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DIGITAL PARENTING AND STUDENTS' ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN NIGERIA

By

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Abstract:

This paper explores Digital Parenting and Students' Academic Performance in secondary schools in Nigeria highlighting both the potential benefits and the challenges involved. As technology becomes integral to education, parents are increasingly responsible for guiding their children's digital interactions to ensure they contribute positively to academic outcomes. Effective digital parenting can enhance learning by regulating screen time, providing access to educational resources, fostering digital literacy, and maintaining a balanced approach to technology use. However, challenges such as technological literacy gaps among parents, inconsistent access to digital resources, managing distractions, student resistance, and concerns about online safety present significant barriers. This paper discusses these challenges and proposes strategies to address them, including parental training programs, improving access to technology, and collaborative approaches to digital management. The paper concludes that parents can play a crucial role in supporting their children's academic success in a digitally-driven educational activities.

Keywords:

Academic Performance; Digital Parenting; Nigeria; Students'; Secondary schools



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Introduction

Digital parenting, are ways in which parents use technology to manage their children's digital interactions and educational experiences, which has become increasingly relevant in today's educational environment. In Nigerian secondary schools, digital parenting involves not only overseeing students' use of educational technology but also addressing the challenges and opportunities that come with the integration of digital tools into learning. As Nigeria experiences rapid technological advancement and increased internet access, the dynamics of how students engage with digital platforms are shifting. Digital parenting thus becomes a critical factor in shaping students' academic experiences and outcomes (Akpan & Arikpo, 2022). The significance of digital parenting in Nigerian secondary schools cannot be overstated. With the growing prevalence of digital devices and online learning resources, the role of parents has expanded beyond traditional boundaries. Effective digital parenting can enhance students' academic performance by fostering better study habits, providing access to educational resources, and facilitating communication between students and educators (Akinyemi, 2023).

In a study conducted in Lagos, it was found that students whose parents actively engaged in digital monitoring and provided educational support were more likely to excel academically, particularly in subjects that required extensive online research and digital skills (Ogundele, 2023). These students reported feeling more supported and guided in their academic journey, which contributed to their improved performance. On the other hand, there are cases where digital parenting led to unintended negative consequences. A secondary school student in Abuja, whose parents strictly controlled and monitored all digital activities, reported feeling overwhelmed and anxious about using technology, fearing constant judgment or criticism. This anxiety led to a decrease in the student's academic performance as they became less likely to explore and engage with digital learning tools effectively (Okoro, 2023). Therefore there is need to balance in digital parenting, where supportive guidance is provided without creating a restrictive or stressful environment for the student.

Objective:

The objective of this paper is to explore the impact of digital parenting on students' academic outcomes in Nigerian secondary schools.

Academic Performance among Secondary School Students in Nigeria

Academic performance among secondary school students in Nigeria has been a subject of considerable concern due to its implications for the country's educational development and future workforce. Several factors contribute to the academic outcomes of students in Nigerian secondary schools, including socio-economic status, quality of teaching, and availability of learning resources. Socio-economic factors play a significant role in determining students' academic performance. Many students in Nigeria come from low-income families, which affects their ability to access quality education and necessary learning materials. Studies have shown that students from wealthier backgrounds tend to perform better academically due to their access to private tutoring, better learning environments, and more educational resources (Ogunniyi, 2017). This disparity often leads to a widening educational gap, with students from lower socio-economic backgrounds struggling to keep up with their peers.

The quality of teaching is another critical factor influencing academic performance. In many Nigerian secondary schools, there is a shortage of qualified teachers, and this affects the quality of education provided. According to Owoeye and Yara (2019), the lack of well-trained teachers, especially in rural

areas, has resulted in poor instructional delivery, which directly impacts students' academic outcomes. Overcrowded classrooms and inadequate teaching materials further exacerbate the problem, making it difficult for students to grasp complex concepts and perform well in exams.

The availability and accessibility of learning resources significantly impact students' academic performance. Schools in urban areas are generally better equipped with libraries, laboratories, and ICT facilities compared to those in rural areas. This disparity in resource allocation means that students in urban areas have more opportunities to engage in research and practical learning, which enhances their academic performance (Adesina, 2020). In contrast, students in rural areas often have to contend with outdated textbooks and lack access to digital resources, putting them at a disadvantage. The role of government policies and educational reforms cannot be overlooked when discussing academic performance in Nigerian secondary schools. While efforts have been made to improve the quality of education through various initiatives, implementation challenges have hindered their effectiveness. For example, the Universal Basic Education (UBE) program was designed to provide free and compulsory education for all Nigerian children, yet issues such as funding, corruption, and mismanagement have limited its success (Bamiro, 2021). These systemic challenges contribute to the overall decline in academic performance observed in many Nigerian secondary schools.

Digital Parenting and Students' Academic Performance in Secondary Schools in Nigeria

In the context of secondary schools in Nigeria, digital parenting has become increasingly important as technology becomes more integrated into education. The rise of e-learning platforms, digital assignments, and the use of the internet for research have made it essential for parents to guide and monitor their children's digital activities to enhance academic performance. Effective digital parenting can help students utilise technology for educational success, but it also poses challenges that require careful navigation. One of the primary ways digital parenting influences academic performances is through the regulation and monitoring of screen time.

Parents who actively manage their children's use of digital devices can help ensure that time spent online is focused on educational activities rather than distractions such as social media or gaming. Research has shown that students who are guided by parents in using educational apps, online resources, and digital learning platforms are more likely to improve their academic performance (Akinyemi, 2023). This type of parental involvement can help students develop better study habits and maintain a balanced approach to technology use, which is crucial for sustaining academic focus and productivity. There are potential drawbacks to digital parenting that can negatively affect students' academic outcomes. Over-reliance on technology for educational purposes, without sufficient guidance, can lead to shallow learning experiences where students may complete assignments using digital tools without fully grasping the underlying concepts (Eze, 2024). If parents are too controlling or excessively monitor their children's digital activities, it can create a stressful environment that may hinder students' natural curiosity and willingness to explore educational resources. This over-monitoring can also lead to conflicts between parents and children, which can further impact the student's motivation and engagement in their studies (Okoro, 2023). The effectiveness of digital parenting is also influenced by socio-economic factors and access to technology. Many parents may struggle with limited technological literacy or may not have access to the resources needed to effectively monitor and support their children's digital learning (Ojo & Okafor, 2022). This disparity can create an uneven playing field where students from more affluent backgrounds benefit from better digital parenting and access to advanced educational tools, while others may be left behind.

The Role of Digital Parenting in Enhancing Students' Academic Performance in Nigeria Secondary Schools

1. Monitoring and Regulating Screen Time

One of the key roles of digital parenting is the monitoring and regulation of screen time, which is crucial in ensuring that students do not get distracted by non-educational content. Setting boundaries around how much time students can spend on their devices and specifying when these devices can be used, parents help create a structured environment that prioritizes academic activities. Studies have shown that excessive screen time, especially when it involves social media or gaming, can detract from the time students spend on their studies, leading to poorer academic outcomes (Akinyemi, 2023). On the other hand, well-managed screen time allows students to engage with educational content without the negative effects of digital distractions, thereby enhancing their focus and academic performance.

2. Providing Access to Educational Resources

Digital parenting also involves facilitating access to educational resources that can significantly boost academic performance. Parents who actively seek out and provide their children with access to online learning platforms, educational apps, and other digital tools can enhance their learning experiences. These resources often offer interactive and engaging content that can complement traditional classroom learning, making it easier for students to grasp complex concepts (Ojo & Okafor, 2022). The use of digital libraries and online research tools can help students expand their knowledge beyond the curriculum, fostering a deeper understanding of subjects. This proactive approach to digital parenting supports students in becoming more independent learners and can lead to improved academic outcomes.

3. Fostering Digital Literacy and Responsible Use

Another important aspect of digital parenting is teaching students digital literacy and the responsible use of technology. Digital literacy involves not only the ability to use digital devices effectively but also understanding how to find, evaluate, and use information responsibly. Parents who educate their children about the ethical use of digital tools and the importance of academic integrity can prevent issues such as plagiarism and ensure that students use technology to enhance their learning rather than undermine it (Eze, 2024). Instilling these values, parents help students develop critical thinking skills and responsible behaviors that contribute to their academic success.

4. Encouraging a Balanced Approach to Technology Use

Digital parenting also plays a role in encouraging a balanced approach to technology use, ensuring that students do not become overly dependent on digital devices at the expense of other important aspects of their development. A balanced approach involves integrating technology into education in a way that complements traditional learning methods, such as reading textbooks, participating in discussions, and engaging in physical activities (Okoro, 2023). Parents who promote this balance help their children develop a well-rounded educational experience, which is crucial for long-term academic and personal development. This balance also reduces the risks of digital addiction and burnout, which can negatively impact academic performance.

5. Facilitating Communication and Collaboration with Educators

Digital parenting enhances academic performance by facilitating communication and collaboration between students, parents, and educators. Engaging with online learning platforms, attending virtual parent-teacher meetings, and staying informed about children's progress, parents can work closely with teachers to address any academic challenges their children may face (Ogundele, 2023). This collaboration ensures that students receive consistent support both at home and at school, creating a cohesive learning environment that fosters academic achievement. It allows parents to be more involved in their children's education, which has been shown to positively influence students' motivation and performance.

Challenges of Digital Parenting on Students' Academic Performance in Nigeria Secondary schools

1. Technological Literacy Gaps Among Parents

One of the significant challenges of digital parenting in Nigeria is the technological literacy gap among parents. Many parents may not be well-versed in using digital devices, educational apps, or online learning platforms, making it difficult for them to effectively guide or monitor their children's digital activities. This lack of familiarity with technology can lead to a hands-off approach, where parents are unable to provide the necessary support or oversight needed to enhance their children's academic performance (Ojo & Okafor, 2022). In such cases, students may either misuse technology, leading to distractions, or they might not fully benefit from the educational opportunities that digital tools offer.

2. Inconsistent Internet Access and Technological Resources

In Nigeria, inconsistent access to the internet and a lack of technological resources pose significant barriers to effective digital parenting. Many families, especially those in rural areas or from lower socio-economic backgrounds, struggle with unreliable internet connections or do not have access to the necessary devices such as computers or tablets (Akinyemi, 2023). This disparity means that some students may be at a disadvantage compared to their peers, as they cannot engage fully with online learning resources or participate in digital educational activities. This challenge exacerbates educational inequalities and can negatively impact students' academic performance.

3. Balancing Screen Time and Academic Focus

Another challenge of digital parenting is managing the balance between screen time and academic focus. While digital tools can enhance learning, excessive screen time, particularly when it involves non-educational content, can lead to distractions and reduce students' attention to their studies (Eze, 2024). Parents often struggle to find the right balance between allowing their children to use technology for educational purposes and limiting exposure to digital distractions like social media, gaming, and entertainment. Without proper balance, students may experience reduced academic performance due to an overemphasis on leisure activities facilitated by digital devices.

4. Resistance from Students

Resistance from students is also a common challenge faced by parents in digital parenting. Adolescents often value their independence and may perceive parental control over their digital activities as intrusive or overly restrictive. This resistance can manifest as secretive behavior, where students use digital devices without parental knowledge or bypass parental controls, engaging in

activities that distract them from their studies (Okoro, 2023). This challenge complicates parents' efforts to monitor and guide their children's digital interactions, potentially leading to decreased academic performance if students prioritize entertainment over education.

5. Cybersecurity and Online Safety Concerns

Concerns about cybersecurity and online safety are significant challenges in digital parenting. Parents are often worried about their children being exposed to inappropriate content, cyberbullying, or online predators. These concerns can lead to heightened anxiety and an overly restrictive approach to digital parenting, where parents limit their children's use of the internet to the point where it affects their ability to access educational resources (Ogundele, 2023). Students who experience online safety issues may become disengaged or distracted, impacting their academic performance. Balancing online safety with the need for educational access is a delicate challenge for parents.

Conclusion

Digital parenting plays a critical role in shaping the academic performance of secondary school students in Nigeria. As technology becomes increasingly integrated into education, the involvement of parents in managing and guiding their children's digital interactions is more important than ever. Effective digital parenting can enhance students' academic outcomes by providing access to educational resources, fostering digital literacy, and ensuring a balanced use of technology. However, challenges such as technological literacy gaps among parents, inconsistent access to resources, the difficulty in balancing screen time, student resistance, and concerns about online safety pose significant barriers. Addressing these challenges requires a multifaceted approach. Empowering parents through digital literacy training, improving access to technological resources, setting clear guidelines for screen time, adopting a collaborative approach to parenting, and ensuring robust online safety measures are all critical steps forward. While the path of digital parenting is fraught with challenges, it also offers immense opportunities to enhance student learning. A concerted effort by parents, educators, and policymakers is needed to harness the potential of digital tools for education while mitigating the risks, ultimately leading to improved academic performance and well-rounded development for students.

Ways Forward to Address Challenges of Digital Parenting in Nigerian Secondary Schools

1. **Bridging Technological Literacy Gaps Among Parents:** To address the technological literacy gap, educational institutions and community organizations can offer training programs and workshops tailored for parents. These programs can focus on basic digital skills, how to use educational apps, and strategies for effective digital monitoring. By equipping parents with the necessary skills and knowledge, they can more confidently guide their children in the digital world, enhancing their ability to support academic performance.
2. **Improving Access to Internet and Technological Resources:** To combat inconsistent access to the internet and technology, there is a need for public-private partnerships to provide affordable and reliable internet services and technological devices to underserved communities. Schools can also establish community centers with internet access and digital resources where students can complete assignments and engage in online learning. Advocating for government policies that support infrastructure development in rural areas will help bridge the digital divide.

- 3. Balancing Screen Time and Academic Focus:** Parents can manage screen time more effectively by establishing clear guidelines that differentiate between educational and recreational use of digital devices. Creating a structured daily routine that includes designated times for studying, breaks, and leisure can help students develop discipline in their digital habits. Open communication between parents and children about the importance of maintaining academic focus while using technology can also foster mutual understanding and cooperation.
- 4. Overcoming Resistance from Students:** To address student resistance, parents can adopt a more collaborative approach to digital parenting. Instead of imposing strict controls, involving students in discussions about setting reasonable boundaries and expectations can empower them to take responsibility for their digital behavior. Building trust and explaining the rationale behind certain restrictions can reduce resistance and encourage students to adhere to guidelines that benefit their academic performance.
- 5. Ensuring Cybersecurity and Online Safety:** To address concerns about online safety, parents can implement age-appropriate digital safety measures, such as parental controls, privacy settings, and safe browsing practices. Educating students about the potential risks of the internet and how to navigate them safely is also crucial. Schools can support this effort by incorporating digital citizenship and online safety into the curriculum.

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