

IMPACT OF DIGITAL STRESS ON EMOTIONAL DEPENDENCY AND MENTAL HEALTH AMONG INTIMATE COUPLES

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Abstract

The present study examined the relationship between digital stress, emotional dependency and mental health among individuals involved in intimate relationships. A quantitative, cross-sectional correlational research design was employed. The sample consisted of 100 individuals aged between 20 and 28 years who were in intimate relationships, selected using a non-probability sampling method. Data were collected through an online survey using standardized self-report measures assessing digital stress, emotional dependency and positive mental health. Pearson's product-moment correlation coefficient and simple linear regression analyses were conducted using IBM SPSS Statistics (Version 23). The results indicated a significant positive correlation between digital stress and emotional dependency and a significant negative correlation between digital stress and mental health. Regression analysis further revealed that digital stress significantly predicted emotional dependency and negatively predicted mental health among intimate couples. The findings suggest that increased digital stress may intensify emotional reliance within relationships while simultaneously undermining psychological well-being. The study highlights the importance of promoting digital well-being and balanced technology use to enhance mental health and relationship functioning among intimate couples

Keywords:

Digital Stress, Emotional Dependency, Mental Health, Intimate Couples

1. Introduction

The Digital Age of Technological Advancements leads to the development of Information and Communication Technology. Digital Advancements had brought a connectivity and convenience between the Individuals in the Society. ICT also have the darker side that arises the digital stress, digital anxiety. In the present context Digital well – being is the basic psychological need that has been emerged among the people. After COVID – 19 Pandemic, work from Home became the normal trend with Online Interactions through Digital Devices. A

stream of Studies on the ICT's Digital stress, Digital Well – Being and Digital Anxiety are in Progress. Further the Digitalization tends to pave way for challenges that complicates the Relation between Digital stress and Emotional Dependency and Mental Health.

1.1 Digital Stress

Digital Stress – a Psychological and emotional strain that an Individual might experience as a result of online interactions through the Digital Devices and technologies. This has an impact on

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well – being, emotional state and the Mental Health of the Individuals lifestyle. It can be characterized by impulsive connectivity, overload of Information and the Pressures related to the Modern Life style. It also occurs as emotional dependency towards the digital devices and social media Platforms. Digital Communication contributes social media addiction, Smartphone addiction, Phubbing behavior, Fear of Missing Out, Multiscreen Addiction and has the influence on mental Health and Emotional Well – Being.

1.2 Emotional Dependency

Emotional Dependence refers to a chronic pattern of unmet affective demands, which individual desperately seeks to meet through close interpersonal relationships (Castello, 2005, 2002). Emotional Dependency could be characterized When an Individual rely on others completely; or seeks an emotional support, sense of well – being and Validation. Some of the features include;

- Reliance on Others
- Limited self – validation
- Fear of Abandonment
- Low self – esteem
- Difficulty coping alone

1.3 Mental Health

Mental Health is a state of Mind characterized by emotional well – being, good behavioral Adjustment, Relative freedom from Anxiety and Disabling symptoms, and a capacity to establish constructive relationships and cope with the ordinary demands and stressed of Life (American Psychological Association, 2018). Mental Health is not merely the absence of Disorders but it's an state of well – being that leads an individual to realize their potential, contribute to community, leads to work productively and to cope with normal stressors. Mental Health has many components. Some of them are listed as:

- ✓ Emotional Well – Being

- ✓ Psychological Well – Being
- ✓ Social Well – Being
- ✓ Self – Esteem
- ✓ Purpose and meaning in life
- ✓ Stress Management
- ✓ Balanced Lifestyle

2. Research Questions

1. Is there a relationship between digital stress, emotional dependency and mental health?
2. Is digital stress, a predictor of emotional dependency and mental health?

3. Objectives

1. To investigate the relationship between digital stress, emotional dependency and mental health among intimate couples.
2. To examine whether digital stress is a predictor variable of emotional dependency and mental health among intimate couples.

3.1 Hypotheses

H₀₁: There will be no significant relationship between digital stress, emotional dependency, and mental health among intimate couples.

H₀₂: Digital stress will not significantly predict emotional dependency and mental health among intimate couples.

4. Research Design

The present study adopted a quantitative, cross-sectional correlational research design to examine the relationship between digital stress, emotional dependency and mental health among individuals involved in intimate relationships. This design was considered appropriate as it enabled the systematic

assessment of the strength and direction of associations among the study variables, as well as the predictive role of digital stress on emotional dependency and mental health.

4.1 Samples and Sampling Techniques

This study uses a non-probability sampling method with simple random sampling techniques used for collect data of 100 intimate relationship peoples. The sample was collected by using Google form. The participant's ages ranged from 20 to 28.

4.2 Tools Used

The DSS is a state of the art instrument to measure the perception of digital stressors in the workplace. It comprises 50 items in ten stressor categories that can be consolidated in one 2nd order construct to measure digital stress, which has been performed as part of this study. Each indicator is measured with a 7-point likert scale, with higher values indicating higher levels of stress. The DSS correlates strongly with the existing measure ($r_s=0.923$, $p<0.001$). ADS-9 is a short, simple and reliable self-administered instrument, we believe that it represents a particularly useful and versatile scale both for clinicians and researchers and that it may be applicable in studies aiming to detect affective or emotional dependence in a quick (only nine items), reliable and therefore, practical way, being also suitable for both screening and extensive studies. According to

Lukat et al. (2016), the purpose of developing the 9-item PMH scale was to create a concise, person-centered, unidimensional tool for measuring positive mental health. The PMH scale evaluates social, psychological and emotional components of well-being in addition to affective factors. The scale was found to be a unidimensional self-report tool with good convergent and discriminant validity, scalar invariance across samples and over time, high internal consistency, good retest reliability, and sensitivity to therapeutic change in a series of samples from very different backgrounds through psychometric testing.

5. Limitations of the Study

The results could have been different or more significant if there had been a larger sample size. In fact, despite the small sample size, the research has produced several significant findings that support the current investigation. A greater proportion will be obtained with a larger sample size. It's analyzed by limited variables not adding demographical variables. Addition of demographics may provide efficient results

6. Data Analysis

The obtained data were analyzed using the statistical software IBM SPSS Version 23 and the collected data were interpreted by using Pearson Correlation Coefficient and Simple Linear Regression analysis. The significant value was kept at 0.05 level of significant ($p\leq 0.05$).

7. Results and Discussion

Table 1. Correlation between Digital Stress, Emotional Dependency and Mental Health

Variables	Emotional Dependency	Mental Health
Digital Stress	0.384**	-0.261**

Note: ** Correlation is Significant at 0.01 levels (Sig.2 tailed)

Pearson correlation analysis was adopted to investigate the relationship between digital stress and

emotional dependency among intimate couples: The table 1 illustrates that there was a significant

positive correlation between digital stress and emotional dependency ($r=0.384, p<0.01$). Since the coefficient of correlation was positive, this implies that increasing digital stress increases the likelihood of the individual becoming emotionally dependent on their partner. In addition, the table illustrates that, there was a significant negative correlation between digital stress and mental health ($r = -0.261, p<0.01$). Since the coefficient of correlation is negative, it represents that increases in digital stress, mental

health of couples will decrease. Hence, the stated null hypothesis was rejected. The findings explain that, the digital stress leads to increase reliance on digital communication for emotional expression and connection, while emotional dependency is heightened due to immediate response expectations. Moreover, constant connectivity and information overload can have a negative impact on mental health.

Table 2: Regression Analysis of Digital Stress on Emotional Dependency and Mental Health

Variable	R	R Square	B value	β value	t value	Sig
Emotional Dependency	0.384	0.148	0.187	0.384	6.861	0.01
Mental Health	0.261	.068	-0.027	-0.261	2.673	.009

Note: Predictor Variable: Digital Stress; Dependent Variable: Emotional Dependency, Mental Health, B – Unstandardized beta coefficient, β value=Standardized Regression Coefficient

A Simple linear regression analysis was employed to investigate the predictability of emotional dependency and mental health for digital stress. Table 2 shows that the independent variable digital stress predicts the emotional dependency positively with ($R=0.384, R^2=0.148; p<0.01$). The correlation between digital stress and emotional dependency was found to be significant. Based on ANOVA model fit data, [$F = 47.073, p<0.01$], it suggests that there was 14.8% contribution of digital stress in predicting emotional dependency. That is for each one standard deviation increase in digital stress, the emotional dependency also increased by 0.384 units ($\beta=0.384$). Further, the table also shows that the digital stress predicts the mental health negatively with ($R=0.261, R^2=0.068, p<0.01$). The correlation was found to be significant. Based on the ANOVA table, the model fit data with $F=7.144, p<0.01$. It was suggested that digital stress has 6.8% impact on couples' mental health. That is for each one standard

deviation increase in digital stress, the mental health decreases by -0.261 units ($\beta = -0.261$). From the result, it concluded that digital stress has a significant influence on both emotional dependency and mental health among intimate couples. Hence, the stated null hypothesis was rejected. The finding illustrates that; the digital stress can significantly impact emotional dependency in intimate couples; couples may develop a reliance on digital communication as the primary means of emotional expression for constant connectivity due to fear of missing out (FOMO). Meanwhile, overreliance on digital systems significantly impacts the mental health of intimate couples due to various factors such as communication challenges, digital intrusion, sleep disruptions, work-life imbalance, relationship dissatisfaction leading to stress and negatively affecting the mental health. The combination of increased digital stress and emotional dependency can lead to mental health challenges, such as anxiety, stress, and feelings of

inadequacy.

8. Suggestions

- Awareness programs should be conducted to promote digital well-being and balanced technology use.
- Couples should be encouraged to establish healthy digital boundaries.
- Mental health interventions should address technology-induced stress.
- Digital literacy initiatives should emphasize mindful and purposeful digital engagement.

9. Conclusion

The present study examined the impact of digital stress on emotional dependency and mental health among individuals in intimate relationships. The findings revealed a significant positive relationship between digital stress and emotional dependency, indicating that higher levels of digital stress are associated with increased emotional reliance on partners. Additionally, digital stress was found to be significantly and negatively related to mental health, suggesting that excessive digital engagement and related stressors adversely affect psychological well-being.

Further, regression analysis demonstrated that digital stress is a significant predictor of emotional dependency and a negative predictor of mental health among intimate couples. These findings underscore the role of digital stress as an important psychosocial factor influencing both relational dynamics and individual mental health outcomes. The results highlight the potential risks associated with excessive digital connectivity, such as heightened emotional reliance, reduced psychological well-being and increased vulnerability to stress-related mental health concerns.

Overall, the study emphasizes the need for promoting digital well-being and healthy technology use within intimate relationships. Interventions aimed

at managing digital stress, fostering balanced digital habits, and encouraging offline emotional connections may contribute to improved mental health and healthier relational functioning among couples.

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