

SOCIAL MEDIA AND STUDENT FOCUS: UNPACKING THE
ATTENTION SPAN DEBATE IN EDUCATION

Research
Paper

ABSTRACT

The objective of the study was to evaluate the effect of social media on the attention span of three hundred students from a high school. According to the Social Media Attention Span Toolkit (SMASAT) findings, children's attention span and social media activities do not necessarily correlate with each other, independent of their sibling status, personal device access, parental academic qualification and Student's academic performance. Such findings negate previous hypotheses concerning social media use and attention span within learning contexts.

Keywords : Educational development, online platforms, psychological factors, attention span and educational experiences.

Introduction

The virtue of the people of the society was promoted by culture. Education creates a culture of civilisation; it creates civilised people. It helps a person gain knowledge, skills, and a positive mindset. It takes a balance of moral, social, mental and physical skills to be cultivated among students. Both education and technology have a significant impact; education with its STEAM courses, digital and virtual learning, and technology is meant to show students that they are prepared for a successful future in a global economy.

In the contemporary classroom, educational videos encourage student engagement, cognitive efficiency, and active learning. With this blend of conventional teaching and digital tools (podcasts, eBooks, apps, and videos that make the curriculum easier and more interesting), students appreciate learning with blended learning modes. Not just that, it also pushes messages and engagement. The increasing availability and low cost of the Internet facilitate the intermingling of conventional and digital teaching methods.

It also offers open access to teaching materials and allows learning spaces in which students can choose their own way. Instructional videos simplify complex concepts, increase sensory engagement, increase retention, and are readily available. They increase engagement and support distance and blended learning. Greater access to online courses, staff development, and communication benefit institutions. Good videos should be short, animated, with a

good content load, and interactive. They should also use signalling, segmenting, weeding, and matching modalities to optimise learning.

Need and importance of the study

It is highly imperative to investigate how technology influences memory, motivation, and attention, as it has revolutionised the method of imparting knowledge. Transformation of the traditional modes of education ensued since digitalisation became prevalent, which allowed for new forms of student motivation. The ability for attention, which is the core of learning, varies from person to person with age, experience, and interest. Nowadays, educational social networking sites with instructional films and other resources, such as Google Drive or YouTube, are the most fundamental part of the system. However, kids may suffer from the continuous barrage of information and interaction that shortens their attention span. As a result, a close parallel exists between the fast-paced, disaggregated nature of such films and the learners' shrinkage and/ or prolonged interest. Knowledge about the outcomes of social media usage is essential for teachers to make the consequences of

Dr. P. Subramanian

Assistant Professor, Department of Educational Planning and Administration, Tamil Nadu Teachers Education University, Chennai, Tamil Nadu, India.

Rathish M.

M.Ed. Student, Tamil Nadu Teachers Education University, Chennai, Tamil Nadu, India.

different resources' digitalisation relevant to them. Thus, practical application leads to a sound curriculum that classifies these technologies' usefulness and harmfulness.

Objectives of the study

To find out the level of impact of social media on the attention span of higher secondary school students with respect to sibling status, personal device access, parental academic qualification and Student's academic performance.

To find out the significant difference, if any, in the impact of social media on the attention span of higher secondary school students with respect to their sibling status, personal device access, parental academic qualification and Student's academic performance.

Hypotheses of the Study

1. The level of impact of social media on the attention span of higher secondary school students with respect to their sibling status, personal device access, parental academic qualification, and Student's academic performance is average.
2. There is no significant difference in the impact of social media on the attention span of higher secondary school students in terms of sibling status.
3. There is no significant difference in the impact of social media on the attention span of higher secondary school students in terms of personal device access.
4. There is no significant difference in the impact of social media on the attention span of higher secondary schools in terms of parental academic qualification.
5. There is no significant difference in the impact of social media on the attention span of higher secondary schools in terms of their academic performance.

Method of study

The current research utilises the normative survey method. This research technique aims to gather data from a large group of people to study prevailing conditions, opinions, or behaviour. This technique assists in comprehending patterns, trends, and relationships by collecting information via questionnaires, interviews, or observations, hence being a standard method in social and educational research.

Sample

The sample comprises of 300 higher secondary students selected randomly from schools under Chengalpattu and Kanchipuram districts. The selected students represent varied academic backgrounds, learning conditions, and socio-economic standards to facilitate a detailed study of the research variables.

Tools used in the present study

Social Media Attention Span Assessment Toolkit (SMASAT)

Analysis of data

The investigator used mean, S.D, 't' test and 'F' test to analyse the data to find a meaningful interpretation of the raw scores.

Hypothesis 1

The level of impact of social media on the attention span of higher secondary school students with respect to the background variables.

Table 1
The level of impact of social media on the attention span of higher secondary school students with respect to their background variables

Variables	Categories	Low		Average		High	
		N	%	N	%	N	%
Sibling status	Single child	16	15.5	66	64	21	21
	Has Siblings	31	15	146	74	20	11
Personal device access	Own Device	23	12.7	127	70.5	30	17
	Parents Device	22	18.3	81	67.5	17	14
Parental academic qualification	Graduate	9	12	40	55	24	33
	HSC	17	20	39	47	34	33
	SSLC	19	19	55	55	27	26
	Below SSLC	7	16	26	60	10	24

Academic performance average	Below 40%	5	22	11	66	7	22
	40% to 60%	22	13	123	69	33	18
	61% to 80%	14	17	46	55	23	28
	Above 80%	2	13	9	57	5	30

From Table 1 it is evident that the level of impact of social media on the attention span of higher secondary school students with respect to their sibling status, academic performance average, personal device access and parental academic qualification is average.

Hypothesis 2

There is no significant difference in the impact of social media on the attention span of higher secondary school students in terms of sibling status.

Table 2

‘t’ Value for the level of impact of social media on the attention span of higher secondary school students based on their sibling status

Variable	Category	N	Mean	SD	t-value	Table Value	Remark
Sibling status	Single child	103	200.76	67.8	0.167	1.96	NS
	Has Siblings	197	212.05	71.42			

From Table 2, it is evident that the calculated 't' value (0.167) is smaller than the table 't' value (1.96) at a 0.05 level of significance. It is inferred that there is no significant difference in the impact of social media on the attention span of higher secondary school students with respect to sibling status. Hence, the null hypothesis is accepted.

Hypothesis 3

There is no significant difference in the impact of social media on the attention span of higher secondary school students in terms of personal device access.

Table 3
‘t’ Value for impact of social media on the attention span of higher secondary school students based on Personal device access

Personal Device Access	N	Mean	SD	t-value	Table Value	Remark
Own Device	7	122.3	21.2	0.01	1.96	NS
Parents Device	293	22.49	67.2			

From Table 3, it is evident that the calculated 't' value (0.01) is less than the table 't' value (1.96) at a 0.05 level of significance. It is inferred that there is no significant difference in the impact of social media on the attention span of higher secondary school students based on personal device access. Hence, the null hypothesis is accepted.

Hypothesis 4

There is no significant difference in the impact of social media on the attention span of higher secondary school students in terms of Parental academic qualification.

Table - 4

‘f’ Value for impact of social media on the attention span of higher secondary school students based on Parental academic qualification

Variable	Source of Variation	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	Calculated 'F' Value	Table value	Remark
Parental academic qualification	Graduate	115.03	107	1.07	0.12	3	NS
	HSC	290.39	191	1.5			
	SSLC	163.03	127	1.32			
	Below SSLC	330.39	197	1.77			

From Table 4, it is evident that the calculated 'F' value (0.12) is lesser than the table 'F' value (3.00) at a 0.05 level of significance. It is inferred that there is no significant difference in the impact of social media on the attention span of higher secondary school students in terms of Student's academic performance. Hence, the null hypothesis is accepted.

Findings

1. The level of impact of social media on the attention span of higher secondary school students with respect to sibling status, device access, parental academic qualification and academic performance is average.

2. There is no significant difference in the impact of social media on the attention span of higher secondary school students in terms of sibling status.
3. There is no significant difference in the impact of social media on the attention span of higher secondary school students in terms of personal device access.
4. There is no significant difference in the impact of social media on the attention span of higher secondary schools in terms of parental academic qualification.
5. There is no significant difference in the impact of social media on the attention span of higher secondary school students in terms of their academic performance average.

Conclusion

The study has deeply analysed the impact of social media use by students in school. Though the earlier work was inclined highly towards the theory that high social media usage is synonymous with poor attention of the students, the present work deletes such a thought. Findings from surveys gathered from high school students with the Social Media Attention Span Assessment Toolkit (SMASAT) indicated that social media use does not significantly reduce students' ability to maintain attention on academic tasks. Sibling status, grade level, whether or not owning a device, and parental education level were variables in no way impacting statistically significant influences on attention span about social media use.

References

1. Abbott, J. (2017). *Introduction: Assessing the social and political impact of the internet and new social media in Asia*. *Journal of Contemporary Asia*, 43(4), 579–590. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00472336.2013.785698>
2. Bardakçi, S. (2019). *Exploring high school students' educational use of YouTube*. *The International Review of Research in Open and Distributed Learning*, 20(2). <https://doi.org/10.19173/irrodl.v20i2.4074>
3. Chukwuere, J. E., & Chukwuere, P. C. (2017). *The impact of social media on social lifestyle: A case study of university female students*. *Gender & Behaviour*, 15(4), 9966–9981.
4. Fleck, J., & Johnson-Migalski, L. (2015). *The impact of social media on personal and professional lives: An Adlerian perspective*. *Journal of Individual Psychology*, 71(2), 135–142. <https://doi.org/10.1353/jip.2015.0013>
5. Iwamoto, D., & Chun, H. (2020). *The emotional impact of social media in higher education*. *International Journal of Higher Education*, 9(2), 239–247. <https://doi.org/10.5430/ijhe.v9n2p239>
6. Keles, B., McCrae, N., & Grealish, A. (2020). *A systematic review: The influence of social media on depression, anxiety and psychological distress in adolescents*. *International Journal of Adolescence and Youth*, 25(1), 79–93. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02673843.2019.1590851>
7. Ley, B., Ogonowski, C., Hess, J., Reichling, T., Wan, L., & Wulf, V. (2014). *Impacts of new technologies on media usage and social behavior in domestic environments*. *Behaviour & Information Technology*, 33(8), 815–828. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0144929X.2013.832383>
8. Manjunatha, S. (2013). *The usage of social networking sites among the college students in India*. *International Research Journal of Social Sciences*, 2(5), 15–21.
9. Ndaku, A. J. (2013). *Impact of social media on the students' academic performance in Ghana*. *Networking*, 18(5), 275–285.
10. Osharive, P. (2015). *Social media and academic performance of students*. ResearchGate. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/273765340_social_media_and_academic_performance_of_students
11. Pratama, S., Arifin, R., & Widianingsih, A. (2020). *The use of YouTube as a learning tool in teaching listening skill*. *International Journal of Global Operations Research*, 1(3), 123–129. <https://doi.org/10.47194/ijgor.v1i3.56>
12. Supendra, D., & Amilia, W. (2021). *The use of YouTube to increase the students' autonomous learning in the online learning situation*. *Advances in Social Science, Education and Humanities Research*. <https://doi.org/10.2991/assehr.k.210618.029>