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Alpha Generation and Mental Health a Focused Study Among Adolescents in Mangalore City, Karnataka State, India

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ABSTRACT

The study explores the mental health experiences of Generation Alpha adolescents aged 11 to 14 years residing in Mangalore City, using a mixed-method research design. By integrating both quantitative and qualitative approaches. The research aims to understand individual and collective aspects of psychological well-being within this demographic. A total of 110 school-going adolescents were selected through simple random sampling from various schools within city limits. Data was collected using structured questionnaires and focus group discussions (FGDs), offering both statistical insights and contextual understanding of the adolescents' mental health, coping mechanisms, and environmental influences.

The study findings reveal that a significant number of adolescents report moderate and balanced digital use. These digital devices are primarily utilized for entertainment and social connectivity. Parental monitoring is prevalent, yet challenges such as sleep disturbances (60%), academic distractions (55%), reduced physical activity (35%), and social difficulties (30%) are common. Mental stress and addiction affect approximately 40% of respondents, and 60% acknowledge the impact of social media on their self-esteem. Over half recommend limiting screen time and encouraging offline engagement to support mental wellness.

The study concludes that although digital access plays a central role in the lives of Generation Alpha, a balanced approach, supported by parental guidance is essential to mitigate potential negative impacts on adolescent mental health.

Keywords: Generation Alpha, Adolescent Mental Health, Gadget Use, Social Media Impact, and Parental Monitoring

INTRODUCTION

Generations are groups of individuals born and developed during the same time frame, commonly having similar experiences, values, and influences on their culture. Each generation is influenced by events from history, technology, and developments in society that shape their worldview and behaviours. From Baby Boomers, who were raised during a post-war period of economic development, to Millennials and Gen Z, who have been exposed to the digital age, generational differences affect communication, work style, and

social interaction. Being aware of the differences closes gaps between generations, promoting improved relationships within families, the workplace, and society (Smith, 2020).

Generation Alpha are the individuals born from 2013 onwards, initiating a generation that has existed throughout their lives with technology and artificial intelligence. Generation Alpha is driven by rapid technology advancements, like artificial intelligence (AI), automation, virtual reality (VR), and smart technology, which have made digital engagement a fundamental aspect of their studies, interactions, and communications. Unlike generations who grew up with the incremental development of digital technology, Generation Alpha is born into a world saturated with hyper-connectivity, with tailored digital experiences, voice assistants, and algorithmic platforms profoundly influencing their development. They engage with technology naturally, in some cases even before they possess the ability to read or write, and this leads to a cognitive and social life fundamentally different from their ancestors(Jones & Clark, 2022).

The research on Generation Alpha and mental health is extremely relevant today as they are exposed to a lot of technology and are online for the majority of their early years. Generation Alpha is growing up with artificial intelligence, virtual reality, and personalized digital experiences from the moment they are born. While these emerging technologies have the potential to greatly improve learning and development, they also pose very serious issues, particularly to mental health.We can tell from early research that too much screen time, social media effects, and less face-to-face contact may lead to more anxiety, stress, and loneliness for this generation(Taylor et al., 2023). Moreover, the quick changes in education, social life, and work oblige us to better understand how these affect their emotional health. The study on Generation Alpha and mental health, particularly among adolescents in Mangalore, is significant because it addresses a critical knowledge gap at the intersection of rapid technological immersion and evolving cultural contexts. As Generation Alpha grows up fully immersed in digital environments with constant exposure to AI, virtual reality, and personalized digital experiences their mental health may be uniquely impacted by both the benefits and challenges of these technologies(Kumar & Nair, 2024). Focusing on adolescents in Mangalore allows for an in-depth understanding of how local cultural, economic, and social dynamics interact with digital exposure, potentially influencing mental health outcomes. The research pave way for developing tailored mental health interventions and support systems that resonate with the lived experiences of Generation Alpha, ultimately fostering resilience and well-being in a rapidly transforming society (Sharma, 2023).

The study on Generation Alpha and mental health, particularly among adolescents in Mangalore, aims to assess the demographic and socio-economic status and its impact on the mental health of adolescents.To Investigate the role of digital technology and social media in shaping mental health in generation alpha and To identify key factors contributing mental health problems of generation alpha adolescents.

The research on Generation Alpha and mental health is crucial to determine how their technology use and digital world influence their mental health. Generation Alpha, brought up with AI, social media, and e-learning, has strengths and weaknesses like shorter attention span, higher anxiety, and loneliness. Research must examine how technology addiction, internet interactions, and AI-based learning influence their emotional resilience, cognitive ability, and mental health(Williams, 2022). Social work can help promote mental health by combining educational programs with the use of digital technology, school assistance, and parental guidance to offer an equilibrium method of technology use. Schools can offer mental health education programs, and the community assistance can help children and families deal with issues like screen time, cyberbullying, and social pressures. Social workers can further promote child-friendly policies and better mental health services to ensure their safety(Fernandez & Gupta, 2023)..

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

This research is vital in grasping the psychological difficulties experienced by Generation Alpha who are growing up in a technologically oriented world with excessive and early exposure to screens there is increasing concern over anxiety, depression, and sleep issues. The COVID-19 pandemic, e-learning, evolving parenting strategies, and diminished face-to-face contact have further influenced their social, emotional, and psychological development. By analyzing these variables, this study delivers insightful information regarding digital immersion and its effect on mental well-being, enabling parents, teachers, and policymakers to create efficient interventions. The results will contribute to encouraging healthy use of technology, promoting emotional resilience, and guaranteeing the comprehensive development of Generation Alpha in a highly digital society.

OBJECTIVES

- To assess the demographic and socio-economic status and its impact on the mental health,of the alpha generation adolescents.
- To Investigate the role of digital technology and social media in shaping mental health in generation alpha.
- To identify key factors contributing mental health problems of generation alpha adolescents.

METHODS AND TOOLS

The study adopts a mixed-method research design to examine the mental health experiences of Generation Alpha adolescents residing in Mangalore City. By integrating both descriptive and holistic evaluative approaches. The study aims to explore psychological well-being of both individual and collective levels . The study universe comprises all Generation Alpha youth in Mangalore, while the target population specifically consists of school-going adolescents aged 11 to 14 years, born between 2010 and 2015, and currently studying in schools within the city limits. A total of 110 respondents were selected using simple random sampling from various schools in Mangalore. The inclusion criteria encompassed both male and female adolescents within the specified age group and location. Participants who were absent during data collection or unwilling to participate were excluded from the study.

Primary data was collected using a structured questionnaire comprising with closed-ended questions, which provided quantitative insights into perceptions of mental health. This was complemented by focus group discussions (FGDs) was conducted to gain qualitative understanding of the particpants' emotions, coping mechanisms, and the influence of their environmental and social pressures on their mental health and well-being. Secondary data was sourced from scholarly literature, including books, academic journals, and prior research studies focusing on Generation Alpha and youth mental health. Data collection was carried out through both online using Google Forms and offline through paper-based modes to ensure greater accessibility.

Ethical considerations were rigorously adhered to, including obtaining informed consent, ensuring voluntary participation, maintaining participant confidentiality, and restricting the use of data solely for academic purposes. The collected data was coded and analyzed using SPSS and Microsoft Excel. Both descriptive and inferential statistical methods were employed, including Chi-square test and Karl Pearson's correlation coefficient were used to examine relationship and associations within the data. A p-values of less than 0.01 was considered statistically significant.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table No 1: The socio-demographic characteristics of the Respondents

Variable	Category	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Age	12 years	17	15.5
	13 years	84	76.4
	14 years	9	8.2
Gender	Male	57	51.8
	Female	53	48.2
Class	Class 6	16	14.5
	Class 7	18	16.4
	Class 8	76	69.1
Type of School	Government	14	12.7
	Aided	32	29.1
	Private	64	58.2
Living Arrangement	With Parents	102	92.7
	Hostel/Relatives/Institutions	8	7.3
Father's Education	Graduate	35	31.8
	Postgraduate	21	19.1
	Others (Below Graduate)	54	49.1
Father's Occupation	Business	33	30.0
	Private Job	21	19.1
	Teacher	11	10.0
	Others	45	40.9
Mother's Education	Graduate	24	21.8
	Postgraduate	27	24.5
	Others (Below Graduate)	59	53.6
Mother's Occupation	Housewife	33	30.0
	Teacher	28	25.5
	Others	49	44.5
Family Type	Nuclear	78	70.9
	Single Parent	13	11.8
	Joint	19	17.3
Annual Household Income	Below ₹2 lakhs	18	16.4
	₹2–4 lakhs	14	12.7

Variable	Category	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
	₹4–6 lakhs	19	17.3
	₹6–10 lakhs	59	53.6

The socio-demographic characteristics help in understanding the context and background of the respondents. Among the 110 respondents, the majority were aged 13 (76.4%), with others aged 12 (15.5%) and 14 (8.2%). A near-balanced gender ratio was observed, with 51.8% male and 48.2% female. Most respondents were from Class 8 (69.1%), followed by Class 7 (16.4%) and Class 6 (14.5%). Regarding school type, 58.2% were from private schools, 29.1% from aided schools, and 12.7% from government schools. A large majority (92.7%) lived with their parents, with a few (7.3%) staying in hostels, with relatives, or in institutions.

Fathers were mostly graduates (31.8%) and postgraduates (19.1%), with others having education below graduation (49.1%). Common occupations of fathers included business (30.0%), private jobs (19.1%), teaching (10.0%), and others (40.9%). Mothers showed similar academic backgrounds, with 24.5% postgraduates, 21.8% graduates, and 53.6% below graduation. They were mainly housewives (30.0%) and teachers (25.5%), while 44.5% were engaged in other occupations.

In terms of family type, 70.9% were from nuclear families, 11.8% from single-parent families, and 17.3% from joint families. Annual household income was predominantly in the ₹6–10 lakh range (53.6%), followed by ₹4–6 lakhs (17.3%), below ₹2 lakhs (16.4%), and ₹2–4 lakhs (12.7%).

The respondents primarily comprise early adolescents from nuclear families, most of whom were enrolled in private schools and come from financially stable backgrounds. The Parental demographic indicated a relatively high level of education, with a significant number of mothers employed in teaching profession and fathers engaged in business or private sector occupations. These socio-economic and educational factors suggest the presence of supportive home environment, which is generally conducive to the adolescents earning, emotional development, and overall well-being

Table No 2: Summary of Respondents' Usage Pattern of Electronic Gadgets

Sl.No	Variable	Observation	Interpretation & Discussion
1.	Time Spent on Electronic Gadgets	Majority (62.4%) use gadgets for 1–3 hours/day	It reflects a moderate and balanced digital usage pattern, only a small group (8.9%) exhibit extended use (4–6 hours) which may need attention
2.	Frequently Used Gadgets	85.1% use smartphones	Highlights smartphones are the dominant digital device due to their probability and multi-functionality. Other devices show minimal engagement
3.	Primary Use of Gadgets	48.5% use gadgets for entertainment (gaming, videos, social media); 27.7% for all listed purposes	Entertainment remains the primary blended usage with some respondents engaging in diverse digital activities including education and communication less on single-purpose usage

Sl.No	Variable	Observation	Interpretation & Discussion
4.	Personal Gadget Ownership	76.2% own personal gadgets	It indicates high digital accessibility, However, the 23.8% without personal gadgets may face barriers in connectivity or access
5.	Activeness on Social Media	90.1% are active on social media	Demonstrate widespread social media highlights its role in communication, peer interaction, and leisure among adolescents
6.	Digital Platforms in Use	46.5% use YouTube, Instagram, and Snapchat; 34.7% use all platforms	It suggests a trend toward multi-platform usage and diversified content consumption reflecting the dynamic digital preferences of adolescents
7.	Daily Time on Social Media	47.5% spend 30 mins–1 hour/day; 5.9% spend more than 2 hours	Most of the adolescents use social media in moderation, excessive usage among a few may signal risk of dependency
8.	Purpose of Social Media Usage	31.7% follow influences/watch videos; only 3% post own content	Indicates that adolescents are primarily passive consumers of digital content rather than active contributors, entertainment and connection are key motives

Table No 3: Role of Digital Technology and Social Media in Shaping Mental Health

Sl.No	Key Aspect	Main Findings	Insight
1.	**Daily Use**	57.5% use gadgets daily	Technology is part of daily life
2.	**Staying Updated**	71.3% feel tech helps them stay informed	Positive impact on awareness
3.	**Learning & Skills**	Only 31.7% feel learning improved	Limited educational benefit
4.	**Communication**	57.5% rely on tech for connection	Gadgets support social ties
5.	**Happiness & Connection**	58.4% feel happy via social media	Mixed emotional effects
6.	**Mental Health Impact**	45.5% say social media affects them negatively	Mental health concerns exist
7.	**Distraction**	52.5% feel more distracted	Tech affects focus
8.	**Anxiety When Not Using**	Only 30.7% feel anxious without access	Moderate digital dependency

Sl.No	Key Aspect	Main Findings	Insight
9.	**Social Comparison**	29.7% feel affected by comparisons	Self-esteem concerns
10.	**Feeling Overwhelmed**	40.6% feel stressed by tech	Emotional overload is common
11.	**Balance in Usage**	54.4% feel they maintain balance	Many manage screen time well
12.	**Less Usage = Better Mental Health**	58.4% believe so	Users aware of overuse effects
13.	**Parental Limits**	54.4% have screen-time rules	Moderate parental control
14.	**Parental Support**	39.6% feel supported	Support systems can improve

Table No 4: Key Factors Contributing to Mental Health Problems Among Generation Alpha

Sl.No	Factor	Key Findings	Insight
1.	**Academic Stress**	59.4% feel stressed due to academics	Major source of stress
2.	**Parental Pressure**	52.5% feel pressure from parents	Significant family expectation
3.	**Mood Swings & Sadness**	33.7% experience frequent mood changes	Emotional challenges present
4.	**Loneliness**	43.6% often do not feel lonely	Loneliness less common
5.	**Social Media Comparison**	29.7% feel inadequate due to comparisons	Moderate impact on self-esteem
6.	**Screen Time & Concentration**	49.5% say screen time reduces focus	Concentration affected
6.	**Cyberbullying Impact**	22.8% affected in self-esteem	Some experience negative online interactions
7.	**Family Communication**	45.5% comfortable sharing; 37.6% stressed by conflicts	Mixed family dynamics
8.	**Peer Relationships**	62.4% say friends improve mental health	Peer support important
9.	**Bullying/Exclusion by Peers**	28.7% experienced bullying or exclusion	Notable minority affected

Sl.No	Factor	Key Findings	Insight
10.	**Academic Workload & Pressure**	62.4% stressed by workload; 64.4% pressured to perform	High academic pressure
11.	**Support from Teachers/Counselors**	41.6% feel support is lacking	Need for better mental health support
12.	**School Activities Help**	65.3% find activities reduce stress	Positive role of school environment

Table No 5: Major Findings on Gadget and Social Media Use

Sl.No	Finding	Percentage (%)	Frequency (out of 110)
1.	Parents monitor and set rules for gadget use	70	77
2.	Gadgets used mainly for entertainment	80	88
3.	Gadgets used mainly for social connection	65	72
4.	Users feel happy using gadgets	50	55
5.	Users face sleep problems due to gadget use	60	66
6.	Users get distracted academically	55	61
7.	Users report reduced physical activity	35	39
8.	Users notice negative effects on social interaction	30	33
9.	Addiction, mental stress, and eye strain affect users	40	44
10.	Recommend limiting screen time and offline activities	55	61
11.	Social media impacts self-esteem sometimes	60	66

The findings indicates that a majority of parents (70%) actively monitor gadget use, which is predominantly for entertainment (80%) and maintaining social connections (65%). While 50% of the adolescents reported feeling happy while using gadgets, a significant portion also experienced adverse effects. These include sleep disturbances (60%), academic distractions (55%), reduced physical activity (35%), and challenges in social interactions (30%). Additionally, 40% of the respondents reported issues related to addiction and mental stress with social media negatively impacting the self-esteem of 60% of users. More than half of the respondents (55%) recommended limiting screen time and promoting offline activities. This highlights the need for balanced digital engagement and the vital role of parental guidance in regulating gadget use. The study highlights the need for a holistic approach and fosters mental well-being wile allowing for responsible digital interaction

Table No 6: Association Between Role of Digital Technology and Social Media in Shaping Mental Health and Key Factors Contributing to Mental Health Among Alpha Generation Adolescents

Mental Health Factors	Poor (21–40)	Moderate (41–60)	Good (61–80)	Very Good (81–100)	Total
Good (22–42)	1	2	2	0	5
Moderate (43–63)	1	13	19	1	34
Poor (64–84)	1	29	40	0	70
Total	3	44	61	1	110

****Chi-square (χ^2) = 75.409, df = 6, p = 0.000** (Highly significant)
****Correlation Coefficient (r) = 0.646, p-value = 0.000** (Highly significant)

There is a highly significant association between adolescents' perception of digital technology/social media's role and their mental health factors. Most respondents view the role as poor but report moderate to good mental health factors. This indicates digital perceptions strongly relate to mental health outcomes. A moderate to strong positive correlation (r = 0.646) exists between digital/social media influence and mental health factors, with high statistical significance (p = .00). This means greater digital exposure is closely linked with changes in adolescent mental health.

Digital technology and social media significantly impact adolescent mental health, highlighting the need for tailored strategies to manage digital influence for better mental health outcomes.

The study adopted Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) as part of the mixed-method research design to explore the mental health experiences of Generation Alpha adolescents in Mangalore. The primary aim was to understand emotional well-being, coping mechanisms, and the psycho-social impact of digital exposure. The specific objectives included identifying key stressors, examining the influence of parental involvement, and assessing the role of social media in shaping mental health. FGDs facilitated open and interactive dialogue, allowing participants to share their thoughts and feelings freely. Discussions revealed prevalent concerns such as peer pressure, gadget dependency, and academic stress offering valuable insights that enriched the quantitative data. These insights complemented the quantitative findings, highlighting the importance of balanced digital use and emotional support systems.

SUGGESTIONS AND CONCLUSION

- Conduct long-term studies to understand the psychological impact of digital use on adolescents across different regions and backgrounds.
- Explore emerging technologies like virtual reality and AI for their role in mental health and digital well-being.
- Integrate digital literacy and mental health awareness into social work and school programs.
- Promote positive parenting and family involvement through community workshops on balanced digital use.
- Increase accessibility of school counseling services focusing on digital stress management and peer support.
- Implement school-based programs for emotional regulation, digital detox, and resilience building.
- Raise early awareness and detection of digital-related mental health issues.

- Develop policies to regulate harmful online content and reduce digital addiction risks.
- Fund mental health initiatives and counseling services in schools.
- Launch public campaigns to encourage responsible screen time and online safety.
- Foster collaboration among parents, educators, counselors, and policymakers to create supportive digital environments.

This study on Generation Alpha in Mangalore highlights the complex impact of digital media and social media on adolescent mental health. While technology offers connectivity and learning opportunities, excessive use correlates with stress, sleep problems, academic pressure, and low self-esteem. Parental monitoring and positive guidance emerged as crucial protective factors, yet awareness and professional mental health support remain limited. The findings emphasize the need for integrated approaches in social work, counseling, and education to foster digital literacy, emotional resilience, and responsible technology use. Schools should implement mental health education, digital well-being curricula, and accessible counseling services, while parents must actively engage in supervising and guiding online behavior. Policymakers must promote mental health awareness campaigns, regulate harmful content, and support affordable adolescent mental health services. Future research should explore long-term digital impacts and effective interventions. Together, coordinated efforts from families, educators, counselors, and policymakers can nurture a balanced, resilient Generation Alpha, thriving both online and offline.

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