



Excessive Use of Social Media and Digital Games as Barriers to Academic Engagement among Higher Secondary Students

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Abstract - The increasing penetration of digital technology has significantly influenced students' learning environments and behavioural patterns. Social media platforms, particularly Instagram with its short-form video feature known as Reels, along with digital games, have become dominant components of students' daily lives. While these technologies possess educational potential, their excessive and unregulated use has emerged as a serious challenge to academic engagement. This article presents a reflective, classroom-based study examining the impact of excessive social media usage and digital gaming on students' attention, concentration, seriousness towards studies, and overall academic engagement at the Higher Secondary level. Observations indicate that addiction to short-form video content and prolonged gaming reduces attention span, classroom participation, and study discipline. The study also highlights the need for pedagogical strategies and parental involvement to promote balanced digital habits and improve students' academic engagement.

Keywords - Social media, Instagram Reels, digital games, academic engagement, attention span, student behavior.

I. Introduction

Technological advancements have transformed the modes of communication, information access, and leisure activities of students. Social media platforms and digital games have become integral to students' everyday routines. Although the educational use of technology can enhance learning experiences, excessive engagement—particularly with short-form video content and digital gaming—has raised concerns among educators.

At the Higher Secondary level, students are expected to demonstrate increased academic responsibility, sustained attention, and seriousness towards learning. However, frequent exposure to rapidly changing and entertaining digital content has adversely affected students' ability to focus on academic tasks. This study explores how excessive use of social media and digital games acts as a barrier to academic engagement among Higher Secondary students.

II. Excessive Use of Social Media and Student Engagement



Social media platforms are designed to provide instant gratification through likes, comments, and continuous content updates. Instagram Reels, in particular, promote brief, visually stimulating videos that encourage continuous scrolling. Such platforms condition users to seek immediate rewards, thereby reducing tolerance for activities that require prolonged attention and effort.

Students who spend excessive time watching or creating short-form videos often experience difficulty concentrating during classroom instruction, reading textbooks, or engaging in academic discussions. According to Kumar (2019), excessive social media usage negatively affects students' academic performance by reducing effective study time and mental focus. Consequently, academic engagement declines as students prioritise online interaction over educational responsibilities.

Impact of Digital Gaming on Study Habits

Digital games are intentionally designed to be immersive and competitive, encouraging prolonged participation. While moderate gaming may provide relaxation, excessive involvement frequently results in reduced study hours, irregular study routines, and delayed academic tasks.

Prensky (2001) noted that digitally immersed learners tend to prefer fast-paced, interactive environments, which often conflicts with traditional classroom learning that requires patience and sustained concentration. Excessive gaming, particularly when combined with social media addiction, further fragments students' attention spans and increases cognitive fatigue, thereby negatively influencing academic engagement.

Classroom Attention and Academic Seriousness

One of the most observable consequences of excessive digital engagement is diminished classroom attention. Students often appear distracted, restless, and disengaged during lessons.

The habitual consumption of short and entertaining digital content makes it increasingly difficult for students to remain attentive during extended lectures or discussions.

Over time, this lack of attention contributes to a decline in academic seriousness. Students may perceive academic tasks as monotonous when compared to the instant entertainment offered by digital media. Rosen (2012) emphasized that excessive technology use can disrupt cognitive control and attention management, leading to reduced academic commitment.

Classroom-Based Observations

Based on classroom experiences at the Higher Secondary level, students with high levels of engagement in Instagram Reels and digital games demonstrate lower levels of academic participation. Many exhibit reduced interest in reading, note-taking, discussions, and homework completion. The continuous urge to consume or create digital content results in impatience with tasks that require sustained focus. These behavioural patterns are reflected in declining academic performance and reduced engagement in classroom activities.



Pedagogical and Parental Interventions

Addressing the challenges posed by excessive digital engagement requires collaborative efforts from educators and parents. Teachers can adopt learner-centred and interactive pedagogical approaches, including group discussions, activity-based learning, and short structured tasks that gradually enhance students' attention spans. Awareness programmes on responsible digital usage and digital well-being can also be integrated into school curricula.

Parents play a crucial role in monitoring screen time and encouraging balanced daily routines. Promoting offline activities such as reading, sports, creative hobbies, and family interaction can provide healthy alternatives to excessive screen usage. Constructive guidance and consistent support, rather than strict prohibition, are essential for fostering sustainable behavioural change.

III. Conclusion

The excessive use of social media, particularly Instagram Reels, and digital games has emerged as a significant barrier to academic engagement among Higher Secondary students. Addiction to short-form digital content shortens attention spans, reduces classroom participation, and weakens academic seriousness. Promoting balanced digital habits through effective pedagogical strategies and active parental involvement is essential for enhancing students' academic engagement and learning outcomes. Addressing these challenges is crucial for ensuring meaningful education in an increasingly digitalised learning environment.

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