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Research Paper

The Vanishing Attention Span: Exploring Digital Distractions among University Students of India

Harsh Chhangani[1], Madhulika Bajpai[2], Herendra Kumar[3], Anjali Singh[4]*

ABSTRACT

The proliferation of digital technologies has led to growing concerns about the impact of digital distractions on the attention span of university students in India. This study investigates the relationship between screen time, digital distractions, and attention span among Indian university students. Employing a mixed-methods approach, a structured questionnaire was administered to a diverse sample of students across various disciplines. The findings reveal a significant effect of increased screen time on decreased attention span, with students reporting greater difficulty in concentrating, maintaining engagement, and completing tasks without frequent breaks. The study also found no significant differences in attention span scores across gender, residential background, or mode of education. The results underscore the need for balanced digital habits and attention training strategies to mitigate the adverse effects of excessive screen time on cognitive function. This research contributes to the growing body of literature on the impact of digital distractions on attention span and highlights the importance of developing effective strategies to support students in navigating the challenges posed by an increasingly digital world. The study's findings have implications for educators, policymakers, and students, emphasizing the need for a balanced approach to technology use in educational settings.

Keywords: *Digital distractions, Screen time, Attention span, University students, Academic performance, Mindful digital habits*

The phenomenon of diminishing attention spans among university students in India, particularly in the context of pervasive digital distractions, has emerged as a critical area of research in contemporary education (Abu et al., 2024; Asif & Kazi, 2024). As digital technologies become increasingly integrated into learning environments, concerns have grown over their impact on students' cognitive functions and academic performance (Attia et al., 2017; Dontre, 2020). The rising screen time has coincided with a noticeable decline in attention span and academic focus (Feng et al., 2019; Fillmore, 2015). With the proliferation of short-form content, instant messaging, and multitasking habits, the ability to concentrate on a single task has become a challenge for many learners (Haliti-Sylaj &

[1]Student, Physics Department, BCAS College, University of Delhi, Delhi, 110075, India
[2]Associate Prof., Psychology Department, BCAS College, University of Delhi, Delhi, 110075, India
[3]Assistant Professor, Physics Department, BCAS College, University of Delhi, Delhi, 110075, India
[4]Guest Faculty, Department of Psychology, Shri Varshney College, Aligarh, U.P. India
*Corresponding Author

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Sadiku, 2024; Kumar et al., 2024). Digital distractions, particularly from social media and video streaming platforms, are cited as primary contributors to this attention crisis (Aivaz & Teodorescu, 2022; Cheong et al., 2016). Research suggests that these distractions fragment students' focus, making it increasingly challenging to engage with educational material effectively (Aagaard, 2021; Flanigan & Babchuk, 2020). The transition to blended learning models, while offering flexibility, has further compounded these challenges, exposing students to an array of potential diversions inherent in digital media (Göl et al., 2023; Langan et al., 2016). Consequently, educators and researchers are exploring various intervention strategies aimed at enhancing students' concentration and mitigating the adverse effects of digital distractions on academic performance (Flanigan et al., 2022; Wang et al., 2022). Despite the notable progress in identifying the problem, substantial controversies remain regarding the role of technology in educational settings (Cheng et al., 2016; Nema et al., 2023). Critics argue that while digital tools can enhance learning, their misuse can lead to diminished engagement and academic stress, complicating the balance between beneficial and detrimental technological use (Deepa et al., 2022; O'Brien et al., 2022). Additionally, disparities in digital media usage among different demographic groups, including gender and cultural factors, contribute to the complexity of the issue and warrant further investigation (Pérez-Juárez et al., 2023; Rostaminejad et al., 2022). The exploration of digital distractions and their impact on attention spans among university students in India represents a crucial intersection of education and technology. As institutions strive to cultivate environments that promote focused learning, ongoing research is essential to develop effective strategies that support students in navigating the challenges posed by an increasingly digital world (Park & Ok, 2024; Premnath et al., 2025). This study investigates how digital distractions influence the attention span of Indian university students and identifies patterns across screen time usage, demographics, and coping behaviours.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The Impact of Digital Distractions on Attention Span

Recent studies highlight a growing concern regarding the impact of digital distractions on students' attention spans (Duncan et al., 2012; Flanigan & Babchuk, 2020). Research indicates that the average attention span has significantly decreased, with findings showing a decline from approximately 150 seconds in 2004 to just 75 seconds by 2012, representing a 50% reduction over the span of eight years (Fillmore, 2015). This trend has been linked to the pervasive use of digital technologies in educational settings, where distractions from platforms like social media and video streaming can fragment attention and impede learning (Abu et al., 2024; Aivaz & Teodorescu, 2022). The implications of this attention span crisis are profound, affecting not only academic performance but also cognitive development and mental health among students (Attia et al., 2017).

Cognitive Functions and Learning

Attention is a key cognitive function that has been notably affected by digital media usage (Dontre, 2020). Studies suggest that the overuse of digital platforms contributes to fragmented attention, making it difficult for students to focus on tasks and complete their work efficiently (Feng et al., 2019; Heitmayer & Lahlou, 2021). The pressure of constant notifications from various apps can lead to increased stress levels, further complicating students' ability to engage with their educational material fully (Kostić & Ranđelović, 2022). Moreover, the cultural context plays a pivotal role in shaping how digital distractions are perceived and managed within educational environments (Cheng et al., 2016).

Blended Learning and Digital Distractions

The transition to blended learning models has amplified the challenges posed by digital distractions (Göl et al., 2023; Kumar et al., 2024). While blended learning offers numerous benefits, such as increased flexibility and accessibility, it also exposes students to an array of potential distractions inherent in digital media usage (Ali, 2024; Asif & Kazi, 2024). A structured study utilizing a well-designed questionnaire has demonstrated that students face significant distractions when engaging with blended learning platforms, which can adversely affect their academic performance and overall well-being (Flanigan & Babchuk, 2020; Flanigan & Titsworth, 2020).

Intervention Strategies

To address the negative impact of digital distractions, various intervention strategies have been proposed (Barnett & Juliet, 2017; Seemiller, 2017). These include developing awareness of the sources of distraction, implementing educational frameworks to promote focus, and employing techniques that encourage mindfulness and self-regulation among students (Eduljee et al., 2022; Wang et al., 2022). By reflecting on how educators respond to digital distractions, institutions can foster an environment that minimizes these disruptions and enhances learning outcomes (Flanigan et al., 2022).

IDENTIFIED RESEARCH GAPS

The landscape of digital distractions and their implications for university students in India remains underexplored. Despite the recognition of blended learning's advantages, studies have primarily highlighted its benefits without addressing the negative repercussions of digital media distractions on learners' holistic development (Göl et al., 2023; Flanigan & Babchuk, 2020). This research aims to bridge this gap by focusing on the detrimental effects that such distractions can have on students' academic performance and overall life outlook. Research indicates that the average attention span has significantly decreased over recent decades, a trend that has implications for educational outcomes (Duncan et al., 2012; Fillmore, 2015). However, there is a lack of comprehensive studies specifically examining how different forms of technology, contribute to this phenomenon among Indian university students.

PROBLEM STATEMENT

Despite widespread access to digital devices and online platforms, there is growing concern about how prolonged screen exposure impacts cognitive abilities—particularly attention span and sustained focuses (Attia et al., 2017; Dontre, 2020). While global studies have explored this phenomenon, limited research has addressed this issue within the Indian higher education context (Mondal, 2023). This study seeks to fill that gap by analyzing the relationship between screen time, digital distractions, and self-perceived focus among Indian university students.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The objectives of this study are multifaceted, aiming to provide a comprehensive understanding of the factors influencing attention span among Indian university students. Specifically, the study seeks to investigate the impact of screen time on attention span, while also exploring the roles of gender, location of residence, and educational level. By examining these variables, the study aims to contribute to the existing body of knowledge on attention span and its correlates in the Indian context. The study's findings are expected to have implications for educators, policymakers, and students themselves. The specific objectives are:

1. To examine the impact of screen time on the attention span of Indian university students.
2. To analyze the association between gender and attention span among university students in India.
3. To investigate how the location of residence (urban vs. rural) influences students' attention span.
4. To explore the association between students' educational level (undergraduate vs. postgraduate) and their attention span.

RESEARCH HYPOTHESES (H_0)

The following null hypotheses are formulated to guide the investigation and testing of the research questions. These hypotheses assume no significant effects or associations between the variables of interest. The null hypotheses are as follows:

1. **H_{01}:** There is no significant effect of screen time on attention span among Indian university students.
2. **H_{02}:** There is no significant association between gender and attention span among Indian university students.
3. **H_{03}:** There is no significant association between location of residence and attention span among Indian university students.
4. **H_{04}:** There is no significant association between educational level and attention span among Indian university students.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The study employs a mixed-methods approach to analyze the impact of digital distractions on university students in India. A structured questionnaire was designed to gather quantitative data regarding the use of digital media and its effects on students' academic performance and overall outlook on life. The sample included university students across various disciplines, ensuring a diverse representation of perspectives and experiences.

Data Collection

The questionnaire consisted of multiple sections aimed at understanding students' engagement with digital platforms, the frequency of distractions, and the resultant effects on their academic performance. Items were formulated based on existing literature on digital media usage and distractions, with an emphasis on clarity and relevance to the Indian context. A stratified random sampling method was employed to ensure that different demographic segments were adequately represented. Students were selected from various colleges and universities, allowing for a comprehensive analysis of how digital distractions manifest across different educational environments. The questionnaire was administered online to accommodate different preferences and ensure higher response rates. Participants were informed about the purpose of the study and assured of the confidentiality of their responses.

Data Analysis

The collected data were analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistical techniques. Descriptive statistics, including mean and standard deviation, were used to summarize responses related to attention span. To test the hypotheses, the Chi-square test of independence was employed to examine the association between screen time and attention span-related statements. One-way ANOVA was used to compare differences in attention span across multiple screen time groups. Independent samples t-tests were conducted to

assess differences in attention span based on gender and location of residence (urban vs. Rural). A significance level of $p < 0.05$ was set for all inferential tests to determine statistical significance.

DEMOGRAPHIC BACKGROUND OF RESPONDENTS

In connection with the overall results, the socio-economic variables were displayed and carefully analyzed: including gender, age, and educational level, nature of residence and mode of education.

In terms of gender, the number of female respondents is same as the number of male respondents. Regarding age, around 54% of respondents are 19 to 22 years old, 19 % are 25 years and above and 16% are 22 to 25 years old. There is an under-representation of respondents under 18 years of age. In terms of education level, table 1 show that about 50% of respondents perusing a university degree at the bachelor, 33% of respondents perusing master, and 16% of respondents are at doctoral level. Table 1 also present the nature of residence of respondents, around 66% of respondents are living in urban area whereas 34% of respondents are living in rural area. As shown in table 1, a large majority of respondents (71%) are Regular student, while distant student are rather under-represented.

Table No.1 Demographic background of respondents

	Gender		**Age in years**				**Educational Level**			**Nature of Residence**		**Mode of Education**	
	Female	Male	15-18	19-22	22-25	>25	UG	PG	PG above	Urban	Rural	Regular student	Distant student
N	150	150	32	163	47	58	151	100	49	197	103	214	86
%	50	50	10.67	54.33	15.67	19.33	50.33	33.33	16.33	65.67	34.33	71.33	28.67

ANALYSIS OF DATA

The analysis was carried out using SPSS (Version 21.0) the results obtained from analysis is presented as follows:

Comparison of Mean Scores across Gender, Residence, and Mode of Education Using Independent Samples t-Test is presented in Table 2.

Table No.2 Comparison of Mean Scores across Gender, Nature of Residence, and Mode of Education Using Independent Samples t-Test

	N	**Mean**	**Std. Deviation**	**Std. Error Mean**	**Mean Difference**	**'t'**	**p value**
Gender							
Male	150	25.97	7.039	0.575	0.433	0.601	0.548
Female	150	25.53	5.337	0.436			
Nature of Residence							
Urban	197	25.56	5.876	0.419	0.543	0.716	0.475
Rural	103	26.11	6.897	0.680			
Mode of Education							
Regular	214	26.01	6.567	0.449	0.905	1.136	0.257
Distance	86	25.10	5.318	0.573			

Table 2 presents the results of independent samples *t*-tests comparing mean scores across three demographic variables: gender, nature of residence, and mode of education.

The independent samples t-test results reveal no significant differences in attention span scores across gender, nature of residence, or mode of education among Indian university students. The mean scores for males (M = 25.97) and females (M = 25.53) show a slight difference, but it's not statistically significant (t = 0.601, p = 0.548). Similarly, the mean scores for urban (M = 25.56) and rural (M = 26.11) respondents, as well as regular (M = 26.01) and distance (M = 25.10) students, show no significant differences (p > 0.05).

The inferential statistical analysis using independent sample t-tests reveals no significant differences in attention span scores across *gender*, *nature of residence*, or *mode of education* among Indian university students.

The lack of significant differences in attention span scores across demographic variables may be due to the increasing ubiquity of digital technology and social media, which can affect students' attention spans regardless of their background or mode of education. Additionally, the similarity in attention span scores may indicate that Indian university students, regardless of their demographic characteristics, face similar challenges in managing digital distractions and maintaining focus.

Some studies have reported similar findings, where demographic variables such as gender and nature of residence did not significantly impact attention span or academic performance (Asif & Kazi, 2024). A study by Aivaz and Teodorescu (2022) found no significant differences in attention span between male and female students in online and face-to-face classes. However, other studies have reported contradictory findings, where demographic variables such as gender and mode of education did impact attention span or academic performance (Attia et al., 2017; Dontre, 2020).

OVERALL RESULTS FOR EACH QUESTION

The first statement was to find participants opinion about “I find it difficult to concentrate on a single task for an extended period” with a score of 1-strongly disagree to 5- strongly disagree. Association between daily screen time and opinion towards difficulty in concentrating on a single task is presented in Table 3.

Table No.3 Association between Daily Screen Time and Difficulty in Concentrating on a Single Task

		I find it difficult to concentrate on a single task for an extended period.					**Total**	**Chi-Square (p value)**
		Strongly Disagree	**Disagree**	**Neutral**	**Agree**	**Strongly Agree**		
0 to 2 hours	frequency	7	17	23	14	1	62	34.849 (0.000)
	%	11.3%	27.4%	37.1%	22.6%	1.6%	100.0%	
2 to 4 hours	frequency	4	30	27	26	5	92	
	%	4.3%	32.6%	29.3%	28.3%	5.4%	100.0%	
4 to 6 hours	frequency	1	14	15	36	5	71	
	%	1.4%	19.7%	21.1%	50.7%	7.0%	100.0%	
more than 6 hours	frequency	5	10	19	30	11	75	
	%	6.7%	13.3%	25.3%	40.0%	14.7%	100.0%	
Total	frequency	17	71	84	106	22	300	
	%	5.7%	23.7%	28.0%	35.3%	7.3%	100.0%	

Table 3 examines the Association between daily screen time and the difficulty of concentrating on a single task, as measured by self-reported agreement levels.

The analysis reveals a significant association between daily screen time and difficulty in concentrating on a single task (Chi-Square = 34.849, p = 0.000). As screen time increases, the proportion of respondents who agree or strongly agree with the statement "I find it difficult to concentrate on a single task for an extended period" rises sharply. Specifically, among those with more than 6 hours of screen time, 54.7% agree or strongly agree with the statement, compared to 22.6% in the 0-2 hour category.

The significant association between screen time and difficulty in concentrating on a single task may be due to the fact that prolonged screen exposure can lead to distractions, decreased attention span, and reduced ability to focus. Additionally, excessive screen time can lead to cognitive overload, making it challenging for individuals to sustain attention on a single task.

Some studies have reported similar findings, where increased screen time was associated with decreased attention span and reduced ability to focus ((Zafar et al., 2025)). However, other studies have reported contradictory findings, where screen time was not significantly associated with attention span or cognitive function (Aivaz & Teodorescu, 2022; Langan et al., 2016).

Association between daily Screen time and opinion about distraction by Phone/ Social Media during work/ study is presented in Table 4.

Table No.4 Association between Daily Screen Time and Distraction by Phone/ Social Media during Work/ Study

		I get easily distracted by my phone or social media while working/studying.					**Total**	**Chi-Square (p value)**
		Strongly Disagree	**Disagree**	**Neutral**	**Agree**	**Strongly Agree**		
0 to 2 hours	frequency	6	16	29	11	0	62	57.149 (0.000)
	%	9.7%	25.8%	46.8%	17.7%	0.0%	100.0%	
2 to 4 hours	frequency	1	26	20	34	11	92	
	%	1.1%	28.3%	21.7%	37.0%	12.0%	100.0%	
4 to 6 hours	frequency	2	9	17	32	11	71	
	%	2.8%	12.7%	23.9%	45.1%	15.5%	100.0%	
more than 6 hours	frequency	6	7	17	23	22	75	
	%	8.0%	9.3%	22.7%	30.7%	29.3%	100.0%	
Total	frequency	15	58	83	100	44	300	
	%	5.0%	19.3%	27.7%	33.3%	14.7%	100.0%	

Table 4 explores how daily screen time correlates with self-reported distraction by phones or social media during work or study.

The analysis reveals a highly significant association between daily screen time and distraction by phone or social media during work or study (Chi-Square = 57.149, p = 0.000). As screen time increases, the proportion of respondents who agree or strongly agree with the

statement "I get easily distracted by my phone or social media while working/studying" grows substantially. For instance, among those with more than 6 hours of screen time, 60% agree or strongly agree with the statement, compared to 17.7% in the 0-2 hour category.

The significant association between screen time and distraction by phone or social media may be due to the fact that prolonged screen exposure can lead to increased exposure to digital distractions, such as social media notifications, emails, and text messages. Additionally, excessive screen time can lead to cognitive overload, making it challenging for individuals to focus on tasks and avoid distractions.

Association between daily Screen time and opinion about Need for Background Noise to Maintain Focus is presented in Table 5.

Table No. 5 Association between Daily Screen Time and the Need for Background Noise to Maintain Focus

		I often need background noise (music, TV, etc.) to stay focused.					**Total**	**Chi-Square (p value)**
		Strongly Disagree	**Disagree**	**Neutral**	**Agree**	**Strongly Agree**		
0 to 2 hours	frequency	15	15	12	20	0	62	21.903 (0.039)
	%	24.2%	24.2%	19.4%	32.3%	0.0%	100.0%	
2 to 4 hours	frequency	21	29	22	15	5	92	
	%	22.8%	31.5%	23.9%	16.3%	5.4%	100.0%	
4 to 6 hours	frequency	16	16	17	14	8	71	
	%	22.5%	22.5%	23.9%	19.7%	11.3%	100.0%	
more than 6 hours	frequency	19	16	18	10	12	75	
	%	25.3%	21.3%	24.0%	13.3%	16.0%	100.0%	
Total	frequency	71	76	69	59	25	300	
	%	23.7%	25.3%	23.0%	19.7%	8.3%	100.0%	

The table 5 assesses the association between daily screen time and individuals' reliance on background noise (e.g., music, TV) to stay focused.

The Chi-Square test yields a value of **21.903** with a **p-value of 0.039**, indicating a statistically significant but relatively moderate Association. In the **0–2 hour** screen time group, the highest percentage falls under *Disagree* (24.2%) and *Strongly Disagree* (24.2%), while none selected *Strongly Agree*. As screen time increases, a shift occurs: in the **more than 6 hours** group, the *Strongly Agree* category rises to **16.0%**, and the overall proportion of *Agree* and *Strongly Agree* combined (29.3%) is higher than that in the lowest screen time group (32.3% Agree, 0% Strongly Agree = 32.3%). While *Neutral* responses remain relatively steady across groups (around 23–24%), there's a subtle but noticeable trend: individuals with higher screen time more often report needing auditory stimuli to concentrate, possibly reflecting conditioned multitasking environments created by digital media use.

The findings suggest a modest yet statistically significant correlation between increased daily screen time and the need for background noise to sustain attention. This may point to a

broader shift in attention regulation strategies among heavy screen users, potentially driven by a growing dependence on external stimuli to maintain mental engagement during tasks.

The significant association between screen time and the need for background noise may be due to the fact that prolonged screen exposure can lead to changes in attention regulation strategies, potentially driven by a growing dependence on external stimuli to maintain mental engagement during tasks (Ronconi et al., 2025). Additionally, heavy screen users may become accustomed to multitasking and using background noise as a means to stay focused.

Some studies have reported similar findings. Feng et al. (2019) found that increased screen time was associated with decreased attention span and reduced ability to focus. However, Razikova (2025) found no significant differences in attention span between students with high and low screen time usage.

Association between daily Screen time and opinion about Struggle to Complete Tasks without Frequent Breaks is presented in Table 6.

Table No. 6 Association between Daily Screen Time and the Struggle to Complete Tasks without Frequent Breaks

		I struggle to complete tasks without taking frequent breaks.					**Total**	**Chi-Square (p value)**
		Strongly Disagree	**Disagree**	**Neutral**	**Agree**	**Strongly Agree**		
0 to 2 hours	frequency	3	19	23	17	0	62	22.063 (0.037)
	%	4.8%	30.6%	37.1%	27.4%	0.0%	100.0%	
2 to 4 hours	frequency	5	33	25	25	4	92	
	%	5.4%	35.9%	27.2%	27.2%	4.3%	100.0%	
4 to 6 hours	frequency	4	10	27	27	3	71	
	%	5.6%	14.1%	38.0%	38.0%	4.2%	100.0%	
more than 6 hours	frequency	5	16	19	27	8	75	
	%	6.7%	21.3%	25.3%	36.0%	10.7%	100.0%	
Total	frequency	17	78	94	96	15	300	
	%	5.7%	26.0%	31.3%	32.0%	5.0%	100.0%	

The table 6 evaluates the association between daily screen time and self-reported difficulty in completing tasks without taking frequent breaks.

The Chi-Square statistic of 22.063 with a p-value of 0.037 indicates a statistically significant Association, although the association is weaker compared to previously analyzed behaviours. In the 0–2 hour group, the majority of participants report Neutral (37.1%) or Disagree (30.6%), with no one selecting Strongly Agree. As screen time increases, there is a slight upward shift in Agree and Strongly Agree responses. For instance, in the 4–6 hour and more than 6 hours groups, over 40% of respondents (41.9% and 46.7%, respectively) report struggling with sustained task completion. Notably, the percentage of Strongly Agree responses, though still modest, increases from 0% (0–2 hours) to 10.7% (more than 6 hours). Meanwhile, disagreement levels drop off with increasing screen time. This distribution

suggests that while the pattern is not as pronounced as in other variables, there is still a meaningful trend connecting higher screen usage with reduced task endurance.

The data suggests a statistically significant, albeit moderate, correlation between longer screen time and increased difficulty in completing tasks without frequent breaks. Individuals with higher daily screen exposure tend to take more breaks during work or study sessions, pointing to a potential decline in sustained attention and productivity associated with prolonged digital engagement.

The significant association between screen time and difficulty in completing tasks without breaks may be due to the fact that prolonged screen exposure can lead to cognitive fatigue, decreased attention span, and reduced ability to focus. Additionally, excessive screen time can lead to a habit of frequent checking and switching between tasks, making it challenging to sustain attention on a single task (Heitmayer & Lahlou, 2021).

There are limited studies that directly investigate the association between screen time and difficulty in completing tasks without breaks. Strom et al. (2023) have reported similar findings, however, Aivaz & Teodorescu, (2022) have reported contradictory findings.

Association between daily Screen time and opinion about perceived decline in attention Span over recent years is presented in Table 7.

Table No.7 Association between Daily Screen Time and Perceived Decline in Attention Span over Recent Years

		I feel my attention span has decreased over the past few years.					**Total**	**Chi-Square (p value)**
		Strongly Disagree	**Disagree**	**Neutral**	**Agree**	**Strongly Agree**		
0 to 2 hours	frequency	3	16	16	23	4	62	36.570 (0.000)
	%	4.8%	25.8%	25.8%	37.1%	6.5%	100.0%	
2 to 4 hours	frequency	7	11	25	40	9	92	
	%	7.6%	12.0%	27.2%	43.5%	9.8%	100.0%	
4 to 6 hours	frequency	5	11	12	27	16	71	
	%	7.0%	15.5%	16.9%	38.0%	22.5%	100.0%	
more than 6 hours	frequency	6	8	10	23	28	75	
	%	8.0%	10.7%	13.3%	30.7%	37.3%	100.0%	
Total	frequency	21	46	63	113	57	300	
	%	7.0%	15.3%	21.0%	37.7%	19.0%	100.0%	

The table 7 explores the Association between daily screen time and the self-perceived decline in attention span over recent years.

The Chi-Square value of **36.570** with a **p-value of 0.000** signifies a statistically significant association. Among those with **0–2 hours** of screen time, responses are more evenly distributed, with **37.1%** agreeing and only **6.5%** strongly agreeing that their attention span has declined. As screen time increases, there is a steady and pronounced rise in agreement levels. In the **2–4 hour** group, **53.3%** (43.5% Agree + 9.8% strongly agree) report a decline in attention span, and this jumps to **60.5%** in the **4–6 hour** group. Most notably, among

those exceeding **6 hours** of screen time per day, a striking **68%** (30.7% Agree + 37.3% strongly agree) believe their attention span has decreased. Meanwhile, disagreement levels drop noticeably with increased screen usage, indicating a shift in perception that coincides with higher digital exposure.

The results demonstrate a clear and statistically significant trend: the more screen time individuals report daily, the more likely they are to feel their attention span has diminished in recent years. This finding supports growing concerns about the cognitive consequences of digital saturation and underscores the importance of attention management in an age of constant connectivity.

The significant association between screen time and perceived decline in attention span may be due to the fact that excessive screen time can lead to cognitive overload, decreased attention span, and reduced ability to focus. Additionally, prolonged screen exposure can lead to a habit of frequent checking and switching between tasks, making it challenging to sustain attention on a single task (Heitmayer & Lahlou, 2021).

Association between daily Screen time and opinion about inability to stay engaged during long lectures, meetings, or reading sessions is presented in Table 8.

Table No. 8 Associations between Daily Screen Time and Inability to Stay Engaged During Long Lectures, Meetings, or Reading Sessions

		I am unable stay engaged during long lectures, meetings, or reading sessions.					**Total**	**Chi-Square (p value)**
		Strongly Disagree	**Disagree**	**Neutral**	**Agree**	**Strongly Agree**		
0 to 2 hours	frequency	5	19	21	17	0	62	42.827 (0.000)
	%	8.1%	30.6%	33.9%	27.4%	0.0%	100.0%	
2 to 4 hours	frequency	4	24	22	29	13	92	
	%	4.3%	26.1%	23.9%	31.5%	14.1%	100.0%	
4 to 6 hours	frequency	8	7	21	25	10	71	
	%	11.3%	9.9%	29.6%	35.2%	14.1%	100.0%	
more than 6 hours	frequency	3	11	10	28	23	75	
	%	4.0%	14.7%	13.3%	37.3%	30.7%	100.0%	
Total	frequency	20	61	74	99	46	300	
	%	6.7%	20.3%	24.7%	33.0%	15.3%	100.0%	

The table 8 table analyzes the correlation between the amount of daily screen time and individuals' difficulty staying engaged during extended cognitive tasks such as lectures, meetings, or reading.

The Chi-Square test yields a value of **42.827** with a **p-value of 0.000**, indicating a statistically significant Association. In the **0–2 hour** group, most participants are clustered around *Neutral* (33.9%) and *Disagree* (30.6%), with no one strongly agreeing that they struggle with engagement. However, as screen time increases, particularly beyond four hours, there is a distinct rise in *Agree* and *Strongly Agree* responses. For instance, in the **more than 6 hours** category, **68%** (37.3% Agree + 30.7% Strongly Agree) report having difficulty staying focused during long sessions. The proportion of *Strongly Agree* responses alone climbs steeply from **0%** (0–2 hours) to **30.7%** in the highest usage group. This pattern

suggests that heavy screen exposure may be associated with reduced attention stamina during prolonged intellectual activities.

The findings clearly indicate that individuals with higher daily screen time report significantly greater difficulty maintaining engagement during long-duration cognitive tasks. This supports the hypothesis that extended screen exposure may contribute to attention fatigue or a diminished capacity for sustained focus, reinforcing the need for healthy digital habits and attention training strategies.

The significant association between screen time and inability to stay engaged during long lectures, meetings, or reading sessions may be due to the fact that excessive screen time can lead to cognitive overload, decreased attention span, and reduced ability to focus. Additionally, prolonged screen exposure can lead to a habit of frequent checking and switching between tasks, making it challenging to sustain attention on a single task.

A study by Ophir et al. (2009) found that heavy media multitaskers performed worse on tasks that required sustained attention, suggesting that excessive screen time can lead to difficulties in maintaining focus. Similarly, a study by Liu (2022) found that increased screen time was associated with decreased attention span and reduced ability to focus in children.

However, some studies suggest that the relationship between screen time and attention may be more complex and dependent on individual differences and context. In a study Uncapher et al. (2016) found that the impact of screen time on attention may vary depending on the type of screen-based activity and individual differences in cognitive control.

Association between daily Screen time and opinion about tendency to multitask rather than focus on a single task is presented in Table 9.

Table No.9 Association between Daily Screen Time and Tendency to Multitask Rather than Focus on a Single Task

		I frequently switch between multiple tasks instead of focusing on one.					**Total**	**Chi-Square (p value)**
		Strongly Disagree	**Disagree**	**Neutral**	**Agree**	**Strongly Agree**		
0 to 2 hours	frequency	8	16	12	26	0	62	65.355 (0.000)
	%	12.9%	25.8%	19.4%	41.9%	0.0%	100.0%	
2 to 4 hours	frequency	9	18	28	36	1	92	
	%	9.8%	19.6%	30.4%	39.1%	1.1%	100.0%	
4 to 6 hours	frequency	5	6	27	26	7	71	
	%	7.0%	8.5%	38.0%	36.6%	9.9%	100.0%	
more than 6 hours	frequency	4	9	21	17	24	75	
	%	5.3%	12.0%	28.0%	22.7%	32.0%	100.0%	
Total	frequency	26	49	88	105	32	300	
	%	8.7%	16.3%	29.3%	35.0%	10.7%	100.0%	

The table 9 examines the Association between daily screen time and the self-reported frequency of multitasking instead of focusing on a single task.

The Chi-Square value of **65.355** with a **p-value of 0.000** confirms a statistically significant association, suggesting that higher screen time is meaningfully linked to increased multitasking behavior. Among participants with **0–2 hours** of screen exposure, a significant proportion (*41.9%*) agrees they frequently switch tasks, but none strongly agree. As screen time increases, there is a notable escalation in *Strongly Agree* responses—rising sharply to **32.0%** in the **more than 6 hours** group. Furthermore, in the 4–6 and 2–4 hour groups, a high percentage of respondents fall within the *Neutral* to *Agree* range, with *Strongly Agree* slowly increasing (9.9% and 1.1%, respectively). The distribution suggests that excessive screen use might be associated with fragmented attention and habitual task-switching.

This data reveals a strong and significant correlation between increased screen time and a higher tendency to multitask. Participants with longer screen exposure, particularly those exceeding six hours, are much more likely to frequently shift between tasks. These findings underscore the cognitive behavioural impacts of prolonged digital engagement, suggesting a potential challenge in maintaining sustained attention due to screen-induced multitasking habits.

The significant association between screen time and tendency to multitask rather than focus on a single task may be due to the fact that excessive screen time can lead to cognitive overload, decreased attention span, and reduced ability to focus. Additionally, prolonged screen exposure can lead to a habit of frequent checking and switching between tasks, making it challenging to sustain attention on a single task.

A study by Ophir et al. (2009) found that heavy media multitaskers were more prone to distractions and had difficulty focusing on a single task. Similarly, a study by Cain and Mitroff (2011) found that individuals who frequently multitasked were more likely to experience distractions and have difficulty with task-switching.

Association between daily Screen time and opinion about preference for short, fast-paced content over long-Form media is presented in Table 10.

Table No. 10 Impact of Daily Screen Time on Preference for Short, Fast-Paced Content over Long-Form Media

		I prefer shorter, fast-paced content over long-form reading or videos.						**Chi-Square (p value)**
		Strongly Disagree	**Disagree**	**Neutral**	**Agree**	**Strongly Agree**	**Total**	
0 to 2 hours	frequency	4	14	15	25	4	62	37.772 (0.000)
	%	6.5%	22.6%	24.2%	40.3%	6.5%	100.0%	
2 to 4 hours	frequency	5	7	16	46	18	92	
	%	5.4%	7.6%	17.4%	50.0%	19.6%	100.0%	
4 to 6 hours	frequency	1	8	23	27	12	71	
	%	1.4%	11.3%	32.4%	38.0%	16.9%	100.0%	
more than 6 hours	frequency	3	7	19	18	28	75	
	%	4.0%	9.3%	25.3%	24.0%	37.3%	100.0%	
Total	frequency	13	36	73	116	62	300	
	%	4.3%	12.0%	24.3%	38.7%	20.7%	100.0%	

The Table 10 investigates the Association between the amount of daily screen time and individuals' preference for shorter, fast-paced content over traditional long-form media such as books or lengthy videos.

The Chi-Square statistic (χ^2 = **37.772**, **p = 0.000**) indicates a statistically significant association, meaning screen time is meaningfully linked to content preferences. For those with **0–2 hours** of screen time, 40.3% agreed and only 6.5% strongly agreed with the preference for shorter content. However, in the **2–4 hour** group, both Agree (50.0%) and Strongly Agree (19.6%) responses increased. A similar pattern continues with higher screen time groups: **more than 6 hours** shows the most pronounced preference, where **61.3%** of individuals (24.0% Agree, 37.3% Strongly Agree) lean toward short-form, fast-paced media. This upward trend across screen time groups suggests that prolonged exposure to screens, likely dominated by rapid content consumption (e.g., social media, reels), may shift user preference away from extended formats.

The findings highlight a clear, statistically significant trend: greater daily screen time correlates with an increasing preference for short, fast-paced content. This shift in media consumption behaviour may reflect changing attention spans or content processing habits shaped by digital platforms, emphasizing the cultural and cognitive effects of prolonged digital media exposure.

The significant association between screen time and preference for short, fast-paced content over long-form media may be due to the fact that excessive screen time can lead to a habit of rapid content consumption, making it challenging to engage with longer, more in-depth content (Kumar et al., 2024). Additionally, prolonged screen exposure can lead to a preference for bite-sized information, which is often characteristic of digital media (Carr, 2010).

A study by Liu and Lee (2018) found that individuals who spent more time on social media were more likely to prefer short-form content, such as tweets or Instagram posts, over longer forms of content like articles or books. Similarly, a study by Zhang et al. (2020) found that excessive screen time was associated with a preference for fast-paced, visually stimulating content.

EFFECT OF SCREEN TIME ON ATTENTION DECLINE

The impact of screen time on attention decline is a critical aspect of this study. To examine this relationship, a one-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) for Group Differences (Screen time) was conducted. The results of the ANOVA are presented in Table 11.

Table No. 11 One-Way ANOVA for Group Differences (Screen time)

	Sum of Squares	**df**	**Mean Square**	**F**	**Sig.**
Between Groups	979.964	3	326.655	9.070	0.000
Within Groups	10660.286	296	36.014		
Total	11640.250	299			

The table 11 presents the results of a one-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) conducted to examine whether there are statistically significant differences in mean values across four groups (as indicated by the degrees of freedom between groups = 3). The ANOVA yielded an F-value of 9.070 with a significance level (p-value) of 0.000. Since the p-value is less than the conventional alpha level of 0.05, the result is statistically significant; indicating that

at least one of the group means differs significantly from the others. The between-groups sum of squares (979.964) compared to the within-groups sum of squares (10660.286) suggests that a meaningful portion of the variance is explained by group membership. In conclusion, the analysis confirms that there are significant differences among the groups under study, warranting further post-hoc analysis to identify the specific group differences.

The findings are consistent with previous research that suggests that excessive screen time can lead to attention problems and decreased cognitive performance (Ophir et al., 2009; Gentile et al., 2017). The significant differences among the groups may be due to the fact that prolonged screen exposure can lead to cognitive overload, decreased attention span, and reduced ability to focus.

A one-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was conducted to examine the effect of screen time on TOTAL scores across four groups: 0–2 hours, 2–4 hours, 4–6 hours, and more than 6 hours. The results revealed a statistically significant difference in mean TOTAL scores among the groups, $\mathbf{F}(3, 296) = 9.070$, $p < 0.001$, indicating that screen time duration has a meaningful impact on the dependent variable.

To determine which groups differed significantly, a Tukey HSD post-hoc test was performed and results are presented in Table 12.

Table No. 12 Tukey HSD Post-Hoc Test for Differences in TOTAL Scores by Screen Time Categories

(I) Screen Time		Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
0 to 2 hours	2 to 4 hours	-2.027	0.986	0.170	-4.575	0.521
	4 to 6 hours	-3.734*	1.043	0.002	-6.430	-1.039
	more than 6 hours	-5.043*	1.030	0.000	-7.704	-2.381
2 to 4 hours	0 to 2 hours	2.027	0.986	0.170	-0.521	4.575
	4 to 6 hours	-1.707	0.948	0.275	-4.157	0.742
	more than 6 hours	-3.016*	0.934	0.007	-5.428	-0.604
4 to 6 hours	0 to 2 hours	3.734*	1.043	0.002	1.039	6.430
	2 to 4 hours	1.707	0.948	0.275	-0.742	4.157
	more than 6 hours	-1.308	0.994	0.553	-3.876	1.259
more than 6 hours	0 to 2 hours	5.043*	1.030	0.000	2.381	7.704
	2 to 4 hours	3.016*	0.934	0.007	0.604	5.428
	4 to 6 hours	1.308	0.994	0.553	-1.259	3.876
*. The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.						

The analysis showed that participants in the 0–2 hours screen time group had significantly higher TOTAL scores compared to those in the 4–6 hours ($p = 0.002$) and more than 6 hours ($p < 0.001$) groups. Additionally, the 2–4 hours group also outperformed the more than 6 hours group ($p = 0.007$). However, no significant differences were observed between the 0–2 and 2–4 hours groups or between the adjacent higher screen time categories (2–4 vs. 4–6 hours and 4–6 vs. more than 6 hours).

These findings suggest a clear negative association between screen times and TOTAL scores. As screen time increases, especially beyond 4 hours per day, there is a significant decline in the measured outcomes. Limiting screen time to under 4 hours daily appears to be linked with more favourable performance or well-being as reflected in the TOTAL scores.

HYPOTHESES TESTING

H_{01}: 'There is no significant effect of screen time on attention span among Indian university students' is **rejected**.

The rejection of H_{01}, which indicates a significant effect of screen time on attention span among Indian university students, suggests that prolonged screen exposure negatively impacts cognitive focus. In today's digital age, university students often spend extended hours on smart phones, laptops, and other devices for both academic and recreational purposes. Excessive screen time may lead to cognitive overload, mental fatigue, and reduced ability to concentrate on single tasks, thus deteriorating attention span. Furthermore, blue light exposure from screens, especially late at night, can interfere with sleep cycles, thereby impairing attention and alertness during the day.

H_{02}: 'There is no significant association between gender and attention span among Indian university students' is **accepted**.

The acceptance of H_{02}, implying no significant association between gender and attention span, may reflect a shift in cognitive behaviour patterns among males and females due to increased access to similar educational resources and digital tools. Both male and female students today are equally exposed to online learning environments, social media, and digital distractions, potentially leading to a uniform influence on attention span across genders. Additionally, previous gender-based differences in multitasking or concentration abilities may be diminishing due to shared academic pressures and similar patterns of device use among university students.

H_{03}: 'There is no significant association between location of residence and attention span among Indian university students' is **accepted**.

The acceptance of H_{03}, indicating no significant association between location of residence (urban or rural) and attention span, could be attributed to the widespread availability of digital technology across India. With increasing digital penetration, students from both urban and rural areas have relatively equal exposure to screen-based activities, such as online classes, gaming, and streaming. This technological uniformity may have leveled out any previously existing differences in lifestyle or environment that could affect cognitive focus, leading to similar patterns of attention span regardless of location.

H_{04}: 'There is no significant association between educational level and attention span among Indian university students' is **accepted**.

The acceptance of H_{04}, which found no significant association between educational level (undergraduate vs. postgraduate) and attention span, might suggest that attention-related challenges are prevalent across academic levels. This may be due to consistent academic demands, frequent engagement with digital platforms for assignments and research, and similar lifestyle habits among students at various stages of higher education. Furthermore, both groups might experience equal stress levels, academic burnout, and digital distractions, which neutralize any potential impact of educational level on attention span.

CONCLUSION

The study's findings suggest that excessive screen time is strongly associated with decreased attention span among Indian university students. As screen time increases, students report greater difficulty in sustaining attention, maintaining engagement, and completing tasks without frequent breaks. The results highlight the importance of screen-time management strategies and attention training programs to support students in navigating the challenges posed by digital distractions. By promoting healthy digital habits and providing targeted interventions, educators can help students develop the skills necessary to succeed in an increasingly digital world.

SUGGESTIONS

Based on the study's findings, several suggestions can be made to mitigate the adverse effects of excessive screen time on attention span among Indian university students. Educational institutions can develop guidelines and workshops to help students manage their screen time effectively, prioritize tasks, and minimize digital distractions. Universities can also offer training programs or courses that focus on attention management, cognitive training, and digital literacy to help students develop the skills necessary to succeed in a digital world. Additionally, educators can incorporate digital literacy into their curriculum, teaching students how to use technology effectively, critically evaluate online information, and avoid digital distractions. By promoting cautious digital habits and providing targeted interventions, educators can help students develop the skills necessary to succeed in an increasingly digital world. Furthermore, future research can investigate the impact of specific digital platforms on attention span and explore the effectiveness of interventions aimed at reducing digital distractions, providing valuable insights for educators, policymakers, and students alike.

ETHICAL CONSIDERATION

Ethical protocols were strictly adhered to throughout the research process. All respondents were provided with informed consent prior to participation, ensuring they were fully aware of the study's purpose and their rights. Participation was entirely voluntary and responses were collected anonymously to protect the privacy of individuals. At no point was any personally identifiable information disclosed, thereby maintaining confidentiality and upholding the ethical integrity of the study.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

This study provides important insights into the patterns of attention among Indian students in the context of increasing digital engagement. By highlighting how screen time impacts student focus and academic performance, the research draws attention to a pressing concern in contemporary education. The findings are particularly relevant for educators, policymakers, and curriculum designers, as they underscore the need for adaptive teaching strategies that are responsive to students' evolving digital habits. Moreover, the study contributes meaningfully to the discourse on digital wellness in higher education by offering practical suggestions for managing screen time and implementing interventions aimed at enhancing attention and cognitive well-being among students.

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Conflict of Interest

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