

The Impact of Digital Distraction on the Academic Productivity of First-Year BEED Students at Tagoloan Community College

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the impact of digital distractions on the academic productivity of first-year Bachelor of Elementary Education (BEED) students Tagoloan Community College during the 2023–2024 academic year. The research aimed to determine the relationship between device usage patterns, study habits, and academic productivity. The study focused on aspects such as the profile of students in terms of age and gender, their level of digital device usage, and the effect of digital distractions on their study habits, quality of work, and overall academic performance (measured through General Weighted Average, GWA). The findings indicate that while students generally maintain acceptable academic performance, digital distractions have a slight negative impact on study habits and work quality, with only a limited effect on overall academic achievement. The study suggests that promoting self-regulated learning strategies and balanced device usage could improve student focus and productivity.

INTRODUCTION

The integration of digital devices and technology in educational settings has significantly transformed the learning environment, offering students new ways to participate in their education, access learning materials, and personalize their academic experience. Through the use of smartphones, tablets, laptops, and internet-based tools, students can engage with content more interactively, collaborate with peers, and learn at their own pace. Platforms such as learning management systems, online research databases, communication apps, and educational websites have opened doors to broader knowledge and increased academic engagement. With these tools, students can complete assignments more efficiently, communicate with instructors more easily, and explore educational resources beyond the limits of the classroom.

While these technological advancements have brought about numerous opportunities and benefits, they have also introduced certain challenges—one of the most pressing being digital distraction. Digital distraction occurs when students divert their attention from academic tasks to non-academic activities on their devices, such as browsing social media, watching videos, or playing games. These behaviors, though common in today's digital age, can significantly reduce students' focus, concentration, and productivity. This has raised concerns among educators, researchers, and institutions about the impact of such distractions on academic outcomes and overall student performance.

This study was conducted to investigate the impact of digital distractions on the academic productivity of first-year Bachelor of Elementary Education (BEED) students at Tagoloan Community College (TCC). TCC serves as an ideal setting for this research because the college provides free and open internet access to its students, allowing them to connect their digital devices to Wi-Fi. This digital access supports various academic needs such as research, online discussions, and communication with teachers and classmates. However, it also presents an increased risk of students becoming distracted by non-academic online activities.

The presence of constant connectivity means that students are more likely to be exposed to interruptions, such as social media notifications, online games, or entertainment apps, while trying to study or complete assignments. As a result, the likelihood of divided attention or loss of concentration increases, which can negatively affect their ability to complete tasks effectively and on time. This makes it necessary to study the effects of digital distractions in this specific environment to better understand how they influence the productivity and academic performance of college students.

This study focused particularly on first-year BEED students. These students are in a unique phase of academic and personal development. They are transitioning from high school to college, a shift that often comes with new academic pressures, greater independence, and higher expectations. Many are still developing essential skills such as time management, independent learning, and responsibility for their own success. As they are just beginning their college journey, their academic habits are still forming and may be more vulnerable to external influences such as digital distractions.

In addition, these students are preparing for future careers as educators. As future teachers, they are expected not only to succeed academically but also to gain the professional skills required to manage classrooms and integrate technology into their future teaching practices. The use of digital tools has become essential in modern teaching, with many schools now incorporating technology into the curriculum. Therefore, BEED students are learning to use these tools not only as learners but also as future educators. This double responsibility—adjusting to college life and developing professional digital skills—places them at a higher risk of being affected by digital distractions (Garcia & Martinez, 2024).

While many studies have looked into the effects of technology and device use in education, few have focused specifically on how digital distractions affect first-year BEED students. The general impact of digital distractions on academic performance has been widely discussed, but there is still a research gap concerning how these distractions affect students in teacher education programs, particularly those in their first year of study (Smith & Jones, 2022). Understanding how this specific group experiences and responds to digital distractions is important, especially since they are being trained to become professionals in a field where digital literacy is essential.

Several recent studies support the need to explore this topic further. For example, Rojas and Huerta (2024) found that students who often used social media while studying tended to have lower grade point averages and reported feeling more academic stress. Their results suggest that frequent non-academic use of digital devices during study time can be harmful to both performance and well-being. Similarly, Patel and Singh (2022) reported that students who played online games or watched entertainment content during academic hours often had poor time management and experienced a decline in academic performance. These findings highlight the need for students to develop better habits when using technology for learning.

In contrast, some researchers have found ways to help reduce the negative effects of digital distraction. Lopez and Kim (2023) emphasized the importance of digital literacy training. Their research showed that students who received training on how to use technology responsibly were better at managing their time, avoiding unnecessary device use, and improving their

academic performance. Students who understand the risks of distractions and learn how to stay focused are more likely to succeed.

Similarly, McCoy (2020) studied smartphone usage in classrooms and found that students who used their devices often during lectures had problems staying focused and retaining information. This suggests that even passive digital habits—like checking notifications or switching between apps—can interfere with learning. Thomas et al. (2021) also reported that students who frequently switched between school-related and non-academic digital tasks showed signs of cognitive fatigue and had lower academic performance. Walker and Roberts (2022) found that students who were distracted during assignments produced lower-quality work and missed deadlines more frequently.

All of this research supports the idea that digital distractions can negatively affect students' learning processes, even if the impact on final grades is not always obvious. It also shows that with the right support and strategies; students can reduce these distractions and improve their learning experiences.

For these reasons, this study aimed to examine how digital distractions affect the academic performance of first-year BEED students at Tagoloan Community College. It specifically looked at the relationship between distractions and the students' general weighted average (GWA), their study habits, and the quality of their academic work. By understanding these connections, the study hopes to provide useful insights that can help students recognize the impact of distractions and learn how to manage their time and digital device use more effectively. The goal is not only to highlight the problem but also to find ways to help students become more focused, productive, and successful in their academic journey.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This study employed a descriptive-correlational research design. In this study, it examined if digital distractions significantly affect academic productivity. The entire population of first-year BEED students at Tagoloan Community College during the 2023–2024 academic year was included in the study, totaling 95 first-year BEED students. Using a researcher-made questionnaire validated by experts with overall reliability coefficient of Cronbach Alpha 84.5 % was obtained which means that the instrument was good and highly reliable. The study collected data on learners' profiles and data related to device and application usage, time spent on device and application usage, study habit, quality of work, and the General Weighted Average (GWA) for the first semester of the school year 2023-2024. To establish a comprehensive understanding of the impact of digital distractions, we employed statistical analyses, including Pearson correlation coefficients, to quantify the strength and direction of the relationships between variables.

In conducting this study, the researchers prioritized ethical communication practices when doing the data-gathering procedure. The respondents were fully informed about the purpose and nature of the study. They adhered to ethical guidelines and maintained the privacy and anonymity of the participants. This study examined how digital distractions affect the academic performance of first-year BEED students at Tagoloan Community College.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The study found that the majority of first-year Bachelor of Elementary Education (BEED) students at Tagoloan Community College were aged between 18 to 20 years old, aligning with the typical age range of college freshmen in the post-K to 12 curriculum. This age group is generally in the developmental stage where they are beginning to take on more responsibilities and are expected to independently manage their academic obligations. Being in this transitional

stage, they are considered adaptable to the demands of college-level learning. However, it is also important to acknowledge that students outside this age range—particularly older ones—may require more structured support to adjust to academic challenges, especially in areas involving digital learning tools and modern study practices.

In terms of gender distribution, the results revealed that a significant majority of respondents were female, which mirrors broader national and global trends in enrollment in education-related courses. Historically and culturally, teaching has often been viewed as a more “feminine” profession, and this perception continues to influence student enrollment in teacher education programs. This gender imbalance may have implications for the way educational technology is used and experienced. For instance, some studies suggest that male and female students may differ in how they engage with digital platforms, manage multitasking, or respond to technological distractions, though this was not the main focus of the current study.

The data also indicated that smartphones were the most commonly used digital devices among the respondents. Their widespread use can be attributed to their portability, affordability, and functionality. Students use smartphones to access online materials, communicate with classmates and instructors, and search for information. However, the ease of access also brings a greater risk of digital distractions, especially through social media platforms such as Facebook, Messenger, and YouTube. In contrast, laptops and tablets—while often more suitable for academic tasks such as word processing and structured research—were rarely used. This suggests a notable gap in device utilization, where tools better suited for productive academic engagement are being underused. The limited use of these devices could be due to affordability, lack of awareness of their benefits, or convenience in using phones instead.

Students at Tagoloan Community College reported a moderate level of comfort in using digital devices for academic purposes. They showed familiarity with navigating educational platforms, accessing online references, and submitting digital assignments. However, despite this comfort, they also experienced consistent challenges in the form of poor time management, procrastination, and difficulty maintaining focus. The study found that the constant flow of social media notifications and non-academic content often interrupted students' concentration, thereby reducing their academic productivity. These findings highlight the pressing need for interventions that help students develop effective digital self-regulation skills.

Such interventions could include training workshops on time management, digital mindfulness, and responsible technology use. These workshops would not only provide practical strategies for minimizing distractions but also build habits that promote deeper focus and long-term academic growth. Students may benefit from learning how to set digital boundaries, such as turning off non-essential notifications during study periods, using productivity apps, or following structured schedules for academic tasks.

While digital devices were helpful in giving students access to learning resources and in improving some aspects of their study habits, the study found that this potential was not fully optimized. Many students only occasionally used academic-related apps and platforms, such as educational websites, online journals, and e-books. This limited use suggests that while students are digitally connected, they are not always using their devices for learning-related purposes. This underuse reflects a need for better integration of academic tools into students' regular study routines. Educators may consider introducing specific apps or digital platforms that encourage learning, organizing materials, and promoting collaboration, all while guiding students on how to use them effectively.

Despite the reported distractions and challenges, the study found that most students performed well academically. A notable 35 students (36.84%) achieved “Outstanding” General Weighted Averages (GWAs) between 1.0–1.5, while 55 students (57.90%) fell into the “Very Satisfactory” category (1.6–2.0). Only 4 students (4.21%) received “Satisfactory” ratings (2.1–

2.5), and just 1 student (1.05%) was classified as “Needs Improvement.” These statistics show that students were generally successful in maintaining acceptable academic results, even in the presence of digital distractions.

However, it is important to interpret these results carefully. The study also revealed that while the students' overall academic performance, as measured by their GWA, remained relatively strong, their study habits and quality of academic work were significantly affected. Many respondents shared that they found it difficult to stay focused while studying, often switching between tasks due to digital interruptions. This constant switching and multitasking reduced the depth and consistency of their learning. Students reported submitting assignments on time, but not always to the best of their ability, as they were often rushed or distracted during completion.

These findings underscore the hidden costs of digital distractions. Even when academic performance appears acceptable on the surface, the learning experience itself may be compromised. This is particularly concerning for students in teacher education programs, who will eventually need to model good study habits and effective technology use in their own classrooms.

The minimal impact of digital distraction on GWA suggests a certain degree of resilience among students. Many are able to compensate for poor habits with last-minute effort, prior knowledge, or support from peers. However, this resilience should not be mistaken as a sign that digital distractions are harmless. On the contrary, the fact that study habits and work quality are being harmed means that students have untapped academic potential. If these distractions were managed more effectively, students could achieve even better results—not just in grades but in deeper understanding, skill development, and academic confidence.

The study points to a clear need for institutional and instructional support in helping students manage digital distractions. Schools and educators must take an active role in guiding students toward responsible technology use. This may involve implementing classroom policies that limit the use of mobile phones during lectures or group work, setting clear expectations for academic use of digital platforms, and encouraging digital literacy. Students need to be equipped with the skills to navigate a tech-heavy learning environment without compromising their academic success.

The results of the study strongly support the importance of addressing digital distractions as a key factor in academic performance. While students at Tagoloan Community College demonstrate the ability to achieve good grades despite these challenges, the negative impact on their study habits, time management, and quality of academic output cannot be overlooked. By promoting awareness, offering targeted interventions, and building supportive learning environments, institutions can help students overcome digital distractions and unlock their full academic potential.

CONCLUSION

The study showed that first-year BEED students at Tagoloan Community College are mainly 18–20 years old, the usual age for college freshmen under the K to 12 curriculum. This age group is easily distracted by technology. There were 80 female respondents, reflecting the growing number of women in education-related fields due to societal and cultural influences.

Students often used smartphones, mainly for Facebook and Messenger. Although these devices can support learning, many struggled with time management and procrastination, reducing their academic productivity. Non-academic use like social media and entertainment, made it harder for them to focus and follow a study routine.

Despite these challenges, most students performed well academically, with many achieving "Outstanding" or "Very Satisfactory" GWAs. However, digital distractions significantly affected study habits, time management, and focus, which could harm long-term success even if immediate academic performance remains stable.

In conclusion, the study found that while digital distractions slightly affected students' study habits and work quality, their GWA remained the same. Students effectively coped with distractions. Encouraging students to balance device use and manage their learning can enhance focus and productivity. Future research should explore additional factors influencing academic performance for a better understanding.

Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusions, the researchers recommend the following:

Students should focus on academic success by limiting social media use, making study plans, and using apps that block distractions to reduce screen time's harmful effects. Also, parents can help by setting digital rules, allowing regular study breaks, creating quiet study spaces, and talking openly about how too much social media can be harmful. Meanwhile, teachers can guide students on using technology wisely, recommend useful apps, and help them build good study habits. School leaders can support students by offering workshops on handling digital distractions and providing counseling to help balance schoolwork and technology use. Future studies should include older students and different learning settings to explore how digital distractions affect long-term success and how well self-control strategies work in different situations.

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