

Impact of ICT Usage on the Psychological Well-being of University Students

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Abstract

The rapid integration of Information and Communication Technology (ICT), including smartphones, social media, internet access, and e-sports has become integral to university students' daily lives. While prior literature presents conflicting evidence on its psychological impact, empirical studies in the Sri Lankan context remain scarce. This study investigates how four key ICT domains: internet usage, social media usage, smartphone usage, and e-sport usage influence the psychological well-being of undergraduate students across Sri Lankan state universities. A quantitative cross-sectional survey was conducted with a stratified random sample of 384 undergraduates from 17 state universities. Data were collected using a validated structured questionnaire employing a five-point Likert scale, with psychological well-being measured via indicators adapted from Thomée (2012). Analysis was performed using SPSS v21.0, including descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation, and multiple linear regression. Results revealed statistically significant positive relationships between all ICT variables and psychological well-being. Internet usage showed a moderate positive correlation with well-being, social media usage, smartphone usage, and e-sport usage exhibited the strongest association. In stepwise regression analysis, all four ICT variables significantly predicted psychological well-being, collectively explaining 51.1% of its variance. These findings challenge the prevailing assumption that ICT use universally harms mental health among Sri Lankan undergraduates. Instead, they suggest that, within this context, ICT serves as a tool for social connection, academic support, stress relief, and community building, factors that enhance psychological well-being. The study contributes novel empirical evidence to the global discourse on digital well-being in low- and middle-income countries, advocating for nuanced policy approaches that recognize ICT's potential as a protective resource rather than solely a risk factor. Recommendations include promoting digital literacy that encourages balanced, purposeful use, integrating ICT into campus mental health programs, and designing interventions that leverage online communities for peer support.

Keywords: E-sport usage, ICT usage, internet usage, psychological well-being, smartphone usage