



## IMPACT OF INTERNET DEPENDENCY ON SCHOOL WORK PARTICIPATION AMONG SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS IN RIVER STATE

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### Abstract

With the widespread adoption of internet technologies, concerns about internet addiction have grown. Media reports suggest that many students are no longer actively participating in educational activities as they should. This trend could negatively affect academic performance. This study investigated internet dependency as a factor influencing schoolwork engagement among secondary school students. A survey was conducted with 252 senior secondary school students from both public and private schools in River State. Participants completed self-report measures related to schoolwork engagement and smartphone addiction. The results of a simple regression analysis indicated that internet dependency significantly predicted schoolwork participation. This finding supports the hypothesis that internet dependency correlates with reduced engagement in school-related tasks. Practical implications and recommendations are discussed.

**Keywords:** internet dependency, schoolwork, students, secondary school.

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### Introduction

Poor performance in the Nigerian educational system has been associated with schoolwork disengagement and schoolwork difficulties. Current internet technology trends suggest that many students participate less in school-related activities than they should. There is growing concern that most secondary school students commit much time to internet-related activities, such as online communication and social media activities (Adekunmisi et al., 2013; Anasi, 2008; Ani, 2010; Edem & Ofre, 2010; Madumere et al., 2020; Nwazor & Godwin-Maduikwe, 2015; Olateju, 2019; Opesade & Afolayan, 2022; Osang, 2012). They frequently use their smartphones for activities other than schoolwork activities. This phenomenon probably affects their academic performance and could broadly affect their schoolwork participation. The idea of schools reflects a situation where students gather in groups to learn, work on projects and assignments, and generally engage in academic pursuits. (Salmela-Aro & Upadaya, 2012). In the same way, schools designate a structured setting where students commit to academic goals while attempting to learn, earn a certificate, advance their careers, and perform better (Siu et al., 2014).

Students' participation in school-related activities has reportedly decreased in the past few years (Appleton et al., 2006). Similarly, it is reported that the likelihood for students to disengage from schoolwork increases as they advance in their education (Marion et al., 2014; Siu et al., 2014). For instance, motivated students who take full responsibility for their schoolwork are likelier to achieve successful outcomes. Students who neglect their academic responsibilities are also more likely to see a decline in their academic progress. Numerous studies support this claim, linking higher participation rates in schoolwork to beneficial educational outcomes like improved performance. (Bakker et al., 2015; Salanova et al., 2009; Schaufeli et al., 2002). On the other hand, other studies connected academic consequences like burnout and depressive symptoms to schoolwork disengagement. (Marion et al., 2014; Salmela-Aro et al., 2009; Salmela-Aro & Upadaya, 2012). These studies show how important it is for students to participate in class activities.

Notably, Salmela-Aro and Upadaya (2012) proposed that schoolwork participation includes the energy, dedication, and concentration required for academic success. In this context, energy is regarded as a positive approach to schoolwork. A solid positive cognitive attitude toward school activities characterizes dedication. Also, absorption in studies describes total concentration. Following the relevance of schoolwork participation to academic performance, it would appear necessary to consider the factors that may influence schoolwork participation. In this sense, internet dependency is one likely antecedent claimed in the current paper to affect secondary school



students' schoolwork participation. The current article implies that being over-dependent on internet use and an irresistible and compulsive desire to engage in internet chatting platforms such as TikTok, Twitter, and WhatsApp contributes to the observed decline in schoolwork participation among Nigerian students.

One salient impact of information technology on students' lives is the ever-increasing use of the Internet (Wang, 2001). The widespread use of the internet has given rise to a phenomenon known as internet dependency. Because of its increasing prevalence, internet dependency is becoming a major global concern. However, many reports in the media exist regarding unhealthy Internet use among students. Internet dependence in this context reflects excessive internet use to the detriment of a student's physical, psychological, social, or vocational well-being. Although internet use is crucial in education, students are more likely to utilize the internet as a source of information and entertainment on a daily basis. Most use it regularly without becoming dependent upon it. However, for some, involvement on the internet begins to have serious negative consequences. Internet dependence occurs when such consequences are minimized or ignored while Internet use increases. In the contemporary education ecosystem, the number of internet-dependent students is increasing. Excessive Internet use may revolve around social media, pornography, blogging, gambling, gaming, shopping, or other online activities.

### ***Internet dependency and schoolwork participation***

Several disparate studies have been conducted on internet overuse under different but related appellations, including but not limited to smartphone addiction, excessive mobile phone use, and the like (Adeniyi, 2021; Adeyemi, 2021; Akpunne & Uzonwanne, 2020; Akpunne & Akinnawo, 2019; Ayandele et al., 2020; Balogun & Olatunde, 2020; Iorver Igyuve et al., 2018; Obi et al., 2020; Onuoha & Bada, 2018; Onuoha, 2019). The literature also abounds with studies on schoolwork participation (Bakker et al., 2015; García-Ros et al., 2018; Marion et al., 2014; Salmela-Aro et al., 2009; Schaufeli et al., 2002; Shih, 2012). However, much has not been done to fully explore the relationship between internet dependency and schoolwork participation among secondary school students in River State, Nigerian. This lack of research synthesis hinders our understanding of how internet dependency can affect education development in the post-primary education of the state. Nonetheless, it seems probable that young students who are passionate about the internet and its related activities may become dependent on their internet devices to sustain their passion for online trending, which may decrease participation in their schoolwork.

Indeed, most students dedicate a considerable amount of their time surfing the internet using their smartphones. Importantly, their sustained internet use is primarily for social exchanges and other actions unrelated to their academic pursuit (Enwereuzor et al., 2016). Owing to smartphones' high accessibility and mobility, the extensive and pervasive use of smart mobile phones has become the social norm, exposing users to several risk factors and health challenges (Yu & Susman, 2020). The more an individual uses a smartphone, the more likely they are exposed to numerous favorable and unfavorable outcomes. For example, the persistent pings, buzzes, and beeps accompanying smartphone use can instigate a distinct distraction for a student leading to deviation in essential tasks, including deterioration in schoolwork. Furthermore, increased interruption to moments crucial to reading books interferes with students' reading culture.

***Hypothesis:*** *Internet dependency predicts schoolwork participation among secondary school students in River State, Nigeria*

### **Method Participants**

Students from secondary schools in the River State of Nigeria constituted the research population. A total of two hundred and fifty-two ( $n = 252$ ) students aged 13-18 years, comprising males and females enrolled in secondary school, were conveniently selected from five public and private secondary schools in the Port Harcourt metropolis of River state.

### **Measures**

Schoolwork participation was assessed with Salmela-Aro and Upadaya's (2012) Schoolwork Engagement Inventory (EDA), which encompasses nine items designed to evaluate respondent's energy (e.g., "I feel strong and vigorous when I am studying"), dedication (e.g., "My schoolwork inspires me"), and absorption (e.g., "I feel happy when I am working intensively at school") concerning schoolwork. Respondents rated the degree to which each item applied to them based on estimation from the previous month, using a 0 (never) to 6 (daily) response scale. Items were averaged to form an overall scale score. Higher scores indicate greater engagement with schoolwork. The inventory has a satisfactory Cronbach's alpha ( $\alpha$ ) Coefficient of .78 in the present study.



Internet dependency was assessed using the Smartphone Addiction Scale-Short Version (SAS-SV) developed by Kwon et al. (2013). The (SAS-SV) encompasses ten items, with responses to each item scored on a 6-point scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 6 (strongly agree). Sample items contain: "Having my mobile phone in my mind even when I am not with it" and "The people in my surroundings always comment on my smartphone use." The score on the instrument ranged from 10 to 60. Higher scores indicate problematic mobile phone use. The instrument is internally consistent with Cronbach's  $\alpha$  Coefficient of .73 obtained in the contemporary sample

**Procedure**

Senior secondary school students with smartphone access were recruited from five public and private schools in Port Harcourt City of River State between December 2022 and February 2023. About 272 students were approached and asked to participate in a survey to understand their use of mobile devices following authorization from heads of schools. In all, 265 consented to participate in the study. Importantly, two hundred and sixty-five (265) copies of the questionnaires were given to the participants to complete on the spot. However, only the correctly filled copies (i.e., 252) were subjected to data analysis. The other 13 copies were discarded for wrongful filling.

**Result**

The study adopted a cross-sectional research design. The respondents' data were analyzed using the statistical package for social sciences (SPSS, Version 23).

Table 1: showing the simple regression result.

	B	SEB	$\beta$	t	Sig
Constant	1.84	.033		53.67	.000
ID	.73	.043	.164	16.71	.000
$R^2$	.421				

Note. ID Internet dependency; B = Unstandardized regression coefficient; SEB = Standardized error of the Coefficient;  $\beta$  = Standardized coefficient;  $R^2$  = Coefficient of determination. \* $P < .000$ .

A simple regression analysis was conducted to test the assumption that internet dependency use would significantly predict schoolwork participation among secondary school students in River State, Nigeria. The investigation revealed that internet dependency statistically significantly predicted the respondent's schoolwork participation  $F(1,250)$ , 36.71,  $P < .000$ . Thus, the result affirmed the hypothesis that internet dependency would significantly correlate with schoolwork participation was supported.

## Discussion

The study examined internet dependency as a predictor of schoolwork participation among secondary school students in River State, Nigeria. Data from a convenience sample of two hundred and fifty-two respondents were analyzed using simple regression analysis. The result demonstrated that internet dependency statistically predicted schoolwork participation among the respondents ( $\beta = .164$ ). The result indicates that internet dependency accounted for about 42.1% of the sample's variation in schoolwork engagement. This entails that the compulsive use of the internet contributes significantly to students' overall disengagement in the modern-day educational system. The probable explanation for this outcome might be attributed to the multi-features embedded in the internet devices, which allow users to engage in multiple online activities mainly related to gaming, instant messaging, social exchanges, business exploration, and other fun activities. Also, reading in recent days has been neglected by many students who perceive studies as necessary during examinations. Also, some might believe that reading offers no immediate reward commensurate with the fun of the smartphone.

The finding is consistent with previous studies (Anyira & Udem, 2020; Oji & Erubami, 2020). For example, Bukhori et al. (2019) established a correlation between students' smartphone addiction and textbook reading intensity. Recent studies have noted a significant relationship between smartphone overuse and reading distractions (Gezgin et al., 2021), including reading attitudes (Çizmecı, 2017; Levratto et al., 2021). The finding can be described by the conception that compulsive internet use negatively affects the motivation to participate in



reading and other school activities. The study's findings indicated that the respondents varied in schoolwork participation which affirms the constant concern by educators concerning the declining engagement culture of many students despite the importance of schoolwork. Despite the increasing popularity of the internet in modern day societies, its overuse among students has been broadly discouraged because of its negative impact on academic performance (Lin et al., 2021). Thus, the present finding proves that internet dependency correlates significantly with schoolwork participation in Nigeria's educational context.

### Practical implication

The finding has provided evidence supporting the predictive effect of internet dependency in the increasing decline in schoolwork participation in secondary schools in River state. Also, the study helps provide relevant data to the River State secondary school board, teachers, education administrators, and other stakeholders interested in promoting schoolwork in Nigeria, including researchers, since the result provided insight into the possible variable in poor schoolwork engagement.

### Conclusion

The current study examined schoolwork engagement in the era of growing compulsive use of internet-enabled mobile devices among students. Two hundred and fifty-two senior secondary school students were recruited for the study. Indeed, the simple linear regression conducted on the data confirmed the study's expectations. Thus, the study concluded that internet dependency is crucial to student-schoolwork participation in the River State secondary education system. It is essential to report the observed limitation relative to the present study. Firstly, the sample size limited the current study's generalization, comprising only students from secondary schools in the River states. Thus, more comprehensive samples are needed in future research. More so, the data used for the analysis was exclusively based on self-report, which could raise the issue of common method variance. Multiple data collection methods are required to have trusted data for generalization. However, the present paper contributes to the literature by revealing internet dependency as an antecedent of schoolwork participation, thus, expanding our knowledge of the influencing variables in the declining schoolwork engagement in secondary schools in the River state of Nigeria.

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