

“Entertainment Media Consumption, Coping Strategies, and Psychological Well-Being among Outstation College Students in Bengaluru: A Correlational Study”

Shivani Lute

1. Introduction

The transition from a school to university is a very important phase in every student’s life. During this period, many students experience greater academic pressure, increased independence, and new social responsibilities that will require a significant adjustment. For students who relocate from their hometowns to pursue higher education, this transition often involves additional emotional and psychological adjustments. Outstation students must guide the unfamiliar academic environments, establish new social networks, and adapt to living away from established family support systems. In urban cities such as Bengaluru, where academic competition and urban pace of life are intense, these challenges may become even more pronounced. Understanding the factors influencing psychological well-being among outstation college students is consequently important.

Over the last few years, entertainment media has become an integral part of every students’ everyday lives. Digital platforms such as social media, streaming services, online gaming, and music applications provide easily accessible sources of relaxation, distraction, and social interaction. For students who are adjusting to a new city and academic culture, entertainment media may serve as an easily available means of coping with homesickness, loneliness, and academic stress. When used in moderation, entertainment media can sometimes help students to relax and manage their mood temporarily. However, excessive media consumption may interrupt sleep patterns, academic performance, and emotional functioning.

The current study is grounded in the Transactional Model of Stress and Coping (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984), which views stress as a dynamic interaction between individuals and their environments. According to this model, individuals appraise stressors and employ coping strategies-either problem-focused or emotion-focused-to manage them. The effectiveness of these coping strategies plays a crucial role in determining psychological outcomes. For outstation students who are facing academic pressure, social adjustment, and relocation stress, coping mechanisms may significantly shape their well-being.

In addition, the study informed by the Compensatory Internet Use Theory (Kardefelt-Winther, 2014), which suggests that individuals may engage in digital media use as a way to cope with negative emotions or unmet psychological needs. From this viewpoint or perspective, entertainment media consumption may function as a compensatory behavior aimed at alleviating stress or emotional discomfort. Although such

engagement may provide short-term relief, its long-term implications for psychological well-being may vary depending on usage patterns and underlying coping styles.

Psychological well-being, as defined within positive psychology, includes emotional balance, purposeful living, personal growth, and the capacity to sustain meaningful relationships. For outstation students, well-being is shaped not only by academic success but also by their ability to manage stress and maintain social connections in a new environment. Given the increasing integration of digital media in students' coping behaviors, it becomes essential to examine how entertainment media consumption and coping strategies are associated with psychological well-being.

Although research on digital media use and student mental health is expanding, limited research work has specifically examined the connections among entertainment media consumption, coping strategies, and psychological well-being within the context of outstation college students in urban India. The unique sociocultural and academic pressures faced by students studying away from home requires focused investigation. Therefore, the present study seeks to examine the correlational relationships among these variables to provide a clearer understanding of how media engagement and coping mechanisms are linked to psychological well-being among outstation students in Bengaluru.

2. Review of Literature

The rapid expansion of digital technology has transformed entertainment media into an integral part of daily life, particularly among young adults. College students increasingly rely on social media platforms, streaming services, gaming applications, and online communication tools for leisure, emotional expression, and social interaction. According to the Uses and Gratification Theory (Katz et al., 1973), people intentionally choose different forms of media to fulfill certain psychological needs, such as relaxation, companionship, or emotional relief. For students adjusting to new academic and social environments, entertainment media may function as a readily accessible psychological resource.

Several studies have reported that engaging with media in a moderate and intentional way may provide short-term emotional benefits. Zillmann's (1988) Mood Management Theory argues that individuals selectively consume media content to regulate emotional states. Supporting this perspective, Nabi and Krcmar (2004) found that entertaining television content can enhance positive affect, while Reinecke (2009) suggested that media entertainment facilitates psychological detachment from stress and promotes recovery experiences. Similarly, Vorderer et al. (2017) reported that engaging with enjoyable digital content can temporarily enhance relaxation and mood among university students.

However, the relationship between entertainment media consumption and psychological well-being is complex. Several studies indicate that excessive or passive media use may be associated with adverse mental health outcomes. Kross et al. (2013) found that increased facebook use predicted declines in subjective well-being over time. Twenge and Campbell (2018) reported associations between high screen time and lower psychological well-being among adolescents and young adults. Primack et al. (2017) further observed that heavy social media use was linked to increased perceived social isolation. These findings suggest that while media may provide temporary emotional relief, excessive engagement may undermine long-term psychological functioning.

Coping strategies play an important role in determining how individuals respond to stress. According to the Transactional Model of Stress and Coping (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984), coping involves cognitive and behavioral efforts to manage stressors appraised as taxing or overwhelming. Coping strategies are broadly categorized into problem-focused approaches, which aim to address the source of stress, and emotion-focused approaches, which aim to regulate emotional distress. Research consistently indicates that adaptive coping strategies such as active problem-solving, planning and seeking social support are positively associated with psychological well-being (Folkman & Moskowitz, 2004). In contrast, maladaptive coping strategies such as avoidance and denial have been linked to depressive symptoms and poorer adjustments (Holahan et al., 2005; Compass et al., 2001).

Entertainment media consumption has increasingly been conceptualized as a coping mechanism. Reinecke and Eden (2017) suggested that digital entertainment can facilitate psychological recovery by providing relaxation and perceived control. Kardefelt-Winther's (2014) Compensatory Internet Use Theory proposes that individuals may increase online engagement to cope with offline stressors or unmet psychological needs. Empirical studies support this view, indicating that students often use streaming platforms, gaming, and social networking sites to manage academic stress and emotional discomfort (Dondlinger et al., 2019). However, reliance on media as a primary coping strategy may increase the risk of problematic usage patterns and psychological distress (Elhai et al., 2017; Weinstein & Lejoyeux, 2010).

Outstation college students may be particularly vulnerable to stress due to relocation, homesickness, and reduced familial proximity. Thurber and Walton (2012) identified homesickness as a significant predictor of emotional distress and adjustment difficulties among university students. Fisher and Hood (1987) similarly reported elevated stress levels during the initial months of living away from home. In Indian contexts, Bhardwaj and Agrawal (2020) found that hostel-residing students reported higher levels of loneliness and academic stress compared to day scholars. Such stressors may increase the likelihood of seeking coping resources, including digital media engagement.

Recent research also highlights that the impact of media use on well-being may depend on the purpose and quality of engagement. Boer et al. (2021), in a systematic review, concluded that passive social media consumption is more strongly associated with psychological distress than active or socially interactive use. Lee et al. (2022) found that mindful and intentional media engagement was linked to higher life satisfaction compared to habitual or escapist use. These findings suggest that coping style may moderate the relationship between media consumption and well-being.

Taken together, the literature indicates that entertainment media consumption can function both as a psychological resource and as a potential risk factor, depending on usage patterns and underlying coping strategies. While international studies have examined media use and coping independently, limited research has explored their combined relationships with psychological well-being among outstation college students within the Indian context. Given the unique sociocultural and academic challenges faced by students studying away from home, there is a need to examine how entertainment media consumption and coping strategies are associated with psychological well-being among this population.

3. METHODOLOGY

Aim:

The aim of the research was to examine the relationship between entertainment media consumption, coping strategies, and psychological well-being among outstation students studying in Bangalore.

Objectives:

The objectives of the research were:

1. To examine the relationship between entertainment media consumption and coping strategies among outstation students.
2. To examine the relationship between entertainment media consumption and psychological well-being among outstation students.
3. To examine the relationship between coping strategies and psychological well-being among outstation students.

Hypotheses:

H1: There is a significant relationship between Entertainment media consumption and Coping strategies among Outstation Students.

H2: There is a significant relationship between Entertainment media consumption and psychological well-being among Outstation Students.

H3: There is a significant relationship between Coping strategies and psychological well-being among Outstation Students.

Research design:

The present study adopted a cross-sectional correlational research design to examine the relationships among entertainment media consumption, coping strategies, and psychological well-being among outstation college students. A quantitative approach was employed to assess the strength and direction of associations among the study variables using standardized self-report measures.

Research Method:

The present study used a quantitative research method, as it aimed to measure and analyze the relationship between entertainment media consumption, coping strategies, and psychological well-being using standardized tools and statistical techniques.

Sample:

The sample for the present study consisted of outstation students studying in Bangalore. A total of approximately 120–150 undergraduate and postgraduate students aged 18–30 years were selected from various colleges and universities in Bangalore.

Inclusion Criteria:

- Students currently studying in Bangalore
- Students residing away from their hometown/family
- Undergraduate and postgraduate students

Exclusion Criteria:

- Students residing with their parents/family in Bangalore
- Students above age 30
- Incomplete questionnaire responses

Sampling technique:

The technique used in the study is purposive sampling.

Tools and its description:

1. Entertainment Media Consumption Questionnaire: The Media and Technology Usage and Attitudes Scale (MTUAS) developed by Rosen and colleagues (2013) is a 60-item self-report instrument designed to assess individuals' frequency of media and technology usage and their attitudes toward technology. The scale measures multiple domains including social media use, texting, phone calling, media sharing, internet searching, video gaming, online friendships, and technology-related attitudes. Responses are typically rated on a Likert-type scale indicating frequency of usage.

Seventeen items relevant to entertainment media engagement were selected from the original MTUAS to reduce participant fatigue and focus on media activities relevant to the research objectives. The selected items specifically focused on media engagement in different platforms such as Social Media Usage, Text Messaging, Video gaming, Watching TV, and Watching online videos, which are relevant to the research objectives.

2. Brief COPE Inventory (Carver, 1997)-

The Brief COPE is a 28-item standardized self-report scale used to assess different coping strategies individuals use in response to stress. It consists of 14 subscales, including:

- Active coping

- Planning
- Positive reframing
- Acceptance
- Emotional support
- Instrumental support
- Self-distraction
- Denial
- Substance use
- Behavioral disengagement
- Venting
- Humor
- Religion
- Self-blame

Responses are rated on a 4-point Likert scale ranging from “I haven’t been doing this at all” to “I’ve been doing this a lot.”

The scale has demonstrated good reliability and validity across diverse populations, including student samples.

3. Psychological Well-Being Scale (Ryff, 1989)

The Psychological Well-Being Scale assesses overall well-being across six dimensions:

- Autonomy
- Environmental mastery
- Personal growth
- Positive relations with others
- Purpose in life
- Self-acceptance

The short form consists of 18 items, rated on a 6-point Likert scale ranging from “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree.” Higher scores indicate higher levels of psychological well-being.

The scale has been widely used in research and has demonstrated adequate reliability and construct validity.

Administration procedure: All three questionnaires were combined into a single Google Form with proper informed consent attached at the beginning. The questionnaires were distributed to students through their class groups, and responses were collected online. Participants were assured of confidentiality and anonymity. The total time taken to complete the questionnaires was approximately 20–25 minutes.

Statistical analysis: Descriptive statistics, including mean and standard deviation, were computed for all study variables. Pearson’s product–moment correlation was conducted to examine the relationships among entertainment media consumption, coping strategies, and psychological well-being. All analyses were performed using appropriate statistical software.

Ethical considerations: Ethical approval was obtained from the institutional ethics committee prior to data collection. Informed consent was obtained from all participants, and confidentiality and anonymity were strictly maintained. Participation was voluntary, and participants had the right to withdraw at any stage of the study.

4. RESULTS

Table 01

Mean and Standard Deviation of Psychological well-being, Coping strategies and Entertainment media consumption.

Variables	Mean	Standard Deviation
Psychological well-being	1.63	.550
Problem-focused Coping strategies	2.25	.567
Avoidant Coping strategies	1.89	.574
Emotion-focused Coping strategies	2.15	.511
Social media usage	2.12	.697

Text messaging	2.58	.929
Video gaming	1.73	.837
Watching tv	2.00	.785
Watching online videos	2.37	.787

Table 02

Correlation between psychological well-being and coping strategies-

Variables	Avoidant coping strategy	Problem-focused coping strategy	Emotion-focused coping strategy
Psychological well-being	-.075	.191*	-.128

Note- N=121, * Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level.

As shown in Table 02, Psychological well-being was positively correlated with problem-focused coping ($r = .191, p < .05$). However, avoidant coping ($r = -.075, p > .05$) and emotion-focused coping ($r = -.128, p > .05$) were not significantly associated with psychological well-being.

Table 03

Correlation between psychological well-being and Entertainment media consumption-

Variables	Social media usage	Text messaging	Video gaming	Watching TV	Watching online videos
Psychological well-being	.265**	.196*	.031	.251**	.168

Note- N=121, * Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level, ** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level.

As shown in table 03, Psychological well-being was positively correlated with social media usage ($r = .265, p < .01$), text messaging ($r = .196, p < .05$), and watching television ($r = .251, p < .01$). No significant correlations were found between psychological well-being and video gaming ($r = .031, p > .05$) or watching online videos ($r = .168, p > .05$).

Table 04

Correlation between Coping strategies and Entertainment media consumption-

Variables	Social media usage	Text messaging	Video gaming	Watching TV	Watching online videos
Avoidant coping strategy	.218*	.086	.268**	.074	.108
Problem-focused coping strategy	.095	.121	-.014	-.056	.016
Emotion-focused coping strategy	.045	-.060	.018	-.166	-.035

Note- N=121, * Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level, ** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level.

As shown in Table 04, Avoidant coping was positively correlated with social media usage ($r = .218, p < .05$) and video gaming ($r = .268, p < .01$). Problem-focused coping and emotion-focused coping did not show significant correlations with entertainment media consumption.

Overall, the findings of the study indicate that the proposed hypotheses were partially supported. Psychological well-being showed a significant positive relationship with problem-focused coping, while no significant relationships were observed with avoidant coping or emotion-focused coping. Additionally, psychological well-being was positively associated with certain forms of entertainment media consumption such as social media usage, text messaging, and watching television. However, no significant

relationships were found with video gaming or watching online videos. Furthermore, avoidant coping strategies were positively associated with specific forms of entertainment media consumption, particularly social media usage and video gaming.

5. Discussion

The present study examined the relationship between psychological well-being, coping strategies, and entertainment media consumption among outstation students. The results of the study suggest that students who rely on problem-focused coping strategies tend to report higher levels of psychological well-being, suggesting that students who actively attempt to solve problems and manage stressful situations tend to experience better well-being. In contrast, avoidant coping and emotion-focused coping did not show a significant relationship with psychological well-being. Regarding entertainment media consumption, psychological well-being showed positive associations with social media use, text messaging, and watching television, while no significant relationship was observed with video gaming or watching online videos. Additionally, avoidant coping was positively related to social media use and video gaming, whereas problem-focused and emotion-focused coping were not significantly related to entertainment media consumption.

These findings are consistent with earlier studies that highlight the role of adaptive coping in promoting psychological well-being among students. Previous research has indicated that individuals who actively attempt to manage or resolve stressful situations tend to report better psychological outcomes and higher life satisfaction. The positive association between well-being and certain forms of media use may also reflect the role of digital communication in maintaining social connections and providing opportunities for relaxation. Earlier studies have suggested that moderate engagement with media platforms can help individuals manage stress and maintain emotional balance. At the same time, prior research has shown that individuals who rely on avoidant coping strategies may be more likely to engage in media use as a way to temporarily escape stress. However, research also indicates that different forms of media may have varied psychological effects depending on the purpose and pattern of use, which may explain why some forms of entertainment media were not strongly related to well-being in the present study.

These findings are particularly relevant in the modern digital environment where students are constantly exposed to multiple forms of entertainment media. For outstation students who may experience academic pressure, adjustment difficulties, and distance from family support, coping strategies play an important role in maintaining psychological well-being. Students who use problem-focused coping may manage challenges more effectively, which may contribute to better mental health outcomes. At the same time, digital platforms such as social media and messaging applications may provide opportunities for communication and emotional connection, helping students maintain relationships and reduce feelings of isolation. However, students who rely on avoidant coping may be more likely to use media as a distraction from stress rather than addressing problems directly. Overall, these findings highlight the importance of promoting adaptive coping strategies among students while encouraging balanced and mindful use of entertainment media in everyday life.

6. Conclusion

The present study explored how entertainment media consumption, coping strategies, and psychological well-being are related among the outstation college students studying in Bengaluru. The findings indicate that entertainment media usage and coping strategies are strongly connected with students' psychological well-being during the change to independent university life. In particular, adaptive coping strategies demonstrated a positive relationship with psychological well-being, suggesting that students who actively manage academic and adjustment-related stress may experience better emotional functioning and overall psychological adjustment.

The results further suggest that entertainment media consumption may serve as a functional psychological resource for outstation students when used in a balanced and intentional way. Media engagement may help provide short-term emotional relief, relaxation, and sense of social connection, thereby supporting adjustment in new academic and social environments. At the same time, the findings highlight the importance of understanding media use within the broader context of coping behavior rather than viewing it solely as either beneficial or harmful.

Overall, the study contributes to the growing body of research emphasizing psychosocial factors influencing student well-being in higher education settings. The findings show the need for educational institutions and mental health professionals to promote adaptive coping skills and mindful media engagement practices among outstation students. Strengthening these protective factors may support healthier adjustment, improved psychological well-being, and enhanced academic functioning among students navigating relocation and problems with moving to a new place.

7. Limitations

The study has a number of flaws that need to be addressed despite the contributions that it offers and first of all, causality cannot be established using a correlational research approach. Despite the established correlations between media use, coping and well-being it is not possible to ascertain whether media use directly influences well-being or whether students who adopt specific coping strategies or have particular levels of well-being are more likely to adopt specific media consumption patterns.

Second, recall errors and response biases including social and desirability bias may have been introduced by the use of self-reported measures. It's possible that the respondents overreported or underreported their screen time, binge frequency and psychological experiences.

Third, the results may not be as applicable to students in other cities, cultures or non-urban environments because it only included a sample of out-of-town students in Bengaluru. Furthermore, a number of other variables, including academic discipline, year of study and socioeconomic position were not adequately controlled which may have influenced the connections found.

Fourth, the study primarily examined how much time and how often people consume entertainment media. It did not thoroughly examine qualitative aspects that could yield more detailed information, such as emotional attachment to content, parasocial relationships or interactive media use.

8. Future Implications

Future research can expand on these findings in a number of ways. In order to better understand the direction and long-term effects of media consumption on coping and psychological well-being, longitudinal studies are recommended. The idea that directed media use or digital hygiene treatments improve student well-being outcomes can also be tested through intervention-based or experimental research.

The qualitative alternatives of media engagement, such as emotional attachment, consuming motivation, and social media's place in relation to streaming websites, may be investigated in future studies. One may learn more about adaptive and maladaptive patterns by differentiating between passive consumption (such as hours of binge-watching) and active involvement (such as socialization and learning-related content).

Research may examine moderating factors such as personality, resilience, perceived social support and academic distress to determine which students are most vulnerable to negative outcomes associated with excessive media use.

Practically speaking, the findings show that schools and universities can integrate digital well-being awareness programs into their student orientation and counseling programs, particularly for out of town students who need to adjust to new surroundings. Encouraging students to utilize media in moderation and teaching them adaptive coping mechanisms will help them adjust more healthily and have better mental health. .

In summary, the study has discovered the complex relationship between coping strategies, psychological well-being, and entertainment media usage. It emphasizes the importance of conscientious and balanced media intake, particularly in groups undergoing translational stress and offers a potential path for institutional intervention and research.

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