

Swipe, Click, Abandon? Investigating University Students' Engagement with Lifestyle Management Apps

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Keywords | Abstract | 250

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Purpose: This study examines university students' use and retention of well-being apps, focusing on mental and physical health. While these apps aim to enhance productivity, health, and well-being, many students either abandon them or avoid them altogether. This research explores the key factors influencing adoption, usage trends, and reasons for discontinuation, aiming to provide valuable insights for app developers and researchers in the field. **Methodology:** The study used a mixed-methods approach, integrating qualitative insights with quantitative survey data. In an online survey, 105 undergraduates answered questions on their preferences, engagement barriers, selection criteria, and use of lifestyle management apps. While open-ended questions allowed for the exploration of individual motives and difficulties, descriptive statistics were employed to identify behaviors. **Findings:** Many students express interest in well-being apps, yet a large proportion either never use them or stop due to usability issues, lack of personalized options, or preference for traditional methods. Fitness and wellness apps are the most popular, while financial management and habit-building apps receive less engagement. Key reasons for abandonment include perceived ineffectiveness, forgetting to use them, and paywalls or excessive ads. **Novelty:** This study offers a more focused knowledge of user behavior in this demographic by concentrating exclusively on lifestyle management apps among university students, in contrast to earlier research that looks at mobile app engagement more widely. **Implications:** To improve retention, findings indicate that developers should give priority to tailored experiences, intuitive design, and long-term engagement tactics. Furthermore, addressing obstacles like notifications and paywalls may increase adoption rates. In order to better meet the needs of students, these insights can direct future app development.

Introduction | 500

Several aspects of daily life have been profoundly altered by the widespread use of mobile applications, especially in the area of personal wellbeing. University students are increasingly using well-being apps, which are meant to improve both physical and mental health by offering features like mood monitoring, fitness tracking, and meditation instructions. These digital resources provide easily available ways to control stress, preserve physical health, and advance general wellbeing. Although they are widely accessible, a significant number of students either stop using them or choose not to use them at all. For developers hoping to design successful interventions catered to this population, it is essential to understand the factors affecting the adoption, continued use, and disengagement of these apps.

While there is potential for well-being applications to promote mental health, research shows that their effectiveness depends on user engagement and the perceived value they offer. According to a study looking at how university students are affected by mindfulness-based smartphone apps, these kinds of interventions can successfully lessen social anxiety and loneliness symptoms, improving general wellbeing ([Sun, 2023](#)). Regardless of these advantages, there are still difficulties in sustaining user involvement over time.

Among the main reasons students stop using apps are usability problems, a lack of customization, and unwanted marketing. According to a review of mobile health interventions for college students' mental health issues, these apps can be helpful, but their efficacy is frequently hindered by inadequate user experience and engagement tactics ([Choudhury et al., 2023](#)).

Furthermore, a study conducted at a higher education institution on the relationship between student engagement and well-being over time revealed that engagement levels vary throughout a term, indicating that outside variables like social obligations and academic workload have a big impact on app usage patterns ([Boulton et al., 2019](#)).

Additionally, a major obstacle still exists in the preference for conventional approaches over digital ones. Some students prefer traditional

methods over app-based solutions, such in-person counseling or exercise. In order to increase their acceptability and efficacy, this preference emphasizes how crucial it is to incorporate well-being applications with the current support networks in educational institutions.

One of the main reasons people are reluctant to use well-being applications is privacy worries. Fears of data theft and exploitation sometimes make students reluctant to share personal health information on digital sites. To promote adoption and build trust, it is important to address these issues with clear data policies and strong security measures.

In conclusion, although well-being applications present a viable way to assist college students' mental and physical health, their effectiveness mostly depends on identifying and resolving the variables that affect user involvement. Developers can increase the efficacy and popularity of these digital solutions by concentrating on improving usability, guaranteeing customisation, integrating with conventional support systems, and addressing privacy concerns. In order to provide useful insights for the creation of well-being applications that appeal to college students, this study intends to delve deeper into these areas.

Research Objectives | 125

The research objectives of the study are as follows:

1. **To examine how university students are using and interacting with well-being apps** - The purpose of this study is to learn how students choose and utilize apps for mental and physical wellness. It will look at what influences both early adoption and continued use.
2. **To determine the main obstacles preventing long-term use of wellbeing apps** - Due to usability issues, lack of customization options, and additional limitations, many students discontinue using these apps. This purpose seeks to determine the key reasons for app abandonment.
3. **To offer suggestions for improving user retention and engagement** — This study

will provide recommendations for developers to enhance the design, functionality, and user experience of well-being applications, increasing their efficacy for college students, by examining survey data and previous studies.

Research Questions | 125

Following are the research questions of the study:

1. What are the most commonly used lifestyle management apps among university students, and how do they integrate into daily routines?
2. What factors influence students' adoption and continued use of these apps?
3. What challenges or barriers contribute to the decline in usage of lifestyle management apps?
4. How can app developers improve engagement and retention among university students?

Literature Review | 1500

University students are increasingly using lifestyle management applications to assist them balance their personal and academic obligations, including productivity, mental health, and fitness. Students' well-being, self-control, and time management are all enhanced by these apps ([Baumel et al., 2019](#)). But issues such as app weariness, motivational decline, and privacy concerns all play a part in decreasing engagement ([Huckvale et al., 2019](#)).

This study looks at how lifestyle management applications are adopted, used, and disengaged by undergraduates. It also identifies characteristics that affect usage patterns and investigates possible innovations to increase long-term effectiveness.

Trends in the Use of Lifestyle Management Apps

University students have embraced lifestyle management apps in large numbers, frequently using them to handle multiple aspects of their personal and academic lives. Apps for fitness and health, including Nike Training Club and MyFitnessPal, have become very popular as they

promote good lifestyle choices. With features like activity tracking, personalized training plans, and nutritional monitoring, these applications appeal to young adults' health-conscious outlook. Research by ([Aboelmaged, Ali and Hashem, 2021](#)) highlights that mobile fitness applications significantly enhance university students' well-being by improving motivation and adherence to healthy behaviors. Similarly, ([Schoeppe et al., 2016](#)) demonstrated that these apps effectively promote better lifestyles, especially when they incorporate gamification features such as badges, progress monitoring, and community challenges. According to ([Hamari, Koivisto and Sarsa, 2014](#)), gamification plays a critical role in sustaining user engagement by fostering a sense of achievement and social interaction, both of which are essential for long-term usage and behavioral change.

Apps for mindfulness and mental wellness, such as Calm and Headspace, have grown in popularity, especially during and after the COVID-19 pandemic. These applications target the mental health issues that are common among university learners by offering easily accessible solutions for guided meditations, stress management, and mood tracking. The American Psychological Association reports that during the 2020–2021 school year, more than 60% of college students met the criteria for at least one mental health problem, underscoring the critical need for accessible mental health resources ([Abrams, 2022](#)). Applications like Calm and Headspace have been instrumental in providing these resources. These platforms offer guided meditations, stress management techniques, and mood tracking features, which have been shown to reduce stress and enhance overall well-being among users. For instance, regular use of Calm has been associated with decreased stress levels and improved general well-being ([Gandhi et al., 2024](#)). This highlights the importance of such tools in promoting emotional resilience. The growing reliance on these apps is part of a broader social trend that places a higher value on mental health and well-being. ([Kajitani et al., 2020](#)) support this trend, noting that students' mental health and stress management can be positively impacted by mobile apps designed for mental wellness.

Students who want to improve their academic performance also frequently utilize productivity and organizing applications like Notion and Todoist. These tools improve time management and overall efficiency by simplifying task management, setting reminders, and tracking deadlines. A recent study by [\(Yu et al., 2021\)](#) found that university students who use productivity apps experience better academic performance due to improved task organization and reduced procrastination. Students aiming to improve mental health or academics are more likely to use apps that align with these goals [\(Alothman et al., 2024\)](#). There is a trend toward apps that help manage both academic responsibilities and personal well-being in one location, as demonstrated by the increasing number of students selecting apps that mix productivity tools with wellness features. [\(Aboelmaged, Ali and Hashem, 2021\)](#) noted that students increasingly prefer all-in-one platforms to manage both their academic workload and personal health, indicating a growing demand for integrated solutions.

Factors Influencing Adoption

Perceived utility, usability, social influence, and individual goals are key factors in app adoption. The Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology (UTAUT2) emphasizes perceived value and usability, especially when it comes to mobile applications [\(Venkatesh, Thong and Xu, 2012\)](#). Students are more likely to adopt apps that are seen as helpful for productivity, well-being, or fitness [\(Baumel et al., 2019\)](#). For example, a study by [\(Cho et al., 2014\)](#) discovered that students were more likely to embrace and keep using fitness applications if they thought they would help them reach their health goals. Likewise, apps with easy-to-use interfaces and low learning curves are more likely to be accepted since they take less mental work to incorporate into daily activities [\(Zhao, Ni and Zhou, 2018\)](#).

Social factors have a great influence on adoption. For example, [\(Cao et al., 2024\)](#) discovered that social influence had a major impact on young adults' adoption of health and wellness apps, especially through peer networks and online communities. The significance of social proof in adoption decisions was highlighted by [\(Schoeppe](#)

[et al., 2016\)](#), who discovered that students were more inclined to acquire fitness applications if their peers were using them. Furthermore, by encouraging a feeling of community and competition, the incorporation of social features like leaderboards or community challenges might improve adoption even more [\(Hamari et al., 2014\)](#).

Adoption is also significantly influenced by individual goals, such as the desire to reduce stress or improve oneself. Students aiming to improve mental health or academics are more likely to use apps that align with these goals [\(Peng et al., 2016\)](#). For example, [\(Huberty et al., 2019\)](#) discovered that students were more likely to use mindfulness apps like Calm and Headspace if they had a strong need to control stress. Likewise, students who prioritize fitness and health are more likely to use applications that provide individualized training schedules or dietary advice [\(Aboelmaged, Ali and Hashem, 2021\)](#).

Challenges in Sustaining Engagement

It is quite difficult for lifestyle management apps to keep university students consistently engaged. Privacy concerns pose a significant barrier, as lifestyle apps often require access to sensitive user data, raising concerns about security and potential misuse. While [\(Martínez-Pérez, de la Torre-Díez and López-Coronado, 2014\)](#) underlined the need for more robust data protection measures to foster user confidence, [\(Huckvale et al., 2015\)](#) drew attention to the transparency of app privacy policies.

Another crucial issue is user retention. Because of the apps' repetitive material, lack of customization, and declining novelty, many students discontinue using them. According to [\(Baumel et al., 2019\)](#), 60% of consumers stop using an app within the first month. The complexity of retention challenges is well-documented, as highlighted by a study by [\(Kidman et al., 2024\)](#), which emphasizes understanding user engagement over time to address factors contributing to app abandonment. [\(Hamari et al., 2014\)](#) suggest that incorporating gamification elements—such as leaderboards, rewards, and social challenges—can enhance user motivation and long-term engagement.

Retention is further hindered by app fatigue and technostress. Overuse of digital technologies can cause mental tiredness and cognitive overload, which lowers students' motivation to engage regularly. ([Kumar, 2024](#)) emphasized the need for efficient management techniques to reduce the effects of technostress, whereas ([Monideepa Tarafdar, Cooper and Stich, 2019](#)) listed factors that contribute to it, such as information overload.

The sheer volume of applications students must deal with on a daily basis frequently causes app fatigue, which further contributes to disengagement. Students who experience cognitive overload and social media fatigue report higher levels of anxiety, which has a detrimental effect on their mental health and app usage ([Wang, Xu, and Xie, 2023](#)). This suggests that in order to keep users interested over time, lifestyle management apps should steer clear of intrusive notifications, simplify functions, and provide an easy-to-use interface.

Lastly, the absence of customization reduces the attraction over time. Students favor apps that are suited to their individual needs, yet many fall short in this regard. Personalized fitness plans and other adaptable features greatly increase engagement, according to ([Aboelmaged, Ali and Hashem, 2021](#)).

Future Prospects for Lifestyle Management Apps

Lifestyle management apps will be successful in the future if they take advantage of new technology and tackle sustainability and inclusion issues. App functionality could be greatly improved by artificial intelligence (AI). ([Fitzpatrick, Darcy and Vierhile, 2017](#)), for instance, showed how AI-driven algorithms may offer tailored suggestions for mental health applications, enhancing user engagement and results.

Pairing smartphone apps with wearable technologies is another promising trend. According to a poll at the American University of Beirut, 26.5% of students had fitness trackers, mostly for the purpose of self-monitoring. The Apple Watch, Garmin, and Fitbit were among the popular gadgets. This demonstrates how lifestyle apps can

improve engagement through integration with wearable technology to deliver real-time fitness and health data, smoothing and enhancing health tracking ([Bardus et al., 2021](#)).

Peer accountability and team challenges are two collaborative features that are growing increasingly popular. By creating a sense of community, interaction elements in fitness apps dramatically increase user satisfaction and retention, according to ([Schoeppe et al., 2016](#)).

The development of apps is increasingly taking sustainability into account. ([Bieser and Hilty, 2018](#)) assert that digital solutions can support environmental sustainability, but only if they are created with efficiency as their primary goal. Developers must give energy-efficient design techniques a priority as technology advances to ensure that the environmental impact of digital tools remains manageable.

Energy issues are just one aspect of integrating sustainability into app development. Research highlights the significance of energy-aware computing, stressing that developers must concentrate on managing energy usage as applications grow more complex ([Charalampos Marantos et al., 2022](#)). In addition to lessening the environmental impact of digital solutions, this strategy offers developers additional chances and challenges to produce software that is more effective and sustainable.

Furthermore, there has been a lot of focus lately on the relationship between screen use and mental health. Numerous psychological problems, such as anxiety and sleep disorders, have been connected to prolonged use of digital gadgets ([Kuss and Griffiths, 2017](#)). By incorporating features that encourage thoughtful usage, sustainable app design can significantly contribute to resolving these issues.

To sum up, lifestyle management applications have become essential to university students' lives, meeting their demands for health, mental wellness, and productivity. But problems like app weariness, poor retention, and privacy concerns still exist, which emphasizes the need for creative solutions. Developers may reimagine these apps' future by

utilizing innovative technologies, emphasizing sustainability, and embracing user-centered design, guaranteeing that they continue to be useful and relevant in improving students' quality of life.

Research Methodology | 500

Research Design

Using a mixed-methods approach, this study examines how university students use lifestyle management applications by combining quantitative and qualitative data. The primary means for gathering data is a survey questionnaire, which includes both open-ended questions to learn more about students' opinions, difficulties, and ideas for improvement, as well as closed-ended questions for statistical analysis.

Participants

105 university students, aged 15 to 25, participated in the study. They were chosen through random sampling from social media and on campus. To ensure an accurate representation of app usage patterns, participants were chosen to reflect a range of academic years, fields, and demographics. There were no particular requirements for inclusion or exclusion.

To gather diverse viewpoints and usage patterns from students with varying degrees of experience with lifestyle management applications, the survey was shared via social media. Students who participated agreed to have their answers used for study, and all answers were kept private and anonymous.

Here is a summary of the respondents |

Response Summary	Count 105	Percentage
Age Group		
15-17 years	17	16.2%
18-21 years	61	58.1%

22-25 years	27	25.7%
Do you currently use any lifestyle management apps?		
Yes	37	35.2%
No	68	64.8%

Data

The following section presents the short survey responses, including both quantitative (closed-ended) and qualitative (open-ended) data.

Responses from Non-Users (Participants who selected 'No')

Survey queries	Responses
Why do you not use lifestyle management apps?	%
I don't find them helpful	29.4%
I prefer traditional methods (e.g., paper planners, physical exercise tracking)	26.5%
I haven't found an app that suits my needs	47.1%
I don't like the idea of using apps for this purpose	20.6%
Privacy or security concerns	25.0%
Medical issues	1.5%
Not really interested	1.5%
I don't tend to open a lot of apps	1.5%
I'm not consistent with the apps, usually due to laziness	1.5%
Have you ever tried using a lifestyle management app in the past?	%
Yes	45.6%

No	54.4%
If yes, Why did you stop using it?	%
It wasn't helpful or effective	34.8%
It was difficult to use or navigate	8.7%
Too many ads or paywalls	34.8%
I forgot about it or lost interest	52.2%
No response provided	6.5%
Minimal/No Usage	4.4%

Responses from Current Users (Participants Who Selected 'Yes')

Survey queries	Responses
What types of lifestyle management apps do you use?	%
Task management (e.g., Todoist, Trello)	40.5%
Fitness/Wellness (e.g., MyFitnessPal, Calm)	75.7%
Finance (e.g., Mint, YNAB)	8.1%
Habit building/Motivation (e.g., Habitica, Streaks)	24.3%
Others	8.1%
How often do you use these apps?	%
Daily	24.3%
A few times a week	56.8%
Weekly	8.1%

Rarely	10.8%
Do you feel these apps have been effective in improving your lifestyle?	%
Yes	67.6%
No	2.7%
Neutral	29.7%

Lifestyle Management Apps Recommended by Participants

Category	Apps Recommended	Count
Task management	Notion, Trello, Todoist, Google Keep, Lifeat.io	6
Fitness and Workout	MyFitnessPal, Strava, GymNation, Train Effective, Female Fitness, FitMe, CO FIT, Pacetracker, Gymshark Training, Fit at Home	10
Habit building/Motivation	Finch, Habitica, Goaly, Me+ Daily Routine App, Alarmy, Daily Deeds	6
Wellness and mental health	Calm, Meet You, Mental Health Fitness Apps, Shyft Health	4
Focus and productivity	Forest, Google Calendar, Business Suit	3
Others	Capcut, My Calendars, I Haven't Recommended Any	5

Categories of lifestyle management apps respondents would consider trying

Category	Count	Percentage
Task management	65	61.9%
Fitness and Workout	60	57.1%
Habit building/ Motivation	47	47.8%
Finance	43	41%
All listed categories + Self-care/Wellness	2	2.0%
Affirmations and quotes	1	1.0%

Findings & Discussion | 500

Overview of Lifestyle Management App Usage

According to the survey, only 35.2% of participants utilize lifestyle management apps currently, and 64.8% do not use them at all. Perceived ineffectiveness (29.4%), a preference for more conventional approaches like paper planners (26.5%), and trouble finding suitable apps (47.1%) are the main causes of non-usage. This suggests a gap between student needs and what current apps provide, indicating that apps may not fully meet the demands of users seeking productivity or well-being solutions.

Barriers to Adoption of Lifestyle Management Apps

Lack of effectiveness (34.8%) and trouble navigating the app (8.7%) were the main reasons given by individuals who had previously tried but stopped using lifestyle management apps. The difficulty of sustaining user engagement over time is shown by the fact that 52.2% of users stopped using applications as they lost interest in them or simply forgot about them. While privacy concerns deter 25% of non-users, it remains unclear whether these concerns stem from data security risks, app permissions, or general mistrust of digital tools. Addressing these apprehensions with transparent

privacy policies and data protection features could increase user adoption.

Popular Types of Apps Among Users

Fitness and wellness apps were the most popular among the 37 respondents who actively use lifestyle management apps (75.7%), followed by task management apps (40.5%) and habit-building apps (24.3%). This is consistent with more general trends in the field, which indicate that students choose apps that promote mental and physical wellness over those that are centered on productivity or money.

Despite the popularity of fitness and wellness apps, a significant number of users did not engage with certain types of apps. Just 8.1%, for instance, utilized apps for managing finances, while 24.3% used habit-building apps. According to this variation, individuals may give priority to their current needs or interests—like wellness and fitness—over other areas of lifestyle management.

Effectiveness of Lifestyle Management Apps

According to the survey, 67.6% reported a positive impact on their lifestyle, compared to 2.7% who disagreed and 29.7% who felt neutral. This suggests that although many students have benefited from these apps, many of them are still unsure of their advantages or may not see appreciable improvements in their wellbeing. This could imply that the effectiveness of these apps is largely dependent on the user's personal goals and engagement level.

Categories of Apps That Students Would Consider Trying

When asked what app categories they would be interested in using, the most frequently mentioned categories were fitness/wellness (57.1%) and task management apps (61.9%). In contrast, only 41% and 47.8% of respondents expressed interest in apps that tracked habits and finances, respectively. These findings suggest that while university students are less likely to investigate apps that concentrate on money management or habit formation, they may be more receptive to exploring

applications that have a direct influence on their productivity and health. Some students could think about adopting a range of lifestyle management tools, as seen by the 2% of participants who chose the "all of the above" group.

Recommended Apps

Respondents suggested a wide variety of apps, which reflects the wide range of needs and interests among students. The apps that were most frequently suggested included productivity tools like Notion, Todoist, and Trello as well as fitness/wellness tools like MyFitnessPal, Strava, and Calm. These recommendations emphasize the value of diversity in the app marketplace and the range of methods students employ to manage their lifestyle.

Conclusion | 250

This research has provided valuable insights into university students' use of lifestyle management apps, presenting both possibilities and difficulties for app developers. There is noticeable willingness to investigate categories such as task management, wellness, and fitness, even though a sizable percentage of students do not presently use these apps. Barriers such as perceived ineffectiveness, low engagement, and privacy concerns have been identified as major obstacles to wider adoption.

To increase the appeal of lifestyle management apps, developers should concentrate on enhancing functionality, customizing user interfaces, and guaranteeing data security. By addressing these concerns, developers can improve usability and encourage long-term engagement, which is essential for the success of these apps.

In conclusion, while the adoption of lifestyle management apps among university students remains limited, there is strong potential for these tools to enhance productivity and well-being. The study's findings provide a roadmap for developers to better meet student needs and drive future innovation in this sector.

Limitations and Recommendations | 250

This study offers insightful information about how university students utilize lifestyle management apps. However, certain limitations should be acknowledged. First, the sample size was restricted to 105 students and may not fully represent the

diversity of university students, even though it was sufficient for general findings. For a more thorough knowledge of app usage trends, a larger and more diverse sample from various institutions and geographical areas would be ideal. Second, the study only used self-reported survey responses, which could be biased by social desirability or mistakes in recall. Using qualitative techniques like focus groups or interviews could provide a more in-depth understanding of why students use these apps and their experiences with them.

Future studies should examine the effects of cultural influences, digital literacy, and academic workload on app adoption and sustained engagement. To increase engagement and retention, developers should also consider using gamification, AI-driven personalization, and enhanced usability features. Wider use may also be encouraged by addressing privacy concerns through the implementation of clear data policies and security measures.

Overall, while lifestyle management apps hold great potential for university students, by addressing these limitations and implementing user-centered improvements, developers can enhance adoption and engagement, ensuring the long-term success of lifestyle management apps.

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