



IMPACT OF SOCIAL MEDIA CONTEXT SWITCHING ON RETENTION POWER (*Dhriti*) IN BAMS FIRST PROFESSIONAL STUDENTS: A PILOT STUDY

Ayurveda

Dr. Pranav Sharma PG Scholar DEPT.OF Kriya Sharir, IAS&R, SKAU Kurukshetra.

Dr. Shubha Kaushal

Associate Prof. PG Dept. Of Kriya Sharir, IAS&R,SKAU Kurukshetra.

ABSTRACT

Background: Social media usage is increasingly recognized as a source of cognitive disorders, primarily through constant context switching. In Ayurveda, *Dhriti* refers to the intellectual capability responsible for retention and sustained focus. This pilot study explores the impact of social media cut off on academic performance in first-year BAMS students. **Objective:** To assess whether temporary removal from social media platforms improves retention power (*Dhriti*) and academic performance among BAMS students. **Methods:** A comparative observational (pre-post) pilot study was conducted on five BAMS 1st professional students. After the first periodic assessment (PA1), participants voluntarily deleted their social media accounts for a specified time period. Their academic performance was compared using marks from PA1 and PA3. Descriptive statistics were used for analysis. **Results:** Four out of five students showed improved scores --post-intervention. The average increase in academic performance suggests a positive correlation between reduced context switching (via social media cessation) and enhanced retention power. **Conclusion:** Temporary removal from social media may contribute to improved retention (*Dhriti*) and academic performance in BAMS students. Larger, controlled studies are recommended to confirm these findings.

KEYWORDS

Social media, Context switching, *Dhriti*, Retention power, BAMS students, Academic performance

INTRODUCTION

The widespread use of social media among students has raised significant concerns regarding its effects on cognitive functions such as attention, retention, and academic performance. One major cognitive consequence of frequent social media usage is **context switching**—the rapid alternation between tasks and stimuli—which can impair retention power and deep cognitive processing.

In Ayurvedic psychology, the concept of *Dhriti* encompasses the determinative capability of the intellect, which is responsible for retention, decision-making, and cognitive restraint. Impairment in *Dhriti* is associated with mental distraction and poor academic performance. This pilot study investigates whether social media cessation-intended to reduce context switching—can positively influence *Dhriti*, reflected through improved retention and academic performance in students of BAMS 1st professional year.

OBJECTIVES

- To assess the academic performance of students before and after cessation of social media usage.
- To explore the relationship between social media context switching and retention power (*Dhriti*).
- To determine whether digital cessation can enhance cognitive focus and learning outcomes in students.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Study Design

A comparative analytical (pre-post) pilot study.

Sample size= 5

Five students from 1st professional year of the BAMS program voluntarily participated in the study.

Inclusion Criteria.

willingness to delete all social media accounts post-PA1 and minimize digital distractions.

Exclusion Criteria

Those with social media exposure less than one hour

Sampling Technique

Purposive sampling. (Students were not randomized due to the voluntary nature of digital cessation.)

Intervention

Following the first periodic assessment (PA1), students agreed to delete their social media accounts for a sustained period (~2 months) and consciously reduced digital distractions. No other academic

interventions were introduced.

Duration

Academic performance was tracked across two periodic assessments (3 months):

- PA1 (Baseline, before social media cessation)
- PA3 (Post-intervention, after social media cessation)

Data Collection and Analysis

Academic scores from PA1 and PA3 were compared. Descriptive statistics were used to analyze score changes.

Student	PA1 Marks	PA3 Marks	Difference
S1	26	28	+2
S2	21	26	+5
S3	21	27	+6
S4	25	23.5	-1.5
S5	24	29	+5

RESULTS

- Improvement Observed:** Four out of five students demonstrated improvement in academic performance after discontinuing social media use.
- Mean Increase:** The average increase in marks among those who improved was 4.5.
- Negative Change:** One student (S4) showed a marginal decline (-1.5 marks), indicating potential influence of other confounding factors.
- Maximum Gain:** Student S3 exhibited the highest gain (+6 marks).

DISCUSSION

The preliminary results indicate a **potential positive effect of social media cessation on retention power**, likely due to reduced cognitive load from context switching. In cognitive science, frequent task-switching is associated with impaired memory consolidation and decreased attentional control. In Ayurvedic terms, this aligns with the **vitiation of *Dhriti***, which governs the ability to retain knowledge, regulate distractions, and make discerning judgments.

The findings support the hypothesis that **digital minimalism can enhance *Dhriti*** by fostering a more focused mental environment, conducive to learning. Although the sample size is limited, this study adds to growing evidence on the cognitive benefits of reducing social media use.

Notably, one student did not follow the trend, underscoring the influence of **individual variability**, including factors like stress, personal motivation, sleep, and learning styles.

CONCLUSION

This pilot study suggests that **reduced social media usage—and thereby reduced context switching—may enhance retention power (*Dhriti*) and academic performance** in BAMS students. These findings have potential implications for student wellness, Ayurvedic mental health approaches, and digital hygiene education in medical curriculum.

Future studies with larger samples, control groups, and psychometric assessment of *Dhriti* are recommended to substantiate and deepen these initial observations.

Limitations

- Small sample size limits generalizability.
- No formal psychological or neurocognitive assessment of *Dhriti* was performed.
- Self-reported adherence to social media cessation may vary.

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