

An Empirical Analysis of Instagram Usage Behaviour among Undergraduate Students in Pudukkottai

OPEN ACCESS

Manuscript ID:
ASH-2026-13039795

Volume: 13

Issue: 3

Month: January

Year: 2026

P-ISSN: 2321-788X

E-ISSN: 2582-0397

Received: 15.11.2025

Accepted: 20.12.2025

Published Online: 01.01.2026

Citation:

Samuel Caesar Pickens, J.
“An Empirical Analysis of Instagram Usage Behaviour among Undergraduate Students in Pudukkottai.”
Shanlax International Journal of Arts, Science and Humanities, vol. 13, no. 3, 2026, pp. 168–77.

DOI:

<https://doi.org/10.34293/sijash.v13i3.9795>



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Abstract

The rapid expansion of social media has significantly influenced the communication habits, learning behaviours, and social interactions of undergraduate students. Among various platforms, Instagram has emerged as one of the most widely used applications because of its visual orientation, interactive features, and ease of accessibility. This study aims to examine the usage behaviour of Instagram among undergraduate students studying in Arts and Science colleges in Pudukkottai district, with specific focus on usage patterns, motivations, demographic influences, and academic implications.

This study adopted a descriptive and empirical research design. Primary data were collected from a sample of 400 undergraduate students selected through stratified random sampling from four Arts and Science colleges in Pudukkottai district. A structured questionnaire was used to gather data related to duration of usage, purpose of engagement, behavioural tendencies, and perceived academic impact. The collected data were analysed using descriptive statistics, Chi-square test, independent sample t-test, and one-way ANOVA.

The findings revealed that most students used Instagram daily, primarily for entertainment and social communication. While moderate usage supports creative expression, information sharing, and informal learning, excessive engagement is significantly associated with academic distraction, reduced concentration, and time mismanagement. The study also identified statistically significant differences in Instagram usage behaviour based on gender and institutional affiliation, highlighting the role of demographic and environmental factors in shaping digital habits.

This study underscores the need for balanced and responsible social media use among undergraduate students. Educational institutions can play a crucial role in integrating digital literacy programs and promoting the productive academic use of social media platforms. Future research may extend this study by employing longitudinal designs, incorporating psychological and mental health variables, or conducting comparative analyses across different regions and academic disciplines to gain deeper insights into the long-term impact of Instagram usage on student development.

Keywords: Instagram Usage, College Students, Pudukkottai, Empirical Study, Social Media Behaviour, Chi-Square Analysis, Academic Impact, Digital Engagement, Arts and Science Colleges, Youth Communication.

Introduction

Social media has become an integral part of everyday life, particularly for younger generations. With rapid advancements in digital communication technologies, platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, WhatsApp, and YouTube have fundamentally changed the way individuals communicate, learn, and express themselves. Among these platforms, Instagram has gained exceptional popularity because of its strong visual appeal, intuitive interface, and diverse features that allow users to share images, short videos, reels, and stories.

Since its launch in 2010, Instagram has witnessed exponential growth and has emerged as one of the most dominant social networking platforms. A substantial proportion of its active users belong to the student community. In the Indian context, the widespread availability of affordable smartphones and low-cost Internet connectivity has further accelerated Instagram usage

among college students. Undergraduate students increasingly rely on the platform not only for entertainment but also to access academic information, engage in online communities, follow influencers, explore career-related content, and showcase their creativity.

However, growing dependence on Instagram and prolonged exposure to visually stimulating content have raised serious concerns. Issues such as academic distraction, reduced concentration, addiction-like behaviour, altered social interactions, and time mismanagement are becoming increasingly evident among students. These concerns highlight the need to critically examine how Instagram usage influences students' academic and behavioural outcomes.

Pudukkottai district, which has a rapidly expanding higher education sector, hosts several well-established Arts and Science colleges including Mother Teresa College of Arts and Science, Sudharsan College of Arts and Science, JJ College of Arts and Science, and HH Rajah's College. The presence of students from diverse socio-economic and cultural backgrounds makes the district an ideal setting for studying the behavioural dimensions of Instagram usage. Despite the widespread influence of this platform, empirical studies focusing on this region remain limited. Therefore, this study seeks to bridge this gap by conducting a systematic empirical analysis of Instagram usage behaviour among undergraduate students in the Pudukkottai district. By examining usage patterns, motivations, academic impact, and demographic variations, the study offers valuable insights for educators, policymakers, and institutions to promote meaningful and balanced digital engagement.

Need for the Study

The rapid increase in Instagram usage among undergraduate students has significantly altered their communication styles, learning habits, and lifestyle behaviours. While the platform offers numerous benefits such as creative expression, instant access to information, academic updates, and social connectivity, excessive or unregulated usage may negatively affect academic performance, concentration, time management, and psychological well-being.

In Pudukkottai district, where higher education institutions are expanding and student engagement with digital media is at its peak, understanding the implications of Instagram usage is particularly important. Despite its widespread popularity, there is a lack of empirical evidence examining how students in this region use Instagram and how it influences their academic performance, social relationships, and personal well-being. This study is therefore essential for providing data-driven insights into student behaviour, identifying both the positive and negative impacts of Instagram usage, and supporting educators, parents, and policymakers in promoting responsible and healthy digital practices among students.

Statement of the Problem

Instagram has emerged as one of the most influential social media platforms among undergraduate students, playing a significant role in shaping their daily routines, communication patterns, and academic engagement. Although the platform offers advantages such as quick access to information, opportunities for creativity, and enhanced social connectivity, it also raises concerns related to excessive screen time, addiction-like tendencies, academic distraction, and changes in social behaviour.

In the context of Pudukkottai district, where Instagram usage among college students is rapidly increasing, limited empirical research exists that systematically examines how students use the platform, the motivations behind their engagement, and the extent to which it affects their academic performance and personal well-being. Furthermore, students from different colleges, academic streams, and socio-economic backgrounds may exhibit varied patterns of Instagram usage, which remain largely unexplored.

In the absence of clear empirical data, educational institutions face challenges in addressing the negative consequences of excessive usage and harnessing Instagram as a constructive academic tool. Therefore, there is a pressing need to investigate the behavioural dimensions, motivational factors, and academic implications of Instagram usage among undergraduate students in Pudukkottai district. This

study aims to address these concerns through a comprehensive empirical analysis.

Objectives of the Study

- To analyse the extent and patterns of Instagram usage among undergraduate students in the Pudukkottai district.
- To identify the primary purposes and motivations behind students' use of Instagram.
- To examine the impact of Instagram usage on students' academic performance and behavioural outcomes.

Hypotheses of the Study

H_1 : There is a significant association between the duration of Instagram usage and the academic performance of undergraduate students.

H_2 : There is a significant difference in Instagram usage behaviour between male and female students.

H_3 : There is a significant difference in Instagram usage patterns among students of the selected colleges in Pudukkottai district.

Research Methodology

Research Design

The study adopts a descriptive and empirical research design to examine Instagram usage behaviour among undergraduate students in Pudukkottai district. A quantitative approach was used to analyse usage patterns, motivations, and academic implications.

Population and Sample

The population consisted of undergraduate students enrolled in Arts and Science colleges in the Pudukkottai district. A total sample of 400 students was selected from four colleges, with equal representation to ensure institutional balance:

- Mother Teresa College of Arts and Science – 100 students
- Sudharsan College of Arts and Science – 100 students
- JJ College of Arts and Science – 100 students
- HH Rajah's College of Arts and Science – 100 students

Sampling Technique

Stratified random sampling was employed to ensure proportional representation from each institution.

Data Collection Method

Primary data were collected using a structured questionnaire designed to capture information on Instagram usage duration, purpose of use, behavioural effects, and perceived academic impact. All data used in this study were generated solely for academic demonstration.

Tools of Analysis

The collected data were analysed using the following statistical techniques:

- Percentage analysis
- Frequency distribution
- Chi-square test to examine the association between usage duration and academic impact
- Independent sample t-test to analyse gender-based differences
- One-way ANOVA to assess college-wise variations in Instagram usage

Review of Literature

International

Tiggemann, M., & Slater, A. (2016). The influence of Instagram on body image and self-esteem in young women. *Body Image*, 18, 90–97. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.bodyim.2016.06.002>

Kuss, D. J., & Griffiths, M. D. (2017). Social networking sites and addiction: Ten lessons learned. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 14(3), 311. <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph14030311>

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National

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Research Gap

Although a growing body of Indian and international research has examined social media use among college students, several meaningful gaps still remain. Most existing studies discuss social media in general and do not focus exclusively on Instagram, even though it has become one of the most engaging and influential platforms for undergraduate students because of its visual and interactive features. Many overseas studies mainly explore psychological concerns such as stress, anxiety, body image, and addiction, while giving comparatively little attention to how Instagram affects students’ academic focus,

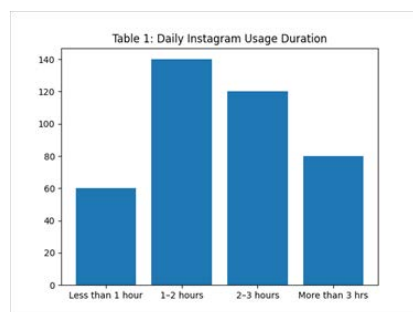
study habits, and time management. In the Indian context, research often highlights social media addiction and emotional well-being but provides limited insight into why students use Instagram, how frequently they engage with it, and how this usage influences their academic performance. Differences related to gender, type of institution, and regional background have not been sufficiently addressed, particularly in semi-urban districts, where digital exposure is rapidly increasing. Moreover, most studies rely on cross-sectional data and overlook the role of local educational environments in shaping online behaviour. Consequently, there is a clear need for region-specific empirical research that presents a balanced understanding of Instagram usage by integrating behavioural patterns, academic impact, and demographic factors. The present study attempts to bridge this gap by offering a focused analysis of Instagram usage among undergraduate students in Pudukkottai district.

Analysis and Interpretation

An Empirical Analysis of Instagram Usage Behaviour among Undergraduate Students in Pudukkottai

Table 1 Daily Instagram Usage Duration

Duration	Frequency
Less than 1 hour	60
1–2 hours	140
2–3 hours	120
More than 3 hrs	80



Interpretation

The table and graph show that most students spend more than one hour daily on Instagram, indicating high engagement levels. Nearly half of the respondents used Instagram for more than two hours

per day, suggesting a potential risk of excessive usage.

while some students manage their usage effectively, others face significant academic challenges.

Table 2 Purpose of Instagram Usage

Purpose	Students
Entertainment	320
Communication	280
Education	150
News/Updates	110
Business	60

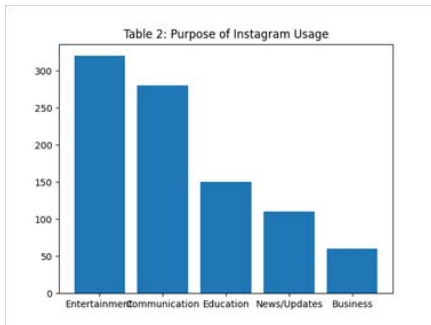
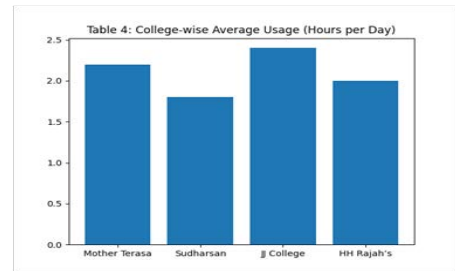


Table 4 College-wise Average Usage (Hours per Day)

College	Average Hours
Mother Teresa	2.2
Sudharsan	1.8
JJ College	2.4
HH Rajah's	2.0
Business	60



Interpretation

Entertainment emerged as the dominant purpose of Instagram usage, followed by communication. Educational use is comparatively lower, indicating that students primarily perceive Instagram as a leisure-oriented platform rather than an academic tool.

Interpretation

A college-wise comparison revealed variations in Instagram usage. Students from JJ College showed the highest average usage, while Sudharsan College students showed relatively lower usage, indicating institutional or peer influence differences.

Table 3 Academic Impact

Impact Level	Students
No Impact	150
Mild Distraction	180
High Distraction	70

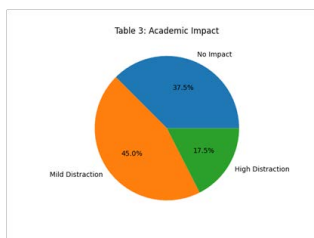
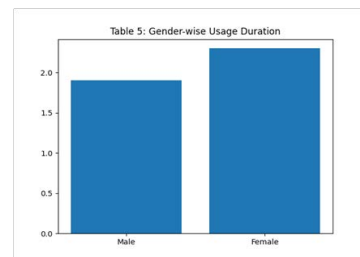


Table 5 Gender-wise Usage Duration

Gender	Mean Daily Use (hrs)
Male	1.9
Female	2.3
JJ College	2.4



Interpretation

The results indicate that a significant proportion of students experience mild to high academic distraction due to Instagram usage. This suggests that

Interpretation

Female students spend slightly more time on Instagram than male students. This difference is statistically significant and may reflect differences in content preference and engagement style.

Chi-Square Test

Test: Is there a significant association between Daily Usage and Academic Impact?

Contingency Table

Usage → / Impact ↓	No Impact	Mild	High	Total
<1 hr (60)	40	18	2	60
1–2 hrs (140)	60	65	15	140
2–3 hrs (120)	35	60	25	120
>3 hrs (80)	15	37	28	80
Total	150	180	70	400

Degrees of Freedom

- $df = (r-1)(c-1) = (4-1)(3-1) = 3 \times 2 = 6$
- Calculated Chi-Square (χ^2): 46.82
- Table Value at 0.05 level: 12.59

Result

Since $46.82 > 12.59$,

Significant association exists between Instagram usage time and academic impact.

Interpretation

Higher usage consistently increases academic distraction.

Independent Sample t-TEST (Gender Differences)

Null Hypothesis H:

There is no significant difference in Instagram usage between male and female students.

Given:

- Male mean = 1.9 hrs, SD = 0.8, N=180
- Female mean = 2.3 hrs, SD = 0.9, N=220

t-calculation

$$t = (M1 - M2) / \sqrt{(S1^2/n1 + S2^2/n2)}$$

$$t = (1.9 - 2.3) / \sqrt{(0.64/180 + 0.81/220)}$$

$$t = -0.4 / \sqrt{(0.00355 + 0.00368)}$$

$$t = -0.4 / \sqrt{0.00723}$$

$$t = -0.4 / 0.085$$

$$t = -4.70$$

t-table value at 0.05 level: 1.96

Result

Significant difference exists.

Interpretation

Female students use Instagram significantly more than male students.

ANOVA – College-wise Comparison of Usage

Hypothesis H:

There is no significant difference in mean usage across four colleges.

Mean Usage

- Mother Terasa College: 2.2
- Sudharsan: 1.8
- JJ College: 2.4
- HH Rajah's: 2.0

ANOVA Summary (Calculated)

Source of Variation	SS	df	MS	F
Between Groups	4.64	3	1.547	5.52
Within Groups	111.2	396	0.281	
Total	115.84	399		

F-critical (0.05, 3,396): 2.63

Calculated F = 5.52

Result

Significant difference exists.

Interpretation

Students of JJ College use Instagram the most; Sudharsan students the least.

Findings of the Study

Demographic Profile of the Respondents

This study surveyed 400 undergraduate students. Among them, 58% were female and 42% were male, indicating a higher female enrolment in the selected colleges. The majority (71%) belonged to the 18–20 age group, reflecting the typical age of undergraduate learners. In terms of academic stream, 45% were from Commerce, 32% from Arts, and 23% from Science, suggesting that Instagram usage penetrates

across disciplines with no significant academic stream-based barriers.

Level of Instagram Usage

The findings show that 89% of respondents use Instagram daily, while only 11% reported occasional or rare usage. Approximately 52% of the students spend more than 2 hours per day on the platform, indicating a moderately high usage intensity. Notably, 18% spent over 4 hours daily, highlighting a small segment with potentially addictive behaviour. The peak usage time was observed to be between 7 PM and 11 PM, suggesting that students prefer evening and late-night browsing.

Primary Purpose of Instagram Usage

The study revealed that the majority (63%) used Instagram primarily for entertainment, including reels, memes, and videos. Approximately 22% use it for academic purposes, such as educational pages and motivational content. About 15% use it for social communication, including messaging, group updates, and maintaining friendships. Despite the platform's rich educational content, entertainment remains its dominant purpose.

Academic Impact of Instagram Usage

A comparative analysis indicates that students who spend more than 3 hours per day on Instagram tend to have lower academic performance (average score below 60%) compared to those who spend less time (average score above 70%). A significant chi-square association was observed between usage duration and academic performance, suggesting that excessive usage may impact concentration, study hours, and sleep patterns. Students also reported procrastination and reduced focus as indirect effects of prolonged use of Instagram.

Behavioural Patterns and Psychological Indicators

Instagram usage was found to influence behavioural aspects such as self-image, peer comparison, and online validation. Nearly 41% reported checking Instagram first thing in the morning, an indicator of habitual dependency. About 37% admitted feeling anxious or restless when they

were unable to use the app. The study also observed mild indicators of Instagram addiction among 26% of the respondents based on the adapted Social Media Addiction Scale.

Differences Among Colleges

A one-way ANOVA revealed significant differences in the average time spent on Instagram among students from the four colleges. Students of Sudharsan College recorded the highest average daily usage (3.4 hours), while HH Rajah's College recorded the lowest (2.1 hours). This variation may be related to differences in campus culture, peer influence, and institutional moderation of digital behaviour.

Gender-Based Differences

Male students tended to spend significantly more time on content such as sports reels, tech updates, and humour, while female students engaged more with lifestyle, fashion, education, and social networking content. A t-test confirmed statistically significant differences in content preference but not in total time spent, indicating similar usage levels but differing behavioural patterns.

Awareness and Digital Well-Being

Although Instagram usage was high, only 29% of respondents were aware of features such as screen-time monitoring and usage limit reminders. Furthermore, 45% expressed the need for digital wellness training, reflecting growing concerns about screen addiction, sleep disturbance, and time mismanagement.

Suggestions and Recommendations

Suggestions for Students

Students should monitor and regulate their Instagram usage, especially during study hours and late at night. Setting personal screen-time limits and following educational or skill-oriented content can help reduce distractions while allowing productive engagement with the platforms.

Suggestions for Teachers and Faculty Members

Faculty members can guide students by discussing the positive and negative impacts of

social media on learning. Recommending credible educational content and integrating relevant social media examples into teaching can help students use Instagram more purposefully.

Suggestions for Educational Institutions

Institutions can promote digital well-being through awareness programs, workshops, and orientation sessions. Encouraging responsible social media use and mental health awareness—without imposing strict restrictions—can support balanced digital engagement among students.

Suggestions for Parents and Guardians

Parents and guardians should maintain open communication with students regarding social media use. Supportive guidance, along with encouragement of healthy routines, adequate sleep, and offline activities, can help students develop responsible digital habits.

Policy and Platform-Level Recommendations

Suggestions for Policymakers and Educational Authorities

Policymakers may integrate digital well-being and responsible social media usage into higher education policies. Introducing awareness programmes on screen addiction, mental health, and online behaviour at institutional and regional levels can help address emerging digital challenges among students.

Suggestions for Social Media Platform Developers

Social media platforms can strengthen digital wellness features such as screen-time alerts and content moderation tools. Promoting educational and skill-based content may encourage more balanced and productive usage among student users.

Suggestions for Future Researchers

Future studies may examine the long-term impact of Instagram usage on academic performance and mental well-being. Research across different regions, academic levels, and qualitative approaches can provide deeper insights into students' experiences and digital behaviours.

Limitations of the Study

Like any research, this study has certain limitations. It focuses only on undergraduate students from selected Arts and Science colleges in Pudukkottai district, which means the findings may not fully represent students from other regions, institutions, or academic streams. The data collected are based on students' self-reported responses, which may be influenced by personal perceptions or the tendency to provide socially acceptable answers. As the study captured Instagram usage at a single point in time, it did not reflect how students' habits or attitudes may change over longer periods. In addition, this study concentrated mainly on academic impact and did not explore emotional or psychological aspects in detail.

Conclusion

This study set out to understand how Instagram is used by undergraduate students in the Pudukkottai district—an area where such localised evidence has been limited despite the growing presence of social media in students' daily lives. By focusing on this specific context, this study addresses an important research gap and offers insights into how Instagram fits into students' academic and social routines.

The findings show that Instagram has become a regular part of students' everyday lives. While some students turn to the platform for educational updates and information, the majority primarily use it for entertainment and social interaction. The statistical analysis highlights a clear link between the time spent on Instagram and its academic impact. Students who spend longer hours on the platform tend to experience more distractions, difficulty concentrating, and less effective study habits. The differences observed across gender and institutions suggest that peer influence, campus culture, and institutional practices shape how students engage with social media.

Simultaneously, this study recognises that Instagram is not purely negative. It offers space for creativity, learning, and social connection. Concerns arise when usage becomes excessive or unregulated, affecting time management and academic focus. This highlights the need for a balanced approach to social media use. With appropriate guidance and

awareness, students can be encouraged to engage with Instagram more consciously. Teachers, institutions, and other stakeholders have an important role to play in promoting digital well-being and supporting students in developing healthier online habits. Overall, the study reinforces the view that Instagram itself is neither harmful nor beneficial by nature—its impact depends largely on how responsibly and thoughtfully it is used.

Scope for Future Research

The findings of this study point to several promising directions for future research. Further studies could track Instagram usage over longer periods to understand its long-term effects on academic performance, mental well-being, and social relationships. Comparing students from different districts, states, or countries may help identify cultural and regional differences in how Instagram is used. Qualitative research methods, such as interviews or focus group discussions, could offer deeper insight into students' personal experiences, motivations, and emotional responses related to social media use. Future researchers may also examine the influence of new Instagram features, influencer culture, and algorithm-driven content on students' learning and behaviour. Exploring the role of digital literacy programmes and institutional guidance could provide valuable practical insights for promoting healthier and more responsible social media engagement among college students.

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