

EFFECTS OF DIGITAL ADDICTION AND PHUBBING ON THE SOCIAL WELL-BEING OF UNDERGRADUATES OF THE FACULTY OF AGRICULTURE AT RAJARATA UNIVERSITY OF SRI LANKA

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Increasing reliance on digital devices has raised concerns about its impact on health, education, work, and personal and social well-being. This study explored the factors influencing digital addiction and phubbing and their effects on social well-being among undergraduates of the Faculty of Agriculture at Rajarata University of Sri Lanka (RUSL). A cross-sectional survey was conducted in 2024 with 266 undergraduates (75% females and 25% males) aged around 24 years. Data were randomly collected on demographics, digital device usage, social networking (SN), social support (SS), self-control (SC), fear of missing out (FOMO), digital addiction (DA), phubbing behavior (PB), and social well-being (SWB). Structural equation modeling was performed using AMOS and SPSS 26. On average, undergraduates used two digital devices and 21 software applications for 12 hours daily. The FOMO ($p<0.001$), SC ($p=0.003$), and English literacy (EL) ($p=0.013$) were major factors linked to DA. Digital addiction ($p<0.001$) and SC ($p=0.003$) were connected to PB. Social well-being was significantly influenced by DA ($p=0.001$), FOMO ($p<0.001$), SS ($p=0.002$), and EL ($p=0.021$). The model explained 44% of DA, 84% of PB, and 34% of SWB. The DA directly affects SWB, while PB has no significant impact. The Faculty of Agriculture at RUSL is grappling with a growing trend of digital addiction, phubbing, and a decline in social well-being. To combat this, the university can organize awareness sessions, train academic staff, encourage students to use apps and data limiters and implement interventions to enhance social support, networking, and English literacy. This will create a supportive environment for students. The recommendation is to expand sample sizes and conduct extensive research to understand the strategies for promoting balanced digital engagement among undergraduates in the RUSL's digital landscape.

Keywords: Internet addiction, Smartphone addiction, Social media addiction, Youth education