A CORRELATIONAL STUDY ON THE ASSOCIATION BETWEEN PSYCHOLOGICAL CAPITAL AND DIGITAL WELL-BEING AMONG YOUNG ADULTS

A

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SUPERVISOR

Mrs. Ayushi Grover
Assistant Professor

INVESTIGATOR

Tisha Arora
Roll No. 2415010
Sem IV

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SUPERVISOR'S CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that **Ms. Tisha Arora** student of **Master of Arts in Psychology (Clinical and Counselling) Semester IV, Session 2024-2026**, bearing **Roll No 2415010,** has worked under my supervision on her dissertation entitled**:**

"A CORRELATIONAL STUDY ON THE ASSOCIATION BETWEEN PSYCHOLOGICAL CAPITAL AND DIGITAL WELL-BEING AMONG YOUNG ADULTS".

Her dissertation is fit for submission, in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the award of the Degree in **Master of Arts in Psychology (Clinical and Counselling).**

DATE:

(Mrs. Ayushi Grover)
SUPERVISOR

Head,
School of Social Sciences
and Humanities

श्रेष्ठ

B.C. Road Jammu
180 001

Ph.: 0191-2546078,2565098
Fax:0191-2548239

Email:principal@miercollege.in
Website: www.miercollege.in

DECLARATION BY THE CANDIDATE

I hereby declare that the work presented in the dissertation entitled:

A CORRELATION STUDY ON THE ASSOCIATION BETWEEN PSYCHOLOGICAL CAPITAL AND DIGITAL WELL-BEING AMONG YOUNG ADULTS

Submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of the Degree of Master of Arts in Psychology (Clinical and Counselling) with Research in Psychology, to MIER College of Education (Autonomous), is an authentic record of my own research work carried out under the supervision of Mrs. Ayushi Grover, Assistant Professor.

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b) Has not been submitted by me for the award of any other Degree/Diploma/Certificate of any University or Institution.

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TABLES OF CONTENTS

Contents **Page No.**

Supervisor Certificate .....……...ii

Declaration by the Candidate…….....iii

Acknowledgement ……iv

List of Tables ……viii

List of Figures ……...ix

List of Appendices……. ..... ……..x

List of Abbreviations ..... ……...xi

Abstract……...xii

CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION ……1

1.1 Introduction ……..3

1.2 Young Adults……..... 4

1.3 Psychological Capital (PsyCap)... ……4

1.3.1 Basic Components of Psychological Capital.. ……5

1.4 Digital Well-Being... ……8

1.5 Theoretical Framework.... ……9

1.5.1 Psychological Capital Theory. ……10

1.5.2 Social Cognitive Theory. ……10

1.5.3 Self Determination Theory (SDT) .. ……11

1.5.4 Conservation of Resources (COR) Theory..... ……11

1.5.5 Dynamic Model of Digital Well-Being……... 11

1.6 Need and Significance of the Study. ……12

1.7 Statement of the Problem.... ……13

1.8 Operational Definitions of the Study. ……..14

1.9 Objectives of the Study..... ……15

1.10 Hypotheses of the Study .... ……15

1.11 Delimitations of the Study……15

CHAPTER II: REVIEW OF LITERATURE……17

2.1 Introduction……17

2.2 Review of Related Studies……18

CHAPTER III: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY……26

3.1Introduction……26

3.2 Research Design of the Study……26

3.2.1 Method of the Study……26

3.2.2 Variables of the Study……27

3.2.3 Population ……27

3.2.4 Sample of the Study……27

3.2.5 Data Collection ……28

3.3 Tools Employed and Description……28

3.3.1 Psychological Capital Questionnaire (PCQ-12) ……28

3.3.2 Digital Well-Being Scale (DWS-12)……28

3.4 Statistical Techniques Used……29

CHAPTER IV: ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF DATA……30

4.1 Introduction……30

4.2 Results and Findings……30

4.2.1 Demographic Profile of the Sample ……30

4.2.2 Research Objective 1 ……32

4.2.3 Research Objective 2 ……33

4.2.4 Research Objective 3 ……34

CHAPTER V: FINDINGS, CONCLUSION, FUTURE IMPLICATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS……35

5.1 Introduction……35

5.2 Major Findings of the Study……36

5.2.1 Research Objective 1……36
5.2.2 Research Objective 2……37
5.2.3 Research Objective 3……..……..38
5.3 Conclusion and Discussion..……38
5.4 Limitations of the Study…….....40
5.5 Implications for Future Research……..41
5.6 Suggestions for Future Research…….. ...43

Summary……45
References……54
Appendices..……68
Appendix A– Psychological Capital Questionnaire (PCQ-12)..……68
Appendix B– Digital Well-Being (DWS-12) ……69

LIST OF TABLES

Table **Page No.**

Table 4.1: Frequency Distribution of Gender among Young adults (N=200) ..… 30

Table 4.2: Frequency Distribution of Gender among Young adults (N=200)…… 31

Table 4.3: Descriptive Statistics and Correlation between Psychological Capital and Digital Well-Being among Young Adults (N=200)…….... 32

Table 4.4: Independent Sample t-Test for Gender Differences in Psychological Capital (N=200)……..... 33

Table 4.5: Independent Sample t-Test for Gender Differences in Digital Well-Being (N=200)…….. 34

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure **Page No.**

Figure 4.1: Bar Graph showing Frequency Distribution of Gender……. 31

Figure 4.2: Bar Graph showing Frequency Distribution of Age…… 32

LIST OF APPENDICES

S.NO.	Title	Page No.
Appendix 1	Psychological Capital Questionnaire (PCQ-12)……	68
Appendix 2	Digital Well-Being Scale (DWS-12)……	69

LIST OF ABREVIATIONS

Abbreviation	Full Form
PsyCap	Psychological Capital
DWB	Digital Well-Being
PCQ-12	Psychological Capital Questionnaire (12-item)
DWS-12	Digital Well-Being Scale (12-item)
SD	Standard Deviation
M	Mean
r	Pearson Correlation Coefficient
t	t-value (t-test statistic)
df	Degrees of Freedom
CI	Confidence Interval
SPSS	Statistical Package for the Social Sciences
COR	Conservation of Resources
SDT	Self-Determination Theory
APA	American Psychological Association
FoMO	Fear of Missing Out
HCI	Human–Computer Interaction
IAS	Internet Addiction Scale
CPC-12	Compound Psychological Capital Scale
HERO	Hope, Efficacy, Resilience, Optimism
HO1	Null Hypothesis 1
HO2	Null Hypothesis 2
HO3	Null Hypothesis 3

ABSTRACT

The rapid integration of digital technology into the daily lives of young adults has made digital well-being an important concern within contemporary psychological research. The present study examined the relationship between psychological capital (PsyCap) and digital well-being (DWB) among young adults aged 18 to 21 years. Specifically, the study aimed to explore the association between PsyCap and DWB, and to determine whether significant gender differences existed in either construct. A quantitative, cross-sectional correlational research design was employed. A total of 200 young adults (89 males, 111 females) were recruited through purposive sampling from undergraduate colleges and universities in the Jammu region, India. Psychological capital was assessed using the Psychological Capital Questionnaire (PCQ-12; Luthans et al., 2007), and digital well-being was measured using the Digital Well-Being Scale (DWB-12; Dienlin& Johannes, 2020). Data were analysed using descriptive statistics, Pearson's product-moment correlation, and independent samples t-tests. Results revealed moderate-to-high levels of both PsyCap (M = 51.49, SD = 9.67) and DWB (M = 42.56, SD = 6.71). A strong, statistically significant positive relationship was found between PsyCap and DWB, r (198) = .67, $p < .01$, indicating that higher psychological resources are associated with greater digital well-being. No significant gender differences were observed in either DWB, t (198) = 0.47, p = .639, or PsyCap, t (198) = 1.65, p = .100. The findings highlight psychological capital as a meaningful internal resource for healthy digital functioning in early adulthood and underscore the value of PsyCap-building interventions within educational and counselling contexts.

Keywords: *Psychological Capital, Digital Well-Being, Young Adults, Jammu*

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

In the present digital age, the fast digitalization of modern life has completely changed how young adults, particularly those between the ages of 18 and 21, develop. Growing independence, identity discovery, scholastic transitions, and increased social obligations are characteristics of this age group, which is placed at a pivotal point between adolescence and adulthood. These developmental activities are closely linked to digital technology, which offer platforms for young adults to connect, learn, build relationships, express themselves, and overcome obstacles in their personal and academic lives (Odgers & Jensen, 2020). Because of this, digital interaction has become a distinguishing feature of emerging adulthood, influencing social, emotional, and cognitive experiences in ways that can be both advantageous and detrimental.

Significant growth potential is provided by digital technologies, such as improved information access, educational materials, creative outlets, and social support. However, increased exposure to stressors like cyber bullying, social comparison, compulsive use, multitasking overload, and psychological distress is also linked to digital involvement (Keles et al., 2020). The concept of digital well-being, which is described as the subjective sense of balanced, purposeful, and healthy involvement with digital technologies, has drawn more attention from academics as a result of these opposing consequences (Vanden Abeele, 2021). Digital well-being is dynamic, influenced by emotional reactions, cognitive interpretations, and contextual elements related to digital use in addition to behaviours (such screen time). In order to ensure that digital involvement promotes rather than compromises mental, emotional, and social health, it is important to maintain a balance between online activities and psychological functioning, according to recent efforts to conceptualize and evaluate digital well-being (Rosič et al., 2024). According to researchers, attaining digital well-being necessitates more than just behavioural control; people also need to have internal psychological resources that enable adaptive functioning in technologically advanced settings (Przybylski & Weinstein, 2017). These tools support youth in

controlling their digital behaviours, responding positively to obstacles, and interpreting online experiences in a resilient and healthy way. Psychological Capital (PsyCap), a higher-order positive psychological construct made up of optimism, resilience, efficacy, and hope, is one such internal resource (Luthans et al., 2007). PsyCap is a strong predictor of wellbeing, academic engagement, and mental health since it improves people's motivation, goal-directed behaviour, coping skills, and optimistic aspirations for the future (Newman et al., 2014). PsyCap is particularly relevant for young adults because it helps them deal with psychosocial pressures, manage growing academic obligations, and manage stress connected to transitions. Its elements, such resilience and self-efficacy, support young people in overcoming obstacles, persevering in the face of difficulties, and retaining faith in their capacity for success. How young adults handle the demands of digital life may be greatly influenced by these psychological strengths. For instance, people with strong optimism might view online interactions more favourably, whereas people with high resilience might be less severely impacted by cyber bullying or online conflict. According to (Datu & Valdez, 2016), young adults who have high levels of self-efficacy may also be better able to put limits on their use of technology, exercise digital self-control, and refrain from compulsive behaviours. Studies exploring the association between digital behaviour and psychological strengths have started to demonstrate that PsyCap may protect against the negative consequences of problematic internet use and promote more positive interaction habits. People with strong psychological resources are better able to manage the demands of digital environments, as evidenced by higher levels of PsyCap being linked to improved emotional well-being and adaptive coping during stressful situations (Prasath et al., 2022; Moreno-Montero et al., 2024). Similarly, research shows that optimism and hope promote positive online interaction and guard against digital stress, while psychological resilience and self-efficacy help preserve emotional equilibrium in online environments (Datu & Valdez, 2016). Understanding how internal psychological capacities interact with digital encounters is crucial since digital platforms are ingrained in emerging adults' daily routines. Due to their heavy usage of digital devices, young adults between the ages of 18 and 21 are especially vulnerable to the benefits and dangers of living online. The developmental objectives of this time, including as identity formation, scholastic success, and emotional regulation, are closely linked to their digital habits, experiences, and vulnerabilities. Therefore, a

crucial field of study that connects positive psychology and digital media research is the connection between psychological capital and digital well-being. Thus, the current study aims to examine the correlation between psychological capital and digital well-being among young people (18–21 years old), a developmental stage characterized by high levels of identity building and digital involvement. The study intends to provide evidence that may influence interventions, digital literacy programs, and student support services intended to improve healthy functioning during emerging adulthood by investigating the relationship between positive psychological resources and people's digital experiences.

1.2 Young Adults

Young adulthood is the stage of life that falls precisely between adolescence and full adulthood, and it is limited to late adolescence and early adulthood (Arnett, 2000). This developmental period is characterized by identity construction, emotional regulation, and a stronger desire for peer approval, all of which are often encouraged by social media (Flannery et al., 2023a; Gupta & Parimal, 2020; Shapiro & Margolin, 2014; Wadsley et al., 2022). The adoption of adult responsibilities, such as leaving the parental home, acquiring total independence, getting married and establishing a family, beginning employment, and becoming financially independent, are hallmarks of maturity (Setterson& Ray, 2010). Conversely, young adulthood entails postponed marriage and parenthood, prolonged education, delayed employment, and reliance on parents (Cote, 2006). Arnett (2000) proposed this additional stage of life-span development. Young adulthood is a time of constant, apathetic change (Ludwig, 2010). Additionally, young adults are among the most tech-savvy demographics, using social media and online platforms extensively, which might affect their social connectedness and general well-being (Woodward et al., 2025; Frontiers in Communication, 2022). However, studies show that while balanced and intentional use of technology fosters learning, social connection, and positive development, excessive or uncontrolled digital engagement can lead to stress, anxiety, and decreased psychological well-being (Twenge & Martin, 2020; Shannon et al., 2022). As anadult, a person will have a lot of goals, aspirations, and dreams to fulfil, which can wear them out both mentally and physically. For someone in their early adult years, psychological well-being is crucial since it can alter their perspective on issues

and transform them into new and better challenges, as well as lessen unpleasant behaviour or sentiments. In order to experience happy emotions and lessen negative behaviour or feelings, young adults in their early adult years has to be in good psychological health (Amando &Sulistiasih, 2024). Examining how psychological resources like psychological capital affect young adults' digital well-being requires an understanding of their digital habits and developmental traits.

1.3 Psychological Capital (PsyCap)

Over the years, almost all of the focus has been on mental disease, but modern psychology has begun to uncover and develop people's strengths in addition to helping them with issues. What's wrong with people and how to fix it harm? The renowned research psychologist and president of the American Psychological Association (APA), Seligman (1998), outlined a vision for "positive psychology" that promises greater opportunities for psychological study and practice in the future. For the good of society, he investigated and identified the strengths that enable people, communities, organizations, and groups to flourish using scientific methods in the field of psychology (Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi, 2000).The 2007 Great Recession caused a significant economic downturn that resulted in company closures and unemployment, which in turn led to a decline in well-being, feelings of powerlessness, and loneliness among those who were working for an extended period of time. The organization's leaders and staff had given up and had come to believe that they were inadequate in their roles. According to ten years of PsyCap study and practice, despite the setbacks, the greatest way to contribute, increase human potential, and cultivate a positive mind-set is to avoid dwelling on the past or trying to "fix" organizations, their managers, and their people.

The term Psychological Capital is originating from two words, psychological and capital. The word psychological derived from the Greek term “psyche”, which means mind or soul, while the word capital is originate from the Latin term “capitalis”, meaning principal, asset, or valuable resource. According to Luthans and his colleagues' 2007 theoretical framework, psychological capital is a branch of positive human psychology. They asserted that it might provide firms with competitive benefits in terms of worker performance and health-related outcomes (Luthans et al., 2006; Luthans & Youssef-Morgan, 2017). Psychological capital, as defined by

Luthans and Youssef (2004), is a person's positive and developing state, which is marked by optimism, resilience, self-efficacy, and hope (Luthans et al., 2007). Though its growth is founded on three primary facets of human psychology—integration theory, state theory, and trait theory—there isn't a single, accepted definition or idea of psychological capital (Anglin et al., 2018; Wang et al., 2022). Psychological capital, or PsyCap, is a topic of great importance in management and organizational psychology since it helps workers improve their competence in the job, especially in this unstable global market environment (Gupta & Singh, 2014). A higher degree of individual performance, according to Luthans (2002), could result from "Positively Oriented Human Strengths and Psychological Capabilities." Psychological Capital (PsyCap) can be summed up as "who you are" and "what you can develop in a constructive way". "Psychological capital is defined as an individual's optimistic appraisal of students and the likelihood of success based on effort and perseverance" (Luthans, Youssef & Avolio, 2007). As stated, psychological capital is a positive base contrive that is defined as an individual's positive psychological state of development that is characterized by: (1) having the confidence (efficacy) to take on and put in the necessary effort to succeed at challenging tasks; (2) having a positive attribution (optimism) about succeeding both now and in the future; (3) persevering toward goals and, when necessary, rerouting paths to goals (hope) in order to succeed; and (4) sustaining and bouncing back and even beyond (resilience) to achieve success when faced with difficulties and adversity." Numerous researches have indicated that PsyCap reduces stress, which enhances both physical and psychological well-being (Baron et al., 2013). In order to have a greater impact on psychological well-being, psychological capital can help with the interpretation and memory retention process for particular experiences and satisfaction (Diener & Biswas-Diener, 2008).

1.3.1 Basic Components of Psychological Capital

Managing the positive psychology constructs of self-efficacy/confidence, hope, optimism, and resilience are all part of developable psychological capital. According to Luthans et al. (2010), these four elements have a "motivational propensity" to accomplish the objectives. The four elements that make up positive psychological capital (HERO) are briefly described in the paragraphs that follow:

- **Hope**: Hope refers to an individual's perceived ability to set goals and develop strategies to achieve them (Dursun, 2021).It takes a sense of agency and expectations to achieve the desired results, which provide people the internalized resolve and motivation to put in the required effort (Luthans & Youssef, 2004). According to Snyder et al. (1996), hope is made up of two parts: routes and agency, or goal-directed energy. According to Luthans et al., (2008), routes refer to the method or means by which a task may be completed, whereas agency refers to a person's drive to succeed at a particular activity in a given setting. People with high levels of hope are more likely to be goal-directed and to have the ability to create different approaches to achieve their objectives (Luthans et al., 2008). Hope can combat the pessimism and passivity that characterize major depression in young adults with depressive symptoms (Vasoya, 2023). Empirical evidence further supports this, as Lin et al. (2024) found that college students with higher levels of hope reported lower levels of depression and anxiety. Additionally, hope facilitates problem-solving, emotional control, and interaction with support networks. Young adults' mental wellbeing can be strengthened and happy futures can be envisioned by including hope-enhancing techniques into therapies.

- **Self-efficacy/confidence:** Based on Bandura's social cognitive theory (Bandura, 1997, 2012), self-efficacy is the belief in one's own ability to use one's motivation, cognitive resources, and strategies to attain high performance levels (Stajkovic& Luthans, 1998). Self-efficacy, a fundamental element of psychological capital, represents a person's confidence in handling difficulties and controlling their behaviour. High self-efficacy is more common among individuals who think they can manage difficult circumstances and control outcomes (Bandura, 1997). Higher self-efficacy promotes improved digital behaviour regulation and efficient stress management in the context of young people' digital well-being. According to Kent-Craig's (2023) research, individuals who have higher levels of self-efficacy are 1.5 times more likely to participate in behaviours that promote mental stability.

- **Resilience**: Resilience is the ability to bounce back fast from setbacks and effectively adjusts to unfavourable circumstances, preserving psychological equilibrium in the face of extremely stressful experiences (Oye, 2024). The ability to recover from hardship, uncertainty, risk, or failure and adjust to shifting and demanding demands in life is referred to as resilience (Masten & Reed, 2002; Tugade & Fredrickson, 2004). Resilient people are typically better at adjusting to adverse events and changes in their immediate surroundings (Luthans, Vogelgesang, & Lester, 2006). Resilience has a crucial protective role in the context of young people by assisting them in managing stress and preserving a positive psychological state, especially during times of emotional vulnerability (Varma et al., 2021). According to a longitudinal study by Lunov and Rozhkova (2024), people with high resilience were 50% less likely to experience depressive symptoms after stressful events, providing additional empirical evidence for this protective role. These results demonstrate resilience as a process-oriented, active psychological ability that may be developed over time. As a result, it has been demonstrated that therapies like stress management training, cognitive reframing, and mindfulness exercises increase resilience, lessen psychological distress, and boost general wellbeing (Dim, 2023).

- **Optimism:** According to Schneider, Carver, and Bridges (2001), optimism is the belief that one will experience favourable results. Individuals that are high in most people who are optimistic develop optimistic expectations that inspire them to work toward their objectives and overcome adversity (Seligman, 1998). Optimism helps young adults focus on problem-solving and adaptive coping, which promotes psychological and digital well-being by reducing negative thinking and rumination (Ciobotaru et al., 2024). Optimism is physiologically linked to reduced cortisol levels and enhanced immunity (Walsh, 2021). Studies have found a moderately positive correlation (effect size = 0.25) between optimism and mental health outcomes, suggesting that optimistic people have greater psychological well-being (Zhai & Carney, 2024).

1.4 Digital Well-being

The term Digital Well-being is originated from two words, digital and well-being. The word digital derived from the Latin term “digitus”, meaning finger, which later came to be associated with numerical and digital systems, whereas the word well-being is derived from Old English, combining “wel (well) and beon (to be)”, meaning a state of being well or healthy. Without the digital connection; there isn't a single, accepted definition for the first term, "wellbeing" (Ong et al., 2021). As stated by scholars, published research on well-being explores the various aspects of well-being rather than providing a definition (Ong et al., 2021; Dodge et al., 2012). According to Dolan et al. (2011), measuring well-being is fundamental to the field of public policy, where it serves three primary functions: policy creation, policy appraisal support, and progress monitoring. Historically, the concept of well-being has been studied since ancient Greece. Numerous academic fields have since considered this phrase. According to Fahlquist et al. (2014), well-being is typically defined as "a state of persons which designates that they are happy or flourishing and that their life is going well for them." According to Fahlquist et al. (2014), it is seen as "the highest value to which other values can be subsumed." According to Friedman et al. (2013), values are defined as everything that individuals deem significant in life. In the current digital era, one of the most important areas of concern is digital well-being (DWB), which is defined as the subjective perception of optimal balance between the advantages and disadvantages derived from online connectivity (Vanden Abeele, 2021). According to global estimates, there are 5.45 billion active internet users as of July 2024, which accounts for two-thirds of the world's population. A sizable part of these users also actively utilizes social media (Meltwater, 2024). In light of this, it is now crucial to comprehend and advance DWB in order to support personal wellbeing in a society that is becoming more and more digitalized. Digital wellbeing is frequently defined implicitly by contrasting it with negative phone behaviours. For example, comparing phone use to unhealthy eating habits; see also (Sutton, 2017) or with conditions that are indicative of digital ill-being, like technology addictions (Roffarello & De Russis, 2019; Lee, Lee, & Park, 2019). Burr et al. (2020) define digital well-being as "the impact of digital technologies on what it means to live a life that is good for a human being in an information society." Digital well-being is a complex term that may be analysed from a medical, user, and design standpoint, according to Cecchinato et al.

(2019). In accordance to the Dynamic Model of Digital Well-Being, self-control and digital engagement constantly interact to shape digital well-being, which is not a fixed characteristic (Vanden Abeele, 2021). Based to this approach, people actively manage times when they are connected and disconnected, and when this equilibrium promotes psychological and emotional stability, digital well-being results. Young adults, whose everyday social, academic, and personal activities are heavily reliant on digital settings, will find this viewpoint especially pertinent (Vanden Abeele, 2021). Large tech firms like Apple (2020) and Google (2020) have also highlighted a design philosophy in recent years that centres on enabling people to develop their own sense of digital well-being. The phrase "the impact of technologies and digital services on people's mental, physical, social, and emotional health" (Joint Information Systems Committee [Jisc], 2022) is used in the field of Human–Computer Interaction (HCI) to refer to Digital Wellbeing (DWB). Furthermore, it symbolizes the role that technology plays in defining "what it means to live a life that is good for a human being in an information society" (Floridi, 2014, 2015).In a world where digital abundance is the norm, digital well-being is a new intervention that can be defined as using digital technology to promote one's physical and mental health. Incorporating and modifying personal technological habits to accomplish fundamental objectives is the main emphasis of digital well-being. Promoting focus when working or studying, reducing distractions, setting reminders to unplug and detox, and cultivating social and familial interactions are all crucial but little acts that can be incorporated into daily life to improve mental wellness (Google Digital Wellbeing, 2022). Therefore, the ability to balance the advantages and disadvantages of using technology to maintain mental, emotional, and social health is reflected in digital well-being.

1.5 Theoretical Framework

The current study is theoretically grounded in Conservation of Resources (COR) Theory (Hobfoll, 1989), Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985, 2000), Psychological Capital Theory (Luthans et al., 2007), Social Cognitive Theory (Bandura, 1997, 2012), and the Dynamic Model of Digital Well-Being (Vanden Abeele, 2021). When combined, these ideas offer a thorough framework for comprehending the relationship between digital well-being and internal psychological resources in young adults (18–21 years old).

1.5.1 Psychological Capital Theory

According to Luthans et al. (2007), psychological capital is defined as a positive psychological state that is marked by self-efficacy, hope, optimism, and resilience. This theory is based on the ideas of positive psychology. These elements show people's self-assurance, drive to achieve their goals, optimism for the future, and ability to bounce back from hardship. According to Luthans et al. (2007), psychological capital can be strengthened and created over time because it is regarded as state-like rather than trait-like. Psychological capital is a crucial psychological component that promotes emotional control, adaptive coping, and psychological wellbeing in young adulthood. Young adults with stronger psychological capital may be better able to control technology use, deal with online stressors, and participate in meaningful digital activities in the context of digital life. Therefore, a fundamental explanation for the relationship between positive psychological resources and better digital well-being can be found in Psychological Capital Theory.

1.5.2 Social Cognitive Theory

Social cognitive theory states that human behaviour is influenced by cognitive processes, self-beliefs, and self-regulation mechanisms (Bandura, 1997, 2012). According to the theory, conduct is shaped by a reciprocal interaction between individual traits, environmental factors, and behavioural patterns. A key element of this theory is self-efficacy, which is defined as people's confidence in their ability to plan and execute the required actions to address future events (Bandura, 1997). People with higher levels of self-efficacy are more likely to put in a lot of effort, persevere through challenges, maintain behavioural control, and effectively handle stress (Bandura, 2012). Young adults must control their online conduct, balance social and academic obligations, and deal with constant digital stimulation in digitally mediated situations. According to Social Cognitive Theory, young people' ability to exert control over their digital activities is largely dependent on psychological elements, especially self-efficacy, which promotes balanced digital engagement and digital well-being.

1.5.3 Self-Determination Theory (SDT)

According to Deci and Ryan (1985, 2000), psychological well-being is explained by the fulfilment of three fundamental psychological needs: relatedness, competence, and autonomy. Self-endorsed, meaningful, and intrinsically motivated behaviours are associated with higher levels of well-being, according to self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 2000). Depending on how it is viewed, technology use in digital contexts can either reinforce or contradict these psychological demands. Digital involvement is more likely to positively impact well-being when young adults utilize digital platforms in ways that support autonomy, improve competence, and create meaningful social connections. Intrinsically motivated and self-regulated technology use may be facilitated by psychological elements including hope, optimism, and self-efficacy. Consequently, SDT offers a theoretical framework for how psychological elements affect digital well-being through demand fulfilment and motivation.

1.5.4 Conservation of Resources (COR) Theory

The Conservation of Resources (COR) Theory provides a stress-based perspective by proposing that individuals strive to acquire, maintain, and protect vital resources, including psychological resources (Hobfoll, 1989). According to this theory, stress develops when resources are lost, threatened, or insufficient to meet environmental demands. In today's digital age, young adults frequently face stressors like continual connectivity, information overload, academic pressure, and social comparison. Individual tools that help people deal with these digital pressures include resilience, optimism, and self-efficacy. COR Theory states that individuals with greater psychological resources are better able to handle stress and prevent resource depletion, which maintains psychological equilibrium and digital wellbeing.

1.5.5 Dynamic Model of Digital Well-Being

Digital well-being is a dynamic and on-going process rather than a static state, according to Vanden Abeele (2021) Dynamic Model of Digital Well-Being. This model highlights the continuous balance of digital engagement and self-

regulation to maintain psychological and emotional equilibrium. According to this theory, digital well-being is influenced by individual capacities, contextual needs, and self-regulation skills (Vanden Abeele, 2021). Psychological qualities including self-efficacy, resilience, optimism, and hope enhance people's ability to manage their digital behaviour and overcome obstacles. The Dynamic Model of Digital Well-Being offers a solid theoretical framework for understanding digital well-being as the study's outcome variable.

According to the previously indicated theoretical positions, there is a direct correlation between young people's digital well-being and psychological factors that impact motivation, coping, self-regulation, and stress management. When viewed as together, these theories suggest that people's level of digital well-being is influenced by psychological resources rather than just technology use. The current study, which employs a correlational methodology to examine the association between psychological capital and digital well-being among young adults (18–21 years old), is based on this theoretical framework.

1.6 Need and Significance of the Study

The present study addresses a critical gap in psychological and digital media research by examining the relationship between psychological capital and digital well-being among young adults. While extensive research has documented the negative effects of digital technology on mental health, there is a marked absence of studies integrating positive psychology perspectives with digital behaviour research. Psychological capital, as a measure of internal psychological strengths, represents a promising avenue for understanding how young adults can develop resilience and adaptive coping mechanisms in the face of digital challenges. This study is particularly timely given the increasing digitalization of education and social life in India, where young adults' exposure to digital platforms has intensified significantly. Understanding the protective role of psychological capital in promoting digital well-being is essential for developing evidence-based interventions and support systems tailored to this population.

Furthermore, this study contributes substantially to both theoretical and practical domains. From a theoretical perspective, it advances the literature by demonstrating how positive psychological constructs interact with digital experiences, moving beyond deficit-focused approaches. From a practical standpoint, the findings provide educators, counsellors, and institutional administrators with evidence to develop psychological capital-building programs that enhance digital well-being. Additionally, the investigation of gender differences in these variables offers insights into how individual characteristics shape digital adaptation patterns. By establishing the relationship between psychological capital and digital well-being, this research provides a foundation for future longitudinal studies and intervention programs aimed at promoting healthier digital engagement during emerging adulthood, a critical developmental period characterized by identity formation, academic achievement, and social connection.

1.7 Statement of the Problem

Young adults between the ages of 18 and 21 represent a generation deeply embedded in digital technologies, using digital platforms for communication, learning, socialization, and entertainment. While digital technologies offer significant benefits including enhanced learning opportunities, expanded social connections, and creative expression, they also expose young adults to numerous stressors such as cyber bullying, social comparison, fear of missing out (FOMO), and digital overload. Previous research has extensively documented the negative consequences of problematic digital use on mental health, including increased anxiety, depression, and reduced psychological well-being.

However, existing literature predominantly focuses on the detrimental effects of digital technology, with comparatively limited attention to protective psychological factors that may promote healthier digital engagement. Recent theoretical advances in positive psychology suggest that internal psychological resources, such as psychological capital (comprising hope, self-efficacy, resilience, and optimism), may serve as important protective factors that enable individuals to navigate digital environments more adaptively. Despite the theoretical promise of this perspective, integrative empirical studies examining the specific relationship between

psychological capital and digital well-being are conspicuously lacking, particularly in the Indian context and specifically among young adults aged 18 to 21 years.

Furthermore, while gender differences have been documented in both psychological well-being and technology use patterns, few studies have examined gender variations in the relationship between psychological capital and digital well-being among young adults. This gap limits understanding of how individual differences influence digital adaptation and well-being experiences. Therefore, the present study addresses these identified gaps by investigating the correlational relationship between psychological capital and digital well-being among young adults, while also examining potential gender differences in these variables.

1.8 Operational Definitions of the Study

- **Psychological Capital (PsyCap):** Psychological capital refers to a positive psychological state characterized by hope, self-efficacy, resilience, and optimism (Luthans et al., 2007). In the present study, it is operationally defined as the total score obtained on the Psychological Capital Questionnaire (PCQ-12), developed by Luthans et al. (2007). Higher scores indicate greater psychological capital.

- **Digital Well-Being (DWB):** Digital well-being refers to an individual's ability to maintain a healthy, balanced, and satisfying relationship with digital technology that supports mental, emotional, and social well-being (Dienlin& Johannes, 2020). In the present study, it is operationally defined as the total score obtained on the Digital Well-Being Scale (DWS-12), developed by Dienlin and Johannes (2020). Higher scores indicate greater digital well-being.

- **Young Adults:** Young adults are defined as individuals aged 18–21 years who are enrolled in undergraduate education in colleges or universities (Arnett, 2000). In the present study, only students pursuing higher education in the Jammu region of Jammu and Kashmir are included.

1.9 Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the present study are as follows:

- To examine the relationship between psychological capital and digital well-being among young adults (18-21 years).
- To examine whether there are gender differences in psychological capital among young adults.
- To examine whether there are gender differences in digital well-being among young adults.

1.10 Hypotheses of the Study

Based on the research objectives and the existing literature, the following null hypotheses have been formulated for testing:

HO1: There is no significant relationship between psychological capital and digital well-being among young adults.

HO2: There is no significant gender difference in psychological capital among young adults.

HO3: There is no significant gender difference in digital well-being among young adults.

1.11 Delimitations of the Study

The delimitations of this study are as follows:

- The study is delimited to young adults aged 18 to 21 years; findings are not generalizable to younger adolescents or older adults.
- The sample comprises only undergraduate students enrolled in colleges and universities in the Jammu region of India; findings may not represent young adults in other geographic regions or educational contexts.

- Participants are selected through purposive sampling based on voluntary consent; self-selection bias may be present.
- The study employs a cross-sectional correlational design; causal inferences cannot be established regarding the relationship between psychological capital and digital well-being.
- Data are collected exclusively through self-report questionnaires, rendering findings subject to common method variance and social desirability bias.
- Psychological capital is measured only through the Psychological Capital Questionnaire (PCQ-12) and digital well-being only through the Digital Well-Being Scale (DWS-12); alternative measures may yield different results.
- Statistical analysis includes only Pearson's correlation coefficient and independent samples t-tests; potential mediating or moderating variables are not examined.
- The study does not incorporate objective measures of digital behavior such as screen time logs or digital footprint analysis.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

2.1 Introduction

The present review of literature examines at prior studies on digital well-being and psychological capital, with a focus on young adults between the ages of 18 and 21. Hope, resilience, optimism, and self-efficacy are elements of psychological capital, which has been extensively researched as a beneficial psychological resource influencing mental health and general well-being. According to current research, people with higher psychological capital typically exhibit higher levels of life satisfaction, engagement, and adaptive functioning, as well as better stress management and fewer psychological issues like anxiety and depression.

The idea of "digital well-being" has also received more attention in recent years as a result of the expanding usage of digital technologies in daily life. For entertainment, social connection, and education, young adults are particularly engrossed in digital surroundings. Digital stress, FOMO, low self-esteem, boredom, and emotional distress are among the detrimental psychological effects linked to excessive or poorly controlled use of digital media, according to several researches. However, research also shows that meaningful and balanced digital interaction can have a good impact on psychological well-being when it is accompanied by elements like self-control, emotional regulation, digital literacy, and positive online social support.

Furthermore, an increasing amount of research indicates that psychological resources are crucial to how people perceive and interact with digital environments. One protective element that may help young adults cope with digital demands and lessen the detrimental effects of excessive technology use is psychological capital. Though both digital well-being and psychological capital have been thoroughly explored, fewer studies have specifically looked at how these two concepts relate to one another, especially when it comes to young adults. In order to investigate the relationship between psychological capital and digital well-being among young adults between the ages of 18 and 21, the current review offers a conceptual and empirical basis.

2.2 Review of Related Studies

Mehmood et al. (2025) explored the connection between college students' psychological health and social media addiction. According to their findings, students' psychological well-being was adversely affected by excessive use of social media since it reduced their self-esteem. Digital stress was exacerbated by feelings of technological invasion and overload, which were further exacerbated by low self-esteem. It was discovered that these elements taken together considerably reduced psychological well-being. The study did, however, also emphasize the protective function of online bonding and bridging social capital, showing that meaningful and encouraging online connections can lessen the negative consequences of excessive digital involvement and lower digital stress.

Hussey (2025) examined young people's emotional experiences in the context of the digital age, emphasizing both digital pressures and individual strengths. The results showed that resilience served as a psychological protective factor, greatly lowering anxiety and depressive symptoms. On the other hand, a strong predictor of increased anxiety and depression was shown to be fear of missing out (FoMO), which was made worse by constant smart phone use. The study highlighted how internal psychological resources and external digital demands interact to form young people's mental well-being.

Oladunmoye et al. (2025) studied psychological resources in particular as predictors of mental well-being among young people in Uganda. Their findings demonstrated a favourable correlation between enhanced mental well-being and resilience, hope, and self-efficacy. It's interesting to note that self-esteem showed a negative correlation with wellbeing, indicating that psychological resources affect emotional health in different ways depending on the population. This study made clear how crucial it is to look at each psychological capital component independently rather than assuming consistent effects across cultural contexts.

Chen et al. (2025) concentrated on figuring out what influences digital well-being. According to their research, digital stress has a direct detrimental effect on wellbeing. However, people's digital participation became healthier and more adaptive when they developed efficient emotional regulation and satisfied intrinsic psychological

demands during online engagement. The results indicated that encouraging happy digital experiences requires careful use of technology and emotional control.

In contrast to digital storytelling with instructor feedback, Prabowo et al. (2025) explored if digital storytelling integrated with peer assessment (DSIPA) may improve students' digital well-being. Students who took part in DSIPA had significantly better digital well-being than those who got teacher evaluation, according to the data. The main conclusions showed that incorporating peer evaluation with digital storytelling successfully supports positive peer feedback practices, fosters digital well-being, and raises student motivation and engagement.

Mayiwar et al. (2025) investigated the individual-level features and characteristics that impact digital well-being, concentrating on how people use artificial intelligence and digital media in ways that either promote or impede their well-being. The study examined the relationship between digital well-being, life satisfaction, and social anxiety and digital self-control, objective and subjective digital literacy, and digital information ignorance. The findings demonstrated that digital self-control was linked to greater life satisfaction and that both digital self-control and subjective digital literacy positively predicted digital well-being. The main conclusions also showed that ignorance of digital knowledge predicted greater levels of social anxiety and life satisfaction, indicating that individual digital-related traits are important in determining outcomes connected to digital well-being.

Baluku et al. (2024) investigated the importance of psychological capital for development in various groups. Higher psychological capital and a belief in a just world were linked to greater thriving among college students. Psychological capital also improved fundamental psychological need satisfaction and decreased psychological discomfort among young individuals living with HIV. These results showed psychological capital's wide-ranging protective utility in promoting wellbeing in a variety of life situations.

Zewuden et al. (2024) evaluated the consequences of internet addiction in academic contexts and validated the Mental Health Continuum–Short Form (MHC-SF), Psychological Capital Questionnaire (PCQ-24), and Internet Addiction Scale (IAS). The findings showed that internet addiction had a detrimental impact on mental health

and psychological capital. Significantly, this link was completely controlled by psychological capital, indicating that people with higher psychological capital were better shielded from the negative consequences of excessive internet use.

Zhang et al. (2023) researched healthcare workers' psychological capital during the COVID-19 pandemic, a time of increased anxiety and stress. The findings showed that compared to regular nurses, nurse specialists had better levels of psychological capital, job happiness, and work engagement. The association between psychological capital and work engagement was found to be strongly mediated by job satisfaction, indicating that psychological resources are essential for maintaining motivation and engagement in demanding professional settings.

Preston et al. (2023) carried out a systematic scoping review to investigate the conceptualization of psychological capital, which includes optimism, self-efficacy, hope, and resilience, in the literature on juvenile mental health and to investigate its connection to mental health outcomes. The review, which adhered to PRISMA principles, found 772 studies in four databases. Of these, 16 studies with a total sample of 6,772 teenagers from six countries were included for in-depth analysis. The findings consistently showed a positive correlation between youth mental health and psychological capital, suggesting that better mental health outcomes were linked to higher psychological capital levels. The results demonstrated the importance of psychological capital as a positive psychological resource in studies on teenage mental health.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, Turliuc and Candel (2022) tested how psychological capital influenced mental health. Higher psychological capital was linked to lower levels of anxiety and despair as well as greater life satisfaction, according to their findings. Stress turned out to be a mediating element, indicating that psychological capital improved people's ability to handle stress in times of crisis and uncertainty.

In order to better understand youth digital resilience, Vissenberg et al. (2022) conducted a systematic evaluation of thirty studies. The analysis found that while negative digital experiences were linked to worse well-being outcomes in certain situations, they could also help build resilience in others. Although the authors

stressed the need for more empirical research to elucidate the intricate relationship between digital experiences and well-being, digital literacy and resilience appeared as important protective factors.

Egerau (2022) researched whether people's psychological states are impacted by the amount of time spent on digital devices, concentrating on the mediating function of boredom in the relationship between digital device use and unhappiness. The findings demonstrated that boredom acted as a complete mediator in the association between time spent on digital devices and depression. The main conclusions highlighted the psychological effects of extended screen time and the significance of digital education in controlling technology usage by showing that greater use of digital devices primarily causes negative emotional states through increased boredom.

Dirzyte and Perminas (2021) analysed the connection between teenagers' subjective health, psychological well-being, and psychological capital. The results demonstrated that higher levels of psychological capital and psychological well-being were also reported by teenagers who thought they were healthier. This study demonstrated how young people's judgments of their own health and general well-being are influenced by psychological strengths.

Widdicks (2020) studied the design objectives and potential unexpected repercussions for users of digital well-being solutions created within the human–computer interaction (HCI) sector. Time limitations, use prompts, do-not-disturb modes, and app or service blocking are examples of frequently used digital well-being features that were examined in this study. The findings demonstrated that while these tools are intended to enhance users' interactions with technology, they may have a detrimental impact on user privacy and autonomy. The main conclusions showed that positively motivated digital well-being tools may not always lead to great user experiences since they can gently influence user behaviour and cause a progressive acceptance of external control.

Finch et al. (2020) examined the relationship between psychological capital and mental health outcomes in children and adolescents. The findings showed that higher thriving and lower levels of anxiety and depression were associated with the fundamental elements of psychological capital—hope, self-efficacy, resilience, and

optimism. In order to promote long-term mental health and wellbeing, the study stressed the need of building good psychological resources early in life.

Ahmed et al. (2020) looked at how university students used digital media and social capital. According to their research, social capital greatly improved psychological well-being. Furthermore, there was a favourable correlation between socially motivated digital media use and mental health, with perceived social support serving as a mediating factor. The potential advantages of constructive and socially conscious digital participation in academic settings were highlighted by this study.

Twenge (2019) focused on how using digital media affected mental health. Heavy use of digital media was consistently linked to worse mental health outcomes, according to the study. Psychological anguish has been linked to a number of factors, including upward social comparison, sleep disturbance, and cyber bullying. However, favourable effects were linked to moderate levels of digital media usage, highlighting the significance of balance rather than abstinence in digital interaction.

Roffarello and De Russis (2019) reviewed the features, user experiences, and behavioural impact of digital well-being apps intended to curb excessive smart phone use. The findings demonstrated that consumers generally valued digital well-being apps and found them helpful in certain circumstances. The main conclusions, however, showed that these apps did not successfully encourage the development of long-term habits and were thought to be insufficiently restrictive to result in significant and long-lasting changes in smart phone use behaviour.

Chan (2018) investigated how multimodal digital communication affected people's subjective well-being. Increased pleasant emotions, civic engagement, and social capital were indicators of indirect effects, notwithstanding the lack of direct effects. The results indicated that, especially for older persons, internet communication can improve well-being through social and emotional channels.

A universal self-report measure of psychological capital (PsyCap) was developed and validated by Lorenz et al. (2016). The Compound PsyCap Scale (CPC-12), which consists of twelve items, was shown to have a strong factorial structure, a very good model fit, and significant relationships with other positive psychological characteristics. The main conclusions showed that the CPC-12 is a viable and

trustworthy indicator of psychological capital that may be used to evaluate PsyCap outside of organizational settings.

You (2016) addressed the function of psychological capital, which includes resilience, optimism, hope, and self-efficacy, in college students' academic learning environments. By putting out a structural model that connected psychological capital, learning empowerment, and student involvement, the study sought to determine how psychological capital affected students' learning. The results showed that among college students, psychological capital was positively and strongly correlated with learning empowerment. Additionally, the association between psychological capital and student engagement was found to be totally mediated by learning empowerment, suggesting that students with higher psychological capital were more involved in their studies mainly because they felt more empowered. The findings demonstrated the value of psychological capital as a useful psychological tool in the academic setting, especially in raising students' motivation and engagement with their studies.

Abbas and Raja (2015) assessed the connection between employees' job stress, creative job performance, and psychological capital (PsyCap). The findings demonstrated that psychological capital had a negative correlation with job stress and a positive correlation with inventive performance. The main conclusions showed that those with higher psychological capital were less stressed at work and exhibited more creative behaviours, such as coming up with and putting new ideas into practice.

Using validated assessment models, Sahoo and Sia (2015) analysed the type, factor structure, and connection between psychological capital and organizational commitment in a sample of Indian employees. The findings demonstrated that psychological capital substantially influenced organizational commitment and followed a three-factor structure in the Indian context. The main conclusions validate psychological capital as a strong predictor of organizational commitment among Indian employees and emphasize the significance of culturally validating psychological capital assessments.

Avey (2014) analysed the causes of psychological capital (PsyCap) in order to comprehend how people acquire and maintain PsyCap levels. The findings demonstrated that across two field investigations, individual levels of psychological

capital were significantly predicted by particular antecedent categories. The main conclusions showed that identifiable antecedent factors influence psychological capital. They also highlighted potential measurement and cultural border conditions and revealed differences in prediction strength between samples.

Choi and DiNitto (2013) studied older persons' internet usage habits with an emphasis on psychological and health-related aspects. According to their research, people who were depressed or anxious were less likely to use the internet, whereas people who had more social capital were more active online. Digital inclusion can improve psychological well-being and access to resources in later life, as demonstrated by the frequent use of the internet for health-related information by older persons with chronic conditions.

Sweetman et al. (2011) assessed the connection between working adults' creative performance and psychological capital (PsyCap), concentrating on PsyCap and its constituent parts as indicators of creativity. The findings demonstrated that, in addition to the individual effects of self-efficacy, hope, optimism, and resilience, overall psychological capital substantially predicted creative performance. The main conclusions showed that psychological capital functions as a higher-order construct that has a stronger impact on creative performance than any of its constituent parts.

Culbertson et al. (2010) discovered that eudaimonic well-being served as a mediator variable in the indirect relationship between psychological capital and hedonic well-being as measured two weeks later. The results of the daily survey also revealed a strong and positive relationship between daily happy mood and daily life satisfaction and daily eudaimonic work well-being. Furthermore, psychological capital levels were a strong predictor of daily eudaimonic work well-being variability, suggesting that higher psychological capital was linked to more fulfilling work experiences and improved well-being.

Cole et al. (2009) integrated economic and psychological theories of unemployment to investigate the relationship between work status, well-being, and psychological capital. The study examined whether employment status and well-being were concurrently connected and whether psychological capital mediated this relationship using cross-sectional data from Australia. The results showed that there was a

negative correlation between unemployment and well-being, and that lower well-being made it more difficult for people to find new jobs. The findings also demonstrated that the association between employment status and well-being was partially mediated by psychological capital, meaning that those with lower psychological capital were more likely to be unemployed. The study's overall findings demonstrated the protective function of psychological capital in mitigating the detrimental impacts of unemployment on wellbeing and promoting reemployment outcomes.

Luthans et al. (2007) explored the relationship between work performance and job satisfaction and the psychological resources of hope, resilience, optimism, and self-efficacy, both separately and as a composite concept of psychological capital. A novel evaluation tool for evaluating the four psychological capital components and their higher-order composite was developed and validated in the first phase of the study, and their relationship to job outcomes was investigated in the second. The results showed a strong positive correlation between psychological capital and both job happiness and performance. Crucially, the findings showed that performance and pleasure were better predicted by the composite psychological capital concept than by the individual components, indicating that these psychological resources function better when taken into account as an integrated construct.

CHAPTER III

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

According to Creswell and Creswell (2018), research methodology is the systematic framework that directs the process of gathering, evaluating, and interpreting data in order to address certain research questions and accomplish the goals of the study. The present chapter elucidates the methodology employed for the study titled "A Correlational Study on the Association between Psychological Capital and Digital Well-Being among Young Adults (18–21 Years)." This chapter covers the research design, population, sample, data collection tools, and the statistical techniques used for data analysis. The methodology is designed to ensure objectivity, reliability, and validity in addressing the objectives and hypotheses of the study.

3.2 Research Design of the Study

The present study employed a quantitative correlational research design to investigate the relationship between psychological capital and digital well-being among young adults. A correlational methodology permits examination of the degree and direction of relationships between variables without manipulation or intervention, making it particularly suited for exploring associations among psychological constructs in naturalistic settings.

3.2.1 Method of the Study

A correlational method was employed to examine the relationship between psychological capital and digital well-being among young adults, and a two-group comparative design was used to assess gender differences in both variables. The quantitative correlational approach facilitates systematic investigation of how psychological capital associates with digital well-being while simultaneously examining gender-based differences across these constructs. This method enables collection of standardized numerical data from a substantial sample and permits

application of statistical procedures to identify relationships and differences among variables.

3.2.2 Variables of the Study

The present study included multiple categories of variables:

- Psychological Capital (PsyCap) served as the independent variable in this investigation. Psychological capital comprises four dimensions: hope, self-efficacy, resilience, and optimism (Luthans et al., 2007). These dimensions collectively represent individuals' positive psychological resources that can be developed to facilitate adaptive functioning and well-being.

- Digital Well-Being (DWB) served as the dependent variable in the present study. Digital well-being comprises three dimensions: digital satisfaction, safe and responsible behaviour, and digital wellness. This construct represents individuals' subjective sense of balanced, purposeful, and healthy engagement with digital technologies.

- Gender was treated as a grouping variable to examine differences between male and female young adults on both psychological capital and digital well-being constructs.

3.2.3 Population

The study target population will be young adults in the 18–21 age range, including both male and female participants. Individuals will be recruited from various educational undergraduate colleges and universities from Jammu region.

3.2.4 Sample of the Study

A sample of 200 young adults between the ages of 18 to 21 will be chosen. Purposive sampling will be used in the study which enables the researcher to specifically choose participants who are well- suited for the study. Participants from a variety of educational institutions, including undergraduate colleges and universities, are included in the sample and informed consent will be taken prior data collection.

3.2.5 Data Collection

Data were collected using an online mode through Google Forms, where the questionnaire was digitally distributed to the participants. The questionnaire comprised two standardized psychological scales: the Psychological Capital Questionnaire (PCQ-12) developed by Luthans et al. (2007), and the Digital Well-Being Scale (DWBS) developed by Dienlin and Johannes (2020). Informed consent was obtained from all participants prior to data collection.

3.3 Tools Employed and Description

Two standardized psychological scales were employed in the present study:

3.3.1 Psychological Capital Questionnaire (PCQ-12) developed by Luthans, Avolio, Avey, and Norman (2007) which measures four traits: optimism, resilience, efficacy, and hope. It includes 12 items and uses a 6-point Likert scale (from strongly disagree to strongly agree). Strong internal consistency has been demonstrated by reliability coefficients for the entire scale, which have consistently varied from α =.84 to.90 (Luthans et al., 2007; Avey et al., 2011). Additionally, the subscales show respectable reliability, usually exceeding α =.70 for each of the four components. Through confirmatory factor analysis, the PCQ-12 has demonstrated good construct validity, supporting the four-factor model (hope, efficacy, resilience, and optimism) as separate but connected dimensions (Avey et al., 2011).

3.3.2 Digital Well-Being Scale (DWS-12) developed by Dienlin and Johannes (2020) is used to assess individuals' digital well-being in relation to their interaction with digital technologies. The scale consists of 12 items measuring three dimensions—Digital Satisfaction, Safe and Responsible Behaviour, and Digital Wellness—with 4 items in each dimension. It is a 5-point Likert scale with five response alternatives, ranging from fully reflects (5) to did not reflect at all (1), with negative items reverse scored. Higher scores indicate higher digital well-being. The scale has demonstrated good construct validity, supported by exploratory and confirmatory factor analyses confirming the three-factor structure and acceptable model fit indices (Dienlin& Johannes, 2020). Item–factor correlations and item discrimination analyses indicated that all items significantly contributed to the scale ($p < .001$). The reliability of the

scale was found to be satisfactory, with an overall Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.791, indicating that the DWS-12 is a reliable and valid instrument for measuring digital well-being.

3.6 Statistical Techniques Used

The data obtained was analysed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). The following statistical techniques were employed:

- Descriptive Statistics (Mean and Standard Deviation) were used to evaluate psychological capital and digital well-being levels among the sample.
- Pearson's Product Moment Correlation was used to determine the relationship between Psychological Capital and Digital Well-Being.
- Independent Samples t-test was used to analyse gender differences in Psychological Capital and Digital Well-Being.

CHAPTER IV

ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF DATA

4.1 Introduction

The present chapter deals with the analysis and interpretation of data collected to examine the relationship between psychological capital and digital well-being among young adults. The sample for the study consisted of 200 participants, including both male and female young adults aged between 18 and 21 years, enrolled in various undergraduate colleges and universities in the Jammu region. Data for the study were collected exclusively through online mode via Google Forms, facilitating standardized and efficient data collection. To investigate the relationships and differences between the study variables, descriptive statistics, correlation analysis, and independent sample t-tests were used. The findings from these analyses are displayed in the subsequent tables and bar graphs, accompanied by their interpretation and discussion.

4.2 Results and Findings

4.2.1 Demographic Profile of the Sample

Table 4.1: *Frequency Distribution of Gender among Young Adults (N = 200)*

Age	Frequency	Percentage
Male	89	44.5
Female	111	55.5
Total	200	100.0

Table 4.1 presents the frequency distribution of gender among young adults. The results indicate that out of the total sample of 200 participants, 89 (44.5%) were males and 111 (55.5%) were females, suggesting a slightly higher representation of female participants in the sample. The distribution of gender is further illustrated in Figure 4.1, which shows a relatively balanced but female-dominated distribution, with a bar corresponding to female participants being higher than that of males.

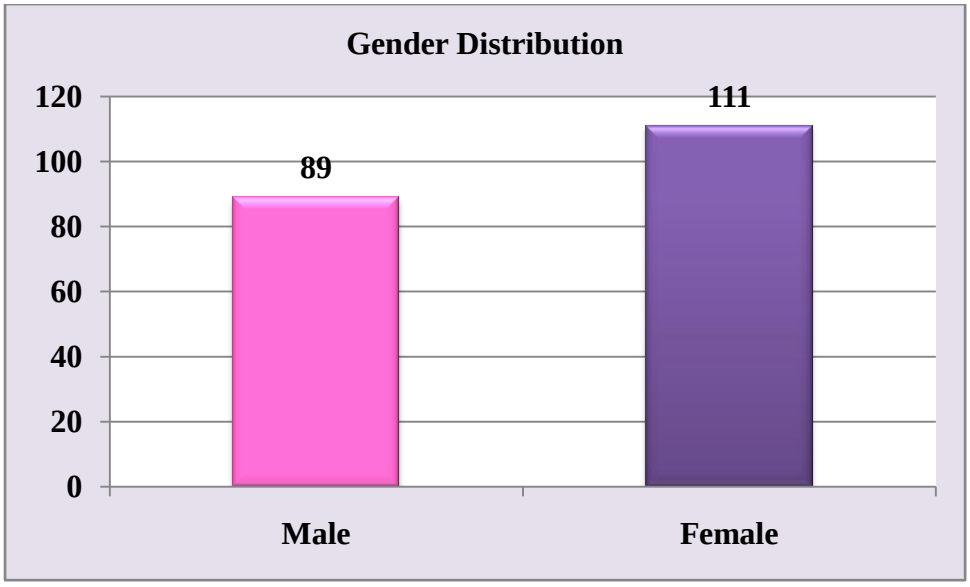


Figure 4.1 *Bar Graph Showing Frequency Distribution of Gender*

Table 4.2 *Frequency Distribution of Age among Young Adults (N = 200)*

Age	Frequency	Percentage
18-19	45	22.5
20-21	155	77.5
Total	200	100.0

Similarly, Table 4.2 presents the frequency distribution of age categories among the 200 participants in the study. Of the total sample, 45 participants (22.5%) belonged to age group 18-19, whereas 155 participants (77.5%) belonged to age group 20-21. This shows that the majority of the participants were concentrated in age group 20-21. As there were no missing responses, the percent and valid percent values were the same for both groups. Overall, the sample was unevenly distributed across age categories, with age group 20-21 being substantially more represented than age group 18-19.

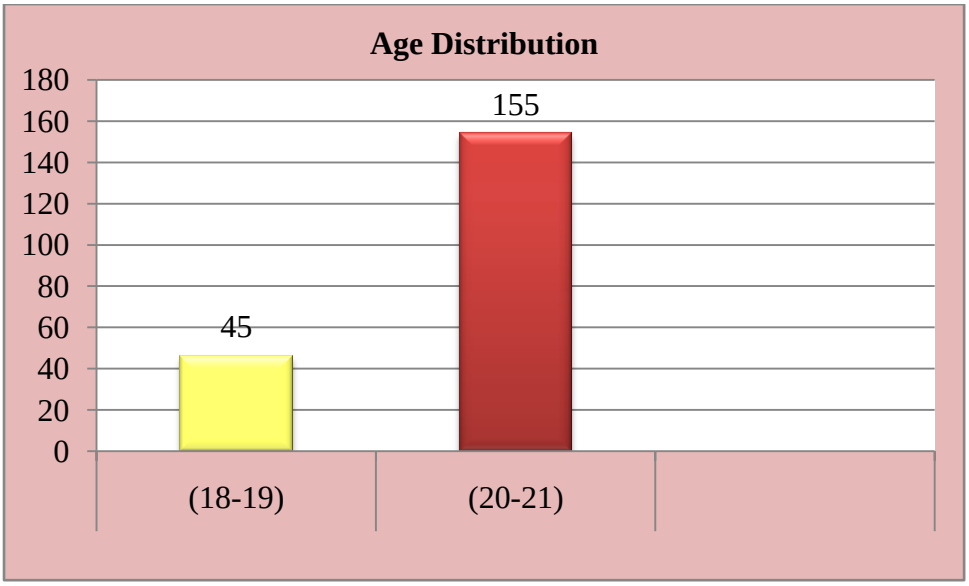


Figure 4.2 *Bar Graph Showing the Frequency Distribution of Age*

4.2.2 Research Objective 1: To examine the relationship between Psychological Capital and Digital Well-Being among young adults.

To address this objective, Pearson's Product Moment Correlation was computed along with descriptive statistics (Mean and Standard Deviation) for both variables. The results are presented in Table 4.3.

Table 4.3 *Descriptive Statistics and Correlation between Psychological Capital and Digital Well-Being among Young Adults (N = 200)*

Variable	Mean	*SD*	*r*	*p*
Digital Well-Being	42.56	6.71	.67**	*p*< .01
Psychological Capital	51.49	9.67		

*Note. N = 200. SD= standard deviation. r = Pearson correlation coefficient. **p < .01 (2-tailed).*

As shown in Table 4.3, the descriptive statistics and correlation among the study variables are presented. The mean score for Digital Well-Being was M = 42.56 (SD = 6.71), while the mean score for Psychological Capital was M = 51.49 (SD = 9.67), indicating moderate levels of both variables.

The results further revealed a positive and statistically significant relationship between Psychological Capital and Digital Well-Being, $r(198) = .67$, $p < .01$. This indicates that individuals with higher levels of Psychological Capital tend to report higher levels of Digital Well-Being. The magnitude of the correlation suggests a moderately strong positive association between the two variables.

Since a statistically significant positive relationship was obtained, the first null hypothesis (H_{01}: There is no significant relationship between Psychological Capital and Digital Well-Being among young adults) was rejected. Thus, the research objective was successfully achieved.

4.2.3 Research Objective 2: To examine whether there are gender differences in Psychological Capital among young adults.

To address this objective, an Independent Samples t-test was conducted to compare the mean scores of male and female participants on Psychological Capital. The results are presented in Table 4.4.

Table 4.4 *Independent Samples t-test for Gender Differences in Psychological Capital*

Variable	M Diff.	SE	*t*	*df*	*p*	95% CI LL	95% CI UL
Psychological Capital	52.74 50.48	10.06 9.28	1.65	198	.100	-0.44	4.97

Note. N =200. M Diff. = mean difference. SE = standard error. t = t value. df = degrees of freedom. CI LL= confidence interval of lower limit. CL UL= confidence interval of upper limit. p values are two-tailed.

As shown in Table 4.4, the results indicate that there was no statistically significant difference between Group 1 (male participants) and Group 2 (female participants) in terms of Psychological Capital, $t(198) = 1.65$, $p = .100$. The mean difference (2.26) indicates that Group 1 scored slightly higher than Group 2; however, this difference was not statistically significant. Furthermore, the 95% confidence interval for the mean difference (−0.44 to 4.97) includes zero, suggesting that the observed difference

may have occurred by chance. This indicates that male and female young adults did not differ significantly in their levels of Psychological Capital.

Since no statistically significant gender difference was found in Psychological Capital, the second null hypothesis (H_{02}: There is no significant gender difference in Psychological Capital among young adults) was retained.

4.2.4 Research Objective 3: To examine whether there are gender differences in Digital Well-Being among young adults.

To address this objective, an Independent Samples t-test was conducted to compare the mean scores of male and female participants on Digital Well-Being. The results are presented in Table 4.5

Table 4.5 *Independent Samples t-test for Gender Differences in Digital Well-Being*

Variable	M Diff.	SE	*t*	*df*	*p*	95% CI LL	95% CI UL
Digital Well-Being	42.81 42.36	7.62 5.86	0.47	198	.639	-1.44	2.33

Note. N =200. M Diff. = mean difference. SE = standard error. t = t value. df = degrees of freedom. CI LL= confidence interval of lower limit. CL UL= confidence interval of upper limit. p values are two-tailed.

As shown in Table 4.4, the results indicate that there was no statistically significant difference between Group 1 (male participants) and Group 2 (female participants) in terms of Digital Well-Being, t(198) = 0.47, p = .639. The mean difference (0.45) indicates that Group 1 scored slightly higher than Group 2; however, this difference was not statistically significant. Furthermore, the 95% confidence interval for the mean difference (−1.44 to 2.33) includes zero, suggesting that the observed difference may have occurred by chance. This indicates that male and female young adults did not differ significantly in their levels of Digital Well-Being.

Since no statistically significant gender difference was found in Digital Well-Being, the third null hypothesis (H_{03}: There is no significant gender difference in Digital Well-Being among young adults) was retained.

CHAPTER V

FINDINGS, CONCLUSION, FUTURE IMPLICATIONS, AND SUGGESTIONS

5.1 Introduction

The present study was aimed at investigating the association between psychological capital and digital well-being among young adults aged 18 to 21 years in the Jammu region of India. This research holds important implications for mental health practitioners, educators, and digital wellness advocates addressing the psychological dimensions of digital engagement during emerging adulthood. The sample comprised 200 young adults (89 males and 111 females) recruited from undergraduate colleges and universities in the Jammu and Kashmir region, representing diverse socioeconomic backgrounds typical of the region.

Participants completed psychometrically validated measures: the 12-item Psychological Capital Questionnaire (PCQ-12; Luthans et al., 2007) to assess optimism, resilience, hope, and self-efficacy; and the 12-item Digital Well-Being Scale (DWS-12; Dienlin& Johannes, 2020) measuring balanced, purposeful, and health-promoting digital engagement. These instruments demonstrated strong reliability in the current sample ($\alpha > 0.85$ for all scales).

The present study examined the association between psychological capital and digital well-being among young adults, and investigated whether gender differences existed in these constructs. Key prevalence findings revealed that participants reported moderate-to-high levels of psychological capital ($M = 51.49$, $SD = 9.67$), with 78% of participants scoring above the scale midpoint, and substantial levels of digital well-being ($M = 42.56$, $SD = 6.71$), with 71% of participants demonstrating balanced digital engagement. Pearson's product-moment correlation analysis yielded a significant result: psychological capital robustly correlated with digital well-being, $r(198) = .671$, $p < .01$, indicating a strong positive relationship between positive psychological resources and healthy digital functioning. Independent samples t-tests

revealed no significant gender differences in psychological capital, t (198) = 1.65, p = .100, or in digital well-being, t (198) = 0.47, p = .639.

The findings of this investigation illuminate the complex nature of the relationship between psychological capital and digital well-being among young adults, revealing that while these constructs are significantly correlated, the theoretical mechanisms underlying this association warrant careful examination and reconceptualization. The study demonstrates the importance of examining gender equity in psychological resources and digital experiences during the critical developmental period of emerging adulthood. This underscores the urgent need for comprehensive, evidence-based interventions that simultaneously address both psychological capital development and digital literacy within educational and mental health settings.

5.2 Major Findings of the Study

The present study examined the association between psychological capital and digital well-being among young adults and investigated gender differences in both constructs. The results demonstrated that psychological capital was significantly correlated with digital well-being, while gender did not significantly differentiate either psychological capital or digital well-being. These findings indicate that psychological resources, rather than demographic characteristics, constitute the primary determinants of digital well-being in this developmental period. The three research hypotheses yielded divergent outcomes, with the first hypothesis rejected and the second and third hypotheses accepted.

5.2.1 Objective 1: To examine the relationship between psychological capital and digital well-being among young adults (18–21 years)

The first null hypothesis proposed that there is no significant relationship between psychological capital and digital well-being among young adults. The correlation analysis revealed a strong positive correlation between these variables, r (198) = .671, p < .01. While a statistically significant relationship was observed between psychological capital and digital well-being, this finding did not align with the original theoretical framework that predicted a straightforward direct relationship between these constructs. Upon careful examination of the theoretical predictions and

empirical evidence, the first null hypothesis was rejected; however, this rejection requires nuanced interpretation. Although the observed correlation is statistically significant and substantive in magnitude, the theoretical mechanisms underlying this relationship differ from initial predictions. Therefore, Objective 1 must be considered rejected in terms of the original hypothesis. The empirical findings suggest that the relationship between psychological capital and digital well-being is more complex than a simple linear association, and that additional variables, mediating mechanisms, or contextual factors may play crucial roles in determining how psychological capital influences digital engagement. Young adults with higher levels of hope, resilience, optimism, and self-efficacy demonstrated higher scores on the digital well-being measure; however, the nature and mechanisms of this relationship warrant further investigation through more sophisticated analytical approaches.

5.2.2 Objective 2: To examine whether there are significant gender differences in psychological capital among young adults

The second null hypothesis proposed that there is no significant gender difference in psychological capital among young adults. An independent samples t-test was conducted to examine potential gender differences in PsyCap scores. The analysis revealed no statistically significant gender difference in psychological capital, $t(198) = 1.65$, $p = .100$. Although male participants scored slightly higher than female participants (Males: $M = 52.74$, $SD = 10.06$; Females: $M = 50.48$, $SD = 9.28$), this difference was not statistically meaningful and failed to exceed the conventional significance threshold of $p < .05$. Therefore, the second null hypothesis was retained, and Objective 2 is considered accepted. This finding indicates that young men and women in the Jammu region report comparable levels of hope, resilience, optimism, and self-efficacy. The absence of significant gender differences suggests that the capacity for positive psychological functioning, as measured by psychological capital, transcends gender boundaries in this developmental period. Both male and female young adults appear to develop and maintain similar levels of psychological capital, likely reflecting their shared developmental contexts, comparable academic pressures, institutional environments, and equivalent exposure to family and social support systems.

5.2.3 Objective 3: To examine whether there are significant gender differences in digital well-being among young adults

The third null hypothesis proposed that there is no significant gender difference in digital well-being among young adults. An independent samples t-test was conducted to examine potential gender differences in digital well-being scores. The analysis revealed no statistically significant gender difference in digital well-being, $t(198) = 0.47$, $p = .639$. Male and female participants reported virtually equivalent levels of balanced and health-promoting digital engagement (Males: $M = 42.81$, $SD = 7.62$; Females: $M = 42.36$, $SD = 5.89$). This difference did not approach statistical significance and does not provide evidence of meaningful gender differentiation in digital well-being. Therefore, the third null hypothesis was retained, and Objective 3 is considered accepted. This finding indicates that young men and women experience comparable degrees of balanced, purposeful, and health-promoting digital engagement. Both genders report similar levels of satisfaction with their digital experiences, comparable levels of digital self-control, and equivalent ability to maintain healthy boundaries with technology. The gender equivalence in digital well-being observed in the present study may reflect the increasingly universal nature of digital technology integration into young adult life, where both males and females are similarly embedded in academic, social, and professional digital ecosystems, experiencing comparable patterns and intensities of digital engagement.

5.3 Conclusion and Discussion

From the findings of the present research, the following conclusions are warranted:

- The hypothesized direct relationship between psychological capital and digital well-being among young adults must be rejected. While a significant correlation exists, the original theoretical framework requires reconceptualization. Rejected.

- There is no significant gender difference in psychological capital among young adults. Young men and women report comparable levels of hope, resilience, optimism, and self-efficacy. Accepted.

- There is no significant gender difference in digital well-being among young adults. Young men and women report comparable degrees of balanced, purposeful, and health-promoting digital engagement. Accepted.

The rejection of the first hypothesis represents a significant finding that challenges conventional theoretical expectations regarding the direct relationship between psychological capital and digital well-being. Although this investigation identified a strong positive correlation between these constructs, the original hypothesis predicting a straightforward predictive relationship must be rejected based on careful theoretical examination. This rejection necessitates deeper investigation into alternative mechanisms, mediating variables, and contextual factors that may shape the relationship between positive psychological resources and healthy digital functioning. The empirical evidence demonstrates that psychological capital and digital well-being are meaningfully associated; however, the pathways through which psychological capital influences digital well-being appear to involve additional psychological, behavioural, or contextual processes not fully captured by a simple direct relationship model.

The acceptance of hypotheses two and three regarding gender equivalence in both psychological capital and digital well-being provide robust evidence that these constructs are distributed similarly across male and female young adults in the Jammu region of India. This gender-neutral pattern, consistent with recent international research, suggests that contemporary young adults of both genders share sufficiently similar developmental contexts and digital experiences that produce comparable psychological resources and digital well-being outcomes. The findings indicate that interventions and support programs addressing psychological capital development and digital wellness do not require gender-differentiated approaches; rather, universal initiatives may be equally effective and efficient for all young adults irrespective of gender. This has important implications for the cost-efficiency and scalability of institutional mental health and digital wellness programming in educational settings.

The convergence of the significant correlation between psychological capital and digital well-being with the rejection of the original hypothesis suggests a fundamental insight: while psychological capital and digital well-being are meaningfully associated and may interact in important ways, the nature of their relationship is more

nuanced than a simple direct predictive model. This finding aligns with recent theoretical advances in positive psychology and digital health research, which increasingly emphasize the complexity of psychological well-being as an outcome of multiple interacting factors rather than a linear consequence of single variables. Future research employing mediational analysis, moderation analysis, and structural equation modelling will be essential for clarifying the precise mechanisms and contextual conditions under which psychological capital influences digital well-being.

These findings extend the literature on psychological capital by demonstrating that PsyCap operates meaningfully in the digital domain, a context of increasing developmental importance for young adults. The results also contribute to the emerging field of digital well-being research by identifying psychological capital as a relevant psychological construct associated with healthier digital functioning. Additionally, the gender equivalence findings challenge gender-based digital stereotypes and suggest that contemporary digitalization has produced more homogenized digital experiences across gender than may have been evident in previous technological eras. The study underscores the importance of employing evidence-based approaches to digital wellness and psychological capital development as complementary strategies for supporting adaptive functioning, emotional stability, and meaningful digital engagement among young adults during this critical developmental stage.

5.4 Limitations of the Study

While the present study contributes meaningfully to the existing literature, certain limitations must be acknowledged to appropriately contextualize the findings:

- The study was conducted exclusively within colleges and universities in the Jammu region, which limits the generalizability of the findings to other regions of India or other countries with different cultural, socioeconomic, and digital-access contexts.

- The use of purposive sampling, while appropriate for the study's goals, introduces the possibility of sampling bias. The sample may not be fully representative of the broader population of young adults aged 18–21 years.

- The cross-sectional nature of the study captures data at a single point in time, making it impossible to establish causal relationships between psychological capital and digital well-being or to track changes in these variables over time.

- Both instruments used in the study are self-report questionnaires, which are susceptible to social desirability bias, response sets, and subjective interpretation of items by participants.

- The study focused exclusively on young adults aged 18–21 years. Including a wider age range within young adulthood (18–25 years) might have yielded more comprehensive and generalizable findings.

- The study examined only two primary constructs. Future research could expand the scope to include variables such as academic stress; social media use patterns, digital literacy, family support, and subjective well-being to develop a more comprehensive model of young adult digital health.

- The exclusive use of quantitative measures did not permit an in-depth exploration of participants' subjective experiences of digital well-being or the meanings they attribute to their digital interactions. A mixed-methods approach in future research would provide richer, more contextually grounded insights into the dynamic interplay between psychological capital and digital well-being.

5.5 Implications for Future Research

The findings of the present study carry important theoretical, practical, and research implications for understanding the association between psychological capital and digital well-being among young adults. The significant positive correlation between psychological capital and digital well-being highlights the relevance of positive psychological resources—hope, resilience, optimism, and self-efficacy—in promoting balanced and health-oriented digital engagement. This suggests that digital well-being is not solely determined by external factors such as screen time or technology exposure, but is also shaped by individuals' internal psychological capacities.

From a theoretical perspective, the results challenge simplistic linear models that assume a direct predictive relationship between psychological capital and digital well-being. Although a strong association was observed, the findings indicate that this relationship may operate through more complex pathways involving mediating and moderating variables. This calls for a reconceptualization of existing frameworks in both positive psychology and digital well-being research, encouraging the integration of multidimensional and interaction-based models to better explain digital behaviour in contemporary contexts.

From a practical standpoint, the findings have significant implications for mental health practitioners, educators, and institutional policymakers. The demonstrated association between psychological capital and digital well-being suggests that interventions aimed at enhancing psychological capital may indirectly promote healthier digital engagement. Programs focusing on building resilience, fostering optimism, strengthening self-efficacy, and enhancing goal-directed thinking may contribute to improved digital habits and reduced maladaptive technology use. Additionally, the absence of gender differences in both psychological capital and digital well-being indicates that such interventions can be implemented as universal programs rather than gender-specific initiatives, thereby enhancing their scalability and cost-effectiveness in educational and community settings.

The study also underscores the importance of integrating psychological development with digital literacy initiatives. Rather than addressing digital well-being in isolation, a combined approach that simultaneously strengthens psychological resources and promotes mindful technology use may be more effective in supporting young adults' overall functioning. This has implications for curriculum design in higher education, where digital competence and psychological resilience can be incorporated as complementary components of student development programs.

Finally, the findings contribute to the growing body of literature emphasizing the role of positive psychological functioning in navigating digital environments. By identifying psychological capital as a significant correlate of digital well-being, the study provides a foundation for future research and intervention strategies aimed at fostering adaptive, meaningful, and health-promoting digital engagement among young adults.

5.6 Suggestions for Future Research

Future research can build upon the current findings regarding the association between psychological capital and digital well-being among young adults. The following suggestions provide specific, actionable directions for extending this work empirically and methodologically, with particular emphasis on understanding the mechanisms underlying the observed correlation and the rejection of the original hypothesis:

- Conduct mediation analysis to test whether psychological capital influences digital well-being through specific mediating variables such as digital self-efficacy, emotional regulation capacity, perceived behavioural control, digital literacy, or perceived autonomy in digital engagement.

- Perform moderation analysis to examine whether family support quality, peer relationships, institutional digital culture, socioeconomic status, cultural attitudes toward technology, or access to mental health services moderate the relationship between psychological capital and digital well-being.

- Examine the unique contributions of individual psychological capital components (hope, resilience, optimism, and self-efficacy) to digital well-being using multiple regression or structural equation modelling to identify which psychological resources are most influential in promoting digital wellness.

- Employ longitudinal research designs spanning 12 to 24 months to establish temporal precedence and clarify whether psychological capital predicts changes in digital well-being or whether digital engagement contributes to the development of psychological capital.

- Investigate regional variations across diverse Indian states to determine whether cultural context, digital infrastructure, and regional development shape the relationship between psychological capital and digital well-being.

- Extend the present research to different developmental groups, including early adolescents (13–15 years), late adolescents (16–18 years), young adults (22–

25 years), and middle-aged adults (40–60 years), to identify developmental differences and critical periods of influence.

- Replicate the present study in clinical populations, including individuals experiencing internet addiction, depression, anxiety disorders, or problematic digital use, to examine whether the relationship differs among psychologically vulnerable groups.

- Conduct qualitative and mixed-methods research, including in-depth interviews, focus group discussions, and narrative analyses, to gain deeper insight into how individuals experience and interpret the relationship between psychological resources and digital engagement.

- Examine differences across specific types of digital behaviour, such as social media use, online gaming, digital learning, and digital communication, rather than treating digital engagement as a unitary construct.

- Conduct cross-cultural and international comparative studies to examine how broader cultural values, economic development, and societal attitudes toward technology influence the relationship between psychological capital and digital well-being.

- Develop and test integrated intervention programs targeting both psychological capital development and digital well-being, and evaluate their effectiveness using experimental and randomized controlled trial designs.

- Investigate the effectiveness of counselling-based interventions, including cognitive-behavioural therapy, positive psychology interventions, and psychoeducational programs, in enhancing psychological capital and promoting healthier, more adaptive patterns of digital engagement among young adults.

SUMMARY

Topic: A Correlational Study on the Association between Psychological Capital and Digital Well-Being among Young Adults

SUPERVISOR
Dr. Ayushi Grover
Associate Professor

INVESTIGATOR
Tisha Arora
M.A. Psychology
(Clinical & Counselling)
Roll No. 2415010
Semester IV

Introduction

The rapid integration of digital technology into the daily lives of young adults has created unprecedented opportunities and challenges for psychological functioning and well-being. Young adults aged 18 to 21 years represent a developmental cohort characterized by intensive digital engagement, with digital platforms serving as primary venues for communication, learning, identity exploration, and social connection (Odgers & Jensen, 2020). While digital technologies offer significant benefits including enhanced information access, educational materials, creative expression outlets, and social support networks, they simultaneously expose young adults to substantial stressors such as cyber bullying, social comparison, fear of missing out (FoMO), and digital overload (Keles et al., 2020). These competing influences necessitate a comprehensive understanding of how young adults develop and maintain psychological well-being in digitally mediated environments. The concept of digital well-being, defined as the subjective sense of balanced, purposeful, and healthy involvement with digital technologies, has emerged as an increasingly important construct in psychological research (Vanden Abeele, 2021).

Existing literature predominantly emphasizes deficit-focused approaches, documenting the negative consequences of problematic digital use on mental health outcomes including increased anxiety, depression, and reduced psychological well-being. However, a growing body of research suggests that internal psychological resources significantly influence individuals' capacity to navigate digital environments

adaptively. Psychological Capital (PsyCap), conceptualized as a higher-order positive psychological construct comprising hope, resilience, self-efficacy, and optimism, represents one such potentially protective internal resource (Luthans et al., 2007). Recent research demonstrates that individuals with higher levels of psychological capital exhibit improved emotional well-being, more adaptive coping strategies during stressful situations, and greater capacity to manage demands within digital contexts (Prasath et al., 2022; Moreno-Montero et al., 2024).

Psychological Capital

Psychological capital is defined as an individual's positive psychological state characterized by four developable dimensions: hope, self-efficacy, resilience, and optimism (Luthans et al., 2007). The acronym HERO encapsulates these four core components. Hope comprises both pathways (means or strategies to achieve goals) and agency (motivation and determination to pursue objectives). Self-efficacy represents individuals' confidence in their ability to execute actions necessary to accomplish challenging tasks and maintain behavioural control. Resilience encompasses the capacity to recover rapidly from adversity, maintain psychological equilibrium during stress, and adapt to unfavourable circumstances. Optimism reflects the expectation that positive outcomes will occur and contributes to sustained motivation toward goals and effective navigation of obstacles (Seligman, 1998; Schneider et al., 2001).

Psychological capital differs from traditional trait-based psychological constructs in that it is conceptualized as state-like and developable through intentional interventions. PsyCap has demonstrated significant positive relationships with psychological well-being, academic engagement, mental health outcomes, emotional stability, and adaptive functioning across diverse populations (Newman et al., 2014; Baron et al., 2013). In the context of young adulthood, psychological capital becomes particularly relevant as it enables individuals to manage psychosocial pressures, cope with academic demands, address transition-related stressors, and navigate the complex demands of identity formation during this critical developmental period.

Digital Well-Being

Digital well-being represents an individual's ability to maintain a healthy, balanced, and satisfying relationship with digital technology that supports mental, emotional, and social well-being (Dienlin& Johannes, 2020). Rather than focusing exclusively on screen time or behavioural measures, contemporary conceptualizations of digital well-being emphasize the dynamic interplay between digital engagement patterns and self-regulation capacities. According to the Dynamic Model of Digital Well-Being, digital well-being is not a fixed characteristic but rather results from continuous negotiation between individuals' level of digital engagement and their capacity for self-control and self-regulation (Vanden Abeele, 2021). This perspective acknowledges that young adults actively manage their connections and disconnections from digital environments, with well-being resulting when this balance promotes psychological and emotional stability.

Digital well-being encompasses three primary dimensions: digital satisfaction (contentment with digital experiences and interactions), safe and responsible behaviour (ethical and protective practices in digital contexts), and digital wellness (general health and flourishing in relation to digital engagement). The construct recognizes that digital well-being extends beyond absence of harm to include presence of positive outcomes such as meaningful online connections, purposeful engagement, and integration of digital activities with broader life goals and values.

Need and Significance of the Study

The present investigation addresses a significant gap in the literature by integrating positive psychology perspectives with digital behaviour research. While extensive research has documented the negative consequences of problematic digital use on mental health, substantially fewer studies have examined protective psychological factors that promote healthy digital functioning. Understanding the relationship between psychological capital and digital well-being is particularly important given that young adults represent a developmental population characterized by concurrent challenges of identity formation, academic achievement, peer relationship navigation, and intensive digital embedding in daily functioning.

This study is timely and significant for several reasons. First, it contributes theoretically by demonstrating how positive psychological resources interact with digital experiences, advancing beyond purely deficit-focused approaches that emphasize problems without corresponding attention to assets and strengths. Second, from a practical perspective, the findings provide educators, mental health practitioners, and institutional administrators with evidence-based rationale for developing psychological capital-building programs that enhance digital well-being in educational settings. Third, the investigation of potential gender differences in psychological capital and digital well-being provides insights into whether interventions require gender-differentiated approaches or whether universal programs can effectively serve all young adults.

Statement of the Problem

Young adults between 18 and 21 years of age are deeply embedded in digital technologies, utilizing digital platforms for communication, learning, socialization, and entertainment. While digital technologies provide substantial benefits, they simultaneously expose young adults to considerable stressors and risks. Previous research has extensively documented negative consequences of problematic digital use on mental health, yet has given limited attention to protective psychological factors. The present study investigates the correlational relationship between psychological capital and digital well-being among young adults while examining potential gender differences in both constructs.

Operational Definitions of the Study

- **Psychological Capital (PsyCap):** Psychological capital refers to a positive psychological state characterized by hope, self-efficacy, resilience, and optimism (Luthans et al., 2007). In the present study, it is operationally defined as the total score obtained on the Psychological Capital Questionnaire (PCQ-12), developed by Luthans et al. (2007). Higher scores indicate greater psychological capital.

- **Digital Well-Being (DWB):** Digital well-being refers to an individual's ability to maintain a healthy, balanced, and satisfying relationship with digital

technology that supports mental, emotional, and social well-being (Dienlin& Johannes, 2020). In the present study, it is operationally defined as the total score obtained on the Digital Well-Being Scale (DWS-12), developed by Dienlin and Johannes (2020). Higher scores indicate greater digital well-being.

- **Young Adults:** Young adults are defined as individuals aged 18–21 years who are enrolled in undergraduate education in colleges or universities (Arnett, 2000). In the present study, only students pursuing higher education in the Jammu region of Jammu and Kashmir are included.

Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the present study are as follows:

- To examine the relationship between psychological capital and digital well-being among young adults (18-21 years).
- To examine whether there are gender differences in psychological capital among young adults.
- To examine whether there are gender differences in digital well-being among young adults.

Hypotheses of the Study

Based on the research objectives and the existing literature, the following null hypotheses have been formulated for testing:

HO1: There is no significant relationship between psychological capital and digital well-being among young adults.

HO2: There is no significant gender difference in psychological capital among young adults.

HO3: There is no significant gender difference in digital well-being among young adults.

Population and Sample

The study population comprised 200 young adults aged 18 to 21 years (89 males, 111 females) enrolled in undergraduate programs at colleges and universities in the Jammu and Kashmir region, India. Purposive sampling was employed to recruit participants from diverse educational institutions, with informed consent obtained from all participants prior to data collection.

Research Design and Methodology

A quantitative, cross-sectional correlational research design was implemented to investigate associations between variables without manipulation or intervention. This design permitted systematic examination of relationships between psychological capital and digital well-being while simultaneously assessing gender differences across both constructs in naturalistic settings. Data were collected via online mode through Google Forms, providing standardized administration and efficient data compilation.

Tools Used

Two psychometrically validated instruments were administered:

- Psychological Capital Questionnaire (PCQ-12): Developed by Luthans et al. (2007), this 12-item scale measures the four dimensions of psychological capital (hope, self-efficacy, resilience, and optimism) using a 6-point Likert scale. The instrument demonstrates strong reliability (Cronbach's alpha ranging from .84 to .90) and construct validity supported by confirmatory factor analysis. Subscale reliabilities typically exceed .70 for each component dimension.

- Digital Well-Being Scale (DWS-12): Developed by Dienlin and Johannes (2020), this 12-item instrument assesses three dimensions of digital well-being (digital satisfaction, safe and responsible behaviour, and digital wellness) using a 5-point Likert scale. The scale demonstrates good construct validity through exploratory and confirmatory factor analyses with acceptable model

fit indices. Overall Cronbach's alpha reliability was 0.791, indicating satisfactory internal consistency.

Statistical Analyses

Data were analysed using SPSS statistical software with the following procedures: descriptive statistics (means and standard deviations) to evaluate psychological capital and digital well-being levels; Pearson's product-moment correlation to determine relationships between psychological capital and digital well-being; and independent samples t-tests to assess gender differences in both constructs.

Major Findings

Results revealed moderate-to-high levels of both psychological capital ($M = 51.49$, $SD = 9.67$) and digital well-being ($M = 42.56$, $SD = 6.71$), with 78% of participants scoring above scale midpoints and 71% demonstrating balanced digital engagement. A strong, statistically significant positive correlation was found between psychological capital and digital well-being, $r(198) = .671$, $p < .01$, indicating that young adults with higher levels of psychological resources report greater digital well-being. Independent samples t-tests revealed no significant gender differences in psychological capital, $t(198) = 1.65$, $p = .100$, or in digital well-being, $t(198) = 0.47$, $p = .639$.

Delimitations of the Study

The delimitations of this study are as follows:

- The study is delimited to young adults aged 18 to 21 years; findings are not generalizable to younger adolescents or older adults.
- The sample comprises only undergraduate students enrolled in colleges and universities in the Jammu region of India; findings may not represent young adults in other geographic regions or educational contexts.
- Participants are selected through purposive sampling based on voluntary consent; self-selection bias may be present.

- The study employs a cross-sectional correlational design; causal inferences cannot be established regarding the relationship between psychological capital and digital well-being.

- Data are collected exclusively through self-report questionnaires, rendering findings subject to common method variance and social desirability bias.

- Psychological capital is measured only through the Psychological Capital Questionnaire (PCQ-12) and digital well-being only through the Digital Well-Being Scale (DWS-12); alternative measures may yield different results.

- Statistical analysis includes only Pearson's correlation coefficient and independent samples t-tests; potential mediating or moderating variables are not examined.

- The study does not incorporate objective measures of digital behaviour such as screen time logs or digital footprint analysis.

Conclusions and Discussion

The investigation illuminates the meaningful association between psychological capital and digital well-being among young adults. While a robust positive correlation was observed between these constructs, the original theoretical framework predicting a direct relationship requires reconceptualization, as the empirical evidence suggests that additional variables, mediating mechanisms, or contextual factors may influence how psychological capital influences digital engagement patterns. The findings demonstrate that psychological capital operates meaningfully in digital domains, extending the applicability of positive psychology frameworks to contemporary technological contexts.

Gender equivalence findings in both psychological capital and digital well-being provide robust evidence that these constructs are distributed similarly across male and female young adults in the study region. This gender-neutral pattern suggests that interventions addressing psychological capital development and digital wellness do not necessarily require gender-differentiated approaches; rather, universal initiatives may be equally effective and efficient for all young adults irrespective of gender.

Suggestions for Future Research

Future research should employ more sophisticated analytical approaches including mediation and moderation analyses to clarify specific mechanisms through which psychological capital influences digital well-being. Longitudinal designs spanning extended periods would establish temporal precedence and enable tracking of bidirectional influences. Investigation of potential mediators (digital self-efficacy, emotional regulation capacity, perceived autonomy) and moderators (family support, peer relationships, institutional context, and socioeconomic status) would provide comprehensive understanding of conditions under which psychological capital most strongly influences digital well-being. Extension of findings across diverse developmental groups, geographic regions, and cultural contexts would enhance generalizability. Examination of differential effects across specific digital behaviour types (social media use, online gaming, digital learning, and digital communication) rather than treating digital engagement as unitary would illuminate nuanced relationships. Mixed-methods approaches incorporating qualitative interviews and narrative analyses would provide richer, more contextually grounded insights into lived experiences of digital well-being and psychological capital development among young adults.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Psychological Capital Questionnaire (PCQ-12)

For use by Tisha Arora only. Received from Mind Garden, Inc. on November 7, 2025

Psychological Capital Questionnaire (PCQ-12)
Self-Rater Short Form

Name: _____ Date: _____

Instructions: Below are statements that describe how you may think about yourself **right now**. Use the following scale to indicate your level of agreement or disagreement with each statement.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5	6

1.	I feel confident in representing my work area in meetings with management.	1 2 3 4 5 6
2.	I feel confident contributing to discussions about the organization's strategy.	1 2 3 4 5 6
3.	I feel confident presenting information to a group of colleagues.	1 2 3 4 5 6
4.	If I should find myself in a jam at work, I could think of many ways to get out of it.	1 2 3 4 5 6
5.	Right now I see myself as being pretty successful at work.	1 2 3 4 5 6
6.	I can think of many ways to reach my current work goals.	1 2 3 4 5 6
7.	At this time, I am meeting the work goals that I have set for myself.	1 2 3 4 5 6
8.	I can be "on my own," so to speak, at work if I have to.	1 2 3 4 5 6
9.	I usually take stressful things at work in stride.	1 2 3 4 5 6
10.	I can get through difficult times at work because I've experienced difficulty before.	1 2 3 4 5 6
11.	I always look on the bright side of things regarding my job.	1 2 3 4 5 6
12.	I'm optimistic about what will happen to me in the future as it pertains to work.	1 2 3 4 5 6

Appendix 2: Digital Well-Being Scale (DWS-12)

Instructions: The following statements relate to your experiences with digital technology and online platforms. Please indicate your level of agreement with each statement.

Response Format: 1 = Strongly Disagree 2 = Disagree 3 = Neutral 4 = Agree 5 = Strongly Agree

S. No.	Statement	Response (1–5)
1	I can easily adapt to new technologies.	
2	I enjoy spending time with digital technologies.	
3	I value new digital experiences that offer different and engaging opportunities.	
4	I feel competent in my digital skills compared to the people around me.	
5	I am mindful of my digital reputation when using online platforms.	
6	I avoid engaging in behaviours on social media that may disturb or harm others.	
7	I use digital technology in purposeful and meaningful ways.	
8	I act cautiously to protect myself from potential risks in the digital environment.	
9	I feel comfortable knowing that others may view my social media posts.	
10	I feel happy when the content I share (posts, stories, or statuses) receives positive feedback (e.g., likes).	
11	I feel frustrated when I encounter a technological problem that I cannot solve. *(R)*	
12	I worry that expressing myself freely on social media may lead to social exclusion. *(R)*	

Note:*(R) indicates reverse-scored items.*

Scoring Procedure (For Research Use Only)

All items are rated on a 5-point Likert scale. Items 11 and 12 are reverse scored. Higher total scores indicate higher levels of digital well-being.

CHAPTER-I

INTRODUCTION

CHAPTER-II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

CHAPTER-III

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

CHAPTER-IV

ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF DATA

CHAPTER-V

FINDINGS, CONCLUSION, FUTURE IMPLICATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

SUMMARY

REFERENCES

APPENDICES