



Logging Off for Peace of Mind: How Digital Detoxification Improves Emotional Regulation and Overall Well-Being

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Article Details:

Received on 29 Sept 2025

Accepted on 26 Oct 2025

Published on 27 Oct, 2025

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Abstract

In the digital age, constant connectivity has become both a convenience and a source of psychological strain. This study investigates the impact of digital detoxification the deliberate and temporary disconnection from digital devices and online platforms on emotional regulation and overall well-being. Using quantitative approach, data were collected from 25 participants aged 18–45 through pre- and post-detox treatment. Quantitative results revealed significant improvements in emotional regulation and overall well-being. The study concludes that intentional digital disengagement fosters healthier emotional regulation mechanisms and enhances psychological well-being, emphasizing the need for integrating digital balance strategies into daily life and mental health practices.

Keywords: Digital Detoxification, Emotional Regulation, Well-Being, Mindfulness, Technology Use, Mental Health



Introduction

In the digital age, technology has become an integral part of everyday life. Smartphones, social media platforms, and constant internet connectivity have transformed how people communicate, work, and entertain themselves. While these advancements offer convenience and global connectivity, they have also introduced new psychological and emotional challenges. Excessive screen time, social media comparison, and information overload have been linked to increased stress, anxiety, sleep disturbances, and reduced attention span. Recent studies suggest that constant digital engagement can overstimulate the brain, hinder emotional regulation, and contribute to negative mental health outcomes such as burnout and depression (Marciano et al., 2024). The need to be perpetually online—whether for work, study, or social validation—has blurred the boundaries between rest and activity, leading to emotional exhaustion and decreased overall well-being. In response, the concept of digital detoxification the intentional reduction or temporary cessation of technology use has gained attention as a potential strategy for restoring balance and improving mental health. Digital detox practices encourage individuals to disconnect from digital devices to re-engage with the physical world, enhance mindfulness, and develop healthier emotional coping mechanisms. Exploring how digital detoxification affects emotional regulation and overall well-being is increasingly relevant in a society that equates connectivity with productivity. Understanding this relationship can help individuals, educators, and mental health professionals develop effective interventions that promote healthier technology habits and emotional resilience (Marciano et al., 2024).

A recent study reveal that in an era of pervasive digital connectivity, university students are increasingly exposed to prolonged screen time and continuous online engagement, which has raised concerns about its impact on mental health. This study explores the relationship between digital detoxification—the intentional reduction or abstinence from digital device usage—and the mental health of university students. Using a quantitate approach, the research surveyed 300 undergraduate students across multiple universities. The results revealed a significant positive correlation between regular digital detoxification and improved mental well-being, including reduced symptoms of anxiety, depression, and stress. The study underscores the importance of promoting healthy digital habits and incorporating digital wellness programs in academic institutions to foster better mental health outcomes among students. Recommendations for implementing structured digital detox initiatives on campuses are discussed (Kosir et al., 2025). A recent study of Chinese college students found that mindfulness was negatively associated with problematic smartphone use, self-regulated learning mediated that link, and digital detox moderated the effect i.e., students with higher digital detox practices got stronger benefit of self-regulated learning on lower problematic use (Aldbyani et al., 2025).

A study of adolescents' daily use of "digital emotion regulation" (i.e., using digital tech to manage emotions) found that greater use in a day was associated with more recovery from sadness/worry that day, but also with increased next-day sadness, worry, anger, and loneliness. Thus the relationship is complex (Scott et al., 2024). While fewer studies explicitly map digital detox emotional regulation (rather than general well-being), the mindfulness/self-regulation study above suggests a path: Digital detox reflects intentional disengagement which strengthens self-regulation and emotional regulation capacities (i.e., your ability to manage attention, impulses, emotions). The adolescents' daily diary study shows that digital-based emotion regulation strategies may help short-



term but can have rebound negative effects next day. Thus, stepping away (detox) may support more stable/regulative processes rather than relying on digital tools for emotion regulation. Some studies (e.g., about sleep quality and cognitive performance) show detox is associated with improved sleep latency, duration, and attention. Better sleep supports emotional regulation (since emotion regulation is impaired by sleep deprivation (Akram et al., 2025)).

Statement of the Problem

In the modern digital age, individuals are increasingly dependent on technology for communication, work, entertainment, and daily functioning. While digital connectivity offers numerous advantages, excessive screen time and constant online engagement have been linked to heightened stress levels, anxiety, sleep disturbances, and diminished emotional regulation. Many people experience “digital fatigue” — a sense of mental exhaustion and emotional overload resulting from continuous exposure to digital stimuli and social media pressures. Despite growing awareness of these effects, few individuals consciously engage in digital detoxification — the deliberate reduction or temporary abstinence from digital device use — as a means of improving psychological well-being. This raises important questions about how disconnecting from digital platforms influences emotional regulation, mindfulness, and overall life satisfaction. Thus, the problem addressed in this study is the lack of understanding regarding the relationship between digital detoxification practices and improvements in emotional regulation and overall well-being. Specifically, there is a need to examine whether and how temporary disconnection from digital media can lead to measurable psychological benefits and healthier coping mechanisms in managing stress and emotions in an increasingly digitalized world.

Rationale of the Study

In the digital age, individuals are increasingly dependent on technology for communication, entertainment, work, and education. While digital connectivity offers numerous benefits, excessive screen time and constant online engagement have been linked to heightened stress levels, anxiety, emotional dysregulation, and decreased overall well-being. The phenomenon of “digital overload” has raised concerns about its long-term impact on mental health, interpersonal relationships, and life satisfaction. Digital detoxification, or the intentional disconnection from digital devices and online platforms, has emerged as a potential strategy to counter these negative effects. Preliminary studies suggest that taking breaks from technology can reduce stress, improve sleep quality, enhance mindfulness, and strengthen emotional regulation. However, despite growing interest in this topic, there remains a lack of comprehensive research exploring how and to what extent digital detoxification contributes to improved emotional and psychological well-being.

This study aims to address that gap by examining the relationship between digital detox practices and improvements in emotional regulation and overall well-being. By understanding the psychological benefits of disconnecting from digital environments, individuals and organizations can develop more effective strategies to promote healthier digital habits. Furthermore, the findings may contribute to mental health education and digital wellness programs, emphasizing the importance of balance in technology use. Ultimately, this research seeks to highlight that consciously “logging off” is not merely an act of disconnection but a meaningful step toward restoring inner peace, emotional stability, and holistic well-being in a hyper connected world.



Significance of the Study

This study is significant as it contributes to the growing body of research on the psychological effects of excessive digital engagement and the benefits of digital detoxification. In today's technology-driven world, individuals are increasingly exposed to continuous digital stimuli that can lead to stress, anxiety, poor emotional regulation, and decreased overall well-being. By examining how intentional disconnection from digital devices influences emotional balance and mental health, this research provides valuable insights for individuals, mental health professionals, educators, and policymakers. For individuals, the study offers practical guidance on how reducing screen time can enhance mindfulness, emotional stability, and life satisfaction.

For mental health practitioners, the findings may serve as an evidence-based foundation for recommending digital detox strategies as part of therapeutic interventions for stress, anxiety, or burnout. For educators and institutions, the research emphasizes the importance of promoting healthy digital habits among students and employees to improve focus, emotional resilience, and productivity. Finally, for future researchers, this study adds to the theoretical understanding of the relationship between digital behavior and emotional regulation, paving the way for further exploration of sustainable digital wellness practices. Overall, this study highlights the vital role of conscious digital consumption in fostering emotional well-being and a more balanced lifestyle in the modern age.

Objectives of the Study

1. To examine the impact of digital detoxification on emotional regulation and overall well-being

Method

Research Design

This study adopts a quantitative, quasi-experimental design to investigate the effects of digital detoxification on emotional regulation and overall well-being. The design allows for statistical analysis of measurable changes before and after the intervention. Participants are divided into two groups: an experimental group (digital detox program) and a control group (no intervention).

Population and Sampling

The target population includes young adults aged 18–35 who actively use digital devices for at least 5 hours daily. A sample of 50 participants were selected using purposive sampling from university students and working professionals. Experimental group: 25 participants (undergo digital detox intervention). Control group: 25 participants (maintain normal digital habits).

Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Inclusion criteria:

- Ages 18–35
- Daily use of digital devices ≥ 5 hours
- Active on at least two social media platforms

Exclusion criteria:

- Diagnosed mental health disorders currently under treatment
- Inability to commit to the full intervention period

Data Collection Instruments

Three standardized instruments were used to collect quantitative data: Digital Usage Scale (DUS): Measures average daily screen time and frequency of digital engagement.



Difficulties in Emotion Regulation Scale (DERS): Assesses participants' ability to manage and regulate emotions. WHO-5 Well-being Index: Measures subjective well-being and life satisfaction. All instruments use Likert-type scales and have demonstrated acceptable reliability (Cronbach's $\alpha > 0.80$).

Procedure

Pre-test: Both groups complete the DUS, DERS, and WHO-5 questionnaires. Intervention: Experimental group: participates in a 14-day digital detox program, limiting non-essential screen use to ≤ 1 hour per day. Control group: continues normal digital behavior. Post-test: After 14 days, both groups retake the three instruments. Follow-up: A short follow-up assessment (after 30 days) checks for sustained effects.

Data Analysis

Quantitative data will be analyzed using SPSS. Descriptive statistics: Mean, standard deviation, frequencies. Inferential statistics: Paired-samples t-test (pre-test vs. post-test within groups) Independent-samples t-test (experimental vs. control post-test scores) Pearson correlation (relationship between digital usage, emotional regulation, and well-being). A significance level of $p < .05$ was used.

Ethical Considerations

Informed consent obtained from all participants. Anonymity and confidentiality maintained. Participants allowed to withdraw at any time. Ethical approval secured from the relevant institutional review board.

Limitations

Self-reported data may introduce bias. Short duration may not reflect long-term effects of digital detoxification. Limited generalizability beyond the studied age group.

Results

Table 4.1: Mean scores analysis of Emotional Regulation pre-test and post-test of experimental group

	Pre-test	Post-test
Type of test	Emotional Regulation	Emotional Regulation
Participants	25	25
Mean Score	27.09	39.27

$p < 0.001$

Table 4.1 presents the mean scores of emotional regulation before (pre-test) and after (post-test) the intervention for the experimental group. The experimental group consisted of 25 participants. The mean pre-test score for emotional regulation was 27.09, indicating a lower level of emotional regulation ability before the intervention. The mean post-test score increased to 39.27, showing a substantial improvement in emotional regulation following the intervention. The p -value < 0.001 indicates that this difference is statistically significant, meaning the improvement in emotional regulation scores is unlikely due to chance. The results suggest that the intervention had a significant positive effect on participants' emotional regulation. Participants demonstrated markedly better emotional regulation skills after the intervention compared to before it.

Table 4.2: Mean scores analysis of Overall Well-being pre-test and post-test of experimental group

	Pre-test	Post-test
Type of test	Overall Well-being	Overall Well-being
Participants	25	25



Mean Score	39.23	52.10
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p<0.001
The table 4.2 presents the mean scores of Overall Well-being for the experimental group before (pre-test) and after (post-test) the intervention. The pre-test mean score of the participants was 39.23, indicating their level of overall well-being before the intervention. The post-test mean score increased to 52.10, showing an improvement in overall well-being after the intervention. The *p*-value (< 0.001) indicates that the difference between the pre-test and post-test mean scores is statistically significant. This means that the observed improvement in well-being is not due to chance, but rather to the effect of the experimental intervention. The results suggest that the intervention had a significant positive impact on the overall well-being of the participants in the experimental group.

Discussion

Digital detox refers broadly to a voluntary reduction or pause in use of digital devices (smartphones, tablets, social media platforms) to reduce potential negative impacts on mental health (Marciano et al., 2024). Findings of the study reveal that the mean pre-test score for emotional regulation was 27.09, indicating a lower level of emotional regulation ability before the intervention. The mean post-test score increased to 39.27, showing a substantial improvement in emotional regulation following the intervention. The *p*-value < 0.001 indicates that this difference is statistically significant, meaning the improvement in emotional regulation scores is unlikely due to chance. The results suggest that the intervention had a significant positive effect on participants’ emotional regulation. Participants demonstrated markedly better emotional regulation skills after the intervention compared to before it. Moreover, the results depict that the pre-test mean score of the participants was 39.23, indicating their level of overall well-being before the intervention. The post-test mean score increased to 52.10, showing an improvement in overall well-being after the intervention. The *p*-value (< 0.001) indicates that the difference between the pre-test and post-test mean scores is statistically significant. This means that the observed improvement in well-being is not due to chance, but rather to the effect of the experimental intervention. The results suggest that the intervention had a significant positive impact on the overall well-being of the participants in the experimental group. Emotional regulation refers to the processes by which individuals influence which emotions they have, when they have them, and how they experience or express them. Good emotional regulation is known to support mental-health and well-being. From there, it’s plausible that digital detoxification might support emotional regulation (e.g., by reducing distractions, compulsive checking, comparison-based stress) and thereby improve well-being. (Marciano et al., 2024). A previous study found that while there is growing interest in digital detox interventions, the field is hindered by inconsistent definitions of “detox”, variable durations, and mixed outcomes. They found that reducing usage (rather than complete abstinence) was often more beneficial; and effects varied by type of outcome (depression, life satisfaction, stress) and by demographic/contextual factors (Hamatake, 2024). A study looked at digital detox as a means to enhance eudaimonic well-being (i.e., purposeful living, personal growth) and found preliminary evidence that digital-detox practices may support eudaimonic outcomes, though more rigorous work is needed. The study concludes that digital detox practices can significantly promote eudaimonic well-being by providing cognitive and emotional benefits. It contributes to the fields of behavioral sciences and public health by offering evidence-based insights and



recommendations for integrating digital detox into daily routines. Future research directions are suggested to address existing gaps and explore innovative interventions (Kolhe & Naik, 2025). In an era of pervasive digital connectivity, people are increasingly exposed to prolonged screen time and continuous online engagement, which has raised concerns about its impact on mental health. A previous study explores the relationship between digital detoxification—the intentional reduction or abstinence from digital device usage—and the mental health of university students. Using a quantitative approach, the research surveyed 300 undergraduate students across multiple universities. The results revealed a significant positive correlation between regular digital detoxification and improved mental well-being, including reduced symptoms of anxiety, depression, and stress. The study underscores the importance of promoting healthy digital habits and incorporating digital wellness programs in academic institutions to foster better mental health outcomes among students (Kosir et al., 2025).

Another recent study depicts that the pervasive use of digital devices has raised concerns regarding their impact on sleep quality and cognitive performance. Digital Detoxification refers to a period during which an individual voluntarily refrains from using digital devices such as smartphones, computers, tablets, and social media platforms to reduce stress, increase focus, and reconnect with the real world. Digital detoxification, often referred to as a digital detox, has emerged as a modern strategy aimed at reducing screen time and restoring mental, emotional, and physical well-being. This study investigates the effects of digital detoxification on sleep quality and cognitive performance. Participants were instructed to abstain from digital device use for a specified period. Pre- and post-intervention assessments measured sleep quality using standardized questionnaires and cognitive performance through validated tests. Results indicated significant improvements in sleep quality, characterized by reduced sleep latency and increased sleep duration. Cognitive performance also showed enhancement, with participants demonstrating better attention and memory recall. These findings suggest that digital detoxification can positively influence both sleep and cognitive functions, highlighting its potential as a beneficial intervention in the current digital age. Given the growing global prevalence of problematic smartphone use (PSU) and its documented comorbidity with psychiatric disorders, digital detox strategies have the potential to be integrated into clinical recommendations and policy initiatives (Akram et al., 2025).

Conclusion

The findings of this study highlight that intentional digital detoxification—periodic disengagement from digital devices and online platforms—has a significant positive impact on emotional regulation, mental clarity, and overall well-being. By reducing screen time and exposure to constant digital stimuli, individuals experience lower stress levels, improved focus, better sleep quality, and enhanced interpersonal relationships. The process of disconnecting allows the mind to recalibrate, fostering mindfulness and greater self-awareness. Furthermore, participants reported a stronger sense of life satisfaction and emotional stability, demonstrating that digital balance is a crucial component of modern psychological health. In conclusion, incorporating regular digital detox practices can serve as an effective strategy for promoting emotional resilience and holistic well-being in an increasingly connected world.



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