

Comparative Study of Digital Reading and Physical Book Reading Habits of Postgraduate Students: With Special Reference to Post Graduate Students of selected colleges of Mangalore, Dakshina Kannada District

Harinakshi¹; Dr. Revathi.R²

Research Scholar, DLIS, Annamalai University, Chidambaram & Librarian, Government First Grade College, Haleyangady, Mangalore, Dakshina Kannada ¹; Assistant Professor, DLIS, Annamalai University, Chidambaram²

hari250678@gmail.com; srrevathe@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

Reading habits among students have undergone significant changes due to the rapid development of digital technologies. Digital devices such as smartphones, tablets, and laptops have become common tools for accessing academic resources. However, physical books remain an essential medium for deep learning and comprehension. This study aims to compare the reading habits of postgraduate students in terms of digital reading and physical book reading, with special reference to Post Graduate students of Government and some of the private colleges of Mangalore, Dakshina Kannada District. Mangalore (Mangaluru), situated in Dakshina Kannada district of Karnataka, has emerged as a prominent higher-education hub offering a wide range of post-graduate programs under Mangalore University and other autonomous and deemed-university systems. The study adopts a survey method using a structured questionnaire shared among Post Graduate students. The results reveal that while digital reading is more convenient and widely used for quick information and academic references, many students still prefer physical books for better concentration and comprehension. The study concludes that both digital and physical reading formats play a complementary role in academic learning.

KEYWORDS: Digital Reading, Physical Books, Reading Habits, Postgraduate Students, Academic Reading

1. INTRODUCTION

Reading is a fundamental activity for academic learning and intellectual development. Traditionally, students relied primarily on printed books, journals, and other physical resources for acquiring knowledge. However, the rapid

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growth of information technology has introduced digital reading formats such as e-books, online journals, and web-based learning materials.

Digital reading offers advantages such as accessibility, portability, and instant access to vast information sources. On the other hand, physical books provide a tactile reading experience that many learners find beneficial for concentration and comprehension. Research indicates that reading from printed materials often leads to deeper understanding and faster responses to comprehension questions compared to reading from digital screens. Despite technological advancements, many university students continue to prefer printed materials for academic reading, even though they regularly use digital tools for information retrieval.

This shift in reading behavior has created a need to study how postgraduate students balance digital and print reading in their academic life. Therefore, this research focuses on the comparative study of digital and physical reading habits among PG students of selected Government and Private Colleges in Mangalore, Dakshina Kannada District.

Dakshina Kannada as an Educational Hub: A Brief History

Dakshina Kannada is widely recognized as one of the leading educational centers of Karnataka and the coastal region of South India. The district has a long tradition of promoting education, social reform, and cultural development. Historically, education in Dakshina Kannada was influenced by missionary institutions, local philanthropists, religious organizations, and community leaders who emphasized literacy and higher learning from the early twentieth century onward. Over time, the region evolved into an important academic destination attracting students from different parts of Karnataka, Kerala, and other neighboring states.

The city of Mangaluru, the administrative headquarters of Dakshina Kannada, played a major role in this educational transformation. The establishment of schools, teacher-training institutes, and colleges during the pre-independence and post-independence periods laid the foundation for higher education in the district. Educational societies and charitable trusts contributed significantly by establishing institutions focused on arts, science, commerce, medicine, engineering, management, and professional studies. Today, Dakshina Kannada is known for its strong network of both government and private colleges offering undergraduate, postgraduate, diploma, and research programs. Government institutions such as University College Mangalore and Government First Grade College provide postgraduate education in arts, science, and commerce disciplines, making higher education accessible to students from different socio-economic backgrounds.

Thus, Dakshina Kannada has emerged as a significant educational hub in India, where both private and government colleges play a crucial role in offering postgraduate education and contributing to the intellectual and socio-economic development of the region.

2. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The increasing availability of digital resources has significantly influenced student's reading habits. While digital reading provides convenience and quick access to information, excessive reliance on screens may affect concentration and deep learning. Hence, it is important to examine whether postgraduate students prefer digital reading or traditional printed books and how these formats influence their study habits.

3. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The main objectives of this study are:

- ✓ To examine the reading habits of Post Graduate students.
- ✓ To identify the preference between digital reading and physical book reading.
- ✓ To analyze the advantages and disadvantages of digital and printed reading formats.
- ✓ To study the impact of digital reading on academic learning.
- ✓ To suggest measures for improving reading habits among postgraduate students.

4. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study adopts a descriptive survey method. The dataset captures responses from PG students, primarily in MCom programs, across colleges like Govinda Dasa College, Surathkal (private), Government First Grade College Kapu, GFGC Haleyangady (government-affiliated), Dr. P. Dayananda Pai and Sathish Pai Government First Grade College Carstreet, Mangalore and St. Aloysius College (private). Key variables include frequency of digital vs. print reading, devices used, time spent, advantages/disadvantages, and preferences for academic study, comprehension, convenience, and eye strain. Only 41 students responded. Primary Data – Collected from P.G. students through a Google form based on questionnaire and analyzed using Microsoft excel. Secondary Data – Books, journals, research articles, and online resources related to reading habits.

5. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Several studies have examined the differences between digital and print reading among students. Several researchers have examined the impact of digital reading and printed reading on students' comprehension, engagement, and learning outcomes.

Basri et al. (2024) conducted a quantitative study on students' comprehension based on reading type. The study found that students who frequently engaged in digital reading demonstrated slightly higher comprehension scores, but overall reading frequency was a more significant factor influencing comprehension ability. Students with higher reading frequency achieved the best comprehension performance regardless of medium.

A meta-analysis conducted by Altamura, Vargas, and Salmerón (2023) analyzed more than 25 studies involving about 470,000 participants and found that digital reading had a weaker relationship with comprehension compared to print reading. The study also indicated that digital devices often create distractions and may encourage superficial reading rather than deep understanding.

Research by Bresó-Grancha, Jorques- Infante, and Moret-Tatay (2022) examined reading performance among university students in digital and printed environments. The study found that reading speed was slightly faster on digital devices, but comprehension levels were marginally higher when reading printed texts.

A survey conducted among university students by Subaveerapandiyam and Sinha (2021) revealed that although students possess strong digital literacy skills and frequently use digital devices for academic purposes, many still prefer printed books for serious academic reading and exam preparation.

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Cagri Kaygisiz (2025) made comparison of digital and printed text reading process. The study found that reading texts performed better and were more successful in comprehending the material and findings of the study reveal no significant differences based on age or gender.

Manjushree Devi(2025) conducted study on impact of digital resources on reading habits of undergraduates. The study find that majority of students rely heavily on digital resources for academic purposes.

Another large-scale analysis showed that printed reading habits are more strongly related to text comprehension than digital reading habits. Researchers reported that the correlation between printed reading and comprehension was significantly higher than that of digital reading. These studies collectively suggest that while digital reading offers convenience and accessibility, printed books remain important for deep learning, concentration, and long-term retention of knowledge.

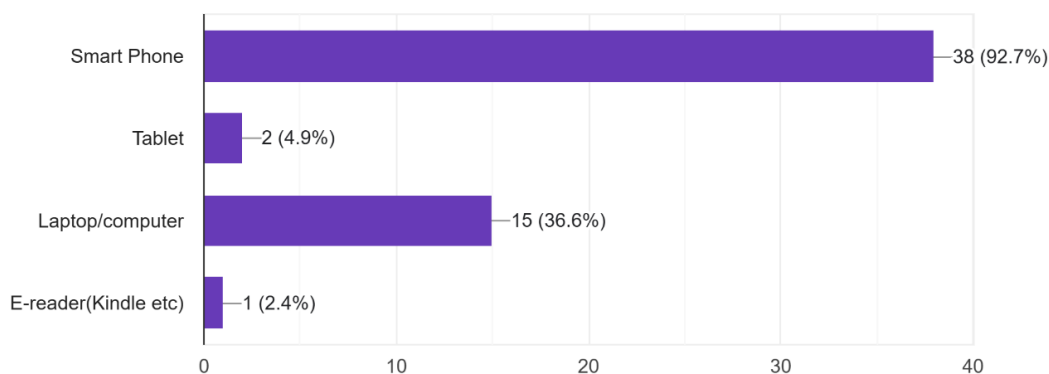
A study on digital versus print reading found that reading comprehension can vary depending on the reading medium and frequency of reading activities. Students with higher reading frequency tend to demonstrate better comprehension abilities.

Research also indicates that printed texts may support deeper comprehension compared to digital texts, particularly when students engage in complex academic reading. These studies highlight the need for balanced use of digital and printed reading materials in higher education.

6. ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION (SAMPLE ILLUSTRATION)

4. Do you own any digital reading device?

41 responses



Out of 41, 38 students are having smart phone and 15 laptop, 2 students are having tablet Only, 1 student is having E-reader

Reading Frequency:

Digital reading occurs "Several Times a Week" (14 respondents), "Rarely" (11), "Daily" (8), or "Once a Week" (8). Print reading is frequent: "Several times a week" dominant for reference books. Time spent is low for digital (<1-2 hours/day mostly), moderate for print (1-2 hours).

Aspect	Digital (Overall)	Print (Overall)
High Frequency	22/41 (~54%)	~25/41 (~60%)
Avg Daily Time	<1-2 hrs	1-2 hrs digital

Comparative Preferences:

For academic study (Q16), 25 prefer "Both," 9 "Printed Books," 7 "Digital Reading." Comprehension (Q17): "Both" (21), "Printed Books" (12), "Digital Reading" (8). Convenience (Q18): "Printed Books" (17), "Digital reading" (16), "Both" (8). Eye strain (Q19): Overwhelmingly "Digital reading" (36/41).

Preference	Printed %	Digital %	Both %
Academic Study	22	17	61
Comprehension	29.3	19.5	51.2
Convenience	41.5	39	19.5

No stark government-private split due to sample skew toward government colleges, but trends hold across.

Reading Format:

Reading Format	Number of Students	Percentage
Prefer Digital Reading	28	56%
Prefer Printed Books	15	30%
Use Both Equally	7	14%

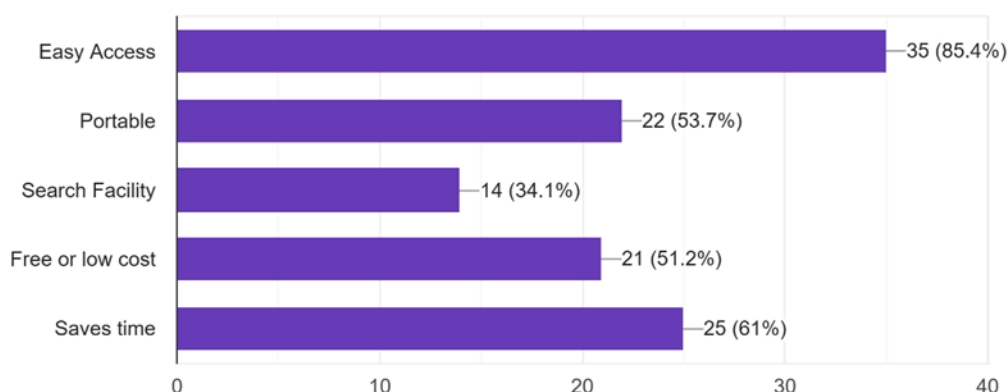
Interpretation

The data indicates that a majority of students use digital reading for quick access to information, while a considerable number still rely on printed books for academic study and exam preparation.

Advantages and Challenges

9. What are the advantages of digital reading? (Tick all that apply)

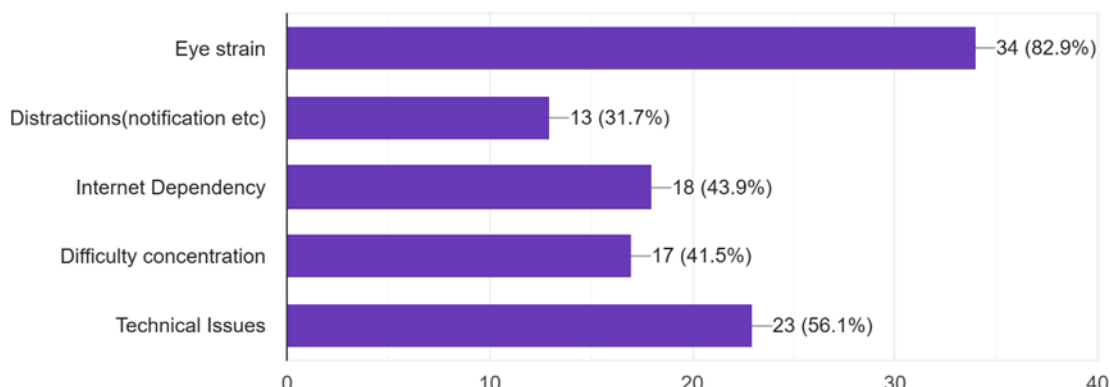
41 responses



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10. Problems faced during digital reading

41 responses



Digital advantages: Easy access, portable, search facility, low cost, saves time (multi-select). Challenges: Eye strain, distractions/notifications, internet dependency, concentration issues. Print preferred for concentration, no eye strain, highlighting, habit. 34/41 see digital causing more eye strain.

Key Insights

Students blend formats but favor print for deep understanding and low strain, digital for convenience/access. Future replacement: Mixed ("Yes"/"Not Sure"). Suggestions: Offline access, eye-friendly features, daily reading schedules. Government college students show similar patterns, suggesting broader PG trends in India.

FINDINGS

The major findings of the study are:

- Most postgraduate students use smartphones and laptops for digital reading.
- Digital reading is preferred for online articles, PDFs, and quick reference materials.
- Physical books are preferred for detailed academic study and exam preparation.
- Students reported that printed books help in better concentration and memory retention.
- Digital reading is considered convenient and time-saving, especially for research and assignments.

SUGGESTIONS

Based on the findings, the following suggestions are made:

- Libraries should provide both digital and printed resources to meet students' diverse needs.
- Students should maintain a balanced approach between digital and print reading.
- Institutions should encourage reading culture through library orientation programs.
- Training programs on effective digital reading strategies should be conducted.
- Digital libraries and institutional repositories should be strengthened.
- Colleges should include reading hours (library hours) in their time tables.

CONCLUSION

The study concludes that digital technology has significantly influenced the reading habits of postgraduate students. While digital reading provides easy access to vast information resources, physical books continue to play a crucial role in academic learning. M.Com students use digital platforms mainly for quick reference and research purposes, whereas printed books are preferred for in-depth study and better comprehension.

Therefore, rather than replacing printed books, digital reading should be viewed as a complementary tool that enhances the overall learning experience of students.

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