

*Project Report on*

**“Impact of fast paced short form content on young adults”**

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**THAPAR INSTITUTE**  
OF ENGINEERING & TECHNOLOGY  
(Deemed to be University)

School of Humanities and Social Sciences Thapar Institute of Engineering and Technology

(May 2, 2024)

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## LETTER OF TRANSMITTAL

Date: May 3rd, 2024

Respected Ma'am,

This is to inform you that we are submitting our report entitled “**Impact of fast paced short form content on young adults**” as partial fulfillment of the Humanities for Engineers Course (UHU005) requirement.

This report oversees the impact of short form fast paced content on the minds of young adults. In addition, the following report also highlights how consumption of such content increases loss in attention span and also has been regarded as one of the causes for ADHD.

Through this report and survey conducted, we intended to bring into the limelight, people's perspectives and views on such forms of content.

Most Sincerely

Kartik Gupta (10215237)  
Aditya Bhati (102165015)  
Rishita Grover (102165018)

## **CERTIFICATE**

This is to certify that the project report on **‘Impact of fast paced short form content on young adults’** is a bonafide project work done originally by **Rishita Grover(102165018), Kartik Gupta(102115237) and Aditya Bhati(102165015)** in fulfillment of the project work given by the School of Humanities and Social Sciences, Thapar Institute of Engineering and Technology during the year 2022.

**Ms Rishita Goyal**

Date: May 3, 2022

Place: Patiala

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

At the outset, we would like to articulate this project on the topic "**Impact of fast paced short form content on young adults**" as a small journey that was a remarkable learning experience. The successful completion of this project is only because of the extraordinary support, guidance, counseling and motivation from our respected teachers at the Thapar Institute of Engineering and Technology. This journey was also incomplete without the support of our family and friends.

We firstly express our heartfelt thankfulness to our professor **Ms Rishita Goyal** in this project who made us feel her presence during all those crucial and decision-making moments this project went through. The deep insights into the subject given to us by her are believed to be the root cause of completing this project qualitatively and timely. Also, through the support provided by her, we have acquired knowledge on the avenues that this project has explored. Her direction in making us think about unique conceptual and practical aspects of practicing repairability among mobile users lifted this project to this stage of successful completion. We extend our gratitude to all our friends for their encouragement and support.

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report investigates the impact of fast-paced short-form content on the cognitive capabilities of young adults short attention span, their ability to focus on the task at hand, their aptitude to comprehend and engage with complex information, and its potential association with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD). By delving into the relationship between short-form video exposure and sustained attention span, as well as a combination of literature review and analysis of the survey data, this study seeks to provide insight into the cognitive implications of a content consumption trend that has become an integral part of modern life.

The study also utilized a Google Form survey to gather anonymous responses from participants, focusing on their age, daily consumption of fast-paced content, screen-related activities before bedtime, and frequency of ADHD-related symptoms such as forgetfulness, restlessness, difficulty staying focused, task avoidance, and impulsivity.

Findings reveal a notable association between increased consumption of fast-paced content and higher frequencies of ADHD-related symptoms. Participants who reported spending more hours per day engaging with stimulating content showed greater tendencies towards forgetfulness, restlessness, difficulty in staying focused, task avoidance, and impulsivity. Moreover, frequent engagement in screen-related activities before bedtime was also correlated with a higher likelihood of experiencing these symptoms. The report underscores the importance of recognizing the potential impact of fast-paced short-form content on cognitive function, particularly among young adults who are heavy consumers of such media. It emphasizes the need for further research to elucidate the causal mechanisms underlying this association and suggests strategies for promoting healthier media consumption habits.

Through the analysis of survey data and existing literature, it becomes evident that the proliferation of short-form content platforms has led to shifts in media consumption habits among young adults. These platforms prioritize quick, easily digestible content over sustained engagement, potentially reinforcing patterns of distractibility and impulsivity. Furthermore, the report explores the broader societal implications of these findings, including potential impacts on education, productivity, and mental health. Strategies for mitigating the negative effects of fast-paced short-form content consumption are discussed, emphasizing the importance of promoting media literacy and mindful consumption habits among young adults.



In conclusion, the report underscores the urgent need for further research and awareness initiatives to better understand and address the impact of fast-paced short-form content on cognitive capabilities, particularly among vulnerable populations. By fostering a greater understanding of these dynamics, stakeholders can work towards promoting healthier media consumption habits and supporting the cognitive well-being of young adults in an increasingly digital world.

# INTRODUCTION

In recent years, we've all noticed a significant rise in the popularity of short-form video content on social media platforms. It seems like everywhere we turn, our social feeds are flooded with bite-sized, engaging videos that keep us entertained and coming back for more. With platforms like TikTok, Instagram Reels, YouTube Shorts, and Snapchat leading the charge, it's worth asking: what exactly makes short-form video content so popular?

Short-form videos have become one of the most popular ways for people to entertain and relax. The rapid development of technology and the Internet has transformed people's lives, and short-form video applications (apps) such as TikTok have swept across the world. Short-form videos are typically less than 15 min in length, mostly between 1 and 5 min, with concise content and a clear theme. According to GWI (2023), TikTok attracted 4 billion global downloads from January 2018 to November 2022, becoming the social media platform with the highest download numbers.

However, the intense interest in short-form videos has given rise to short-video addiction, which poses risks to both the physical and mental health of individuals. As we embrace the convenience and allure of these videos, concerns linger about their impact on our cognitive capabilities.

Attention span—the ability to focus on a task or stimuli for a sustained period—is a cornerstone of cognitive function. Studies have found that the average human attention span has dropped from 12 seconds in 2000 to 8 seconds in recent years. In an era marked by constant digital engagement and quick content transitions, questions arise about how our brains adapt to this dynamic environment. The brevity and rapid visual changes characteristic of short-form videos raise the inquiry of whether prolonged exposure to such content might influence our ability to maintain attention over extended periods.

The diagnosis of attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) among children and adolescents has increased considerably over the past decades. Scholars and health professionals alike have expressed concern about the role of screen media in the rise in ADHD diagnosis. Similarly, as we navigate an information-rich digital landscape, the aptitude to comprehend and engage with complex information becomes paramount. Short-form videos often prioritize brevity and visual engagement, potentially conditioning viewers for rapid information consumption. This prompts exploration into whether

habitual exposure to this style of content might impact our capacity to delve into detailed digital texts and videos that demand more prolonged cognitive engagement.

This study aimed to investigate the association between short-form video addiction and academic procrastination among undergraduates, exploring the role of executive functions (i.e., attentional control) and personality traits (i.e., boredom proneness) in the association.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Platforms like Reels, Shorts, and TikTok have revolutionized content consumption patterns, particularly in the young adult community, through the explosion of relatively brief videos. The literature in this section is dedicated to showing how engaging with short-form videos affects cognitive processes, focusing on sustained attention span and information comprehension.

- **Short-form video addiction and academic procrastination**

According to research conducted on internet addiction and academic procrastination, the 21st-century problem of Internet addiction is increasing globally, but especially among university students. Since short-form video addiction is a type of specific internet addiction, short-form video addiction might have similar effects as internet addiction on academic procrastination. According to the temporal motivation theory, people tend to prefer tasks that offer quicker rewards when time is limited, and postpone those with more distant rewards. Using analytical algorithms of massive user databases, short-form video apps can provide personalized and engaging content. The student audience can experience immediate satisfaction and entertainment rewards in a relatively short amount of time. Thus, short-form videos afford students to procrastinate in high-demanding tasks, such as academic assignment and self-regulated learning. Previous studies have revealed that short-form videos addiction can diminish people's motivation to learn. Overusing short-form videos can foster a short-term oriented mindset, which seeks immediate pleasure and satisfaction. This mindset may diminish expectations for future academic achievements because academic performance typically demands long-term effort and dedication. Students might perceive that they cannot attain quick academic rewards, leading to a loss of confidence in their studies and they cannot complete their academic tasks on time. Thus, individuals with short-form video addiction are prone to academic procrastination.

- **Changes and Challenges: Managing ADHD in a Fast-Paced World**

The diagnosis of attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) among children and adolescents has increased considerably over the past decades. Scholars and health professionals alike have expressed concern about the role of screen media in the rise in ADHD diagnosis. However, the extent to which screen media use and ADHD are linked remains a point of debate. Many hypotheses are based on the assumption that either the fast pace or the violent nature of contemporary media entertainment affect children's media-induced response states, which in turn increase the likelihood of ADHD-related behaviors. As for the fast pace of screen media, two hypotheses have been suggested. The fast-pace arousal-habituation hypothesis builds on the role

of cognitive and excitatory response states. It posits that fast-paced media forces children to repeatedly shift their attention and renew their orienting responses, which increases arousal. With frequent exposure, children may become habituated to this fast pace and produce less arousal. As a result, children's baseline arousal levels may decrease, which may ultimately lead to ADHD-related behaviors. A second hypothesis, the scan-and-shift hypothesis, builds on the role of cognitive response states and argues that the fast pacing of media prevents children from developing attentional focusing skills and forces them to constantly shift their attention, such that they acquire an attentional style of scanning and shifting. These deficits in attentional skills hinder children's capacities to engage in activities that require effortful attention.

- **Short-Form Videos and Attention Economy:**

Short-form videos have emerged as a dominant force in the attention economy. Their brevity caters to contemporary attention spans shaped by digital media consumption patterns (Jin & Phua, 2014). The captivating and quickly consumable nature of short form videos aligns with the principles of "micro attention" (Xing & Meng, 2018). However, concerns have arisen regarding the potential cognitive consequences of a media landscape characterised by ephemeral, fragmented content (Gazzaley & Rosen, 2016). The ability to control their attention might be impaired by short-form video addiction. Studies have found that exposure to television shows, characterized by high arousal and quick change to focus, could impair capacity to maintain concentration on other tasks. Highly arousing content typically elicits strong excitement in the brain, leading to an increased allocation of cognitive resources for information processing and a more frequent shift in attentional focus. From a neurological standpoint, the fMRI study by Dong et al. (2015) have shown that individuals consuming fast paced content are in a state of imbalance. With the imbalanced systems, individuals are more likely to prioritize short-term satisfaction for reduced cravings and lose sight on long-term outcomes.

- **The moderating effect of boredom proneness:**

Researchers have found individual differences in the effect of various internet addiction on individual outcomes. Neuroticism, among personality traits, has received more attention than others. In the effect of short-form video addiction on attentional control, boredom proneness might play a significant role. Boredom proneness is a personality trait that encompasses emotions such as boredom, unhappiness, restlessness, a lack of enthusiasm, and a sense of meaninglessness. According to *Eastwood et al. (2012)*, boredom proneness can be defined as an aversive state of wanting to, but being unable to, engage in satisfied activities. Individuals with high and low boredom proneness might receive different impacts on their executive functions

from short-term video addiction, whereas the specific differences have not yet been investigated.

- **Media Literacy and Cognitive Adaptation:**

Media literacy plays a pivotal role in cognitive adaptation to evolving media formats. Familiarity with media conventions and techniques can influence cognitive expectations (Levine et al., 2020). The effects of cognitive adaptation have been observed in other media contexts, such as video games (Green & Bavelier, 2003). Similar adaptation processes might be at play in short form video consumption, conditioning viewers to expect rapid content delivery while potentially diminishing tolerance for extended cognitive engagement.

## **SCOPE AND SIGNIFICANCE OF STUDY**

Researching how fast-paced short-form content impacts attention span, focus, comprehension of complicated information, and its possible correlation with ADHD is important because it sheds light on how this popular media consumption pattern affects young adults' cognitive capacities. The impact of short-form content on cognitive processes needs to be taken into consideration as it becomes more commonplace in contemporary life. This study fills a knowledge vacuum about the cognitive effects of this kind of content consumption and provides information that mental health, education, and content makers will find invaluable. In order to provide comprehensive insights into the cognitive implications of short-form content on young adults, the scope of the study includes a thorough examination of the existing literature combined with empirical investigation through surveys. This will contribute to both academic discourse and practical interventions in media consumption habits.

## **OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

- Examine the relationship between young adults' attention span changes and their exposure to fast-paced short-form content.
- Examine how young adults' consumption of short-form content affects their capacity to stay focused on activities that need extended periods of attention.
- Examine the connection between young adults' comprehension levels of difficult material and their frequency of interaction with short-form content.
- Examine any connections that might exist between young people's symptoms of Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) and their excessive intake of short-form content.
- Give educators, content producers, and mental health specialists useful information and suggestions to help reduce any potential cognitive harm that young adults may experience from consuming short-form, fast-paced content.

## **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

- **Data Collection:** Aim to collect information about the effects of short-form content on cognitive capacities and ADHD from academic journals, industry studies, tech webinars, podcasts, and product websites.
- **Survey Design:** Create a systematic questionnaire to gather information on the demographics, media consumption patterns, attention span, focus, understanding, self-reported symptoms of ADHD, and opinions of short-form material of participants.
- **Participant Recruitment:** Make use of academic networks and internet platforms to find a varied pool of young individuals.

- Data analysis: For quantitative data, use statistical methods; for qualitative responses, use thematic coding.
- Interpretation: Examine results to see how they relate to theory, practice, and upcoming studies.



## DATA SOURCES

- **Primary Data**

A questionnaire was filled out by the people. The data collected and the interpretations of the same are presented ahead in this report.

- **Secondary Data**

Research papers, journals, and magazines were studied. Information from Podcasts was also taken into consideration.

- **Data Collection Method**

The primary data collection method used in this research is the questionnaire method. Here the data are systematically recorded from the respondents.

The secondary data used here is from published research papers, journals and podcasts.

## RESEARCH TOOL

A structured questionnaire has been prepared to get the relevant information from the respondents. The questionnaire consists of a variety of questions presented to the respondents for their despondence.

## SAMPLING

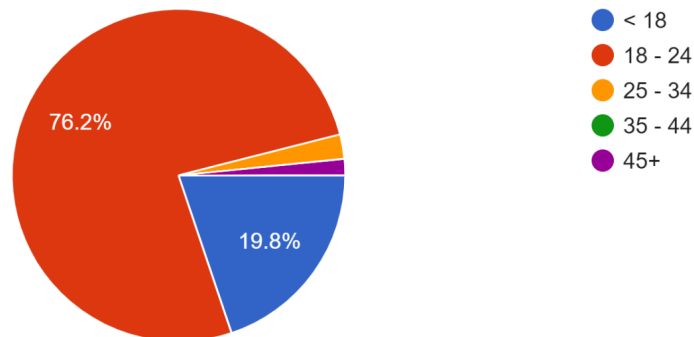
The target sample chosen was focused more on Gen-Z considering the fact that they would provide more accurate information and will help us get more insights into the topic at hand.

*Sample Unit* - The students of the Thapar Institute of Engineering and Technology are the sample unit in the survey.

*Sample Size*-The sample size chosen for this study is 150 since it is a Mini Research Project.

## DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

1. *How old are you?*

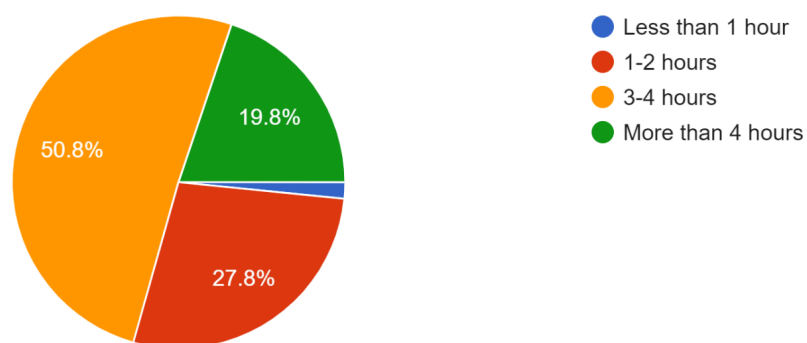


*Fig. 1 Age demographic of respondents*

### Interpretation

- More than 75% of the respondents are aged 18-24
- Nearly 95% of people are from gen-Z.

2. *On average, how many hours per day do you spend consuming fast-paced or stimulating content, like videos, short films, or playing video games?*

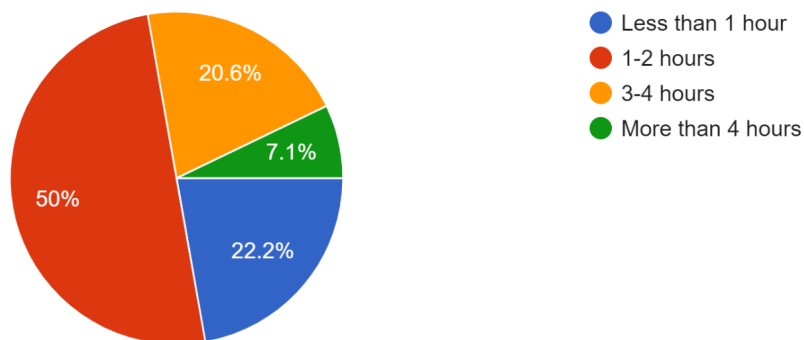


*Fig. 2 Daily consumption of short form content*

### Interpretation

- The Majority of people in this generation are spending 3+ hours on scrolling through fast paced content.
- Most of the people are spending unhealthy amounts of time on such content.

3. *On average, how many hours per day do you engage in screen-related activities (e.g., using a computer, smartphone, or tablet) just before bedtime?*

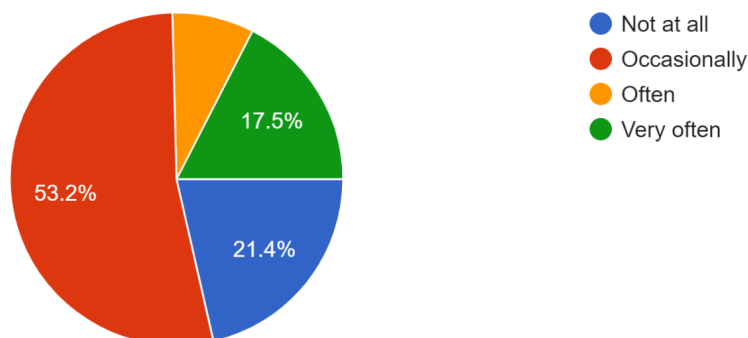


*Fig. 3 Consumption of short form content before sleep*

### Interpretation

- For almost 80% of people, consuming such content is a daily activity before going to bed.
- It is for only 20% of the people, who spend less than an hour on their devices before sleeping.

4. *How often do you experience forgetfulness in daily activities, such as forgetting appointments, deadlines, or where you placed important items?*

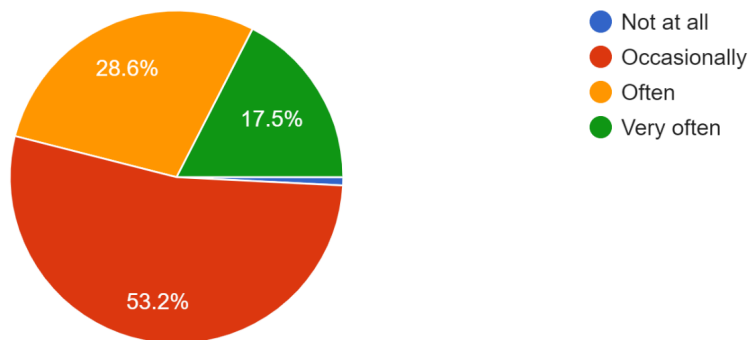


*Fig. 4 Forgetfulness in daily activities*

### Interpretation

- Most of the people report forgetfulness in their day to day activities.
- There is a direct correlation between the number of hours spent on consuming fast paced content and forgetfulness.
- Only 21% of people reported no forgetfulness.

5. *How often do you find yourself restless or unable to sit still during classes, meetings, or social gatherings?*

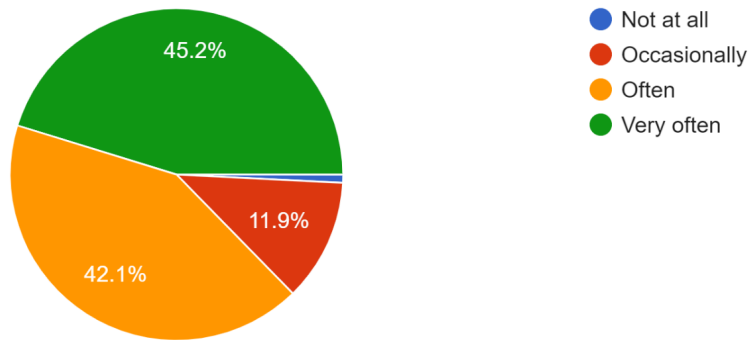


*Fig. 5 restless in sitting still during classes, meetings, or social gatherings*

### Interpretation

- Most of the people report restlessness in their day to day activities.
- There is a direct correlation between the number of hours spent on consuming fast paced content and restlessness.

6. How often do you find it challenging to stay focused on tasks that require your attention, like school assignments or work projects?

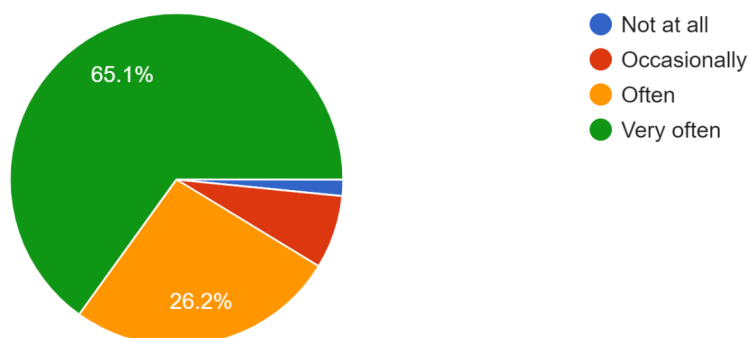


*Fig. 6 Challenges in staying focused*

#### Interpretation

- Most of the people report challenges in staying focused on activities that require attention.
- There is a direct correlation between the number of hours spent on consuming fast paced content and such challenges.

7. Do you often avoid or delay tasks that require sustained mental effort, like studying for exams or completing assignments?

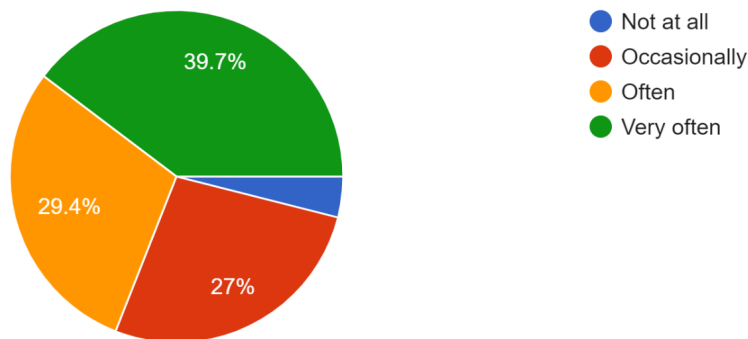


*Fig. 7 Academic procrastination in students*

## Interpretation

- Most of the people report signs of academic procrastination and delay tasks that require sustained mental effort.
- There is a direct correlation between the number of hours spent on consuming fast paced content and academic procrastination.

8. *How often do you find yourself shifting your attention from one task to another, resulting in unfinished projects?*

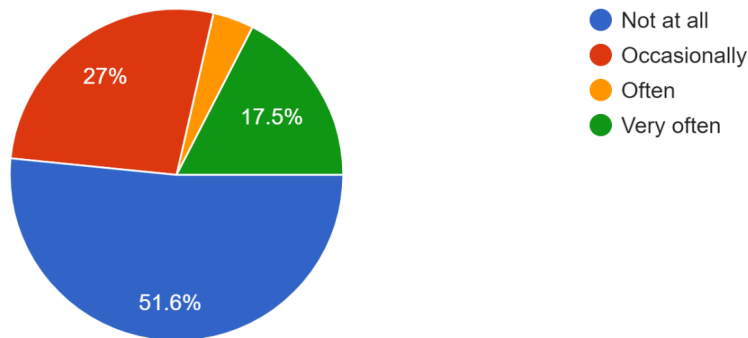


*Fig. 8 Distractions and losing focus*

## Interpretation

- Most of the people report forgetfulness in their day to day activities.
- There is a direct correlation between the number of hours spent on consuming fast paced content and forgetfulness.

9. *Do you find yourself interrupting others in conversations or having difficulty waiting for your turn to speak?*

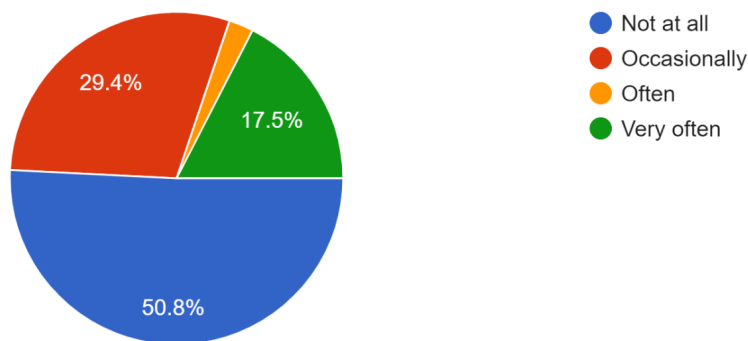


*Fig. 9 Effect on social interactions*

### Interpretation

- Herein, around 20% of the people also reported having trouble waiting for their turn to speak in a social situation.
- This also correlates with a high amount of time spent on consuming short form content.

10. *How frequently do you feel a sense of chronic restlessness or an inner sense of being "on the go"?*



*Fig. 10 Chronic restlessness and boredom*

### Interpretation

- Around 17 percent of respondents reported to suffer from chronic restlessness and boredom.

## KEY FINDINGS

- Relationship between Short-Form information Consumption and Attention span: Research indicates that young adults' attention span and regular exposure to fast-paced short-form information are significantly correlated negatively. Individuals having shorter attention spans than those with limited exposure were those who reported consuming more short-form content.
- Effect on Focus Abilities: The results show that participants' focus abilities are negatively impacted by short-form information intake. More short-form content consumption was associated with decreased levels of focus and increased susceptibility to interruptions, which negatively impacted performance on activities requiring prolonged attention.
- Understanding Complex Information: After being exposed to short-form content, participants' survey responses indicate difficulties understanding complex information. Many reported having trouble understanding complex ideas or remembering specific details after spending a lot of time reading fast-paced content, suggesting that there may be cognitive limitations.
- Relationship with ADHD Symptoms: One noteworthy discovery is the correlation between symptoms of Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) and excessive intake of short-form content. There may be a connection between media habits and mental health outcomes, as evidenced by the greater frequencies of ADHD-related symptoms such impulsivity, inattention, and hyperactivity among those who reported increased media intake.
- Knowledge of Cognitive Effects: Although some individuals showed knowledge of the cognitive consequences of consuming short-form content, others showed different degrees of comprehension or outright denial. This discrepancy emphasizes the need for further information and understanding about the possible effects of media consumption patterns on cognition.
- Perceptions of Engagement and Content Quality: According to survey results, respondents place a high importance on engagement and content quality when making media consumption decisions. The selection of information is greatly influenced by factors including novelty, entertainment value, and social relevance, which in turn shape consumption habits and cognitive results.



## CONCLUSION

The findings of this research shed light on the profound cognitive implications of fast-paced short-form content consumption among young adults. The correlation between frequent exposure to such content and diminished attention span underscores the need for heightened awareness and proactive measures to address this concerning trend. Participants reporting lower focus abilities following prolonged engagement with short-form content highlight the potential impact on cognitive functioning, with implications for academic and professional performance.

Moreover, the challenges in comprehending complex information after exposure to short-form content emphasize the importance of promoting critical thinking skills and media literacy among young adults. The association between excessive content consumption and symptoms resembling Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) raises questions about the role of media habits in mental health outcomes, necessitating further investigation and intervention.

The overwhelming preference for short-form content over traditional long-form formats reflects broader societal shifts towards convenience and instant gratification, reshaping cognitive processing and information retention patterns. However, this preference also raises concerns about the depth of engagement and the quality of information absorbed, highlighting the need for balanced media consumption habits and discerning content selection.

In conclusion, this study underscores the urgent need for multi-faceted interventions aimed at promoting healthier media consumption habits and mitigating potential negative cognitive effects among young adults. Educational initiatives focusing on media literacy, critical thinking skills, and mindfulness in content consumption can empower individuals to navigate the digital landscape responsibly. Additionally, collaboration among educators, content creators, policymakers, and mental health professionals is essential to develop holistic strategies that foster cognitive resilience and well-being in the face of pervasive short-form content consumption trends. By addressing these challenges proactively, we can ensure that young adults are equipped to thrive in an increasingly digitized world while safeguarding their cognitive health and overall well-being.

## **LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY**

In spite of the precautions, vigilance and scrupulousness taken by the investigator to make the study objective, it cannot be denied that there are certain limitations.

- The questionnaire was filled primarily by B.Tech. students of Thapar Institute of Engineering and Technology, Patiala. So, the scope of sample findings was limited.
- As the study was done within a limited time, the investigator could not select a sufficiently large sample for the study.
- The topic being very vast, much literature was left unread.
- The study's findings may not be generalizable to populations outside the sampled demographic of young adults, limiting the broader applicability of the results to other age groups or cultural contexts.

## APPENDIX

### SURVEY FORM AND QUESTIONNAIRE:

#### ***Fast Paced Content and ADHD***

This short survey explores how consuming fast paced content like reels and shorts affects the brain, with a particular focus on its potential to cause ADHD related symptoms.

Your honest feedback will be valuable in our research!

#### **What you can expect:**

The survey should take about 1-2 minutes to complete.

All responses are anonymous.

NOTE: Your participation in this survey is completely voluntary. Your responses will be kept confidential and the data from this research will be reported ONLY in the aggregate.

*On average, how many hours per day do you spend consuming fast-paced or stimulating content, like videos, short films, or playing video games?*

- A. Less than 1 hour
- B. 1-2 hours
- C. 3-4 hours
- D. More than 4 hours

*On average, how many hours per day do you engage in screen-related activities (e.g., using a computer, smartphone, or tablet) just before bedtime?*

- A. Less than 1 hour
- B. 1-2 hours
- C. 3-4 hours
- D. More than 4 hours

*How often do you experience forgetfulness in daily activities, such as forgetting appointments, deadlines, or where you placed important items?*

- A. Not at all
- B. Occasionally

- C. Often
- D. Very often

*How often do you find yourself restless or unable to sit still during classes, meetings, or social gatherings?*

- A. Not at all
- B. Occasionally
- C. Often
- D. Very often

*How often do you find it challenging to stay focused on tasks that require your attention, like school assignments or work projects?*

- A. Not at all
- B. Occasionally
- C. Often
- D. Very often

*Do you often avoid or delay tasks that require sustained mental effort, like studying for exams or completing assignments?*

- A. Not at all
- B. Occasionally
- C. Often
- D. Very often

*How often do you find it difficult to shift your attention from one task to another, resulting in unfinished projects?*

- A. Not at all
- B. Occasionally
- C. Often
- D. Very often

*Do you find yourself interrupting others in conversations or having difficulty waiting for your turn to speak?*

- A. Not at all
- B. Occasionally
- C. Often
- D. Very often

*How frequently do you feel a sense of chronic restlessness or an inner sense of being "on the go"?*

- A. Not at all
- B. Occasionally
- C. Often
- D. Very often

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