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THE INFLUENCE OF DIGITAL TECHNOLOGY ON HUMAN BEHAVIOUR AND EMOTIONAL WELLBEING

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ABSTRACT

Digital technology has become an essential part of modern life, influencing how people communicate, learn, work, develop relationships, and manage their emotions. Smartphones, social media platforms, online learning systems, digital entertainment, and artificial intelligence provide opportunities for communication, knowledge sharing, creativity, and social support. However, excessive or problematic use of digital technologies may also contribute to emotional distress, anxiety, depressive symptoms, sleep difficulties, loneliness, and changes in everyday behaviour. The influence of digital technology is not uniform; it may depend on the purpose of use, duration of exposure, individual characteristics, social environment, and the nature of online interactions. Recent research suggests that digital engagement can produce both beneficial and harmful outcomes, making it important to examine the quality of technology use rather than screen time alone (Sala et al., 2024; Ahmed et al., 2024). This article examines the influence of digital technology on human behaviour and emotional wellbeing through a review of existing scholarly literature. It explores behavioural changes associated with digital engagement, identifies potential emotional benefits and risks, and considers practical approaches to healthier technology use. The article argues that digital wellbeing requires a balanced approach that supports meaningful digital participation while protecting emotional health, personal relationships, and daily functioning.

KEYWORDS

Digital technology, human behaviour, emotional wellbeing, social media, mental health, digital engagement, psychological wellbeing.

INTRODUCTION

Digital technology has transformed contemporary society by changing how individuals obtain information, communicate with others, participate in education, perform professional tasks, and experience everyday life. Smartphones, computers, social networking platforms, video-sharing applications, online communities, and artificial intelligence tools have become integrated into personal and professional routines. These technologies offer immediate access to information, facilitate communication across geographical boundaries, and create opportunities for social participation. At the same time, their increasing presence raises important questions about how digital environments influence human behaviour, emotional experiences, interpersonal relationships, and psychological wellbeing. Digital technology should therefore be understood not merely as a collection of electronic tools but also as an environment that shapes attention, habits, social interaction, and emotional responses. The relationship between internet use and wellbeing is complex, and research suggests that its effects cannot be adequately explained through a single measure of technology use (Vuorre & Przybylski, 2024).One important influence of digital technology concerns changes in human behaviour. Digital platforms allow

people to communicate instantly, respond to information quickly, share personal experiences, and maintain relationships over long distances. These opportunities may strengthen social connection and support collaborative learning. However, frequent notifications, continuous online availability, and the rapid movement between applications may also encourage habitual checking, distraction, and difficulty maintaining attention on a single activity. The effects depend partly on whether technology is being used intentionally for communication, education, work, or recreation, or whether its use has become difficult to control. Research on adult social media users identifies relationships between problematic digital use and outcomes such as anxiety, depression, loneliness, and self-esteem, although differences in research methods limit the conclusions that can be drawn about cause and effect (Social media in the adult population, 2025).Emotional wellbeing is another important dimension of digital life. It includes the ability to manage emotions, maintain supportive relationships, cope with everyday challenges, and experience a reasonable level of psychological balance. Digital environments may contribute positively to emotional wellbeing by providing opportunities for friendship, entertainment, self-expression, and access to supportive communities. Individuals who feel isolated in their immediate surroundings may find encouragement and understanding through online networks. Digital communication can also help people maintain relationships when distance, work responsibilities, or other circumstances make face-to-face interaction difficult. Nevertheless, online experiences may become emotionally challenging when individuals encounter cyberbullying, hostile communication, unrealistic comparisons, social exclusion, or pressure to present an idealized version of their lives. Sala et al. (2024) explain that social media's relationship with mental health and wellbeing is influenced by personal characteristics, patterns of use, and platform design. This suggests that the consequences of digital engagement vary according to both individual circumstances and the conditions of the digital environment.

The relationship between digital technology and mental health has received considerable scholarly attention, particularly regarding social media use, depression, anxiety, sleep, and psychological distress. Ahmed et al. (2024), in a systematic review and meta-analysis, found small associations between social media use and depression and anxiety, while problematic social media use was associated with poorer mental health and wellbeing outcomes. These findings are important because they distinguish ordinary social media engagement from patterns of use that interfere with daily life. However, associations do not automatically demonstrate that digital technology directly causes emotional difficulties. Individuals experiencing loneliness, anxiety, or low mood may also turn to digital platforms more frequently, making the relationship potentially reciprocal. Differences in age, gender, social circumstances, platform characteristics, and research design further complicate interpretation. Consequently, a balanced assessment must consider both the possible effects of technology and the personal or social circumstances that influence how people use it.Digital technology may also influence sleep routines, family interaction, educational participation, and professional productivity. Using digital devices late at night may delay bedtime or expose individuals to stimulating content when they need rest. During conversations, repeatedly checking a phone may reduce attention to the people present

and weaken the quality of face-to-face communication. In educational and professional settings, digital tools can improve access to learning materials and support collaboration, but excessive interruptions may interfere with concentration and task completion. Khalaf et al. (2023) reviewed literature concerning social media, mental health, and psychosocial functioning among adolescents and young adults, highlighting both risks and opportunities associated with digital participation. These findings support the need to examine behavioural and emotional outcomes together, since daily routines, social relationships, and psychological experiences are closely connected.

Another important consideration is that the effects of technology differ across individuals and social contexts. A student using online platforms to access educational resources may experience different outcomes from someone who spends prolonged periods comparing personal appearance or social status with online content. Similarly, digital communication may offer meaningful support to one individual while increasing feelings of exclusion or pressure for another. Conte et al. (2025), in their review of TikTok and adolescent mental health, identified both opportunities for creativity and peer connection and concerns related to problematic use, body image, and self-esteem. Their findings demonstrate why the influence of a particular platform should be examined in relation to its content, design, and users rather than treated as identical to all forms of digital engagement.In view of these developments, understanding digital wellbeing has become increasingly important for individuals, families, educators, mental health professionals, technology designers, and policymakers. Healthy digital behaviour does not necessarily require abandoning technology; instead, it involves using digital resources in ways that support personal goals, meaningful relationships, and emotional balance. This may include managing notifications, establishing device-free periods, maintaining sleep routines, evaluating online information critically, and making time for offline activities. The present article therefore reviews the influence of digital technology on human behaviour and emotional wellbeing, with particular attention to behavioural patterns, emotional outcomes, potential benefits, associated risks, and practical approaches to balanced digital participation.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

1. To examine the influence of digital technology on human behaviour and everyday social interactions.
2. To analyse the relationship between digital technology use and emotional wellbeing.
3. To identify approaches that may encourage healthier digital behaviour and support emotional wellbeing.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. How does digital technology influence human behaviour and everyday social interactions?
2. What relationship exists between digital technology use and emotional wellbeing?

3. Which approaches may promote healthier digital behaviour and improve emotional wellbeing?

LITERATURE REVIEW

The relationship between digital technology and emotional wellbeing has been examined through research on internet use, social media, online communication, and digital behaviour. Vuorre and Przybylski (2024) investigated associations between internet use and wellbeing through a multiverse analysis, highlighting the importance of examining different analytical choices when interpreting research findings. Their work is relevant because digital technology use is not a single, uniform activity: online learning, social interaction, entertainment, and passive browsing may have different relationships with users' experiences. This perspective suggests that research should consider how and why individuals use technology instead of assuming that greater use always produces either positive or negative outcomes.Sala et al. (2024) conducted an umbrella review of research on social media use, adolescent mental health, and wellbeing. Their analysis identified both risks and opportunities, showing that outcomes are influenced by personal and psychosocial characteristics, patterns of social media use, and platform content and design. Digital platforms can provide spaces for connection, communication, and self-expression, but they can also expose users to social comparison, harmful content, and other negative experiences. The authors also highlighted difficulties in obtaining transparent platform data, which can limit researchers' ability to understand how digital environments influence users. These findings support a broader understanding of digital wellbeing that considers both individual behaviour and the design of technology.Ahmed et al. (2024) examined social media use, mental health, and sleep through a systematic review and meta-analysis. Their review found small associations between general social media use and depression and anxiety, while problematic social media use was associated with depression, anxiety, sleep problems, and poorer wellbeing. The findings indicate that the nature of engagement may be important when examining emotional outcomes. However, the researchers also identified substantial variation across studies, meaning the results should not be interpreted as proof that social media directly causes mental health difficulties. This evidence supports the need to distinguish purposeful and manageable use from patterns that interfere with sleep, relationships, or everyday responsibilities.Khalaf et al. (2023) reviewed the influence of social media on the mental health of adolescents and young adults. Their review discussed concerns such as cyberbullying, privacy risks, sleep disruption, and psychological distress, while also recognizing opportunities for communication, information sharing, social connection, and self-expression. The review suggests that digital participation can be beneficial when it provides meaningful support and access to useful resources, but potentially harmful when it involves hostile interactions or disrupts daily routines. Because adolescents and young adults may be particularly affected by peer feedback and social acceptance, their online experiences deserve attention from families, educators, and researchers.

Conte et al. (2025) reviewed research on TikTok and adolescent mental health, including problematic use, self-esteem, body image, and emotional experiences. Their findings indicated that TikTok may offer opportunities for creativity and peer connection, while some patterns of use may be associated with lower life satisfaction and other mental health concerns. The review also emphasized limitations in the quality and consistency of the available research. This is important for the present topic because platform design, personalized content, and repeated exposure may influence users differently. It also demonstrates why the influence of digital technology should be examined in relation to particular activities and user characteristics rather than treating every platform or user as identical.Alwuqaysi (2025) synthesized research on social media's influence on mental health, family functioning, and visual content. The review identified both positive and negative outcomes, including opportunities for social connection and concerns involving cyberbullying and unequal experiences. Its inclusion of family functioning is especially relevant because digital technology may influence not only individual emotional states but also communication and relationships within households. Digital devices can help family members remain connected across distances, yet constant interruptions during shared activities may reduce opportunities for attentive conversation. These findings indicate that the effects of technology extend beyond individual psychological experiences to the social settings in which digital behaviour occurs.Taken together, the reviewed literature suggests that digital technology has a complex relationship with human behaviour and emotional wellbeing. Some studies identify associations between problematic use and adverse emotional outcomes, while others highlight the benefits of connection, communication, and self-expression (Khalaf et al., 2023; Sala et al., 2024). Differences in age, purpose of use, platform features, personal circumstances, and research design make it difficult to reach a single conclusion about all digital technology. The literature therefore supports an approach that examines both the opportunities and the risks of digital participation and gives attention to intentional use, online experiences, and everyday functioning.

METHODOLOGY

This article uses a literature-based methodology to examine the influence of digital technology on human behaviour and emotional wellbeing. Relevant scholarly literature was identified through research sources such as Google Scholar and academic journal publications, focusing on studies addressing digital technology, internet use, social media, behaviour, mental health, and psychological wellbeing. Priority was given to peer-reviewed reviews and research published between 2023 and 2025, alongside relevant work published in 2024. The selected literature was examined for its relevance to the research objectives, its discussion of behavioural and emotional outcomes, and its contribution to understanding both the benefits and potential risks of digital engagement. The evidence was then organized thematically to identify recurring findings, areas of agreement, and limitations. As this article is based on existing literature rather than newly collected participant data, its findings represent a synthesis of published research and should not be interpreted as the results of an original survey or experiment.

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RESEARCH DESIGN

The article follows a descriptive, narrative review design. This design is appropriate for bringing together existing research on a broad topic involving multiple forms of technology and several dimensions of human experience. The literature was organized around three main themes: the influence of digital technology on behaviour and social interaction, its relationship with emotional wellbeing, and approaches to healthier digital engagement. The review compares findings across scholarly publications while considering differences in population, platform, research method, and outcome measures. A narrative approach allows the article to discuss benefits and risks together without claiming that the included studies are directly comparable or that the review constitutes a formal systematic review.

DATA ANALYSIS

The literature was analysed through thematic synthesis to identify recurring patterns across the selected studies. Relevant findings were grouped into themes concerning behavioural changes, social relationships, emotional wellbeing, problematic digital use, and strategies for healthier engagement. The analysis compared evidence relating to positive outcomes, such as social support and self-expression, with evidence concerning anxiety, depressive symptoms, sleep difficulties, social comparison, and digital distraction. Findings were interpreted in relation to the research objectives, while differences in study populations, methods, and definitions of technology use were considered. Because the article relies on previously published research, no original statistical tests, participant surveys, or experimental measurements were conducted. The analysis therefore provides a descriptive interpretation of the available evidence rather than new quantitative results.

FINDINGS

The reviewed literature indicates that digital technology influences human behaviour by changing communication patterns, daily routines, information-seeking habits, and social interaction. Digital platforms allow people to maintain relationships, participate in online communities, exchange information, and express themselves creatively. These opportunities may support belonging and emotional connection, particularly when individuals use technology to communicate meaningfully or obtain social support. However, the same technologies can encourage repeated checking, distraction, passive browsing, and excessive engagement when online activities interfere with personal responsibilities. The findings suggest that the purpose and pattern of technology use are important considerations alongside the amount of time spent online (Sala et al., 2024; Rossi et al., 2025).The literature also identifies a relationship between certain patterns of digital engagement and emotional wellbeing. Ahmed et al. (2024) reported small associations between social media use and depression and anxiety, while problematic use was associated with poorer wellbeing and sleep problems. Research on adolescents further highlights concerns involving social comparison, self-esteem, body image, and problematic

platform use, although opportunities for creativity and peer connection are also reported (Conte et al., 2025). These findings suggest that negative emotional experiences may be more likely in some digital contexts than others. Nevertheless, the available evidence does not establish that technology alone causes these outcomes, as pre-existing emotional difficulties, personal circumstances, and patterns of use may also influence the relationship.

Another finding concerns the effects of digital technology on relationships and everyday functioning. Digital communication can help people remain connected with friends and family, exchange emotional support, and participate in shared activities across distances. Conversely, persistent device use during face-to-face interactions may reduce attention to other people, while online conflict or cyberbullying may create emotional strain. Alwuqaysi (2025) highlights the interconnected relationship between social media, mental health, family functioning, and visual content. This indicates that digital behaviour should be considered not only in relation to individuals but also in terms of its influence on families and social environments.The reviewed evidence also indicates that digital wellbeing cannot be assessed through screen time alone. Vuorre and Przybylski (2024) emphasize the importance of analytical choices when investigating internet use and wellbeing, while Sala et al. (2024) highlight the role of individual characteristics, patterns of use, and platform design. Educational use, purposeful communication, and participation in supportive communities may have different implications from uncontrolled browsing or repeated exposure to distressing content. Accordingly, healthy digital behaviour involves understanding the purpose, context, and consequences of technology use rather than assuming that all online activity is equally beneficial or harmful.Finally, the findings support the importance of intentional and balanced digital participation. Individuals may benefit from setting boundaries around device use, reducing unnecessary notifications, protecting sleep time, engaging critically with online content, and maintaining offline social activities. Families and educational institutions can encourage open discussions about online experiences and responsible technology use. Technology developers also have a role in creating digital environments that respect users' wellbeing and support safer interactions. Overall, the literature suggests that digital technology offers valuable opportunities, but its benefits are more likely to be sustained when its use supports rather than disrupts emotional health, relationships, and everyday responsibilities.

CONCLUSION

Digital technology has become an influential part of modern human behaviour, affecting communication, social relationships, daily routines, and emotional experiences. This article reviewed existing scholarly literature to examine how digital engagement may contribute to both positive and negative outcomes for emotional wellbeing. The evidence indicates that digital platforms can support social connection, information sharing, creativity, learning, and emotional support. At the same time, problematic or poorly managed use may be associated with emotional distress, sleep difficulties, social comparison, distraction, and challenges in interpersonal relationships. These outcomes demonstrate that the relationship between technology and

wellbeing is complex and cannot be explained by the duration of use alone.The reviewed research further suggests that individual characteristics, the purpose of digital engagement, platform design, and social circumstances influence how people experience technology. Some individuals may benefit from online communities and supportive communication, while others may encounter harmful content, cyberbullying, or pressure to compare themselves with others. Therefore, digital technology should not be considered inherently beneficial or harmful. Instead, its influence should be evaluated according to the quality of users' experiences and the extent to which digital activities support their personal, social, and emotional needs.Promoting digital wellbeing requires shared responsibility. Individuals can develop healthier habits by managing screen time intentionally, maintaining sleep routines, setting boundaries around device use, and prioritizing meaningful offline relationships. Families, educators, mental health professionals, and technology developers can also contribute by encouraging digital literacy, responsible platform design, and supportive online environments. In conclusion, a balanced and informed approach to technology use can help individuals benefit from digital opportunities while reducing potential risks to emotional wellbeing and everyday functioning. Further longitudinal and context-sensitive research is needed to clarify how different forms of digital engagement influence behaviour and emotional health over time.

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