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Research Paper

Exploring the Impact of Rapid Digital Media Consumption on Delayed Gratification and Impulsivity Among Young Adults

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ABSTRACT

In the current digital period, young adults are frequently exposed to digital media activities that provide short-form, fast-paced, and algorithm-driven content across various platforms of social media, gaming, and streaming apps. This unprecedented transformation in how they engage with digital platforms has led to the development of phenomena termed Rapid Digital Media Consumption (RDMC), thereby raising psychological concerns on self-regulation, especially in areas of delayed gratification and impulsivity. Hence, this study aimed to explore the impact of rapid digital media consumption on delayed gratification and impulsivity among young adults aged 18 to 25 years. A quantitative, descriptive-correlational survey design was employed among N=200 young adults online through the snowball sampling method. Three self-report scales were used: the Rapid Digital Media Consumption (RDMC) Scale, the Delayed Gratification Inventory (DGI), and the UPPS-P Impulsive Behavior Scale to collect data. The results showed a low positive correlation (r = 0.30) between RDMC and delayed gratification and a low negative correlation (r = -0.29) between RDMC and impulsivity. Hence, higher engagement in RDMC leads to difficulty in delaying gratification; however, it might not always lead to increased impulsivity among them. These findings suggest that further research is required in order to understand the effects extensively, along with the need to develop and promote self-regulation strategies and healthier digital habits among them.

Keywords: *Rapid Digital Media Consumption, Delayed Gratification, Impulsivity, Young Adults*

Rapid Digital Media Consumption (RDMC) refers to the frequent and fast-paced engagement with digital content across various digital platforms, requiring minimal cognitive effort and attention span to consume large amounts of information, entertainment, and services in a short period. It comprises short films, infinite scrolling, binge-watching, and instant notifications, minimizing cognitive effort and facilitating ongoing consumption (Mantulenko, 2020). The use of social media platforms (e.g., TikTok, Instagram, YouTube) trains users for instant, goal-driven engagement with short, reward-based encounters designed to drive the flow of dopamine, thereby inducing habitual use (Evans et al., 1948).

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Delayed Gratification (DG) refers to the ability to resist immediate temptations in order to achieve more valuable, long-term rewards. This construct is related to self-regulation and executive functioning, indicating how much an individual can delay impulsive behavior and tolerate delay for greater outcomes (Conti & Regina, 2014). The classical "Marshmallow Test," conducted by Walter Mischel (1972), demonstrated that individuals capable of delaying gratification tend to experience greater academic, emotional, and life success. This construct is therefore central to psychological development, financial stability, health maintenance, and long-term goal attainment (Casey et al., 2011).

Delayed gratification impacts various life domains such as:

- Education – Students having the ability to resist immediate rewards of engaging in pleasurable activities tend to focus better on their studies, resulting in better grades.
- Finance – Individuals who can save money instead of immediately spending it are more likely to construct financial stability.
- Health – Individuals selecting a healthy diet and exercising regularly tend to have better health compared to those consuming unhealthy food and remaining inactive in life.
- Decision-Making – Individuals who think about future welfare make better life decisions instead of choosing instant reward pleasures.

Impulsivity refers to the tendency to act or speak on impulse, exhibiting behavior characterized by little or no forethought, reflection, and consideration of potential repercussions. It involves poor self-restraint, decision-making, and a preference for instant desires rather than long-term rewards (APA Dictionary of Psychology, n.d.).

Difference from similar concepts:

- Impulsivity vs. Compulsivity – Impulsivity involves acting instantly without any forethought, whereas compulsivity means feeling forced to perform a behavior in a repetitive manner in order to reduce feelings of anxiety or discomfort. An example of compulsivity is excessive hand washing.
- Impulsivity vs. Risk-Taking – Impulsivity means behaving without planning and taking potential risks into consideration, whereas risk-taking means consciously choosing actions despite having possible dangers. An example of risk-taking is skydiving.

Different types and Dimensions of Impulsivity are as follows (Evenden, 1999):

- Motor impulsivity – This occurs when an individual acts quickly without considering the repercussions. For example, an individual may interrupt others while having a conversation or click a button before understanding the rules of the game thoroughly.
- Cognitive Impulsivity – This is associated with poor decision-making because the decisions are made without careful thought. For example, purchasing something expensive instantly without thinking about the product's value.
- Attentional Impulsivity – This occurs when an individual finds it difficult to remain focused on a particular task and gets distracted easily. For example, a student may find it difficult to focus on the lecture and instantly shift their attention to their mobile phone.

- Emotional Impulsivity – This occurs when an individual reacts strongly to emotions without controlling them. For example, getting furious and yelling at someone without fully understanding the situation.

Rationale of the Study

In the current digital scenario, the increased exposure and consumption of rapid digital media among young adults provides them instant feedback and stimulation, which can greatly influence reward processing and impulse control in the brain. The human brain is naturally programmed to seek pleasure and avoid pain, and rapid digital media tends to reinforce this tendency by rewarding individuals' instant responses and thereby attaining immediate gratification (Gega & Aboujaoude, 2021). The environment could prime people to reward short-term gratification and quick feedback at the expense of long-term rewards, affecting both cognitive and behavioral regulation. For neuropsychological reasons, the high frequency of presenting these types of rapid stimuli activates the dopaminergic reward circuitry in the brain, maintaining habits that favor immediate rewards (Lewis et al., 2021). It can weaken the activity of the prefrontal cortex, the part of the brain that serves executive functions like self-control, planning, and decision-making (Ostlund et al., 2008). Young adults, therefore, may have lower capacities for delay of gratification, more impulsivity, and may display a fragmented attentional system, emotional dysregulation, and reduced ability to delay immediate pleasure and long-term goals, thus being unduly affected. Moreover, previous studies have investigated internet usage, social media addiction, and gaming behavior, but comparatively few studies have comprehensively examined the effects that rapid, short-form, algorithm-supported content consumption may have on psychological constructs in the context of delayed gratification and impulsivity in the young adult population, a category that is extremely vulnerable because of ongoing neurodevelopment and social life experience (Yau et al., 2012). Therefore, this existing gap will provide insights and contribute to the knowledge about the role of changing media consumption habits on self-control and decision-making in the digital era.

Problem Statement

While existing research has examined the impact of specific digital media activities, including social media platforms, gaming, media multitasking, and smartphone usage, the broader impact of rapid digital media consumption on these cognitive and behavioral tendencies remains unexplored. Moreover, while delayed gratification has been extensively examined among children, its study remains limited among young adults regarding how they navigate impulse control in the era of immediate digital rewards. Furthermore, while impulsivity has been widely explored in existing digital media research, its study in the context of rapid digital media consumption also remains unexplored. Additionally, while the majority of this research has been conducted on adolescent populations, the study remains limited among young adults. Therefore, the current study aims to address these gaps by exploring the impact of rapid digital media consumption on delayed gratification and impulsivity among young adults.

Theoretical Framework

This research is grounded in three theoretical paradigms, which together provide insight into the psychological and neurobiological processes underlying the RDMC, delayed gratification, and impulsive relationships:

1. Psychoanalytical Theory

Sigmund Freud suggested that human behavior is driven by interactions between three components of personality, namely the id, ego, and superego. Hence, the concepts of delayed gratification and impulsivity are understood as a result of conflict between these three components (Vinney, 2024). If the id overpowers the ego and superego, it will result in impulsivity because it will seek instant pleasure rather than consider the consequences (Drinovac, 2024). A weak ego results in poor decision-making and risk-taking behavior. An underdeveloped superego also allows individuals to take actions without guilt or a sense of right and wrong. Rapid digital media consumption can strengthen the id's drive by providing immediate rewards (likes, comments), which will weaken the ego's ability to resist instant pleasure, resulting in a cycle of compulsive media use and poor self-regulation (Lapsley & Stey, 2012).

2. Walter Mischel's Marshmallow Test

The Marshmallow Test was a renowned study performed by Walter Mischel (1960s and 1970s) at Stanford University. It was conducted to study the ability of children to resist immediate gratification in order to anticipate future success. Studies suggested that children who were able to resist temptations performed better academically, in emotional regulation, in developing healthier relationships, achieving better SAT results, exhibiting a low probability of substance abuse, and leading successful lives in adulthood. The study highlighted the importance of delayed gratification and self-control as predictors of long-term goal achievement and overall well-being (Kmenke, 2022).

3. Reward System Theory

The reward circuitry in the brain — the ventral tegmental area (VTA), nucleus accumbens, and prefrontal cortex — mediates pleasure, motivation, and impulse control (Ostlund et al., 2008). Rapid digital media consumption can overstimulate this system by delivering continuous and small bursts of dopamine, thereby reinforcing instant gratification behavior (White, 2011). The hyperactivity of the limbic system and the underactivity of the prefrontal cortex decrease the ability to delay gratification and increase impulsive behaviors (Circle, 2025). Therefore, the present study combines psychological, behavioral, and neurobiological perspectives to study how Rapid Digital Media Consumption influences Delayed Gratification and Impulsivity in young adults. By linking theory and empirical findings, the project seeks to contribute to the emerging field of cyberpsychology, with a view to revealing how continuous digital stimulation affects human beings' ability to self-regulate in the age of immediate connectivity."

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Li et al. (2016) performed delay and probability discounting tasks in "Problematic internet users' discounting behaviors reflect an inability to delay gratification, not risk taking" among 560 participants, which suggested that individuals with problematic internet use prioritize instant rewards rather than delayed ones. However, they did not display engagement in risky behavior, showcasing that problematic internet use is associated with reduced self-control for immediate rewards rather than long-term reward attainment.

Wilmer and Chein (2016) conducted a study on 91 undergraduates in "Mobile technology habits: patterns of association among device usage, intertemporal preference, impulse control, and reward sensitivity," suggesting that higher mobile usage is associated with poor

self-control and a preference for instant rewards, although there is no association between mobile usage and reward sensitivity.

Du et al. (2019) carried out a study on "Predictors of Social Media Self-Control failure: immediate gratifications, habitual checking, ubiquity, and notifications" with approximately 600 participants. By using hierarchical regression analysis, the study found that excessive notification checking and the ubiquity of being online significantly contribute to self-control failure in social media use; however, immediate gratification did not support this failure. The study suggests the need for improved self-control strategies.

Wegmann et al. (2020) carried out experimental research on "Interactions of impulsivity, general executive functions, and specific inhibitory control explain symptoms of social-networks-use disorder: An experimental study" among 1,112 participants, which found that increased attentional impulsivity, poor inhibitory management, and executive functions are strongly associated with symptoms of social-network-use disorder, which is similar to other behavioral addictions.

Błachnio et al. (2023) researched "Self-Control and Digital Media Addiction: The Mediating Role of Media Multitasking and Time Style" among 2,193 participants, highlighting that extreme usage of the internet, smartphones, and Facebook leads to poor self-control and addiction to digital media. Furthermore, individuals with poor time management skills are more likely to develop digital addiction.

Park (2024) undertook research on "Serial mediation effects of ubiquity and notification on the relationship between habitual social media checking behaviors and self-control failures" among 400 undergraduate students, which found that students who check their social media excessively find it difficult to control their impulses, and this association can be explained by the frequent availability of social media and the urge to instantly reply to notifications. Hence, it increases the risk of problematic usage of social media.

METHODOLOGY

Objectives

- To study the impact of Rapid Digital Media Consumption on Delayed Gratification.
- To study the impact of Rapid Digital Media Consumption on Impulsivity.

Hypothesis

- **H_1 -** Rapid digital media consumption will affect delayed gratification among young adults.
- **H_2 -** Rapid digital media consumption will affect impulsivity among young adults.

Research Design

SN.	Type of Variable (s)	Name of Variable (s)
1	**Independent**	Rapid Digital Media Consumption
2	**Dependent**	Delayed Gratification
		Impulsivity

A Descriptive Survey**.**

Participants

The research study includes the sample size of N = 200 participants, consisting of n1 = 100 males and n2 = 100 females. The age range of respondents is 18-25 years, with Ahmedabad, Gujarat, as the universe. The participants were selected by Snowball sampling of individuals from distinct backgrounds. The random selection procedure helps to minimize bias and ensure the generalizability of results to the broader population within this age group.

Tools Used

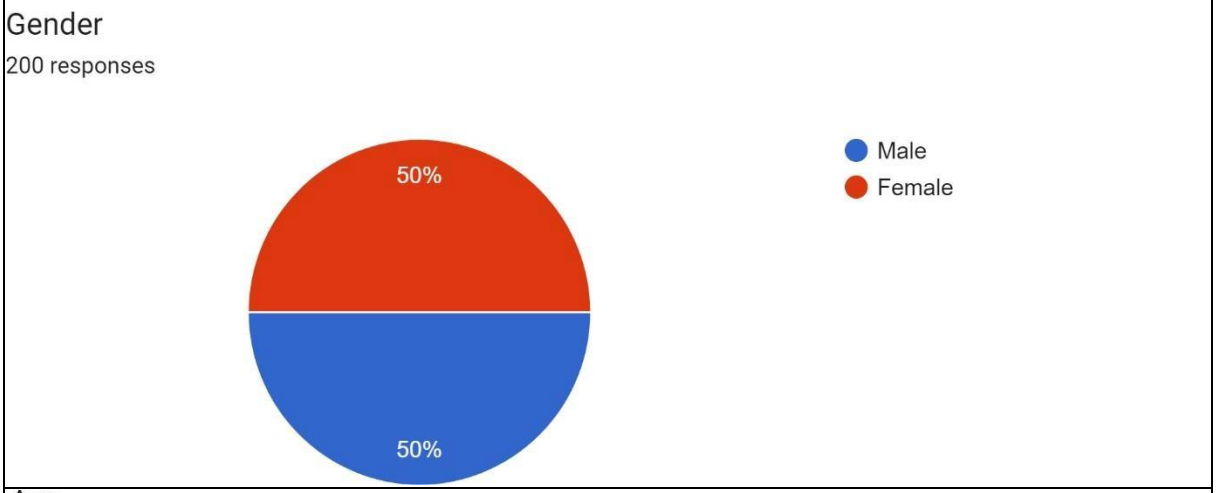
1. **Rapid Digital Media Consumption (RDMC) Scale –** The RDMC scale is a self-report questionnaire developed under the guidance of Dr. Shaili Misra to measure respondents' engagement in rapid digital media consumption. The scale consists of 25 items assessed in Yes/No format (Yes=1 and No=0). It is designed to assess various digital behaviors, including social media usage, content consumption speed, digital multitasking, and instant gratification behaviors related to digital platforms. Higher scores indicate greater engagement in rapid digital media consumption.
2. **Delayed Gratification Inventory (DGI) -** The Delayed Gratification Inventory is a psychological assessment tool developed by Hoerger et al. (2011). It is a self-report questionnaire consisting of 35 items on a Likert scale (Strongly Disagree=1, Somewhat Disagree=2, Neutral=3, Somewhat Agree=4, Strongly Agree=5). It is designed to measure an individual's ability to delay gratification. The sign (*) indicates that the item needs to be reverse scored such as 1=5, 2=4, 3=3, 4=2, and 5=1. Higher scores indicate a greater ability to delay gratification, whereas lower scores indicate difficulty in delaying gratification (poor self-control and preference for immediate rewards). The DGI has been utilized in various psychological studies, demonstrating high reliability and validity.
3. **UPPS-P Impulsive Behavior Scale –** The UPPS-P Impulsive Behavior Scale was developed by Whiteside and Lynam (2001) and was later expanded by Cyders et al. (2007) to include a fifth impulsivity factor. It is a self-report questionnaire consisting of 59 items on a Likert scale (Strongly Agree=1, Somewhat Agree=2, Somewhat Disagree=3, Strongly Disagree=4). The sign (R) indicates that the item needs to be reverse scored such as 1=4, 2=3, 3=2, and 4=1. Higher scores indicate greater impulsivity in that specific domain. The UPPS-P scale has been extensively used in research measuring impulsivity, suggesting high reliability and validity.

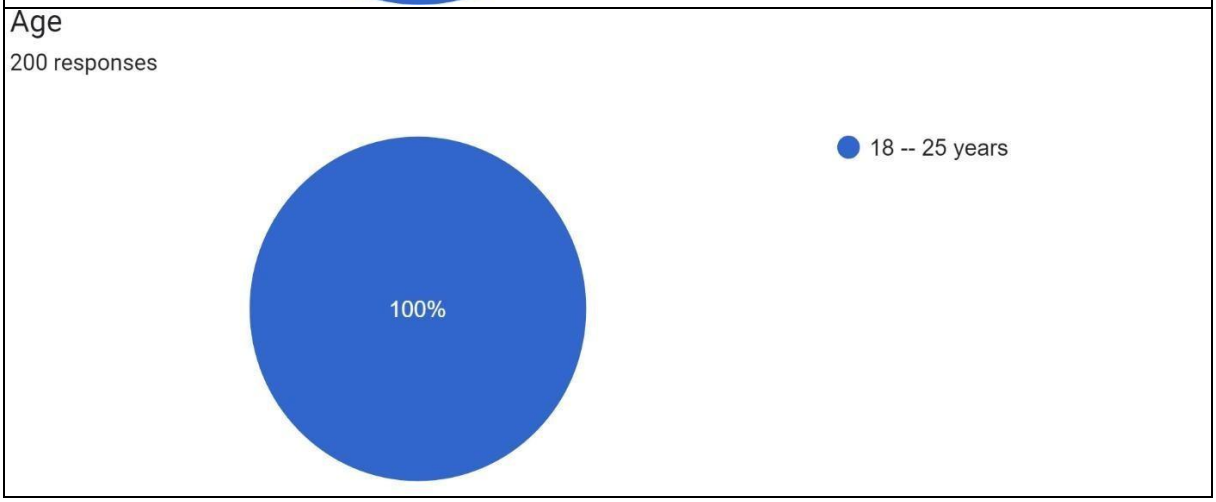
Procedure

To collect the data from participants, a Google Form was created consisting of a consent statement at the beginning before participants proceed to fill the form, informing them of the purpose of the study, ensuring confidentiality, voluntary engagement, and freedom to withdraw at any time. The form consists of participants' demographic details including age, gender, e-mail, followed by validated psychological self-report questionnaire scales - Delayed Gratification Inventory, UPPS-P Impulsive Behavior Scale, and Rapid Digital Media.

Table 1: Showing Respondents Sample Size, Age and Gender

N= 200 respondents		
Age	**Gender (%)**	
18-25 years	**Male (%)**	**Female (%)**
	50%	**50%**





Consumption Scale. After that, the Google Form was distributed through various digital platforms such as e-mail, official formal research groups, and social media to reach young adults from diverse backgrounds. Participants were encouraged to share the form within their networks to increase the reach. Follow-up reminders were sent periodically in order to maximize the response. Finally, the collected data will be analyzed to examine the correlation between rapid digital media consumption and delayed gratification and impulsivity among young adults.

Statistical Analysis

The statistical analysis applied for data analysis is correlation coefficient.

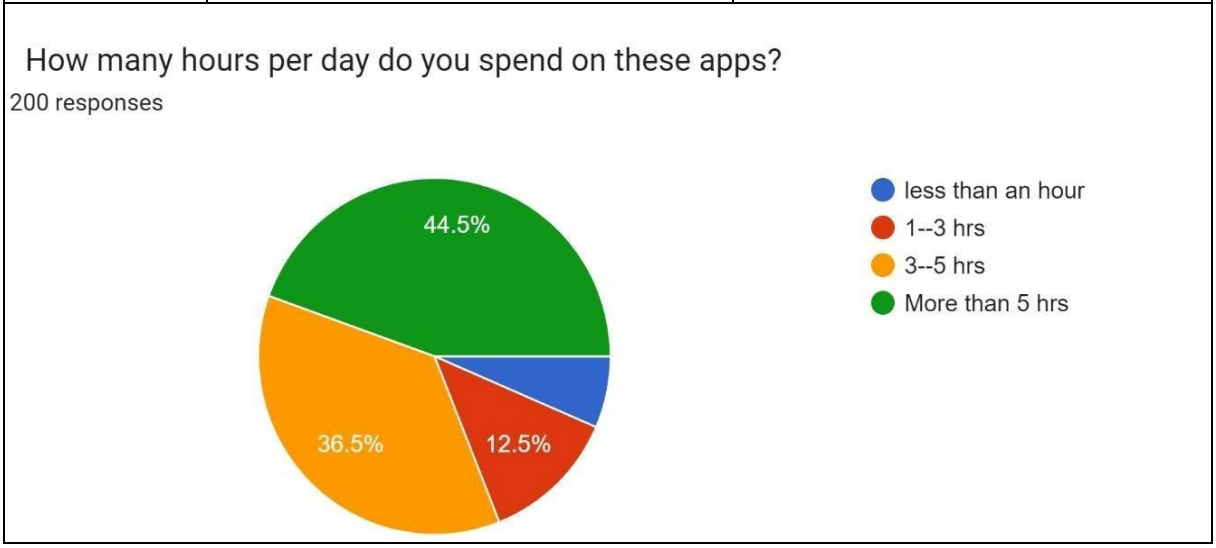
RESULTS

Table 1: Showing Respondents Sample Size, Age and Gender

The above table provides the basic information about individuals who took part in the research, consisting of 200 respondents between the ages of 18 and 25 years, and who were divided into 50% male and 50% female.

Table 2: Showing the responses of Hours spent on digital platforms among Young Adults each day.

Sr No.	Time Spent (in Hours)	Percentage (%)
1.	**More than 5 hours**	**44.5%**
2.	**3-5 hours**	**36.5%**
3.	**1-3 hours**	**12.5%**
4.	**Less than an hour**	**6.5%**



The above table shows the amount of time spent by young adults on digital platforms a day, from which the majority of them (44.5%) spend more than 5 hours on these platforms. A significant number of respondents (36.6%) spend between 3 and 5 hours. Several respondents (12.5%) spend between 1 and 3 hours. Only a few respondents (6.5%) use less than an hour a day. Hence, the overall result has shown how much individuals are deeply integrated into digital media platforms in the present time.

Table 3: Showing the habits of Rapid Digital Media Consumption among Young Adults

Sr no.	Questions	Yes	No
1.	I often use multiple apps and social media platforms for digital consumption of information, entertainment and services.	**64.5%**	35.5%
2.	I scroll endlessly through social media feeds.	**71.5%**	28.5%
3.	I often skip adds/intros/videos/songs after a few seconds.	**63.5%**	36.5%
4.	I binge-watch TV shows or videos with autoplay enabled.	**63.5%**	36.5%
5.	I regularly watch short-form videos over longer ones.	**65%**	35%
6.	I instantly click on eye catching thumbnails instead of reading titles or descriptions.	**64%**	36%

Sr no.	Questions	Yes	No
7.	I prefer watching or listening to shows and podcasts at 1.5X (or more) speed	**59.5%**	40.5%
8.	I often watch multiple status updates and stories of others on social media.	**61%**	39%
9.	I tend to keep track of likes, shares and comments of posts on social media.	**58.5%**	41.5%
10.	I often use instant messaging apps for quick responses.	**58.5%**	41.5%
11.	I constantly refresh my feed to check for new updates.	**63%**	37%
12.	I read micro news, blogs, clickbait articles and headlines instead of full or lengthy reports.	**64%**	36%
13.	I often use AI-generated responses for my work.	**64%**	36%
14.	I often use voice assistant tools instead of typing or manually searching information.	**62%**	38%
15.	I use online dating platforms for instant swipe matches & exploring multiple choices.	**63.5%**	36.5%
16.	I frequently scroll through e-commerce apps to gather product information, keep track of flash sales and limited time offers.	**61.5%**	38.5%
17.	I frequently make one click purchases on online shopping platforms.	**61.5%**	38.5%
18.	I frequently make UPItransactions for quick payments.	**62.5%**	37.5%
19.	I often engage in online gaming /betting and gambling.	**65.5%**	34.5%
20.	I use instant search engines like google multiple times a day.	**67%**	33%
21.	I frequently check notifications while doing other tasks.	**66.5%**	33.5%
22.	I prefer to use voice calls instead of reading long messages.	**63%**	37%
23.	I regularly order food and groceries online for instant delivery.	**63%**	37%
24.	I often rely on navigation devices like Google Maps to find routes.	**63.5%**	36.5%
25.	I often book rides instead of using public transport, walking or planning the travel in advance.	**63.5%**	36.5%

The table shows that the majority of young adults engage heavily in rapid digital media consumption habits. More than 60% of respondents multitask across multiple platforms, binge-watch, prefer short-form content, and frequently refresh feeds or check notifications. This indicates a strong inclination towards instant gratification, speed-based media interaction, and continuous online engagement among young adults.

Table 4: Showing the responses of Delayed Gratification among Young Adults

Sr no.	Questions	Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neutral	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree
1.	I can resist junk food when I want to.	**36.5%**	12.5%	13.5%	24%	13.5%
2.	I am able to control my physical desires.	**36%**	22.5%	19%	16%	6.5%
3.	I hate having to take turns with other people. *	**22.5%**	7.5%	11%	17%	42%
4.	When I am able to, I try to save away a little money in case an emergency should arise.	**34%**	20%	22%	11%	13%
5.	I worked hard in school to improve myself as a person.	**34%**	17%	25%	13.5%	10.5%
6.	I would have a hard time sticking with a special, healthy diet. *	**21%**	9%	15.5%	17.5%	37%
7.	I like to get to know someone before having a physical relationship.	**24%**	37.5%	17%	12.5%	9%
8.	Usually, I try to consider how my actions affect others.	**31%**	17.5%	23%	16.5%	12%
9.	It is hard for me to resist buying things I cannot afford. *	**22%**	8.5%	16%	16.5%	37%
10.	I have tried to work hard in school so that I could have a better future.	**31.5%**	20.5%	20%	16.5%	11.5%
11.	If my favorite food were in front of me, I would have a difficult time waiting to eat it. *	16%	10.5%	19%	17.5%	**37%**
12.	My habit of focusing on what "feels good" has cost me in the long run. *	**29.5%**	14.5%	25%	22%	9%
13.	I think that helping each other benefits society.	**30.5%**	16%	25%	19%	9.5%
14.	I try to spend my money wisely.	**28.5%**	16.5%	24%	21.5%	9.5%
15.	In school, I tried to take the easy way out*.	6.5%	13%	24.5%	21%	**35%**
16.	It is easy for me to resist candy and bowls of snack foods.	**29%**	17.5%	25.5%	20.5%	7.5%
17.	I have given up physical pleasure or comfort to reach my goals.	**30.5%**	20%	25.5%	17.5%	6.5%
18.	I try to consider how my actions will affect other people in the long-term.	**27.5%**	22.5%	25.5%	18.5%	6%
19.	I cannot be trusted with money. *	8.5%	18.5%	**24.5%**	**24.5%**	24%

Sr no.	Questions	Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neutral	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree
20.	I am capable of working hard toget ahead in life.	**29.5%**	20%	24.5%	17.5%	8.5%
21.	Sometimes I eat until I make myself sick. *	10%	16%	**26%**	22.5%	25.5%
21.	Sometimes I eat until I make myself sick. *	10%	16%	**26%**	22.5%	25.5%
22.	I prefer to explore the physical side of romantic involvements right away. *	8%	18%	24%	20.5%	**29.5%**
23.	I do not consider how my behavior affects other people. *	7%	18.5%	25.5%	22%	**27%**
24.	When someone gives me money, I prefer to spend it right away. *	9.5%	16.5%	23%	22.5%	**28.5%**
25.	I cannot motivate myself to accomplish long-term goals. *	8.5%	22.5%	20.5%	21%	**27.5%**
26.	I have always tried to eat healthy because it pays off in the long run.	**29%**	23.5%	23.5%	19%	5%
27.	When faced with a physically demanding chore, I always tried to put off doing it. *	11.5%	21.5%	**24.5%**	20.5%	22%
28.	I value the needs of other people around me.	**30.5%**	22%	20.5%	11.5%	15.5%
29.	I manage my money well.	**31.5%**	21.5%	19.5%	13%	14.5%
30.	I have always felt like my hard work would pay off in the end.	**31.5%**	21%	21%	13.5%	13%
31.	Even if I am hungry, I can wait until it is meal time before eating something.	**31%**	20%	21%	13%	15%
32.	I have lied or made excuses in order to go do something more pleasurable. *	11%	16.5%	23.5%	**24.5%**	**24.5%**
33.	There is no point in considering how my decisions affect other people. *	10%	18%	22.5%	**25.5%**	24%
34.	I enjoy spending money the moment I get it. *	12%	15%	23%	23%	**27%**
35.	I would rather take the easy road in life than get ahead. *	14.5%	15%	21.5%	20%	**29%**

The above table suggests that young adults show moderate levels of delayed gratification. While a portion demonstrates self-control in areas like saving money and resisting temptations, many responses reflect impulsivity—such as difficulty resisting food, instant spending, or preferring immediate pleasure—indicating a mixed tendency toward short-term rewards over long-term goals.

Table 5: Showing the responses of UPPS-P Impulsive Behavior Scale among Young Adults

Sr no.	Questions	Strongly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Somewhat Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1.	I have a reserved and cautious attitude toward life.	24.5%	20%	19.5%	**36%**
2.	I have trouble controlling my impulses. *	**35.5%**	21.5%	23%	20%
3.	I generally seek new and exciting experiences and sensations. *	**24.5%**	22%	22%	21.5%
4.	I generally like to see things through to the end.	**32.5%**	24.5%	23%	20%
5.	When I am very happy, I can't seem to stop myself from doing things that can have bad consequences. *	**33.5%**	23%	22%	21.5%
6.	My thinking is usually careful and purposeful.	12%	19%	25%	**44%**
7.	I have trouble resisting my cravings (for food, cigarettes, etc.) *	**36%**	25%	18.5%	20.5%
8.	I'll try anything once. *	**37%**	21.5%	22.5%	19%
9.	I tend to give up easily. *	**36.5%**	23.5%	20.5%	19.5%
10.	When I am in great mood, I tend to get into situations that could cause me problems. *	**35.5%**	22.5%	19.5%	22.5%
11.	I am not one of those people who blurt out things without thinking.	9%	26.5%	20%	**44.5%**
12.	I often get involved in things I later wish I could get out of. *	22%	**25%**	19%	23%
13.	I like sports and games in which you have to choose your next move very quickly. *	**34%**	21%	22.5%	22.5%
14.	Unfinished tasks really bother me.	12.5%	21.5%	22%	**44%**
15.	When I am very happy, I tend to do things that may cause problems in my life. *	**32.5%**	22.5%	21%	24%
16.	I like to stop and think things over before I do them.	13%	22%	21%	**44%**
17.	When I feel bad, I will often do things I later regret in order to make myself feel better now. *	**34.5%**	24%	19.5%	22%
18.	I would enjoy water skiing. *	**36.5%**	23%	18%	22.5%
19.	Once I get going on something I hate to stop.	**31.5%**	29%	16.5%	23%
20.	I tend to lose control when I am in a great mood. *	**33.5%**	23.5%	20%	23%
21.	I don't like to start a project until I know exactly how to proceed	**33.5%**	25.5%	19.5%	21.5%
22.	Sometimes when I feel bad, I can't seem to stop what I am doing even though it is making me feel worse. *	**35.5%**	26%	17%	21.5%

Sr no.	Questions	Strongly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Somewhat Disagree	Strongly Disagree
23.	I quite enjoy taking risks. *	**31.5%**	23%	20%	25.5%
24.	I concentrate easily.	13%	24%	23.5%	**39.5%**
25.	When I am really ecstatic, I tend to get out of control. *	**36%**	24%	18.5%	21.5%
26.	I would enjoy parachute jumping. *	**33.5%**	22%	23%	21.5%
27.	I finish what I start.	13.5%	21%	22%	**43.5%**
28.	I tend to value and follow a rational, "sensible" approach to things.	15%	27.5%	18%	**39.5%**
29.	When I am upset, I often act without thinking. *	**29%**	25%	21.5%	24.5%
30.	Others would say I make bad choices when I am extremely happy about something. *	**30%**	27.5%	20.5%	22%
31.	I welcome new and exciting experiences and sensations, even if they are a little frightening and unconventional. *	**32%**	27.5%	20.5%	20%
32.	I am able to pace myself so as to get things done on time.	27%	**28.5%**	25.5%	19%
33.	I usually make up my mind through careful reasoning.	14%	24%	**41.5%**	20.5%
34.	When I feel rejected, I will often say things that I later regret. *	**33%**	22%	20%	25%
35.	Others are shocked or worried about the things I do when I am feeling very excited. *	27%	**30%**	20.5%	22.5%
36.	I would like to learn to fly an airplane. *	20%	**38%**	21.5%	20.5%
37.	I am a person who always gets the job done.	24.5%	25.5%	**27%**	23%
38.	I am a cautious person.	15%	23%	25.5%	**36.5%**
39.	It is hard for me to resist acting on my feelings. *	**33%**	24.5%	19%	23.5%
40.	When I get really happy about something, I tend to do things that can have bad consequences. *	**31%**	24.5%	22.5%	22%
41.	I sometimes like doing things that are a bit frightening. *	**31%**	23%	22%	24%
42.	I almost always finish projects that I start.	19%	18.5%	28.5%	**34%**
43.	Before I get into a new situation, I like to find out what to expect from it.	**31.5%**	25%	19.5%	24%
44.	I often make matters worse because I act without thinking when I am upset. *	**30.5%**	27%	23%	19.5%
45.	When overjoyed, I feel like I can't stop myself from going overboard. *	**33.5%**	24.5%	23%	19%
46.	I would enjoy the sensation of skiing very fast down a high mountain slope. *	**33.5%**	24.5%	18%	24%

Sr no.	Questions	Strongly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Somewhat Disagree	Strongly Disagree
47.	Sometimes there are so many little things to be done that I just ignore them all. *	**34%**	24%	18%	24%
48.	I usually think carefully before doing anything.	19%	21%	26%	**34%**
49.	When I am really excited, I tend not to think of the consequences of my actions. *	**32%**	21%	22.5%	24.5%
50.	In the heat of an argument, I will often say things that I later regret. *	31%	27%	**34.5%**	22.5%
51.	I would like to go scuba diving. *	**30%**	27.5%	18.5%	24%
52.	I tend to act without thinking when I am really excited. *	**30.5%**	26%	18.5%	25%
53.	I always keep my feelings under control.	12.5%	20%	26.5%	**41%**
54.	When I am really happy, I often find myself in situations that I normally wouldn't be comfortable with. *	11%	19%	29%	**41%**
55.	Before making up my mind, I consider all the advantages and disadvantages.	12%	17%	28%	**43%**
56.	I would enjoy fast driving. *	**36%**	18.5%	23.5%	22%
57.	When I am very happy, I feel like it is ok to give in to cravings or overindulge. *	**37.5%**	21%	22.5%	19%
58.	Sometimes I do impulsive things that I later regret. *	**38.5%**	21.5%	22%	18%
59.	I am surprised at the things I do while in a great mood. *	**37%**	24.5%	19.5%	19%

Table 5 depicts high levels of impulsivity in young adults, with many agreeing to engage in risky, spontaneous, or emotionally driven behaviors. A significant proportion of young adults reported challenges with impulse control and acting without thinking in the face of excitement or upset; it reflects a strong tendency toward sensation-seeking and poor self-regulation.

Table 6: Showing the Correlational Coefficient Results of RDMC, Delayed Gratification and Impulsivity

Sr no.	Variables	r-value
1.	RDMC and Delayed Gratification	**0.30**
2.	RDMC and Impulsivity	**-0.29**

The above results show a low positive correlation between Rapid Digital Media Consumption (RDMC) and delayed gratification (r = 0.30), and a low negative correlation between RDMC and impulsivity (r = –0.29).

DISCUSSION

The current study aimed to investigate the impact of rapid digital media consumption on delayed gratification and impulsivity among young adults. The results indicated a low positive correlation (r = 0.30) between rapid digital media consumption and lower levels of delayed gratification and a low negative correlation (r = -0.29) between rapid digital media

consumption and impulsivity. These findings provide significant insights into how pervasive and fast-paced digital environments are shaping young adults' behavioral tendencies.

The positive correlation between rapid digital media consumption and reduced ability to delay gratification (r = 0.30) implies that individuals who consume frequent amounts of fast-paced digital media, including short-form videos, curated feeds, and instant messaging services, are inclined to seek immediate gratification rather than long-term rewards. This aligns with the existing literature, which suggests that digital platforms provide individuals with immediate reinforcement and satisfaction as stimuli, which can condition users to anticipate immediate outcomes and thereby potentially inhibit the acquisition or maintenance of self-regulation skills (Wilmer & Chein, 2016). Additionally, the constant availability of stimulating digital stimuli may reduce patience practice and long-term goal thinking, both of which are core aspects of delayed gratification. Hence, hypothesis 1 is proved.

Conversely, the observed negative correlation between rapid digital media consumption and impulsivity (r = -0.29) is somewhat incoherent and needs further exploration. While prior research has often linked higher digital media usage with increased impulsivity (Cain & Mitroff, 2011), one plausible explanation is that young adults who consume digital content rapidly may also develop certain cognitive adaptations, such as improved multitasking skills and enhanced responsiveness, which may temporarily mitigate impulsive behaviors in structured contexts. It is also possible that individuals with lower impulsivity are more capable of engaging with digital content in a focused, intentional manner, thus consuming it more rapidly without necessarily falling into dysregulated usage patterns. Hence, hypothesis 2 is rejected.

Another consideration is the methodology of impulsivity assessment in the present study. The use of a self-report questionnaire may be the cause of the weak negative connection between impulsivity and rapid digital media consumption. Participants with inherently high impulsivity may have hurried through the questionnaire without giving it enough thought. Hence, their accuracy would thus be diminished. Thus, inconsistencies or underreporting of impulsive behaviors may occur from this hurried completion, which would distort the results and lessen the anticipated favorable association. Because of the participants' own impulsive inclinations throughout the evaluation process, the statistics might not accurately reflect the true impact of rapid digital use on impulsivity. Patton et al. (1995) emphasized that impulsivity is multi-faceted and context-dependent; therefore, a purely self-report approach may not capture situational impulsivity triggered by digital stimuli. It is also possible that participants may have perceived their rapid digital media consumption not as impulsive, but as a normative and integrated part of their everyday lives. As Rodríguez-Ruiz et al. (2024) suggested, technological adaptation has blurred traditional boundaries of self-control, suggesting a redefinition of impulsivity in digital contexts. As such, these observations could imply a new perspective on how impulsivity is perceived or experienced among digital-native cohorts.

The recent findings further align with the Reward System Theory, which postulates that repeated exposure to immediate digital feedback strengthens the nucleus accumbens' dopamine response while weakening the prefrontal cortex's inhibitory function (Ostlund, Winterbauer, & Balleine, 2008). This neurobiological imbalance has resulted in a reduced ability to delay gratification without necessarily adding to impulsive behavior tendencies

among young adults. Collectively, the observed correlations support the theoretical knowledge that digital environments are actively shaping cognitive and behavioral tendencies among young adults.

Recommendations for Future work

- Develop educational programs for schools and colleges to promote positive digital habits and responsible media use.
- Incorporate workshops on mindfulness and impulse control to provide skills that teach young adults to resist immediate rewards.
- Motivate caregivers and educators to develop balanced screen time routines and encourage offline participation in activities.
- Developers should build algorithms that encourage longer attention spans and deeper interaction on social media.
- Public health policies ought to incorporate psychological knowledge of excessive digital use and its cognitive impact.
- Prospective studies could also be longitudinal and cross-cultural studies to determine causal associations and neuropsychological mechanisms of RDMC.
- Digital detox behaviors and cognitive-behavioral methods can be integrated into counseling/therapeutic settings for individuals with heavy internet usage.
- Develop community-based awareness campaigns to stress the need for delayed gratification for long-term wellness.

CONCLUSION

The current study emphasized the significant impact of rapid digital media consumption in delaying gratification and also showed the inconsistent and multifactorial relationship of it with impulsivity levels among young adults. Researchers found that regular exposure to rapid and algorithm-directed digital content diminishes an individual's ability to delay gratification, indicating a greater desire for instant rewards than long-term outcomes. This evidence suggests that the rapid feedback loops and dopamine-driven gratification on online digital platforms may predispose our brains to seek immediate pleasure, resulting in poor self-regulation. However, the low negative association between rapid digital media use and impulsivity suggests that not all rapid consumers engage in impulsive behavior; some may possess "adaptive" cognitive control to self-regulate digital involvement with intention. The findings clearly highlight the complex role of digital media in developing moderating factors in self–control mechanisms, emphasizing the need to promote media mindfulness, self-regulatory behavior, and digital literacy in young people. Longitudinal and experimental explorations of these associations are required to identify causal pathways and interventions designed to promote healthy, nuanced media use.

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Conflict of Interest

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