



From Entertainment to Addiction: An Analytical Study of Short-Form Video Usage and Its Academic and Psychological Impact on Students

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Abstract

Short-form video platforms have emerged as one of the most rapidly adopted digital media formats among college-going populations, fundamentally altering how young people allocate their leisure and study time. Platforms such as Instagram Reels and YouTube Shorts deliver algorithm-driven, bite-sized content that is designed to maximise viewer retention, raising concerns about compulsive usage and its downstream effects on academic life. This study investigates the consumption patterns of short-form video content among higher education students in Karnataka, India, and evaluates the extent to which such usage influences their concentration, study time, and overall academic engagement. A quantitative, survey-based design was adopted; data were collected via a structured Google Forms questionnaire distributed across multiple institutions, yielding 254 valid responses after data cleaning. Frequency distributions and graphical techniques were used to identify behavioural trends. The findings reveal that a majority of respondents devote one to two hours daily to short-form video consumption, with nearly 70% reporting that they periodically or frequently lose track of time on these platforms. A notable proportion acknowledged diminished concentration during study sessions and a reduction in productive study hours attributable to habitual platform use. Students themselves largely recognised the addictive potential of these applications. Taken together, the results point to a need for intentional digital self-regulation strategies among students to safeguard academic performance.

Keywords: Academic performance; India; Short-form videos; Social media usage; Student behaviour.

1. Introduction

The proliferation of smartphones and affordable mobile internet has made short-form video platforms accessible to virtually every segment of the student population. Applications such as Instagram Reels and YouTube Shorts have capitalised on this accessibility by offering an endless stream of brief, visually stimulating clips that require minimal cognitive effort to consume. While these platforms offer genuine benefits — enabling creative expression, peer connection, and rapid information access — their design deliberately exploits reward-driven neural pathways, making it difficult for users to disengage voluntarily. For students, who already navigate competing demands on their attention, this creates a particularly acute tension between recreational screen use and the sustained focus that academic work demands. The present study is motivated by the need

to quantify this tension within the Indian higher education context, where smartphone penetration has grown sharply but empirical data on its academic consequences remain limited. Specifically, this investigation maps the daily screen time that students devote to short-form video content, the degree to which platform engagement disrupts awareness of time passing, and the self-reported impact on concentration and study duration. By combining structured survey data with descriptive statistical analysis, the study aims to generate evidence that can inform institutional policies and individual habits around responsible digital media use among college students.[1]

1.1. Background and Context

Research has established that excessive engagement with short-form video platforms is associated with



adverse psychological outcomes among students, including elevated stress, heightened anxiety, and impaired attentional capacity (Nguyen et al., 2025; Li et al., 2024). Interventions centred on mindfulness and self-regulation have shown promise in mitigating compulsive usage patterns (Li et al., 2024). Investigating these behavioural tendencies through structured survey instruments and quantitative analysis provides a systematic basis for understanding how algorithmic content delivery shapes students' academic routines and digital habits (Xie et al., 2023; Haliti-Sylaj & Sadiku, 2024).

1.2. Research Gap and Contribution

Although international scholarship has begun documenting the cognitive and psychological risks of short-form video addiction, survey-driven investigations situated within Indian undergraduate settings remain scarce. Most prior work has focused on general social media use rather than isolating the distinctive features of short-form platforms — namely their algorithmically infinite scroll and sub-minute content format — that make them especially disruptive to sustained study. This study addresses that gap by concentrating specifically on short-form video behaviour, measuring concrete academic indicators such as self-reported study time reduction and concentration loss, and contextualizing the findings within a population of MCA students in Karnataka.

2. Literature Review

A growing body of scholarship highlights the detrimental relationship between heavy social media consumption and students' academic outcomes. Li et al. (2024) found that short-form video app addiction significantly elevated academic anxiety while simultaneously reducing students' engagement with their studies, with mindfulness identified as a key mediating factor [5]. These findings underscore how compulsive platform usage erodes the cognitive resources students need for sustained academic work, ultimately disrupting both time management and learning motivation. A large-scale meta-analysis by Nguyen et al. (2025) examined the cognitive and mental health consequences of short-form video consumption across multiple studies. This may result

in increased procrastination and reduced attention towards academic work [2]. Their review confirmed that repeated exposure to algorithmically curated content fosters compulsive checking behaviours and procrastination tendencies, patterns that frequently disrupt structured study routines and erode students' capacity for deep, focused learning. Xie et al. (2023) investigated the pathway from short-form video addiction to academic procrastination among undergraduates, revealing that impaired attentional control serves as a key mechanism linking excessive platform use to avoidance of academic tasks [3]. Their moderated mediation model demonstrated that students with greater difficulty regulating attention were substantially more susceptible to procrastination when exposed to high volumes of short-form content, with boredom proneness amplifying this vulnerability. Haliti-Sylaj and Sadiku (2024) examined the impact of short video reels specifically on undergraduate students' attention span and academic achievement, finding that frequent exposure was correlated with reduced capacity for sustained concentration during academic tasks [4]. Their quantitative study highlighted that students who consumed higher volumes of reels demonstrated measurably lower engagement in learning activities, pointing to a cognitive cost associated with habitual short-form video use. Collectively, these studies establish a well-evidenced basis for examining how short-form video consumption patterns translate into measurable changes in students' academic behaviour, motivation, and daily study routines — a gap this survey-based investigation aims to address within an Indian higher education context.

3. Research Objectives

- To analyse the usage patterns of short-form video platforms among students.
- To determine the average amount of time students spend watching short-form video content.
- To examine the impact of short-form video usage on students' concentration during academic activities.

- To investigate whether students tend to lose track of time while watching short-form videos.
- To evaluate students' perceptions regarding the potential addictive nature of short-form video platforms.
- To understand the possible influence of short-form video consumption on students' study habits and academic performance.
- To analyse the extent to which short-form video consumption contributes to distraction among students during their academic activities.

4. Method

This study follows a quantitative research approach to examine the usage patterns of short-form video platforms among students and to examine their potential impact on academic activities. A survey method was used to gather primary data from student respondents. The research was carried out through a systematic sequence of steps, including problem identification, questionnaire design, data collection, data preparation, and data analysis. The research methodology flowchart, presented in Figure 1, illustrates the sequence of steps used to conduct the study. The primary data were collected using a structured questionnaire developed through Google Forms. The questionnaire included multiple-choice questions aimed at understanding students' usage behaviour of short-form video platforms. It included aspects such as commonly used platforms, average time spent watching videos, preferred viewing time, along with its impact on students' concentration, study habits, and academic performance. The survey was distributed through online platforms and social networks to reach a diverse group of students. A total of 255 responses were initially collected from students across various higher educational institutions. During the data preparation stage, the responses were carefully examined, and duplicate entries were removed to ensure accuracy. After data cleaning, 254 valid responses were retained for the final analysis. The data was analysed using percentage methods along with graphical

representation techniques. Graphical tools like pie charts and bar graphs were used to present the data and identify patterns in students' short-form video usage behaviour. The analysis revealed key trends related to screen time, loss of time awareness, concentration levels during study, and students' perceptions of the addictive nature of short-form video platforms. [6] These findings provide meaningful insights into how short-form video consumption may influence students' academic behaviour and daily study routines. As Shown in Figure 1.



Figure 1 Research Methodology Flowchart

5. Results and Discussion

5.1. Age Distribution

The age distribution of respondents shows that most participants belong to the 20–22 age group, which represents the majority of college students. A smaller percentage of respondents fall within the 17–19 and 23–25 age groups, while very few are over 25 years

old. As Shown in Figure 2.

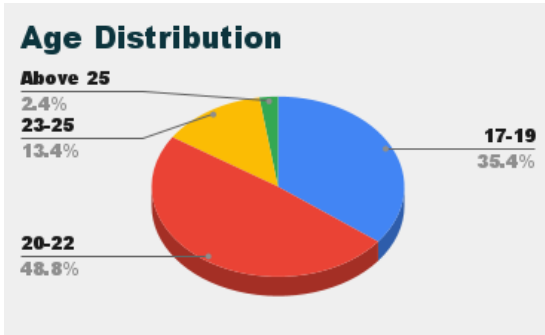


Figure 1 Age Distribution of Respondents

Interpretation: This result shows that the survey mainly represents students in the typical college-going age group. Therefore, the findings of the study reflect the behaviour and habits of young adults who are actively engaged in social media usage.

5.2. Gender Distribution

The gender distribution shows participation from both male and female students, providing a balanced representation of respondents. This helps ensure that the study reflects general student behaviour regarding short-form video usage. As Shown in Figure 2.

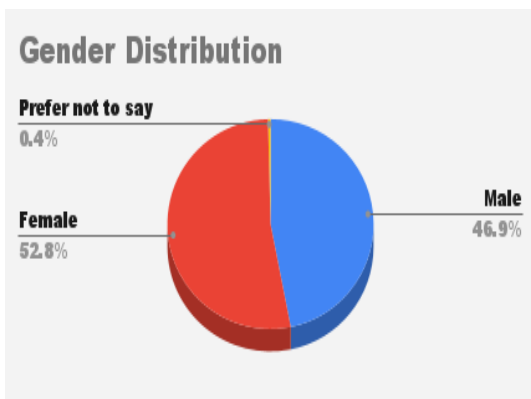


Figure 2 Gender Distribution of Respondents

Interpretation: The presence of respondents from both genders improves the reliability of the study and helps analyse short-form video usage patterns across different student groups.

5.3. Platform Popularity

The survey results indicate that Instagram Reels is the

most widely used short-form video platform among students, followed by YouTube Shorts and other platforms. This suggests that Instagram plays a major role in short-form video consumption among the student population. As Shown in Figure 3.

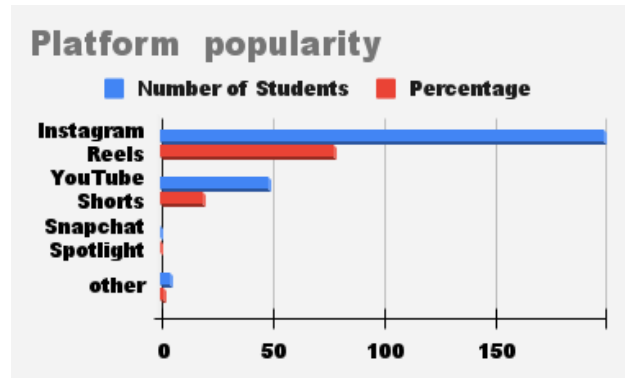


Figure 3 Most Used Short-Form Video Platform Among Students

Interpretation: This finding highlights the strong influence of Instagram in shaping students' online entertainment habits and shows that it is the preferred platform for short-form video content.

5.4. Screen Time Usage

The analysis of daily screen time shows that many students spend 1–2 hours per day watching short-form videos, while some students spend even more time on these platforms. This shows that short-form video content occupies a noticeable portion of students' daily activities. As Shown in Figure 4.

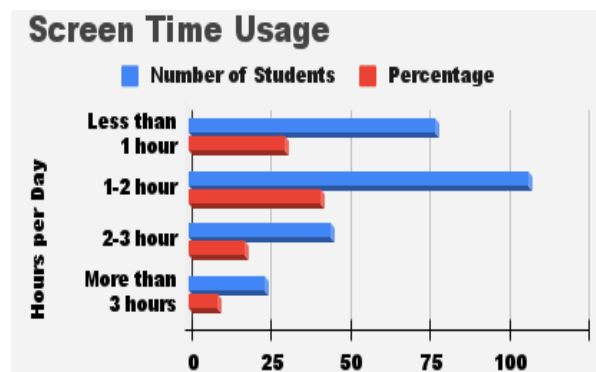


Figure 4 Daily Screen Time Spent Watching Short-Form Videos

Interpretation: The results imply that students dedicate a significant amount of their daily time to consuming short-form video content, which may influence their productivity and time management.

5.5. Loss of Time Awareness

The results reveal that 39.8% of respondents sometimes lose track of time, while 30.7% frequently experience this behaviour while watching short-form videos. This suggests that short-form video content is highly engaging and may lead to extended viewing durations. As Shown in Figure 5.

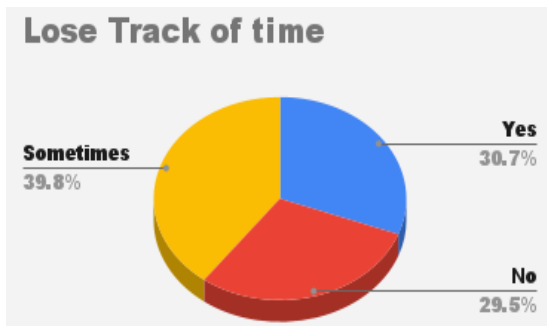


Figure 5 Loss of Time Awareness While Watching Short-Form Videos

Interpretation: This shows that many students become deeply engaged in short-form video platforms, which can lead to unintended prolonged usage.

5.6. Impact on Concentration

The findings show that a considerable number of students believe that short-form video usage affects their concentration while studying, while some respondents reported only occasional effects. As Shown in Figure 6

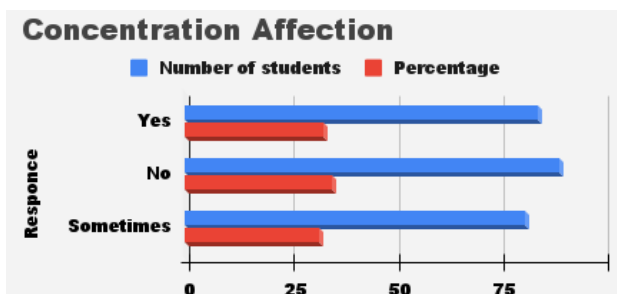


Figure 6 Impact of Short-Form Videos on Students' Concentration

Interpretation: This implies that frequent exposure to short-form videos may reduce students' ability to maintain focus during academic activities.

5.7. Study Time Reduction

The survey responses suggest that some students feel that their study time has reduced due to frequent watching of short-form videos, while others reported no significant change. As Shown in Figure 7.

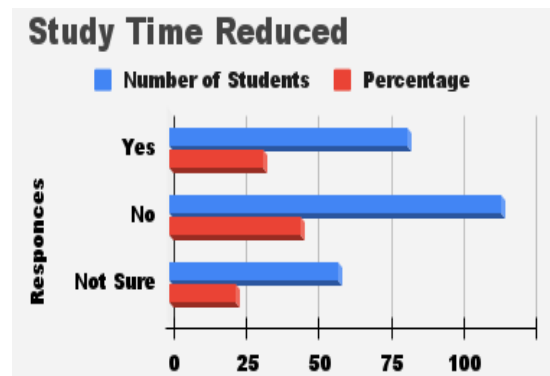


Figure 7 Reduction in Study Time Due to Short-Form Video Usage

Interpretation: This shows that excessive consumption of short-form videos may interfere with effective time management and academic priorities for some students.

5.8. Perception of Addiction

The results show that many students believe that excessive usage of short-form video platforms can lead to addictive behaviour. This perception reflects students' awareness of the potential negative effects associated with prolonged engagement with such content. As shown in Figure 8.

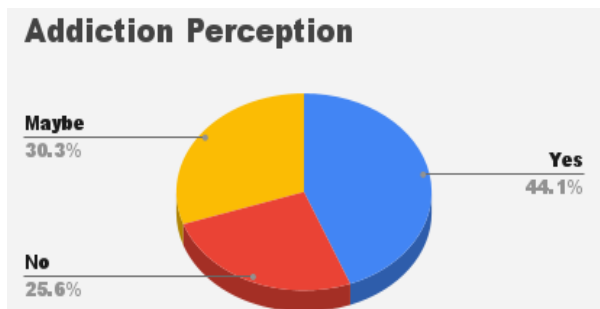


Figure 8 Students' Perception of Short-Form Video Addiction



Interpretation: This highlights that students themselves recognise the addictive nature of short-form video platforms and the possible impact on their daily routines and academic performance.

Conclusion

This investigation set out to assess the relationship between short-form video consumption and the academic behaviour of higher education students, with particular attention to screen time, time-awareness loss, concentration, and study duration. The survey data drawn from 254 respondents across Karnataka institutions paint a consistent picture: short-form video platforms have embedded themselves deeply into students' daily schedules, and for a substantial portion of that population, usage has crossed into territory that actively competes with academic priorities. Instagram Reels emerged as the dominant platform in this sample, with daily viewing times clustering in the one-to-two-hour range — a figure that represents a non-trivial portion of a student's available study window. The time-awareness findings are particularly telling: nearly 70% of respondents acknowledged losing track of how long they had been scrolling, which points to the effectiveness of algorithmic design in suppressing users' metacognitive monitoring of their own behaviour. Reduced attentional capacity during study sessions and shrinking effective study time were both widely reported, aligning with the broader literature on how compulsive digital media consumption depletes the cognitive resources needed for deep learning. Critically, students themselves expressed awareness of the addictive potential of these platforms, suggesting that the barrier is not ignorance of risk but rather an insufficient repertoire of self-regulation strategies to counteract it. In aggregate, the evidence supports the view that short-form video platforms, while valuable for entertainment and informal learning, carry measurable academic costs when consumed without deliberate limits. Institutions and educators would benefit from integrating digital literacy and self-regulation training into curricula, equipping students with practical tools — such as screen-time scheduling and

notification management — to bring their platform use under conscious control. Future research should extend this work through longitudinal designs and objective usage metrics to establish causal relationships between short-form video consumption and academic outcomes across diverse student demographics.

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