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SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHIC DETERMINANTS OF DIGITAL ATTITUDES AMONG YOUNG ADULTS: A MULTIDIMENSIONAL ANALYSIS

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Abstract

The rapid growth of digital technologies has transformed the educational, professional, and social lives of young adults, making it important to understand the factors influencing their digital attitudes. The purpose of this study is to identify the influence of socio-demographic characteristics on the digital attitudes of young adults across four dimensions like Perceived Benefit Attitude, Emotional Reliance Attitude, Compulsive Engagement Attitude, and Job-Driven Attitude. A quantitative cross-sectional survey was conducted among 500 young adults (18–30 years) using a structured questionnaire, and the data were analysed using One-Way ANOVA. The results showed that young adults' digital attitudes are significantly affected by their socio-demographic factors. The field of study is found to be a significant factor influencing all four dimensions of digital attitudes, whereas age, educational qualification, occupation and place of residence have significant impacts on selected dimensions of digital attitudes. The study findings suggest that socio-demographic factors have an impact on young adults' digital attitudes.

Keywords:

Digital Attitudes;
Young Adults;
Socio-Demographic Characteristics;
Digital Literacy.

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1. Introduction

Digital technologies have become an integral part of contemporary life, reshaping education, communication, employment, and social interactions among young adults. Smartphones, Web-based learning platforms, social networks, and other digital services have improved access to information and provided new avenues for education and career growth. But there is still a difference among socio-demographic groups in terms of digital literacy, technology adoption, engagement in digital activities, and the ways in which individuals perceive and use digital technologies (Palanichamy et al., 2023; Getenet et al., 2024). Digital attitudes encompass individuals' perceptions of the benefits of digital technologies, emotional reliance on digital platforms, compulsive engagement, and technology use for educational and occupational purposes.

2. Review of Literature

Palanichamy et al. (2023) developed and validated an Internet Use Assessment Instrument tailored to the Indian context using a sample of 560 individuals aged 16–40 years. The study confirmed high reliability and validity of the instrument and the factor analysis revealed the three factor structure (18 items) related to the patterns of Internet use. The findings provide a robust tool for evaluating internet usage across educational, research, clinical, and workplace settings, highlighting its relevance for understanding digital behaviour in the Indian context. Getenet et al. (2024) investigated the correlation between digital technology attitude, digital literacy, self-efficacy and online learning engagement among the first-year university students. The study revealed that positive digital technology attitudes and higher digital literacy significantly enhanced students' self-efficacy, leading to improvements in their social, collaborative, cognitive, behavioural, emotional, and overall online learning engagement. Soldatova et al.

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(2025) investigated the concept of the Digital Centaur, referring to individuals who effectively collaborate with AI to enhance their capabilities. The research identified that digital competence, positive technology attitudes, emotional intelligence, and online use have significant relationships with preference for human-AI collaboration, suggesting that promoting responsible and effective online engagement in the lives of young adults is important. Gogoi et al. (2025) used a quasi-experimental design approach to assess the efficacy of a Digital Literacy Training Programme (DLTP) with adolescent girls in rural regions of India. The results showed that the digital literacy training had a significant positive effect on the digital skill, continuation of education, availability of ICT devices, knowledge about government schemes and perceived physical security of the participants. Tsouparopoulou et al. (2025) examined the digital attitudes, skills, and civic participation of young people aged 15–35 years across more than 30 European countries using data from the European Social Survey (ESS) Round 10. The study identified that digital skills, digital optimism, and socio-demographic characteristics significantly influenced young people's digital communication, online civic engagement, and perceptions of information and communication technologies (ICT). The findings highlight that positive digital attitudes and stronger digital competencies enhance civic participation and responsible digital engagement among youth.

3. Research Gap

While previous studies have examined digital literacy and technology adoption, where as few studies have examined digital attitudes as a multidimensional construct. Furthermore, the impact of age, educational qualification, field of study, occupation, place of residence on digital attitudes of youth in the context of Tamil Nadu is not yet explored. Thus the study aims to fill this potential gap by exploring the socio-demographic factors that influence multidimensional digital attitudes in young adults.

4. Objective of the Study

To identify the influence of socio-demographic characteristics on the multidimensional digital attitudes of young adults.

5. Research Design

The present study used a quantitative approach with a cross-sectional survey design to explore how socio-demographic factors influence digital attitudes among young adults. Data were gathered from 500 respondents aged between 18 to 30 years using a structured questionnaire and stratified random sampling method was employed to ensure adequate sampling of the different socio-demographic groups. Digital Attitude Scale comprised of 16 statements measured on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree). Then, Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) was used to determine the underlying dimensions of digital attitudes. The analysis extracted four dimensions, namely Perceived Benefit Attitude (5 items), Emotional Reliance Attitude (4 items), Compulsive Engagement Attitude (4 items), and Job-Driven Attitude (3 items), which were used for further analysis using descriptive statistics and One-Way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) to examine significant differences in digital attitudes across socio-demographic variables at a 5% level of significance.

6. Ethical Consideration

Strict adherence to ethical principles such as informed consent, voluntary participation, anonymity and confidentiality were observed throughout the study.

7. Result and Discussion

7.1 Age Group and Digital Attitude of Young Adults

Null Hypothesis:

There is no significant difference in the digital attitudes of young adults across different age groups.

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TABLE 1
One-Way Analysis of Variance on Age & Digital Attitude of Young Adults

Attitude Dimensions	Age Group	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	F	p-value	Result
Perceived Benefit Attitude	18 –22 years	397	3.7103	.68742	5.680	.004*	**Significant**
	23–26 years	76	3.9684	.56385			
	26–30 years	27	3.9333	.67254			
Emotional Reliance Attitude	18 –22 years	397	3.7889	.69933	5.798	.003*	**Significant**
	23–26 years	76	3.6092	.73922			
	26–30 years	27	3.3778	.72342			
Compulsive Engagement Attitude	18 –22 years	397	3.4675	.76708	2.868	.058	Not Significant
	23–26 years	76	3.6908	.64066			
	26–30 years	27	3.5333	.72695			
Job-Driven Attitude	18 –22 years	397	3.7990	.68913	5.512	.004*	**Significant**
	23–26 years	76	4.0500	.55582			
	26–30 years	27	4.0444	.84185			

Source: Computed Data; *Significant at 5% level of Significance

Table 1 indicates the results of One-Way ANOVA conducted to examine differences in digital attitudes based on age groups. Significant differences were observed in Perceived Benefit Attitude, Emotional Reliance Attitude, and Job-Driven Attitude across different age groups, indicating that digital perceptions and usage patterns vary with age. However, Compulsive Engagement Attitude did not differ significantly among the age groups, suggesting that compulsive digital behaviour is relatively consistent regardless of age.

7.2 Education & Digital Attitude of Young Adults

Null Hypothesis:

There is no significant difference in the digital attitudes of young adults across different educational qualifications.

Table 2
One-Way Analysis of Variance on Education & Digital Attitude of Young Adults

Attitude Dimensions	Education	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	F-Value	p-value	Result
Perceived Benefit Attitude	High School	34	3.6000	.53711	3.692	.012*	**Significant**
	Undergraduate	367	3.7678	.68229			
	Postgraduate	84	3.8786	.66804			
	Professional course	15	3.3200	.64940			
Emotional Reliance Attitude	High School	34	3.8147	.61896	.692	.557	Not Significant
	Undergraduate	367	3.7520	.69470			
	Postgraduate	84	3.6893	.81522			
	Professional course	15	3.5400	.78176			
Compulsive Engagement Attitude	High School	34	3.5412	.82503	8.849	.000*	**Significant**
	Undergraduate	367	3.4523	.75443			
	Postgraduate	84	3.8214	.65050			
	Professional course	15	2.9400	.20284			
Job-Driven Attitude	High School	34	3.8765	.61647	1.886	.131	Not Significant
	Undergraduate	367	3.8223	.69545			
	Postgraduate	84	3.9964	.70342			
	Professional course	15	3.6600	.32470			

Source : Computed value; *Significance at 5% level

Table 2 reveals that educational qualification significantly influences young adults' Perceived Benefit Attitude and Compulsive Engagement Attitude, whereas no significant differences were observed in Emotional Reliance Attitude and Job-Driven Attitude. These findings suggest that education shapes how young adults perceive the benefits of digital technologies and their level of digital engagement, but it has limited influence on their emotional dependence and job-related use of digital technologies.

7.3 Field of Study & Digital Attitude of Young Adults

Null Hypothesis:

There is no significant difference in the digital attitudes of young adults across different fields of study.

Table 3

One-Way Analysis of Variance on Education & Digital Attitude of Young Adults

Attitude Dimensions	Field of Study	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	F-Value	p-value	Result
Perceived benefit Attitude	Arts & Humanities	51	3.6471	.54345	7.202	.000*	**Significant**
	Commerce & Management	302	3.7980	.71090			
	Science	75	3.5360	.55426			
	Engineering / Technology	45	3.7067	.64751			
	Others	27	4.2889	.52721			
Emotional Reliance Attitude	Arts & Humanities	51	3.5706	.59373	3.006	.018*	**Significant**
	Commerce & Management	302	3.7493	.76709			
	Science	75	3.7240	.63434			
	Engineering / Technology	45	3.6533	.61445			
	Others	27	4.1333	.51515			
Compulsive Engagement Attitude	Arts & Humanities	51	3.5824	.52563	3.819	.005*	**Significant**
	Commerce & Management	302	3.5589	.77436			
	Science	75	3.2800	.68694			
	Engineering / Technology	45	3.2933	.86324			
	Others	27	3.7333	.63002			
Job-Driven Attitude	Arts & Humanities	51	3.6471	.61882	2.880	.022*	**Significant**
	Commerce & Management	302	3.9142	.64445			
	Science	75	3.7680	.74565			
	Engineering / Technology	45	3.9200	.63123			
	Others	27	3.6333	1.01109			

Source : Computed value; *Significance at 5% level

Table 3 demonstrates that field of study has a significant influence on all four dimensions of digital attitudes among young adults. Significant differences were observed in Perceived Benefit Attitude, Emotional Reliance Attitude, Compulsive Engagement Attitude, and Job-Driven Attitude across different academic disciplines. These findings suggest that students' academic backgrounds play an important role in shaping their perceptions, engagement, and utilization of digital technologies.

7.4 Occupation & Digital Attitude of Young Adults

Null Hypothesis:

There is no significant difference in the digital attitudes of young adults across different occupational groups.

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Table 4

One-Way Analysis of Variance on Occupation & Digital Attitude of Young Adults

Digital Attitudes	Occupation	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	F Value	p-value	Result
Perceived benefit Attitude	Student	386	3.7062	.68438	4.687	.003*	**Significant**
	Employed	72	3.9111	.64120			
	Self-Employed	27	3.9111	.50026			
	Unemployed	15	4.2000	.62792			
Emotional Reliance Attitude	Student	386	3.8000	.66391	4.750	.003*	**Significant**
	Employed	72	3.4708	.95245			
	Self-Employed	27	3.6778	.68743			
	Unemployed	15	3.5800	.20071			
Compulsive Engagement Attitude	Student	386	3.4907	.75951	.736	.531	Not Significant
	Employed	72	3.5681	.73577			
	Self-Employed	27	3.4222	.73920			
	Unemployed	15	3.7200	.58334			
Job-Driven Attitude	Student	386	3.8023	.69613	5.698	.001*	**Significant**
	Employed	72	4.1542	.63266			
	Self-Employed	27	3.7889	.53157			
	Unemployed	15	3.7400	.57296			

Source : Computed value; *Significance at 5% level

Table 4 highlights that occupation significantly influences Perceived Benefit Attitude, Emotional Reliance Attitude, and Job-Driven Attitude among young adults, whereas no significant difference was observed in Compulsive Engagement Attitude. These findings suggest that occupational status shapes the perceived benefits, emotional dependence, and job-related use of digital technologies, while compulsive digital engagement remains largely unaffected across different occupational groups.

7.5 Place of Residence & Digital Attitude of Young Adults

Null Hypothesis: *There is no significant difference in the digital attitudes of young adults across different places of residence.*

Table 5

One-Way Analysis of Variance on Place of Residence & Digital Attitude of Young Adults

Attitude Dimensions	Place of residence	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	F Value	p-value	Result
Perceived Benefit Attitude	Urban	158	3.6696	.71985	5.048	.007*	**Significant**
	Semi-urban	79	3.6456	.64685			
	Rural	263	3.8517	.64588			
Emotional Reliance Attitude	Urban	158	3.8563	.66691	3.755	.024*	**Significant**
	Semi-urban	79	3.7633	.50464			
	Rural	263	3.6620	.78288			
Compulsive Engagement Attitude	Urban	158	3.5329	.70570	.193	.824	Not Significant
	Semi-urban	79	3.5114	.76006			
	Rural	263	3.4863	.77477			
Job Driven Attitude	Urban	158	3.9165	.70997	5.521	.004*	**Significant**
	Semi-urban	79	3.6203	.74788			
	Rural	263	3.8798	.63871			

Source : Computed value; *Significance at 5% level

Table 5 shows that place of residence significantly influences Perceived Benefit Attitude, Emotional Reliance Attitude, and Job-Driven Attitude among young adults, while no significant difference was observed in Compulsive Engagement Attitude. These findings suggest that residential background shapes young adults' perceptions of digital benefits, emotional dependence, and job-related use of digital technologies, whereas compulsive digital engagement remains similar across urban, semi-urban, and rural areas.

8. Recommendations

- Digital literacy initiatives should be strengthened to promote responsible and productive digital engagement among young adults across different socio-demographic groups.
- Greater emphasis should be placed on integrating digital competencies and digital well-being into educational and skill development programmes to foster balanced technology use.
- Context-specific digital engagement strategies should be encouraged to address the diverse digital attitudes observed across educational backgrounds, fields of study, and occupational groups.
- Efforts should be made to enhance the effective use of digital technologies for academic, professional, and career development while minimizing excessive dependence on digital platforms.
- Measures aimed at improving equitable access to digital resources and opportunities should be reinforced to reduce disparities associated with place of residence and other socio-demographic characteristics.
- Awareness programmes promoting healthy digital habits and responsible technology use should be encouraged to strengthen positive digital attitudes and overall digital well-being.
- Future research should explore additional psychological, behavioural, and contextual factors influencing digital attitudes to develop a more comprehensive understanding of digital engagement among young adults.

9. Conclusion

The present study examined the influence of socio-demographic characteristics on the digital attitudes of young adults across four dimensions: Perceived Benefit Attitude, Emotional Reliance Attitude, Compulsive Engagement Attitude, and Job-Driven Attitude. The findings demonstrate that socio-demographic variables significantly shape digital attitudes, although their influence differs across dimensions. Field of study emerged as the most consistent determinant, significantly influencing all four dimensions of digital attitudes. Age, occupation, and place of residence significantly affected perceived benefit, emotional reliance, and job-driven attitudes, whereas educational qualification significantly influenced perceived benefit and compulsive engagement attitudes. In contrast, compulsive engagement was generally unaffected by age, occupation, and place of residence, suggesting that excessive digital engagement may be driven by factors beyond socio-demographic characteristics. Overall, the study highlights that digital attitudes among young adults are multidimensional and vary across demographic groups. These findings contribute to the growing literature on digital behaviour by providing empirical evidence from the Indian context and offer practical insights for educators, policymakers, and organizations to develop demographic-specific digital literacy initiatives that promote responsible, inclusive, and productive use of digital technologies.

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