

Research Paper

Emotional Quotient and Digital Well-being among Adolescents: A Comparative Study of Day-scholars and Hostellers

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ABSTRACT

Adolescence is a time period that is very crucial for our overall holistic development and shaping our life long roles. The present study examined differences in emotional quotient (sensitivity, maturity and competency) and digital well-being among adolescents, focusing on gender and living arrangements (day-scholars vs. hostellers). A total 200 adolescents including 100 Hostellers (50 Male & 50 Female) and 100 day-scholars (50 Male and 50 Female) participated from 13-17 years age. The Emotional Quotient Test (Chadha & Singh) and the Digital Well-being Scale (Arslankara et al., 2022) tools were used for data collection. Results indicated a significant main effect of gender and living arrangement effects among sensitivity, maturity, competency, and digital well-being. Female students showed higher score on all dimensions of EQ as compared to male students while hostellers reported high digital wellbeing as compared to day-scholars. Two-way ANOVA further indicated significant main of gender and living arrangements among all dependent variables and along with interaction effect for sensitivity and digital well-being. Findings highlight the influence of gender and living context on adolescents Emotional and digital wellbeing.

Keywords: *Emotional Quotient, Digital well-being, Adolescents, Day-scholars, Hostellers*

Adolescence in the modern era comprises a life circumscribed by the companionship of smartphones, by classrooms existing inside screen, and by social connectedness that are increasingly screened-mediated phenomena. This stage of development is characterized by accelerated cognitive, physical, and socio-emotional shifts, all of which continue to evolve in light of the opportunities and pitfalls associated with online engagement. Emotional quotient (EQ), or emotional intelligence, has long been regarded as a prerequisite for the inevitable transitions that occur during this period. Emotional intelligence (EI) was originally referred to by Salovey and Mayer (1990) and popularized by Goleman (1995). EI includes a set of social and emotional skills, competencies, and abilities that help individuals perceive, understand, and regulate emotions to effectively respond to environmental demands and pressures.

During adolescence, EI is fundamental to facilitating not only healthy relationships and conflict resolution, but also providing protection against anxiety, depression, aggression, and low self-esteem. Higher EQ is consistently linked to academic success, resilience to

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adversity, and greater overall social functioning (e.g., Mayer, Caruso, & Salovey, 2019; Petrides et al., 2016). Bar-On (2000) modified the definition so that emotional and social functioning help to facilitate adaptability and well-being. Empirical literature has shown that adolescents with greater EQ demonstrate better coping strategies in the context of stressors and typically report lower incident levels and better social support when navigating relationships in learning contexts (e.g., Schutte et al., 1998).

Research on gender differences to this point has generated inconclusive findings, as some studies show that girls have better relational sensitivity and empathy, while boys possess greater resilience and coping to manage stress (e.g., Petrides & Furnham, 2000). More recently, the scholarly literature demonstrates the importance of digital well-being as a plausible (but uncontrolled) factor in adolescent development. For example, Almoallim and Sas (2022) examined both commercial and academic digital well-being by indicating that the majority of digital well-being apps measured, or limited screen time, except for a select few which offered any help in tangentially working towards a healthier digital lifestyle. Similarly, Cao and Li (2023), estimated meaningful estimates for children's screen time, as estimates considered risks in children's screen behaviours, and risks for offline children's participation in the same risks, but did not take into consideration family protection in social competence, and demonstrated that screen time was predicting social competence negatively.

Digital well-being has also been examined in the context of teachers and the school environment. Fang et al. (2022) showed that teachers' perceived digital skillsets had a positive influence on their digital well-being, with resilience serving as a mediating effect, while other studies showed that technology use often negatively impacted teacher well-being. Vanden and Mariek (2021) describe digital well-being as a dynamic construct that is influenced by the 24/7 connectivity found in daily life and highlight the challenge of balancing technology when individuals use their devices an average of nearly three hours per day on a cell phone.

Research Gap

Adolescence marks a significant stage of growth where youth develop their emotional, social, and cognitive capacities while also facing the complexities of a digital world. Exploring aspects of sensitivity, maturity, competency, and digital well-being are directive and reflected in adolescents' adjustment, relationships with peers, and overall mental health. As the use of digital technology becomes omnipresent, we have seen an increase in discussions of the digital wellbeing of adolescents, while often researching in siloes disassociated from traditional emotional competencies. By investigating both physical digital wellbeing and relational dimensions in tandem as they correlate to psychosocial development, this research provides a more comprehensive approach to adolescents' emotional and digital competencies. The gender differences of emotional expression and technology use continue to offer a debate within psychology research and reveal disparity across cultural contexts. Further still, the potential for role differentiation between day-scholars and hostellers in psychosocial outcomes is a limited area of empirical work, while everyday living arrangements create significant influence on personality, independence, and digital habits. Therefore, in the present study we have two major aims: (a) to find the significant effect of gender on sensitivity, maturity, competency and digital well-being. (b) To find the significant effect of living arrangement on sensitivity, maturity, competency and digital well-being. The descriptive outcomes could be of practical use for educators and

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school/educational counselling practitioners in supporting the development of emotional and digital competence skills for adolescents. More broadly, desk-generating frameworks could serve as a resource for school and educational counselling policy developed for day-scholars and hostellers to receive adequate support for emotional and digital development.

METHODOLOGY

Objective

- To find the significant effect of gender (male/female) on sensitivity, maturity, competency and digital well-being.
- To find the significant effect of living arrangement (hostellers/day boarding) on sensitivity, maturity, competency and digital well-being.

Hypothesis

- H_0 – There will be no significant effect of gender (male/female) on sensitivity, maturity, competency and digital well-being.
- H_1 – There will be no significant effect of living arrangement (hostellers/day boarding) on sensitivity, maturity, competency and digital well-being.

Sample

A stratified random sampling technique was used to collect the data. The sample size was 200 adolescents (100 day-scholars and 100 hostellers) aged between 13–17 years. Independent variables are Gender (male and female) and living arrangements (day scholar and hostellers). Dependent variables for the study are sensitivity, maturity, competency and digital well-being. Inclusion criteria are residential schools and no residential schools and participant should be in hostel for more than 2 years. Exclusion criteria are participants who was above 17 and below 13 years and less than 2 years of hostel period. For measuring the variables, the following scales were used: Emotional Quotient (EQ) test used was developed by N.K. Chadha and Dr. Dalip Singh and Digital Wellbeing Scale developed by Arslankara, Demir, Oztas, and Usta (2022) along with a demographic information sheet (age, gender, class, type of schooling, and daily screen time). The questionnaires were administered in classrooms under proper supervision. Data was analysed using SPSS, with statistical techniques such as descriptive statistics and analysis of variance being used to draw comparisons and provide meaning to the study.

Variables

Independent Variables

- Gender (Male/Female)
- Living arrangements (Day scholar/Hostellers)

Dependent Variables

- Sensitivity
- Maturity
- Competency
- Digital Well-being

Inclusion Criteria

- Residential Schools & Non-residential schools
- Age – 10-17

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- Above 2 years in Hostels

Exclusion Criteria

- Above 17 years
- Less than 2 years in Hostels

Instrument

1. **Emotional Quotient (EQ):** Emotional Quotient test used was developed by N.K. Chadha and Dr. Dalip Singh. This test consists of three domains- Sensitivity, Maturity and Competency. The test has a total of 22 questions. Sensitivity domain has 5 questions, Maturity domain has 7 questions and Competency domain has 10 questions. Each question has four responses. Each response can be scored as 5, 10, 15 or 20. Responses to questions are placed in different orders to prevent stereotyped patterns of answering. Total scores were converted to percentile and then interpreted using norms of 'extremely high' to 'low EQ'. Retest reliability for the test was found to be 0.94. The split half reliability in the case of odd-even items was 0.89 and for the first half and second half was 0.91. Validity was found to be 0.89.
2. **Digital Wellbeing Scale** - This study utilised a standardised Digital Wellbeing Scale developed by Arslankara, Demir, Oztas, and Usta (2022). This scale has three dimensions of digital wellbeing, which are Digital Satisfaction; Safe and Responsible Behaviour; and Digital Wellness. This is a 5-point Likert scale having 12 items, contains 10 positive and 2 negative items. The positive items were scored as 5 for fully reflective, 4 for Very reflective, 3 for moderately reflective, 2 for Less reflective and 1 for Doesn't Reflect at all. The negative items were scored oppositely. The reliability results of the scale were determined using Spearman-Brown method (0.728), Guttman Split-Half method (0.751) and Cronbach's Alpha method (0.791). The levels for the digital wellbeing in this scale are Low Level (Score range: 12-24), Moderate Level (Score range: 25-36), Good Level (Score range: 37-48), Very Good Level (Score range: 49-60).

Procedure

The sample was collected from male and female students ranging in age from 10-17 years old at both residential and non-residential schools; Students were informed of the purpose for conducting research prior to administration. For the emotional quotient scale, students received basic instructions that each item had four options for their response; And against the digital wellbeing scale, students understanding that each item had five options. Students were also informed that there is "no right or wrong response" and that they would have "no time limit;" However, students were encouraged to provide their answers "as quickly as possible." All responses to all questions were required to be completed in order for students to have their answers remain confidential and be solely used for research purposes. Doubts related to the completion of all questions were addressed before collecting the completed questionnaires from the students.

Statistical Analysis

The Descriptive statistics used for data analysis were Mean, SD and ANOVA.

Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics of sensitivity, maturity, competency, and digital well-being across gender and living arrangements. Across all four dimensions, female students consistently reported higher scores than male students. Day scholars generally

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scored higher than hostellers on sensitivity, maturity, and competency, whereas hostellers reported substantially higher digital well-being scores.

Table 1 Descriptive Statistics for Sensitivity, Maturity, Competency, and Digital Well-Being by Gender and Living Arrangement

Variable	Living Arrangement	Gender	Mean	SD
Sensitivity	Day Scholars	Male	73.6	4.836
		Female	78.64	8.79
		Total	76.12	7.499
	Hostellers	Male	67.54	7.481
		Female	77.28	5.661
		Total	72.41	8.217
	Total	Male	70.57	6.968
		Female	77.96	7.387
	Overall Total		74.26	8.063
Maturity	Day Scholars	Male	109.38	7.521
		Female	115.74	8.41
		Total	112.56	8.557
	Hostellers	Male	102.84	6.516
		Female	108.28	7.594
		Total	105.56	7.552
	Total	Male	106.11	7.734
		Female	112.01	8.809
	Overall Total		109.06	8.781
Competency	Day Scholars	Male	156.78	12.432
		Female	163.18	11.528
		Total	159.98	12.353
	Hostellers	Male	151.96	13.542
		Female	155.06	15.588
		Total	153.51	14.61
	Total	Male	154.37	13.158
		Female	159.12	14.237
	Overall Total		156.74	13.879
Digital Wellbeing	Day Scholars	Male	31.88	5.59
		Female	32.46	5.376
		Total	32.17	5.464
	Hostellers	Male	48.38	4.155
		Female	52.3	3.376
		Total	50.34	4.25
	Total	Male	40.13	9.631
		Female	42.38	10.925
	Overall Total		41.25	10.334

For the sensitivity, Day scholar males scored 73.60 (SD = 4.836) and females 78.64 (SD = 8.790), with an overall mean of 76.12 (SD = 7.499). Hosteller males scored 67.54 (SD = 7.481) and females 77.28 (SD = 5.661), leading to an overall hosteller mean of 72.41 (SD = 8.217). Across the total sample, males averaged 70.57 (SD = 6.970) and females 77.96 (SD = 7.387).

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= 7.390), with an overall mean of 74.26 (SD = 8.060). The mean scores indicate that females scored more than male in both living arrangements. Between female day scholar and hostellers the mean difference was smaller while male day scholars scored higher than male hostellers. These findings shows that gender has a strong influence on sensitivity than living arrangements.

For the Maturity, the mean score of day scholar was 109.38 (SD = 7.521) and females 115.74 (SD = 8.410), with an overall mean of 112.56 (SD = 8.557). Hosteller males scored 102.84 (SD = 6.516) and females 108.28 (SD = 7.594), leading to an overall hosteller mean of 105.56 (SD = 7.552). In total, males averaged 106.11 (SD = 7.734) and females 112.01 (SD = 8.809), with an overall mean of 109.06 (SD = 8.781). The Mean scores of gender represents that female consistently shows higher maturity as compare to male and the mean scores of living arrangement shows that day scholar shows higher maturity than hostellers, especially among males.

Day scholar males scored 156.78 (SD = 12.432) and females 163.18 (SD = 11.528), with an overall mean of 159.98 (SD = 12.353). Hosteller males scored 151.96 (SD = 13.542) and females 155.06 (SD = 15.588), leading to an overall hosteller mean of 153.51 (SD = 14.610). In the total sample, males had a mean score of 154.37 (SD = 13.158) and females had a mean score of 159.12 (SD = 14.237), with a mean score overall of 156.74 (SD = 13.879). This finding shows that females had a greater perceived level of competency than males, and day scholars tended to have a means score that was higher than hostellers, suggesting that day scholars may have had more access or experience that would contribute to the higher levels of perceived competency.

Day scholar males scored 31.88 (SD = 5.590) and females scored 32.46 (SD = 5.376), with a mean overall score of 32.17 (SD = 5.464). Hosteller males scored 48.38 (SD = 4.155) and females score 52.30 (SD = 3.376) for an overall mean for hostellers of 50.34 (SD = 4.250). Day male and female scholars mean score overall is 40.13 (SD = 9.631) and females are 42.38 (SD = 10.925) for a mean overall of 41.25 (SD = 10.334). This suggests that hostellers report higher levels of digital wellbeing than day scholars, with females reporting slightly higher than males in both groups, illustrating that living arrangement has a greater effect on digital wellbeing than gender.

Inferential Analysis

To investigate the main and interaction effects of living arrangement and gender on the four dependent variables a series of two-way ANOVAs were performed. Table 2 summarizes the results, including effect sizes.

Table 2 - Two-Way ANOVA Results for Sensitivity, Maturity, Competency, and Digital Well-Being

Dependent Variable	Source	F(1,196)	p	Partial η^2
Sensitivity	Living Arrangement	14.59**	< .001	0.07
	Gender	57.90**	< .001	0.23
	LA $\times$ Gender	5.86*	0.016	0.03
Maturity	Living Arrangement	43.09**	< .001	0.18
	Gender	30.61**	< .001	0.14
	LA $\times$ Gender	0.19	0.667	0

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Dependent Variable	Source	F(1,196)	p	Partial η^2
Competency	Living Arrangement	11.73**	0.001	0.06
	Gender	6.32*	0.013	0.03
	LA $\times$ Gender	0.76	0.384	0
Digital Well-Being	Living Arrangement	743.45**	< .001	0.79
	Gender	11.40**	0.001	0.06
	LA $\times$ Gender	6.28*	0.013	0.03

** Significance at 0.01, * Significance at 0.05

Note. LA = Living Arrangement. Partial η^2 = effect size.

For sensitivity ANOVA confirmed significant main effects of living arrangement ($F(1,196) = 14.59$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .07$) and gender ($F(1,196) = 57.90$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .23$). A significant interaction effect ($F(1,196) = 5.86$, $p = .016$, $\eta^2 = .03$) indicated that the influence of living arrangement on sensitivity differed by gender. For maturity the results revealed significant main effects of living arrangement ($F(1,196) = 43.09$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .18$) and gender ($F(1,196) = 30.61$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .14$). However, the interaction was insignificant ($F(1,196) = 0.19$, $p = .667$, $\eta^2 = .00$), suggesting independent contributions of gender and living arrangement.

Day scholars scored higher in competency than hostellers, and females outperformed males. Significant main effects emerged for living arrangement ($F(1,196) = 11.73$, $p = .001$, $\eta^2 = .06$) and gender ($F(1,196) = 6.32$, $p = .013$, $\eta^2 = .03$). The interaction was nonsignificant ($F(1,196) = 0.76$, $p = .384$, $\eta^2 = .00$). For the digital wellbeing, the F ratio shows a very strong main effect of living arrangement ($F(1,196) = 743.45$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .79$) and a smaller but significant effect of gender ($F(1,196) = 11.40$, $p = .001$, $\eta^2 = .06$). The interaction effect was also significant ($F(1,196) = 6.28$, $p = .013$, $\eta^2 = .03$), which indicated that the gender differences in digital well-being varied depending on living arrangement.

DISCUSSION

Adolescence unfolds within the intersection of emotional growth and digital immersion, and the present study offers compelling evidence that both gender and living arrangement shape adolescents' emotional quotient (domains like sensitivity, maturity, and competency) and digital well-being. One striking finding was that female students consistently scored higher on EQ domains, echoing earlier work that links girls with greater socio-emotional awareness and empathy (Petrides et al., 2016). This difference must be laid at the door of gendered socialization patterns: girls are often encouraged to feel, form relationships, and empathize, while boys are sometimes encouraged to be self-contained and to hold back. These cultural expectations likely provide girls with more practice in detecting and responding to emotion, and this is reflected in higher EQ scores. This is corroborated by Brackett et al. (2004), whose findings revealed that female adolescents outperformed male adolescents on measures of emotional attention and empathy, further corroboration of the role of gender in socio-emotional growth. Residential organization also played an important part. Day-scholars outscored hostellers in sensitivity, maturity, and competence, underscoring the role of parental supervision and structured family routines in promoting emotional maturation. Family environments provide stable teaching, emotional modelling, and intergenerational communication opportunities that strengthen adolescents' emotion regulation (Domoff et al., 2020). Sharma and Sharma (2018) have also reported that parents' resident adolescents had better emotional adjustment than the hostel residents, which is similar to the present findings.

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At the same time, hostellers showed much higher digital wellbeing. This opposite pattern suggests that peer-oriented and self-directed contexts could lead to healthier technology practices. Hostellers who were free of constant parental supervision could create their own digital guidelines as a group with peers, about when to disengage in ways that continued to favor social or academic responsibility. The peer culture within hostel life could also lead to normalized group limits on screens, or subsequent offline group engagement, that reduced excessive use. The extremely large effect size ($\eta^2 = .79$) makes clear that environment is not an ambient variable but a primary mediator of digital use. Supporting this interpretation, Twenge and Campbell (2018), showed that teenagers with higher levels of autonomy tended to show healthier digital self-regulation, particularly if peer norms encourage balanced use.

The additional moderating role of gender extends the results of the findings. Female hostellers and Day-scholars were particularly high in sensitivity and in digital well-being, indicating that the successful combination of autonomy and social support from peers for females allows them to thrive emotionally and in their digital wellbeing. This may be consistent with their tendency to create peer networks that facilitate emotional sharing and mutual regulation of each other's behaviors, which protects them in the face of emotional distress and problematic digital usage. Conversely, male hostellers had significantly lower sensitivity and maturity than their Day-scholar counterparts, suggesting the absence of parental involvement may be more impactful on boys and their impulse control, especially when experiencing emotionally demanding conditions. It is important not to overlook contrasting evidence: some studies have not found gender-related differences in EQ scores or digital behaviours, indicating that outcomes may be more closely related to cultural contexts and measurement methods than biological sex (Derks et al., 2008).

Although day scholar students often demonstrate above average emotional intelligence, they may still benefit from programming focused on self-regulation and digital literacy skills due to their greater vulnerability to screen overuse in familial contexts where screens are more readily available. Hostellers would benefit from opportunities and some structure to develop emotional competence skills as was expressed, for example, in peer-led workshop models or mentorship initiatives. Gender-specific programming is also important: allowing boys the opportunity to develop emotional awareness and openness, and girls to establish relationships with screens that include responsible and appropriate screen engagement, would allow for emotional growth and development to be more equal and balanced. In a time when adolescents' lives are dominated by smart phones and social media, the results of the study highlighted the importance of individuals and cultural contexts when embedding emotional development and engagement with screen time.

CONCLUSION

This research highlights the fact that socio-emotional outcomes and digital well-being in adolescence are influenced by both gender and residential type. Females exhibited higher EQ scores than males, while hostellers demonstrated stronger digital well-being than day students. Given our mixed-methods analysis, these findings underscore the importance of the contexts in which assess adolescents' socio-emotional and digital experiences. Educators, parents, and policymakers can draw upon these ideas when designing programs and interventions that promote healthy emotional development and digital practices in adolescents.

Future Research

Future research could employ longitudinal research designs in exploring how EQ and digital well-being change over time and influence one another. Expanding the population and sample size to include cultural and socio-economic diversity would enhance the generalizability of findings. Qualitative approaches, such as interviews or focus groups, could provide insight into the subtleties of adolescents' emotional and digital lives. Experimental and intervention studies may also be used in the future to test the effectiveness of programs designed to enhance EQ and contribute to digital literacy ability. Finally, using objective measures (e.g. tracking for digital use and physiological measures of stress) would add greater validity to future studies in this area.

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Conflict of Interest

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

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