeding 0.85. Due to the strong correlation of scores with excessive smartphone usage, disruptions in daily life, withdrawal symptoms, and difficulty concentrating, the SAS-SV shows high construct and criterion validity.

Perceived Stress Scale (PSS)

The Perceived Stress Scale (PSS), a well-accepted tool, is used in this research and was firstly created by Cohen, Kamarck, and Mermelstein in 1983. The scale has 10 items that assess how much people consider the events in their life as stressful. The responses are recorded using a 5-point Likert scale starting from "never" and going up to "very often." The PSS has proven to be highly reliable, with the reported Cronbach's alpha values being around 0.78, which reflects good internal consistency. Besides, the scale has also proven to be valid and has been used in both clinical and non-clinical settings to measure perceived stress.

Result and Discussion

For the purpose of analysis, the term dtotal refers to the total score obtained on the Digital Minimalism scale by summing the responses across all items of the scale. Similarly, stotal denotes the total score obtained on the Perceived Stress Scale (PSS) by summing responses across all its items. These total scores were used for descriptive, inferential and correlational analyses in the present study.

TABLE 1: Descriptive Statistics – Mean, Median, Mode, SD, Skewness & Kurtosis of digital minimalism and perceived stress among emerging adult

Variables	No of samples	Mean	Median	Mode	SD	Skewness	Kurtoisis
Digital minimalism	112	34.4	34	35	9.58	0.0854	-0.0634
Perceived stress	112	19.7	20	21	4.25	0.0425	0.543

According to table 1, all 112 participants had complete data for both dtotal and stotal (i.e., there were no missing values). The distribution of both was very similar, being approximately symmetric. The average score for dtotal was moderate (34.40) while the average for stotal was lower and had less variability (19.70). All three measures of central tendency (i.e., mean, median, and mode) were close together in value with respect to each of these variables, indicating minimal skewness. The skewness coefficient (0.09 for dtotal, 0.04 for stotal) and kurtosis (-0.08 and -0.53) were within the range of the recommended cut offs for normality, while the results from the Shapiro–Wilk tests ($W \approx .99$ for dtotal; $W \approx .98$ for stotal; $ps > .05$) did not indicate that there were significant deviations from a normal distribution for either variable thereby supporting the application of parametric analyses for each of these two variables.

TABLE 2 shows the data on the level of digital minimalism and perceived stress in emerging adult

Variables	No of samples	High	Moderate	Low
Digital minimalism	112	44	26-43	25
Perceived stress	112	24	16-23	15

The levels were calculated using Mean SD of digital minimalism and perceived stress level. In digital minimalism the participants who scored 44 and above denote a high level of digital minimalism. Perceived stress level the participants who scored 24 and above denote a high level of Perceived stress level.

In digital minimalism, the participants who scored 25 and below denotes a low level of digital minimalism. In perceived stress, the participants who scored 15 and below denotes a low level of Perceived stress level.

In digital minimalism, the participants who scored between 26 to 43 denote a moderate level of digital minimalism. In Perceived stress level, the participants who scored between 16 to 23 denote a moderate level of Perceived stress level.

According to Table 2, in digital minimalism, 21 participants fall under the high level of digital minimalism, 74 participants fall under the moderate level and 17 participants falls under the low level. Hence the stated hypothesis "There is no difference in the level of digital minimalism in young adults" is rejected. To sum up there is difference in the level of digital minimalism in young adults.

In Perceived stress level 16 participants fall under the high level of Perceived stress level 82 participants falls under the moderate level and 14 participant falls under the low level of Perceived stress level. Hence the stated hypothesis "There is no difference in the level of Perceived stress in young adults.

TABLE 3: Mean difference "t" test analysis of digital minimalism among emerging adult based on gender factor.

Variables	Gender	No of samples	Mean	SD	t value
Digital minimalism	Male	55	34	9.6	$0.1542^{@}$
	Female	57	34	9.6	

Note: @ Not significant at 0.05 level, *significant level at 0.05, **significant level at 0.01 level

From analyzing the data, this table shows the mean score of digital minimalisms among emerging adult based on the gender factor is 0.1542. It denotes there is no significant difference at the level of 0.05. Hence, the stated hypothesis "There is no significant difference in the mean score of digital minimalisms among emerging adult in the gender factor" is accepted.

TABLE 4: Mean difference "t" test analysis of perceived stress among emerging adult based on Gender factor.

Variables	Gender	No of samples	Mean	SD	t value
Perceived stress	Male	55	19.6	4.31	0.0498@
	Female	57	19.6	4.1	

Note: @Not significant at 0.05 level, * significant level at 0.05, **significant level at 0.01 level

From analyzing the data, this table shows the mean score of perceived stress in young adult based on the gender factor is 0.0498. It denotes there is no significant difference at the level of 0.05. Hence, the stated hypothesis "There is no significant difference in the mean score of perceived stress in young adult in the gender factor" is accepted

TABLE 5 Correlation between digital minimalism and perceived stress in university students

Variables	r value
Digital minimalism	0.344
Perceived stress	

Table 5 presents between Digital minimalism and perceived stress among a sample of 112 young adults. The Pearson correlation between digital minimalism and perceived stress among young adults. The correlation coefficient (r = 0.344) points to a moderate positive correlation between the two variables. This means that higher levels of digital minimalism are linked to greater stress among young adults, although the relationship is moderate in strength.

Conclusion

The results show that emerging adults experienced both digital minimalism and stress at moderate levels. However, there were no major differences in either variable between genders. The large correlation between digital minimalism and stress points to the psychological impact of digital interactions and habits. Thus, it is crucial to teach young adults the importance of using digital devices mindfully and in balance with the rest of their lives, as this will greatly help them manage their stress and promote their general well-being.

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