Vol. 4, Issue 11 November 2026 ISSN: 2584-0142

ISSN: 2584-0142
PSYCHOPEDIA JOURNALS
International Journal of Interdisciplinary Approaches in Psychology (IJIAP)

A study on Short-Video Addiction, Boredom Proneness, and Attention Control among Young Adults

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Abstract: Short-video platforms offer constant novelty and instant reward, which may shape how young people experience boredom and sustain their attention. Boredom proneness and attention control are important variables that may be linked to problematic short-video use. The present study aims to investigate the relationship between Short-Video Addiction, Boredom Proneness, and Attention Control, and to examine gender differences in these variables. For this purpose, a sample of 80 participants (40 females and 40 males) in the age range of 18-25 years was taken. Standardized measures of Short-Video Addiction, Boredom Proneness, and Attention Control were administered to the participants. Findings of the study revealed a significant positive correlation between short-video addiction and boredom proneness and significant negative correlations between short-video addiction and attention control. Boredom Proneness was also significantly and negatively correlated with Attention Control. No significant gender differences were found on any of the variables. The findings implied the need for digital wellness programmes, attention training, and skills for coping with boredom to be utilized with young adults, to help them maintain healthy short-video use and attentional functioning.

Keywords: *Short-Video Addiction, Boredom Proneness, Attention Control, Young Adults*

1. Introduction

"My experience is what I agree to attend to."

~William James

Young adults now use short-form video platforms like YouTube Shorts & Instagram Reels daily. They use infinite scrolling to get short, algorithmically personalized information. The user seldom finds a natural stopping point because a new clip is always just a swipe away. Although this design keeps users interested, it has also caused worries about obsessive use, which experts now refer to as short-video addiction. Malur (2025, l. Pan-India youth study found that 290 young professional students spend 81.1% of their time watching 30-60 mins/day.)

University students appear particularly at risk. The phone is always accessible, their days are unstructured, and they are under a lot of social and academic pressure. Short-video addiction is prevalent and multi-causal among college students, according to a recent systematic review (Zhan & Zhu, 2025).

Why do some people find this pattern more pleasing than others? Boredom proneness, a generally persistent tendency to experience frequent and extreme boredom, is one possible cause (Farmer & Sundberg, 1986). Boredom is frequently perceived as a transient, unpleasant emotional state. But it can show up as boredom proneness, a consistent individual characteristic characterized by a propensity to feel bored in a variety of contexts, which ultimately affects mindful participation and enjoyment of activities. According to Eastwood et al. (2012), boredom is an uncomfortable state where a person wants to be involved but is unable to find anything fulfilling. A peaceful time can be uncomfortable for someone who gets bored easily, so a little novelty can be fascinating. People often perceive boredom as a transient, unpleasant emotional state. Boredom proneness, by contrast, is a consistent individual difference characterized by a propensity to feel bored across contexts, ultimately affecting attentive participation and enjoyment of activities.

Another aspect is attention control, which is the capacity to consciously focus, hold, and transfer attention (Derryberry & Reed, 2002). It may be more difficult for someone with poor attention control to resist the next clip and even more difficult to stop once scrolling has started. Eye-tracking research shows that students hooked on short films performed worse on an interference test and were more easily distracted than their classmates who were not addicted (Chen et al., 2022).

1.1 *Short - Video Addiction*

"Short videos are defined as videos that are highly engaging for users, readily watchable, diverse in content form, and limited to a few minutes in duration" (Feng, 2024). Short Video Addiction (SVA), also referred to as "short-form video addiction, problematic short video use,

or excessive use of short-form videos, is characterised by an uncontrollable urge to watch, difficulty regulating usage, and compulsive viewing" (Li et al., 2025; Liao, 2024).

A study conducted by Chen, Guo, & Wang (2023) examined the effect of short-form video addiction on users' attention, including attention while watching videos and the ability of attentional concentration after watching. The results showed that addicted users reported less interest and concentration, more distractions, and exhibited more fixation counts and shorter average fixation during watching short-form videos than non-addicted users.

Mao et al. (2025) conducted a study on short-form video addiction and learning burnout association involving anxiety symptoms and coping styles moderation. The researchers took a sample of 523 undergraduates from China. The results showed that short-form video addiction was positively and significantly associated with both learning burnout and anxiety symptoms, and anxiety symptoms mediated the link between addiction and burnout.

Kurta and Dogru (2026) examined the relationship between short-form video addiction and life satisfaction, focusing on the mediating roles of loneliness and anxiety. The researchers used a two-wave longitudinal research design with 234 participants. The results showed that short-form video addiction was associated with increased loneliness, anxiety, and lower life satisfaction over time.

1.2 *Boredom Proneness*

"Boredom proneness has been conceptualized as a relatively stable individual tendency to experience boredom across situations" (Farmer & Sunberg, 1986). Eastwood et al. (2012) defined "boredom as the aversive experience of wanting, but being unable, to engage in satisfying activity, which they attributed to attentional failure."

Malaeb et al. (2022) examined the relationship between boredom proneness, loneliness, and smartphone addiction among 461 young adults aged 18-29 years. The findings revealed that smartphone addiction was significantly associated with higher boredom proneness, anxiety, and loneliness.

A study conducted by Oxtoby et al. (2019) examined the factors associated with young adults' mobile phone use while driving and risky driving behaviours. The study included 526 young adults and considered frequent phone use, social connectivity, and boredom proneness. The results showed that, although the variables varied by gender, boredom proneness and regular phone use were linked to young men's mobile phone use while driving.

Tagliaferri et al. (2026) conducted a meta-analysis study to examine the association between trait boredom and problematic use of new technologies. The researchers reviewed 25

studies (n=15,152). The findings showed that there was a moderate positive correlation between boredom and problematic digital technology use.

1.3 *Attention Control*

"Attention control is the capacity to voluntarily direct, focus, and shift attention according to one's goals, rather than being captured by distracting or emotionally salient stimuli" (Derryberry & Reed, 2002). Eysenck et al. (2007) define "attention control as the goal-directed, top-down attentional system that balances against bottom-up, stimulus-driven attention." It relies on executive functions such as inhibiting irrelevant information and shifting between tasks.

The relationship between attachment anxiety and short-video addiction among 342 Chinese college students aged 18-22 years was examined by Su et al. (2026). The study explored the mediating roles of attentional control and alexithymia. The findings showed a significant negative relationship between attentional control and short-video addiction. Attentional control was also found to mediate the relationship between attachment anxiety and short-video addiction.

Ye et al. (2025) conducted a study on "The relationships between short-video usage intensity, short-video addiction, perceived mood enhancement, and attention control" among 1086 Chinese student users, whose average age was 19.84 years. The result showed that short-video addiction was positively associated with decreased attention control.

A study conducted by Zhou et al. (2024) examined the relationship between boredom, attention control, and problematic short-video addiction. The sample was collected from 632 Chinese young adults aged 18-30 years, using network analysis. The researcher found a significant association among boredom proneness, attentional control, and short-video addiction.

2. Purpose

The purpose of the present study is to examine the relationship between boredom proneness, attentional control, and short-video addiction among young adults. With the increasing use of social media platforms like Instagram Reels and YouTube Shorts, the study aims to understand whether boredom proneness and attentional control are associated with problematic short-video viewing habits.

3. Hypothesis

H1: There will be a significant positive relationship between Short-Video Addiction and

Boredom Proneness among Young Adults.

H2: There will be a significant negative relationship between Short-Video Addiction and Attention Control among Young Adults.

H3: There will be a significant negative relationship between Boredom Proneness and Attention Control among Young Adults.

H4: There will be a significant gender difference in Short-Video Addiction, Boredom Proneness, and Attention Control among Young Adults.

4. Methodology

4.1 *Sample*

A total sample of 80 young adults (40 males and 40 females), aged 18-25 years, was recruited through Google Forms.

4.2 *Measures*

The Attention Control Scale (ATTC) was developed by Derryberry and Reed (2002). It is a self-report scale that is designed to measure two major components of attention (attention focusing and attention shifting). The ATTC consists of 20 items that are rated on a four-point Likert scale from 1 (almost never) to 4 (always).

The Short-Videos Addiction Scale-6 items (SVAS-6) was developed by Katsiroumpa et al. (2025). The SVAS-6 is a brief self-report measure that covers six core addiction components: salience, mood modification, tolerance, withdrawal, conflict, and relapse. Respondents rate each item on a 5-point frequency scale from 1 (very rarely) to 5 (very often), based on the previous 12 months.

The Short Boredom Proneness Scale (SBPS; Struk et al., 2017) is an 8-item, unidimensional measure of trait boredom, adapted from Farmer and Sundberg's (1986) original Boredom Proneness Scale. Items are rated on a 7-point Likert scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree).

4.3 *Procedure*

The participants were informed that their participation was voluntary and that their responses would be kept confidential. The questionnaires were filled out using Google Forms. Standardized psychological tests were administered to the participants. The responses were scored according to the procedure provided in the manual for each measure. Pearson’s product-moment correlation was used to examine the relationship between the variables, and an independent-samples t-test was also used to check gender differences.

5. Analysis of Data

5.1 *Results*

Table 1. N, Mean, and Standard Deviation

	N	Mean	SD
Short-Video Addiction	80	14.6	5.24
Boredom Proneness	80	31.0	12.36
Attention Control	80	51.8	6.70
Attention Focusing	80	22.6	3.91
Attention Shifting	80	29.2	4.25

Table 2. Correlation Matrix of all variables

	Short-Video Addiction	Boredom Proneness	Attention Control	Attention Focusing	Attention Shifting
Short-Video Addiction	—				
Boredom Proneness	0.373***	—			
Attention Control	-0.265*	-0.473***	—		
Attention Focusing	-0.271*	-0.497***	0.805***	—	
Attention Shifting	-0.168	-0.288**	0.837***	0.348**	—

Note. * p < .05, ** p < .01, *** p < .001

Table 3. Independent Samples T-Test

		Statistic	df	p
Short-Video Addiction	Student's t	0.809	78.0	.421
Boredom Proneness	Student's t	-0.117	78.0	.907
Attention Control	Student's t	-0.448	78.0	.655
Attention Focusing	Student's t	0.227	78.0	.821
Attention Shifting	Student's t	-0.921	78.0	.360

Note. H_a $\mu_{Female} \neq \mu_{Male}$

Table 4. Group Descriptives

	Group	N	Mean	Median	SD	SE
Short-Video Addiction	Female	40	15.1	14.0	4.61	0.729
	Male	40	14.1	13.0	5.82	0.920
Boredom Proneness	Female	40	30.9	33.5	11.96	1.891
	Male	40	31.2	28.0	12.89	2.038
Attention Control	Female	40	51.5	51.5	7.20	1.139
	Male	40	52.1	51.0	6.24	0.986
Attention Focusing	Female	40	22.7	23.0	3.75	0.593
	Male	40	22.5	22.5	4.12	0.651
Attention Shifting	Female	40	28.8	28.0	4.25	0.672
	Male	40	29.6	29.0	4.25	0.672

6. Discussion of Results

The study aimed to understand the relationship between short-video addiction, boredom proneness, and attention control, which had two subdivisions: attention focusing and attention shifting. The results found numerous important connections between the variables and their constituent parts.

The study's first hypothesis (H1) was supported by a substantial positive correlation ($r = .37$, $p < .001$) between boredom proneness and short-video addiction. Individuals who find it hard to tolerate low-stimulation situations may turn to short videos as a quick way to relieve boredom, and repeated exposure to rapid, novel content may, in turn, lower tolerance for unstimulating activities. Because the data are correlational, these explanations can't be separated, and relationships may well be reciprocal. The result aligns with a previous study conducted by Wan et al. (2025) on the relationship between boredom proneness and short-form video addiction among Chinese college students. The study included 458 students and used a two-way time-lagged research design. The findings showed that both variables were positively correlated at the later assessment.

Short-video addiction has shown a negative significant correlation with attention control ($r=-0.26$, $p<0.05$), supporting the second hypothesis (H2) of the study. This means that young adults higher in short-video addiction have low attentional control. There were also two

subscales of attention control: attention focusing and attention shifting, out of which attention focusing was found to have a significant negative correlation with short-video addiction too ($r=-0.27$, $p<0.05$). This is consistent with the view that users may become accustomed to rapid stimulus shifts from fast-paced, algorithmically selected information, making prolonged, voluntary attention more difficult. Its practical influence should not be minimized, as the modest amount indicates that short-video consumption is simply one of several elements impacting attention. Previous findings, Xie et al. (2023), in 1047 college students, found that short-form video addiction operated through attentional control.

Boredom proneness has a significant negative relationship with attention control ($r=-0.47$, $p<0.001$) (H3) as well as subdivisions, such as attention focusing ($r=-0.49$, $p<0.001$) and attention shifting ($r=-0.28$, $p<0.01$). Boredom proneness had the strongest links with attention, which suggests that individuals prone to boredom have more difficulty regulating and sustaining attention. These results are consistent with Orban et al.(2026), who found that higher boredom proneness went with poorer performance on a latent attention control factor measured with cognitive tasks. They also found that attention control partially explained the link between ADHD traits and boredom proneness.

In addition to the correlational findings, independent-samples t-tests were conducted to examine whether gender differences existed across the key study variables. As the findings negate our hypothesis thus the hypothesis four (H4) is rejected, i.e there will be statistically significant gender differences in Short-Video Addiction, $t(78)=0.809$, $p=.421$; Boredom Proneness, $t(78)=-.117$, $p=.907$; and Attention Control, $t(780=-.448$, $p=.655$. Overall, these findings suggest that male and female participants did not differ meaningfully in Short-Video Addiction, Boredom Proneness, and Attention Control, indicating that the relationship among the core variables is unlikely to be confounded by gender. Whereas, the past findings of Wan et al.(2025) sample, gender showed no significant correlation with either boredom proneness ($r=-.03$) or short-form video addiction ($r=-.02$).

Taken together, these findings suggest that higher short-video addiction goes with greater boredom proneness and weaker attention control, with boredom proneness showing the strongest ties to attention, and that this pattern holds strongly across gender.

7. Conclusion

Young adults today spend much of their time in fast-moving streams of short-form content, which offer constant novelty and instant reward, which may shape how young people experience boredom and sustain their attention. Boredom proneness and attention control were

important variables that may be linked to problematic short-video use. The present study aimed to investigate the relationship between Short-Video Addiction, Boredom Proneness, and Attention Control, and examined gender differences in these variables. A sample of 80 participants (40 females and 40 males) in the age range of 18-25 years was recruited to examine relationships. Standardized measures of Short-Video Addiction, Boredom Proneness, and Attention Control were administered to the participants.

The Findings of the study revealed a significant positive correlation between short-video addiction and boredom proneness and significant negative correlations between short-video addiction and attention control. Boredom Proneness was also significantly and negatively correlated with Attention Control. Additionally, independent samples t-tests revealed no significant gender differences across any of the variables between male and female young adults.

The findings implied the necessity of organised digital wellness programmes for young adults. Programs that assist young adults in developing better, more conscious interactions with short video platforms- such as controlling screen time and engaging in sustained-attention exercises- should be created by educational institutions and mental health professionals. Reducing dependency on short films and promoting healthier attentional functioning may be achieved by developing safe and interesting alternatives to compulsive scrolling.

Although the study offers valuable insights, certain limitations must be acknowledged. Firstly, the sample size is relatively small, consisting of 80 young adults (40 females, 40 males) aged 18-25 years, which may limit the generalizability of the findings to the broader young adult population. Secondly, the study relied on a self-reported questionnaire administered through Google Forms, making the response potentially susceptible to social desirability bias, individual perception, and inaccurate self-assessment. Additionally, the small size and equal gender representation may have contributed to the study's failure to find statistically significant gender differences in the chosen variables. Future research should address these limitations by employing larger and more diverse samples, incorporating varied methods of data collection to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the relationships among the selected variables.

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