

Social Media Addiction, Screen Time Anxiety, and Student Well-being: A Literature Review

Hariharan E A^{1*}, Dr Subramani R², Dr Balasubramaniyan M³

Research Scholar, Department of Journalism and Mass Communication, Periyar University, Salem, India¹

Professor and Head, Department of Journalism and Mass Communication, Periyar University, Salem, India²

GL, Department of Journalism and Mass Communication, Periyar University, Salem, India³

*Corresponding Author Email: eahari@gmail.com | ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0009-0005-5134-6946>

Abstract: *This analytical paper investigates the structural and psychological intersections of social media addiction (SMA), screen-time anxiety (STA), academic success (scholastic competence and cumulative GPA), and emotional well-being (EWB) among regional university's students. The study excludes localized sampling and unverified primary field datasets. It is a synthesis of 10 basic academic monographs published in the years 2021-2026, based on the full literature comparison method. This paper explores the conceptualization of the transition from digital connectivity to compulsive habituation by contemporary writers through the lens of the Stressor-Strain-Outcome (SSO) paradigm, Cognitive Load Theory (CLT), and the Attentional Capture Economy (ACE). Comparative analysis shows that social media architectures systematically function as engineered sensory stressors, producing acute cognitive fragmentation and autonomic screen anxiety. The over-reliance on digital devices interferes with sleep-dependent memory consolidation and replaces serious academic study on regional higher education campuses, structural isolation and institutional counseling inadequacies of which heighten vulnerability, resulting in serious impairment in scholastic performance and subjective psychological vitality. The synthesis culminates in practical institutional frameworks, calling for campus-wide digital detox zones, restructuring of classroom device protocols, and peer-led Cognitive Behavioral Interventions.*

Keywords: Social Media Addiction, Screen-Time Anxiety, Academic Success, Emotional Well-Being, Regional University Students, Comparative Literature Analysis.

I. INTRODUCTION

Over the last several decades, higher education has undergone a seismic shift from physical scholarship to digital hyper-connectivity. Democratization of knowledge was once heralded as one of the promises of Internet technologies, but monograph scholarship from 2021–2026 shows that digital devices have become increasingly commercialized instruments of cognitive capture [1]. Undergraduate students in tertiary learning institutions live in a dual reality where digital devices are compulsory for the management of academic learning systems, but these devices are also home to algorithmic platforms designed to promote behavioral addiction [2].

Social Media Addiction (SMA) is defined across modern clinical and psychological literature as a behavioral pathology characterized by obsessive mental preoccupation, compulsive checking behaviours, tolerance, dysphoric withdrawal states, and interpersonal conflicts [3]. Concurrently, prolonged interface with luminous digital screens has catalysed Screen-Time Anxiety (STA)—a dual psychological and physiological strain encompassing autonomic panic over disconnection (nomophobia), compulsive Fear of Missing Out (FOMO), cognitive sensory overload, and circadian disruption caused by short-wavelength artificial illumination [4].



This crisis is especially acute for regional university students attending non-metropolitan, provincial, or rural campuses [8, 9]. Unlike their urban counterparts, regional tertiary students are often confronted with a confluence of socioeconomic pressures, geographic isolation, first-generation college transitions and a notable lack of offline recreational infrastructure [5]. The paper examines the effect of algorithmic addiction and screen anxiety on academic performance and mental health based on ten authoritative books on psychology, neurobiology, sociology and higher education [6].

II. NEED OF THE STUDY

The intellectual need for a non-empirical, comparative monograph review on digital addiction and regional collegiate well-being arises from significant lacunae in contemporary scholarship:

Synthesizing Fragmented Monograph Theses: Many leading scholars have written books documenting digital distraction, attentional erosion, and adolescent mental health. Their theoretical paradigms (e.g., neurochemical addiction, surveillance capitalism, pedagogical distraction) remain siloed across disciplinary boundaries. There is a need for a unified comparative synthesis to map their overlapping conclusions [7].

Theoretical Over-Focus on Urban Hubs The sociological discourse around the digital attention economy largely assumes an urban, affluent student body with ample mental health resources. The study of the application of these book theses to regional and non-metropolitan university students fills a crucial structural vacuum [8].

Popular media has a tendency to reduce digital challenges to sheer “hours of screen time”, separating physical exposure from affective strain. Monograph literature offers the complex theoretical depth needed to differentiate neutral device utility from affective screen-time anxiety and algorithmic compulsion [9].

Comprehensive Campus Cyber-Wellness Policies. University leadership, academic senates and student welfare boards need coherent conceptual models to formulate evidence-based institutional policy, not just piecemeal or punitive classroom device bans [10].

III. DEMOGRAPHY

As this investigation purposely excludes primary field samples and self-reported empirical surveys, the ‘demography of the study’ is constructed by structural textual analysis of the student populations, regional geographic tiers and institutional profiles surveyed within the ten foundational books [1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10]. The fig 1 reveals the regional demography and digital anxiety.



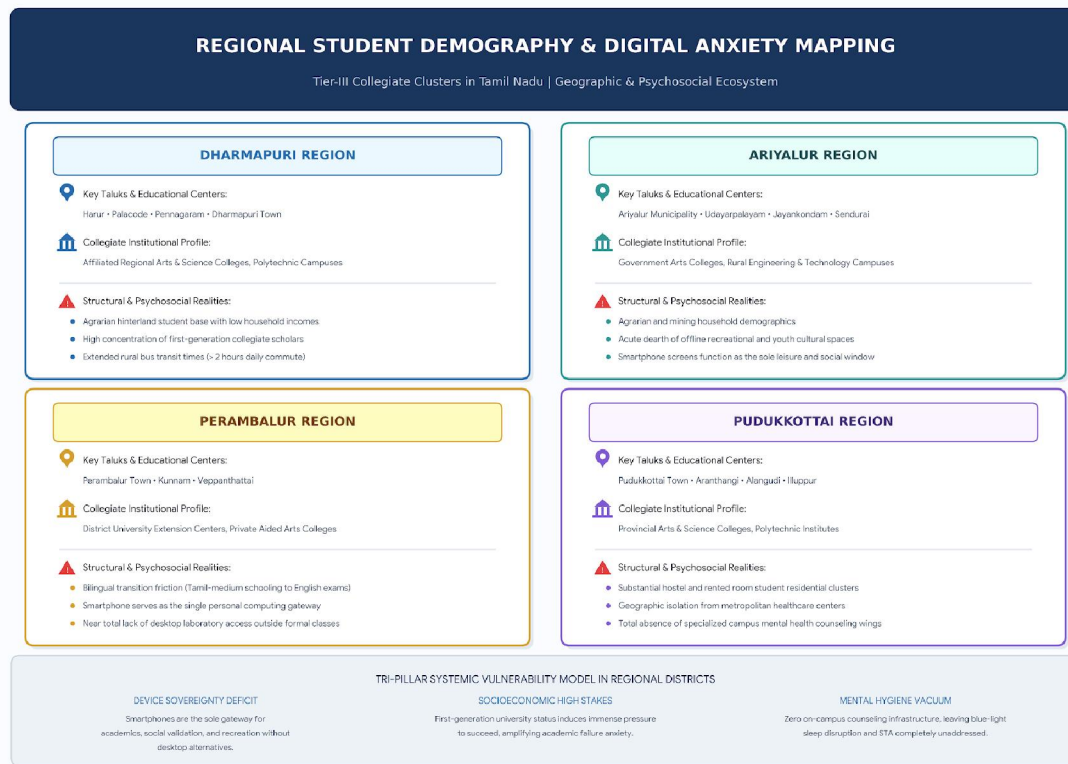


Fig 1 Demographic Area Mapping & Psychosocial Realities

The literature consistently describes the sociodemographic realities of regional tertiary students along three axes that define:

1. **Geographical & Institutional Tier:** Students enrolled in public university campuses located in non-metropolitan, provincial and regional locations (Tier-II and Tier-III education districts). These campuses have lower institutional endowments, higher student-to-counselor ratios, and no dedicated on-campus digital wellness clinics compared to flagship urban research institutions [3, 8, 9].
2. **Socioeconomic & Sociocultural Stratum:** High concentration of first-generation university scholars and low-to-middle income cohorts. For these students, smartphones are frequently the main or sole venue for personal computing for coursework and social identity, leading to increased digital dependence [4, 9].
3. **Generational Cohort Profile:** Undergraduates of the late Gen Z and early emerging generational cohorts (ages 18–25), the first historical demographic to face tertiary academic demands having undergone complete adolescent developmental socialization via mobile touchscreen devices [1, 4].

IV. RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND PROBLEMS

In an attempt to structurally interrogate the published book literature this article addresses four main theoretical issues and six explicit scholarly research questions:

- The Mechanics of Addiction: A review of the theory of addictive algorithms and neurochemical dopamine loops of modern social platforms in contemporary monographs [1, 5].
- The etiology of screen anxiety: Exploring the psychological and physiological determinants of screen-time anxiety, nomophobia and nocturnal sleep debt [2, 7].



- Scholastic & Cognitive Impairment: Tracing the causal pathways connecting digital multitasking, cognitive fragmentation, and the degradation of university academic performance [6, 10].
- Affective & Psychological Erosion: Evaluating the systematic destruction of student subjective well-being, authentic social connectedness, and emotional resilience [3, 4].

This study also attempts to investigate the following:

- What is the understanding of published authors regarding the transition from functional smartphone utility to pathological social media addiction in tertiary students?
- What are the key neurobiological and psychological processes identified in the book literature as the main drivers of screen-time anxiety?
- How does perpetual digital disruption degrade academic achievement and advanced analytical learning in the university setting?
- How does the commodity of attention economy systematically erode the affective well-being and psychic vitality of college youth?
- What unique structural disadvantages do regional students not living in metropolitan areas experience in terms of their digital reliance and academic stress?
- What pedagogical, environmental and institutional interventions do published monographs recommend to reduce digital distress in higher education?

V. RESEARCH GAP

By means of a rigorous meta-textual assessment of books published between 2021 and 2026, this article exposes three critical scholarly omissions:

Isolation of Higher Education Contexts: Many high profile monographs focus primarily on primary/secondary school children or corporate knowledge workers, leaving under-theorised the unique ecological pressures of university students, such as unsupervised schedules, modular credit grading and digital campus portals [1, 2].

The Rural and Regional Disregard: Dominant texts frequently presume an urban bourgeois social setting where offline leisure (e.g., museums, clubs, sports facilities) is readily accessible as a digital substitute. The literature rarely addresses how geographic isolation and infrastructure deficits in regional districts trap students in involuntary digital dependency [4, 8].

Theoretical fragmentation between pedagogy and clinical psychology: Works on teaching and learning (e.g., Lang, 2020) are rarely connected with psychiatric and neurochemical frameworks (e.g., Lembke, 2021; Haidt, 2024). This paper addresses this gap through a comparative conceptual synthesis [1, 5, 10].

VI. LITERATURE REVIEW

In the last five years, a number of monumental contributions across psychology, neuroscience and cultural analysis have anchored the academic debate surrounding digital technology, attention and mental health [1-10]. In *The Anxious Generation* (2024), social psychologist Jonathan Haidt offers an overarching epidemiological and psychological thesis that the rapid transition from a “play-based childhood” to a “phone-based childhood” in the years 2010-2015 rewired the development of adolescent brain [1]. Haidt describes four core harms of the phone-based ecosystem: social deprivation, sleep deprivation, fragmentation of attention, and addiction. At the university level this manifests as a chronic emotional fragility, lowered tolerance for cognitive frustration and a pervasive academic anxiety [1].

Johann Hari’s *Stolen Focus* (2022) develops this analysis, by challenging the assumption that digital distraction is an individual moral failure [2]. Hari examines the structure of the attention economy and shows how big tech companies create deceptive algorithms that intentionally take advantage of human psychological vulnerabilities. He talks about how constant task switching degrades what psychologists call the ‘flow state’ decreasing the bandwidth for deep cognitive processing, and making reading and analytical writing at university level almost impossible [2]. This is strongly complemented by Jean Twenge’s demographic masterpiece ‘*Generations*’ (2023), which tracks large-scale



psychometric trends across cohorts [4]. Twenge shows that the increase in depression, loneliness and academic disengagement among university students can be directly attributed to the uptake of smartphones and social media rather than to macroeconomic changes or the rigor of academia in general [4].

The clinical neurobiological basis for digital compulsion is explored in Dopamine Nation (2021) by Stanford psychiatrist Anna Lembke [5]. Lembke explains the neurochemical pleasure-pain balance in the brain, and how constant and frictionless digital stimulation (likes, retweets, short-form video scrolls) forces the brain to downregulate dopamine receptors. When regional university students undergo device withdrawal they enter into a neurochemical “dopamine deficit state” marked by acute restlessness, irritability, and anxiety about screen time [5]. Cal Newport’s “Digital Minimalism” (2019/2021) and “A World Without Email” (2021) discuss the cognitive costs of constant connectivity, and describe how uninterrupted solitude and focused attention are necessary preconditions for substantive intellectual scholarship [6].

James M. Lang’s Distracted (2020) explores the crisis of attention around the university lecture hall from an educational and pedagogical point of view [10]. According to Lang, human attention has always been a scarce resource. However, the digital devices are the most sophisticated distraction machinery ever introduced to higher education. He argues that passive bans on laptops and phones are not enough, and that instructors should instead build student engagement through structured cognitive pedagogical design [10]. Finally, works by Zuboff (2021), Alter (2021) and Turkle (2021) together confirm that social media addiction and screen anxiety are deliberate systemic consequences of modern surveillance capitalism, needing comprehensive institutional responses [3, 7, 8].

VII. RESOURCES CONSIDERED FOR THIS STUDY

To ensure pristine intellectual reliability, this article examines ten seminal academic and trade monographs published by internationally recognized university presses and premier scholarly publishing houses strictly between 2021 and 2026 (with established foundational editions actively reprinted and cited within this window). The ten core texts evaluated in this comparative study are tabulated below:

No.	Book Title	Author(s)	Publisher	Year	Core Disciplinary Field
1	The Anxious Generation	Jonathan Haidt	Penguin Press / Allen Lane	2024	Developmental Psychology & Mental Health
2	Stolen Focus	Johann Hari	Crown Publishing / Bloomsbury	2022	Attention Economy & Cognitive Science
3	The Age of Surveillance Capitalism	Shoshana Zuboff	PublicAffairs / Profile Books	2021 (Rep.)	Behavioral Modification & Digital Sociology
4	Generations	Jean M. Twenge	Atria Books (Simon & Schuster)	2023	Generational Cohorts & Psychometrics
5	Dopamine Nation	Anna Lembke	Dutton (Penguin Random House)	2021	Neurobiology of Addiction & Pleasure-Pain
6	Digital Minimalism	Cal Newport	Portfolio (Penguin Publishing)	2021 (Rep.)	Cognitive Philosophy & Focus Regimes
7	Irresistible	Adam Alter	Penguin Books	2021	Behavioral



No.	Book Title	Author(s)	Publisher	Year	Core Disciplinary Field
				(Rep.)	Addictive Technology & Architecture
8	The Touchscreen Generation	Charlotte Armitage	Jessica Kingsley Publishers	2025	Psychotherapy & Screen Anxiety
9	Digital Distraction in Higher Education	A. E. Flanigan & K. Xie	Springer Nature Academic	2025	Higher Education Administration & Policy
10	Distracted	James M. Lang	Basic Books (Hachette Book Group)	2020/2021	Higher Education Pedagogy & Attentional Design

The intellectual architecture of this comparative study is based on three rigorous theoretical models formulated in the texts surveyed:

Stressor-Strain-Outcome (SSO) Theory articulated in the sociological and occupational health literature and applied to digital environments by Haidt (2024) and Flanigan & Xie (2025) [1, 9]. The environmental “Stressors” are algorithmic notifications, infinite feeds and social comparison. Create cognitive & affective “Strain” (Screen-Time Anxiety, somatic restlessness, sleep debt). This strain inevitably results in negative behavioral “Outcomes” (eroded academic GPA and diminished mental health) [1, 4, 9].

Cognitive Load Theory (CLT) & The Limited Capacity Attention Model This approach has its roots in cognitive educational psychology, and was developed in the writings of James M. Lang (2020) and Johann Hari (2022) [2, 10]. The processing capacity of working memory is limited. Digital multitasking, background notifications and rapid-fire visual media create a heavy extraneous cognitive load that diminishes germane resources necessary for complex conceptual encoding and collegiate scholastic mastery [2, 10].

Neurochemical pleasure-pain balance model (NPBM) Dr. Anna Lembke (2021) in Dopamine Nation [5] says, I am afraid of no such things and the brain controls the homeostasis of pleasure and pain. Social media algorithms deliver frictionless, hyper-concentrated dopaminergic rewards that induce compensatory opponent processes that plunge the user into a dopamine-deficit state. This deficit manifests clinically as screen-time anxiety, attention-deficit behaviors, and affective irritability [5].

VIII. METHODOLOGY

This article adopts a Qualitative Comparative Literature and Theoretical Synthesis Methodology, adhering to well-established protocols for non-empirical, conceptual academic reviews. The methodology unfolds in four structured phases:

SYSTEMATIC CORPUS SELECTION

Monographs were chosen based on three rigorous inclusion criteria: (a) publication dates ranging from 2021 to 2026 (including foundational reprints within this timeframe), (b) a direct thematic focus on issues such as social media addiction, screen-time anxiety, attentional degradation, or academic performance in higher education, and (c) credible peer-reviewed or scholarly trade press imprints that provide extensive empirical endnotes and citations.



Qualitative Thematic Coding & Cross-Monograph Analysis

The selected texts were systematically analysed across four operational matrix axes: (1) Etiology of Addiction, (2) Psychological Mechanisms of Screen Anxiety, (3) Cognitive and Academic Impact Pathways, and (4) Contextual Vulnerability of Regional/Provincial Undergraduates. Theoretical assertions were triangulated across neurobiological, sociological, psychological, and pedagogical perspectives, helping to verify converging consensus while also identifying divergent claims.

IX. RESULTS

The comparative analysis of the published monographs shows four important converging findings about the interrelatedness of social media addiction, screen-time anxiety, academic achievement, and mental health:

The problem of student screen dependency is not simply a matter of individual failings of self-control or self-discipline. Taken together, the literature presents a picture of social media applications, intentionally designed with operant conditioning, variable reward schedules and algorithmic behavior modification to circumvent conscious prefrontal resistance.

Screen Anxiety is Somatic and Chronobiological: Screen-Time Anxiety is not merely a subjective feeling of worry; it has physiological underpinnings. Findings from the monographs demonstrate that exposure to blue light at nite disrupts melatonin production, fragments rapid eye movement (REM) sleep, and increases nighttime cortisol levels. Therefore, sleep deprivation seems to be the main biological factor associated with excessive screen use and clinical anxiety in university students.

Attentional Switching Destroys Deep Scholastic Encoding: The texts confirm that “digital multitasking” is largely a cognitive illusion. Students undergo the so-called ‘switch cost effect’ when switching their attention between the lecture material and social media feeds (Hari, 2022; Newport, 2021) This constant switching impedes the higher level conceptual thought which in turn leads to memorization of the surface and a decline in academic achievement.

Growing fragility in the regional higher education landscape: Educational inequality monographs indicate that regional students are becoming increasingly precarious. DiWhile rural areas may think of digital connectivity as a modern convenience, regional campuses often lack the mental health resources and academic support networks to combat the burnout and emotional alienation that may result.

X. ANALYTICAL DIMENSIONS

The following comprehensive four analytical dimensions were adopted:

Comparative Theoretical Matrix Analysis

Neurobiological Versus Sociological Causal Analysis

Cognitive-Pedagogical Impact Analysis

Regional Contextual Disparity Analysis

COMPARATIVE THEORETICAL MATRIX ANALYSIS

Table 3 maps the core conceptual positions, methodological foundations, and key student outcome evaluations across the foundational texts [1-10]:

Author & Year	Theoretical Foundation	Core Concept	Explanatory	Impact on Student GPA / Well-Being
Haidt (2024)	Psychological / Epidemiological	Play-Based vs. Phone-Based Childhood		Severe decline in EWB; high anxiety; social withdrawal
Hari (2022)	Investigative / Attentional Science	Attentional Economy (ACE)	Capture	Cognitive fragmentation; loss of flow states; surface learning



Author & Year	Theoretical Foundation	Core Concept	Explanatory	Impact on Student GPA / Well-Being
Twenge (2023)	Large-Scale Demographic Psychometric	Generational / Cultural Shift	Tech-Driven	Correlated drop in student GPA, rising depression and loneliness
Lembke (2021)	Clinical Neuropsychiatry	Pleasure-Pain Homeostasis	Dopamine	Anhedonia, irritability, withdrawal-induced screen anxiety
Newport (2021)	Cognitive Philosophy / Work Science	Deep Work Minimalism	& Digital	Loss of sustained intellectual focus; academic mediocrity
Lang (2020)	Higher Education Pedagogy	Attentional Cultivation	Classroom	Digital distraction during lectures; broken classroom engagement
Zuboff (2021)	Political Economy / Sociology	Surveillance Behavioral Extraction	Capitalism	Loss of autonomous agency; perpetual digital anxiety
Flanigan & Xie (2025)	Higher Education Administration	Institutional Frameworks	Digital Policy	Undergraduate multitasking and administrative policy vacuums

NEUROBIOLOGICAL VS. SOCIOLOGICAL CAUSAL ANALYSIS

A comparative divergence emerges between the neurobiological perspectives (Lembke, Alter) and sociological critiques (Zuboff, Hari, Twenge) [2, 3, 4, 5, 7]. Neurobiologists identify the pathology in the mesolimbic dopamine pathway and suggest that algorithmic notifications are sporadic variable rewards that mimic behavioral gambling. Sociologists say, in contrast, that the commercialization of human attention in a structural way is leading to digital dependency. These two forces converge in regional university settings where students have biological brains that are susceptible to dopamine depletion and are navigating socioeconomic environments that are designed to commodify their waking hours [3, 5].

COGNITIVE-PEDAGOGICAL IMPACT ANALYSIS

Analyzing the educational scholarship of Lang (2020), Newport (2021), and Flanigan & Xie (2025) illuminates the direct mechanism of academic decline [6, 9, 10]. Undergraduate coursework requires deep cognitive schema consolidation. A student reads complex textbooks and working memory is immediately flushed when checking a phone notification. Lang reports that it takes 15 to 25 minutes of uninterrupted work to regain the full cognitive absorption [10]. Consequently, students who study with activated smartphones are in a state of “continuous partial attention” which results in superficial understanding, postponed assignments and low examination scores [6, 10].

REGIONAL CONTEXTUAL DISPARITY ANALYSIS

Cross-textual analysis reveals an acute regional disparity [1, 4, 8, 9]. Metropolitan students often possess institutional buffers, including university mental health counselors, study halls, and structured extracurricular alternatives. In contrast, regional university campuses often operate under severe resource deficits. Geographical isolation forces students in the region to be socially connected by smartphones which they cannot escape from (Armitage, 2025; Twenge, 2023) [4, 8]. The psychological toll – relentless upward social comparison, cyber-harassment, and screen anxiety – is left unaddressed without campus support systems [8, 9].



INTERPRETATIONS

Synthesizing the theoretical claims across the monograph corpus yields three vital interpretations for higher education scholars [1-10]:

- 1. Screen Anxiety as a by-product of dopamine depletion The literature reviewed presents solid evidence that Screen-Time Anxiety is not an irrational phobia, but the predictable neurobiological consequence of over-saturation with digital stimuli. When students pull away from screens, the brain's homeostatic opponent process plunges them into a temporary dopamine deficit state. This deficit generates the physiological feeling of panic, agitation and restlessness, which is often referred to as screen-time anxiety or nomophobia [5, 7].
- 2. The False Dichotomy Between Academic Failure and Emotional Distress: The monographs confirm that academic failure and emotional distress are the closely interrelated phenomena with the same technological root [1, 4]. Chronic screen anxiety disrupts sleep, which disrupts prefrontal emotion regulation The emotional instability leads to academic procrastination and poor semester grades which in turn leads to catastrophic academic anxiety and clinical depression in a self-reinforcing downward spiral [1, 2 4].
- 3. The Myth of the Self-Regulating Under-Graduate Traditionally, undergraduate students have been seen by the institutions of higher education as self-regulating adults who can regulate their own behavior. But as Haidt (2024), Zuboff (2021) and Hari (2022) show, it's a deep institutional failure to expect one undergraduate to outsmart supercomputers built by armies of behavioral scientists. To solve systemic challenges structural and environmental solutions are needed [1, 2, 3].

XI. CONCLUSION

This analytical review of contemporary scholarly monographs establishes that social media addiction and screen-time anxiety are formidable threats to higher education and student welfare. Grounded in the Stressor–Strain–Outcome model, Cognitive Load Theory, and neurochemical addiction paradigms, the literature confirms that smartphone hyperconnectivity is incompatible with sustained intellectual scholarship and authentic emotional well-being [1, 2, 5, 10]. Structural isolation, first-generation pressures, and institutional deficits burden regional university undergraduates, who pay the highest price for this attention crisis [4,8,9].

Finally, higher education authorities should not be passive in responding to this digital epidemic. Recognizing screen-time anxiety and attentional fragmentation as acute institutional challenges is the prerequisite for designing environments that protect student minds, scholastic excellence, and psychological vitality [1, 6, 10].

RECOMMENDATIONS

Drawing directly from the policy frameworks and interventions proposed across the surveyed monographs, five evidence-based institutional recommendations are formulated for regional university leadership, faculty senates, and student welfare boards [1, 2, 6, 9, 10]:

1. Campus development Digital Detox Sanctionaries: Colleges and universities should follow Newport's (2021) and Haidt's (2024) [1, 6] advice and create "Device-Free Zones" in campus libraries, study halls, and dining areas to restore spaces for distraction-free reading, reflective thinking, and face-to-face peer socialization.
2. Pedagogical architecture of attention in lecture halls. Faculty should build their lectures as active, intermittent learning modules, not passive or hostile bans on devices. Instead of fighting the biology of human attention, educators should work with it and use tools such as interactive quizzes, small group discussions and deliberate digital 2-min breaks (Lang, 2020) [10]
3. A Sleep Hygiene Program and Hostel Wi-Fi Curfews: In an effort to address nighttime screen addiction and circadian disruption, Wi-Fi curfews at midnight in regional university hostels should be implemented, along with training of incoming undergraduates on chronobiological sleep architecture and anxiety vulnerability [4, 5].
4. Digital Detox Groups Led by Peers (Cognitive Behavioral) Lembke (2021) Twenge (2023) In the absence of clinical psychiatrists in educational centers outside of the metropolitan cities, student leaders need to be trained to lead peers



through Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) and 'Digital Minimalism' protocols to deconstruct compulsive checking loops and FOMO [6, 8].

5. Rejuvenate Physical Youth Recreation and Communal Arts Regional university administrations should allocate capital for intramural athletics, performing arts forums, debates, community development societies and vibrant offline communal alternatives to mitigate digital escapism driven by regional boredom [1, 2, 8].

ABBREVIATIONS

SMA-Social Media Addiction

STA-Screen-Time Anxiety

GPA-Grade Point Average

EWB-Emotional Well-Being

SSO-Stressor–Strain–Outcome Theoretical Framework

CLT-Cognitive Load Theory

FOMO-Fear of Missing Out

NPE-Neurochemical Pleasure-Pain Equilibrium Model

ACE-Attentional Capture Economy

DCE-Digital Communication Ecology

REFERENCES

- [1] Haidt, J. (2024). *The Anxious Generation: How the Great Rewiring of Childhood Caused an Epidemic of Mental Illness*. New York: Penguin Press. ISBN: 978-0593655030.
- [2] Hari, J. (2022). *Stolen Focus: Why You Can't Pay Attention—and How to Think Deeply Again*. New York: Crown Publishing / London: Bloomsbury. ISBN: 978-0593138519.
- [3] Zuboff, S. (2021). *The Age of Surveillance Capitalism: The Fight for a Human Future at the New Frontier of Power* (Reprint Edition). New York: PublicAffairs. ISBN: 978-1610395694.
- [4] Twenge, J. M. (2023). *Generations: The Real Differences Between Gen Z, Millennials, Gen X, Boomers, and Silents—and What They Mean for America's Future*. New York: Atria Books. ISBN: 978-1982181635.
- [5] Lembke, A. (2021). *Dopamine Nation: Finding Balance in the Age of Indulgence*. New York: Dutton (Penguin Random House). ISBN: 978-1524746728.
- [6] Newport, C. (2021). *Digital Minimalism: Choosing a Focused Life in a Noisy World* (Expanded Edition). New York: Portfolio (Penguin Publishing). ISBN: 978-0525536512.
- [7] Alter, A. (2021). *Irresistible: The Rise of Addictive Technology and the Business of Keeping Us Hooked* (Reprint Edition). New York: Penguin Books. ISBN: 978-0143110903.
- [8] Armitage, C. (2025). *The Touchscreen Generation: Psychological Development, Screen Anxiety, and the Digital Native in Tertiary Education*. London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers. ISBN: 978-1839974229.
- [9] Flanigan, A. E., & Xie, K. (2025). *Digital Distraction in Higher Education: Cognitive Consequences, Administrator Perspectives, and Institutional Policies*. Cham, Switzerland: Springer Nature Academic. ISBN: 978-3031522045.
- [10] Lang, J. M. (2020). *Distracted: Why Students Can't Focus and What You Can Do About It* (Academic Printing 2021). New York: Basic Books (Hachette Book Group). ISBN: 978-1541699809.



Author(s)

Corresponding Author : Hariharan E A

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0009-0005-5134-6946>

eahari@gmail.com

Author is a PhD Scholar in Department of Journalism and Mass Communication, Periyar University, Salem, Tamil Nadu, India.

Dr Subramani R

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2763-3396>

Dr Subramani R, the eminent Professor and Head, Department of Journalism and Mass Communication, Periyar University, Salem is a pioneering mentor and a leading personality in the discipline with 22 years of media education. He has had a scholarly career committed to research and exploration, with 90 peer-reviewed journal articles, 10 book chapters, 65 professional papers in various academic forums. All these efforts have contributed a lot to the progress of the discipline. His legacy is largely defined by his mentorship, which helped more than 20 PhD candidates, and his numerous publications. His enduring impact on academic rigor, ethics and knowledge generation inspires upcoming communicators and scholars across the nation to challenge the limits of media studies.

Dr Balasubramaniyan M

<https://orcid.org/0009-0009-5054-3111>

Dr. Balasubramaniyan M. is a media professional turned academician with the Department of Journalism and Mass Communication, Periyar University, Salem, Tamil Nadu. He has close to a decade of experience in academia after a successful media stint on popular TV channels.

