IJCRT.ORG ISSN : 2320-2882

INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF CREATIVE RESEARCH THOUGHTS (IJCRT)

An International Open Access, Peer-reviewed, Refereed Journal

The Impact Of Online Learning On Student Concentration In Northern Bengaluru

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26-04-2026

Abstract

The rapid transition to online education has introduced significant challenges regarding students' cognitive engagement. This study investigates the multifactorial impact of online learning environments on student concentration in Northern Bengaluru. Utilizing a mixed-methods research design, primary data was collected from 180 respondents—comprising school, undergraduate, and postgraduate students—through structured online questionnaires. The findings reveal that students generally maintain a moderate level of concentration during virtual classes. Regression analysis indicates that screen time is the most significant negative predictor of concentration ($\beta = -0.41$), leading to digital fatigue and reduced attention spans. Conversely, effective teacher-student interaction ($\beta = 0.36$), positive psychological well-being ($\beta = 0.31$), and a conducive home learning environment ($\beta = 0.28$) act as strong positive determinants. Furthermore, significant differences in concentration were observed across academic levels, while gender showed no substantial impact. The study concludes that improving cognitive engagement in digital education requires a holistic approach that integrates optimized screen time, interactive pedagogical strategies, and robust psychological support.

Keywords: online learning, student concentration, cognitive engagement, digital fatigue, educational psychology, Bengaluru

The Impact of Online Learning on Student Concentration in Northern Bengaluru

Introduction

The evolution of educational delivery systems has undergone a profound transformation, primarily driven by advancements in information and communication technologies. The onset of the COVID-19 pandemic precipitated an unprecedented and immediate shift, transforming online learning from a peripheral tool into the primary medium of instruction. While digital platforms enabled educational continuity, this transformation has given rise to critical challenges concerning students' ability to sustain concentration.

Unlike traditional classrooms, online environments expose learners to multiple distractions, including social media, household interruptions, and multitasking tendencies. Prolonged screen time further exacerbates this issue by inducing cognitive fatigue, reducing alertness, and impairing information retention. Additionally, the lack of real-time supervision and immediate feedback mechanisms often leads to passive learning behaviors.

Despite the widespread adoption of online education, there remains a notable lack of region-specific empirical studies examining its impact on student concentration, particularly within Northern Bengaluru. This study aims to bridge this gap by evaluating the impact of online learning on student concentration, identifying key influencing factors, and analyzing the relationship between these factors and attention spans.

Literature Review

Cognitive engagement is a critical dimension of learning, where learners actively invest mental effort in understanding and analyzing instructional content. Concentration serves as a foundational mechanism for this process.

Prolonged engagement with screens can increase extraneous cognitive load, limiting the capacity of working memory to process new information. Studies indicate that excessive screen time leads to digital fatigue, eye strain, and decreased alertness. Furthermore, reduced face-to-face communication in online environments often results in lower accountability and passive learning. Conversely, interactive teaching methods—such as live discussions and quizzes—significantly enhance engagement.

Psychological factors also play a critical role. High levels of stress or anxiety can impair attention and hinder information processing. Intrinsic motivation remains a key driver of cognitive engagement in self-directed digital formats. Finally, the learning environment is paramount. A conducive learning environment typically includes a quiet space and minimal interruptions. External disturbances in home environments can disrupt attention and reduce learning effectiveness.

Methodology

Research Design and Sample

This study adopted a mixed-method research design to provide a comprehensive analysis. The geographic scope was confined to Northern Bengaluru, selected for its rapid urban development and diverse socio-economic student population. Utilizing a stratified random sampling technique, data was collected from 180 students. The sample consisted of school students (38.9%), undergraduate students (36.1%), and postgraduate students (25.0%).

Data Collection and Measures

Primary data was collected via a structured online questionnaire using a 5-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree). The dependent variable, student concentration, was measured via focus levels, attention span, distractions, and retention. The independent variables included screen time, learning environment, teacher-student interaction, and psychological well-being.

Data Analysis

Data was analyzed using descriptive statistics, Pearson's correlation, multiple linear regression, one-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA), and independent sample t-tests.

Results

Descriptive Statistics

The mean concentration score was 3.12 (SD = 0.84), indicating moderate levels of focus among students. Screen time recorded the highest mean value at 3.85 (SD = 0.76), reflecting significant exposure to digital devices. Teacher interaction had a mean of 3.25 (SD = 0.81), while learning environment and psychological well-being scored lower at 2.98 (SD = 0.89) and 2.87 (SD = 0.92), respectively.

Correlation and Regression Analysis

Pearson's correlation revealed a strong negative relationship between screen time and student concentration ($r = -0.62$). Teacher-student interaction exhibited the strongest positive correlation with concentration ($r = 0.67$). Psychological well-being ($r = 0.59$) and the learning environment ($r = 0.54$) also demonstrated moderate to strong positive correlations with concentration.

A multiple linear regression model evaluated the impact of the independent variables on student concentration. The overall model was statistically significant, explaining 68% of the variance ($R^2 = 0.68$). Screen time significantly negatively impacted concentration ($\beta = -0.41$, $p < .001$). Teacher interaction emerged as the strongest positive predictor ($\beta = 0.36$, $p < .001$). Psychological well-being ($\beta = 0.31$, $p < .001$) and learning environment ($\beta = 0.28$, $p = 0.001$) were also significant positive predictors.

Group Differences

A one-way ANOVA indicated a statistically significant difference in concentration levels across the three academic groups ($F = 4.87$, $p = 0.009$). An independent sample t-test comparing gender revealed no significant difference in mean concentration scores between male and female students ($t = 1.12$, $p = 0.264$).

Discussion

The findings demonstrate that student concentration during online learning is a multidimensional construct. The negative impact of screen time aligns with Cognitive Load Theory; prolonged exposure to digital content increases extraneous cognitive load, leading to mental fatigue and reduced ability to focus. This supports previous literature establishing that digital distractions and prolonged screen use diminish academic focus.

Conversely, the strong positive influence of teacher-student interaction supports the constructivist learning theory, which emphasizes active participation in knowledge construction. The results align with studies indicating that perceived teacher support and interactive methodologies heavily dictate student engagement. Furthermore, mental health variables—such as stress, anxiety, and motivation—significantly dictate cognitive states, affirming that cognitive engagement is deeply interconnected with emotional well-being. Finally, the significance of the home learning environment marks a shift in educational responsibility from institutional spaces to domestic settings.

Conclusion and Recommendations

This study concludes that while online learning provides flexibility, it introduces multifaceted challenges that hinder sustained concentration. Excessive screen time is the primary detractor of focus, whereas strong teacher interaction and psychological well-being are fundamental for cognitive engagement. Improving concentration in digital education cannot rely on a single intervention; it requires a holistic approach.

Based on these findings, it is recommended that institutions optimize screen time by limiting continuous class durations and introducing regular breaks. Educators should utilize interactive teaching methods, such as quizzes and multimedia, to promote active participation. Institutions must support psychological well-being by providing counseling support and mental health awareness programs. Finally, parents and students should collaborate to create dedicated, distraction-free study spaces during class hours.

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