The Effects of Mobile Phone on the Academic Performance of Students of Nigerian British University, Asa-Abia State

By

Akani Chibuike Akani,
Department of Mass Communication,
Nigerian British University,
Kilometre 10, Port Harcourt Aba Road,
Asa, Ukwa West L.G.A
Abia State, Nigeria.
akanichibuike@gmail.com
08068216522; 09117312593

Abstract

Mobile phones are nowadays central to students' lives while undertaking higher education, giving both academic benefits and distractions. For this research, the influence of mobile phone utilization on the academic performance of students at Nigerian British University is examined. Empirical evidence from studies in Nigeria and worldwide literature is utilized to determine how mobile phones foster academic behavior through learning materials, improved communication, and personal time management. It also investigates harmful impacts such as distraction, disruption of sleeping patterns, reduced attention span, and psychological dependency. The study stresses that the learning impact of mobile phones is not in ownership but in the habit of use. Students who utilize their devices to a very high degree for learning activities such as opening learning portals, teamwork, or timely interaction with lecturers will be at an academic advantage. In contrast to this, overuse of social media activities, entertainment, or study multitasking during study hours typically leads to lowered focus and worse academic performance. The study believes that even though cellular phones can lead to enhanced educational outcomes when used appropriately, student digital control and school-based interventions are necessary in order to minimize misuse. A few suggested strategies include instituting phone-use regulations, digital self-regulation training, and promoting structured phone-free study sessions. Future research is advised to conduct mixed-method or

survey-type research within the university to provide data-driven insights into the subtle effects of mobile phone usage.

Keywords: Mobile phones; academic performance; Nigerian British University; digital distraction; student behavior.

1.1 Introduction

Mobile phones are now ubiquitously essential devices in contemporary university life, transforming communication, information access, and academic administration. Their increasing pervasiveness has sparked debate in academic literature on the issue of their role as learning facilitators or distractors. In Nigeria, particularly in private institutions like the Nigerian British University, Asa, mobile phones serve as necessary learning devices and at the same time jeopardize students' academic concentration. The ambivalence of such devices◎facilitating and interfering with academic performance in equal measure◎has been reason enough to study their multifaceted contribution in specific settings of institutions. With learning systems within the globe shifting towards hybrid and distance learning trends, the application of mobile phones has become increasingly necessary (Shao et al., 2020). In Nigeria, where infrastructural problems have a tendency to limit exposure to traditional learning resources, mobile phones have the propensity to be utilized to access e-textbooks, electronic journals, virtual libraries, and live study support (Edeh et al., 2024). This is particularly the case in private universities like Nigerian British University, Asa, where students are required to supplement lecture room learning with personal digital research. Through interfaces like Google Scholar, ResearchGate, and institutions' learning portals, mobile phones facilitate efficient access to information, support collaborative learning through messaging apps, and facilitate classroom management through timetabling (Rabiu et al., 2016).

Convenience of mobile connection, however, also comes with several risks to academic engagement. Mounting literature points to the distraction that smartphones present, especially with the availability of social media, games, and entertainment content (Adeleke, 2017). Students' tendency to multitask◎switching between study material and recreational apps◎has the capability to substantially inhibit retention, reduce understanding, and diminish academic productivity.

Overreliance on the use of smartphones during studies has been linked to procrastination and poor performance among undergraduates in southwestern Nigeria by Adebayo and Abdulhamid (2022).

Also, psychological dependency on cell phones has led to new problems concerning the health of students and its indirect impact on academic performance. Instagram and TikTok have been linked with increased anxiety, lower self-esteem, and lower motivation, all of which are deterrents to the ability of students for prolonged academic participation (Egielewa, 2021). These socio-psychological effects, though non-academic in nature, are part of the net impact of telephone usage in a university setting.

In Nigerian British University, with exposure to mixed international norms and home socio-cultural environments, the role of mobile phones deserves critical inspection. On the one hand, there is anecdotal evidence of students making effective use of phones for access to lecture materials, coordination of group work, and research for assignments. On the other hand, it is a common claim by most students of regular distraction by social and entertainment media while they study. This bimodal usage pattern is as part of the broader national phenomenon and warrants empirical scrutiny.

Therefore, the principal aim of this paper is to examine how phone usage influences student performance at Nigerian British University. By employing national studies and situating them in the specific academic environment of this institution, the paper tries to determine the facilitative and constraining roles of mobile phone use. It considers the socio-psychological, cognitive, and behavioral factors of mobile phone use, with a general evaluation of its impact on learning. The findings are expected to inform university policy, guide student behavior, and indicate possible research into digital discipline and learning technology for Nigerian tertiary institutions.

1.2 Literature Review

The heightened prevalence of mobile phones among Nigerian university students has drawn a considerable volume of academic research whose findings present a

spectrum of positive and negative implications for the academic performance of the students. Research studies conducted in Nigerian contexts offer insights into how the use of mobile phones shapes learning habits, study behavior, and overall academic achievement among students.

In an earlier work by Rabiu, Muhammed, and Umar (2016), a survey of students at the secondary school level in the Taraba State revealed that the use of mobile phones had a significant impact on performance, though surprisingly, frequency of use was less impactful than the nature of activities done via the phone. The study highlighted that the students who employed phones for non-academic purposes very often—i.e., gaming and social media—performed poorer academically than those who employed phones primarily for learning. That suggests that the nature and intention of mobile use, rather than its frequency, are stronger predictors of academic performance.

Adeleke (2017) also conducted a study on university undergraduate students and confirmed strong correlation between excessive use of phones and poor academic performance. Users who spent considerable amounts of time on entertainment programs, social sites, and texting reported lower focus levels, increased procrastination levels, and decreased study time levels. The same study, however, highlighted that if mobile phones were being used moderately and for academic purposes—such as studying e-books, contacting lecturers, or group work—then they could well enhance academic performance. Adeleke's work, thus, confirms the role of balanced and purposeful use.

Edeh, Okonkwo, and Nwakamma contributed to this in the year 2024 by noting that smartphones, when used properly, are learning enrichment tools. Their study involving management students in three private Nigerian universities confirmed that mobile phones granted convenience and flexibility in how one accessed learning platforms like Coursera, Google Scholar, and university portals online. The study also acknowledged that while such technology can facilitate scholarly productivity, the same technology facilitates distractions like smartphone video games and streaming media entertainment, the net effect squarely rests on students' self-control and institutional controls.

Extending the scope, Egielewa (2021) gave a panoramic perspective across some Nigerian universities and underscored the ambivalence of the use of mobile phones. The study concluded that mobile phones had the potential to become useful learning tools◎particularly for information searching and communication in real time◎if properly integrated into educational settings. In the absence of institutional management, like restrictions on phone use in lectures or computer skills courses, distraction and abuse opportunities were still high. Egielewa also referred to the newly arising psychological effects of mobile phone addiction, including anxiety, fatigue in attention, and lower academic drive, especially among students who excessively use social comparison on social media platforms such as Instagram and TikTok.

Furthermore, international research reaffirms and reinforces these home-country findings. Shao et al. (2020), for example, conducted a systematic review of mobile learning in tertiary education and determined that while mobile technology has the potential to support personalized learning, poor regulation and lack of demarcation typically lead to decreased scholarly discipline. The same is true for the Nigerian case where digital technologies are increasingly being adopted within spaces of learning but where policies and regulatory frameworks for managing device usage continue to evolve.

Cumulatively, these studies suggest that use of mobile phones among Nigerian university students, including Nigerian British University, is neither necessarily bad nor always good. Rather, their academic impacts depend on the purposes of their users, institutional support infrastructure, and socio-cultural realities. The literature therefore suggests making discreet interventions such as proposing apps with academic applications, digital politeness training, and implementing mobile phone use policies tailored to university learning spaces.

1.3 The Effects of Mobile Phone on the Academic Performance of Students in Nigeria

Students are increasingly using mobile phones to carry out primary learning activities, including accessing lecture notes, conducting research, and planning group work. The modern smartphone is not only used for communication but also

as a study platform, data repository, and school calendar. The same device, however, comes with accessories like social media, mobile games, and non-academic web browsing. Such duality has a call to explore how mobile phones affect learning⊚either positively as enablers of success or negatively as hindrances to learning. An understanding of such dynamics at university levels is critical for those stakeholders who have an interest in establishing interventions, policies, or awareness initiatives that enhance learning in the midst of managing the negative energies of mobile technology in educational circles

1.3.1 Positive Effects

In the Nigerian British University, mobile phone use has become a high-profile part of student life. Students utilize smartphones at regular intervals to access learning material in the form of lecture notes, e-books, online journals, and research databases. Materials like Google Scholar, Coursera, and institutional repositories are increasingly used for academic enrichment. Smooth access to digital content improves the quality of assignment writing and research. In a study by Edeh, Akor, and Njoku (2024), the use of smartphones was discovered to significantly enhance the academic performance of Nigerian university students. In the study, it was noted that management students who consistently used their phones for learning purposes were more proficient and had higher grades in academic engagement than students who kept phone usage for non-academic purposes.

Apart from enabling access to learning content, mobile phones also enhance communication and collaboration. Students often use phones to communicate with instructors via email, telephone, and instant messaging applications like WhatsApp and Telegram. This has become necessary for reasons of clarifying lecture content, arranging classes, and seeking academic guidance outside class hours. Group collaboration is also facilitated using mobile phones. Group assignments and projects, which often require coordination between several students, are now efficiently managed through messaging apps and file sharing. According to Ukoha and Mbachu (2021), students who employed educational group discussion using mobile communication platforms experienced higher levels of productivity and cohesion, and this was reflected in better group performance and project quality.

Mobile phones also help students organize their time and academic matters more effectively. Calendar applications, reminders, and productivity software such as Google Keep, Notion, and Evernote are employed to schedule study sessions, monitor deadlines, and coordinate academic activities. These applications enhance planning and academic discipline. Ayodele and Oloyede (2022) found that students who actively utilized mobile apps to regulate their time were likely to submit assignments on time and experienced less academic stress. The researchers thus concluded that the ability to monitor work and set reminders enhanced students' self-regulation and academic independence. Thus, even though mobile phones are accused as a source of distraction, their potential to enhance learning cannot be overlooked if used purposefully. The growing reliance on mobile technology in academic environments like the Nigerian British University is a pointer towards the trend of flexible, student-centered learning in which the use of mobile technology as a required academic tool occurs.

1.3.2 Negative Impacts

Although mobile phones are useful in academic environments like the Nigerian British University, their misuse has the consequence of undermining student performance. Distraction is likely to be the most common disadvantage. Students tend to get distracted by non-academic uses such as social media, cell phone games, and entertainment sites like YouTube. These distractions frequently interrupt planned study time or in-class work. Adeleke (2017) reported that students who multitasked extensively◎switching between study materials and entertainment apps◎had lower rates of retention and understanding. Multitasking is a cause of mental overload, and therefore it becomes difficult for the students to improve knowledge consolidation. Therefore, even if there is access to mobile phones for learning purposes, their use with leisure applications is often counterproductive to concentrative learning.

Disturbance of sleep patterns through excessive use of phones during the night is a related major problem. Students are prone to stay up late going through social media postings or watching videos, thus experiencing low quality sleep and reduced mental alertness during the day while studying. Sleep hygiene affected by the overuse of the phone is reported by Okoye and Balogun (2021) to have a

negative effect on cognitive ability in the areas of memory, attention, and problem-solving, all of which are necessary for good academic performance. The researchers also noted a significant relationship between nighttime mobile use and poor academic performance among Nigerian university undergraduates.

Moreover, frequent use of mobile phones for brief periods of information consumption also leads to a reduced attention span. Constant notifications and the tendency of toggling between apps create a psychological habit of fragmentation. Students accustomed to consuming and reading material in brief durations, such as TikTok videos or social media posts, may find it increasingly difficult to maintain attention over long academic texts or extended durations of lecture. Bello and Olaniyi (2023) assert that the online environment created by smartphones encourages shallow learning, where learners browse rather than become engrossed in learning content. Ultimately, it erodes critical thinking and hinders deep learning experiences.

In short, while cell phones are certainly a valuable learning tool, their use can be a drain on academic achievement. The problem lies in ensuring that students learn how to walk the thin line between productivity and entertainment, so the potential benefits of technology are not overshadowed by its capacity to distract and impair thinking.

1.3.3 Academic Dishonesty

The increasing number of internet-enabled mobile phones among Nigerian British University students has also contributed to fuelling academic dishonesty. With the ease of internet access during examinations, students are likely to cheat, plagiarize, or collaborate with other students without authorization. When there is no substantial invigilation or computerized monitoring system, mobile phones provide the easily accessible tool for copying information from the internet or texting fellow classmates while taking exams. Eze and Nwankwo (2020) further reported a phenomenal increase of academic dishonesty associated with mobile device use in Nigerian tertiary institutions, attributing this trend to the lack of clear digital ethics policies and poor examination monitoring. This erodes student achievement validity and demeans genuine academic labor.

Furthermore, socio-psychological impact of mobile phone use cannot be ignored in relation to academic performance. Excessive use of social media platforms, especially those that support image-based content like Instagram and Snapchat, is likely to lead to social comparison, low self-esteem, and anxiety. These psychological effects negatively influence motivation, performance in class, and overall academic performance. Egielewa (2021) found that students who reported high usage of social media were more stressed and less engaged academically, as a result of the mental stress created due to the artificial portrayal of success and lifestyle on the web. Such emotional exhaustion can lead to disengagement from academics, delay, and poor outcomes.

Apart from psychological stress, addiction to mobile phones also adds a new level of academic difficulty. Students who depend excessively on their phones for even the most fundamental purposes◎consulting the time, solving simple arithmetic, or scheduling study routines◎may struggle with partaking in traditional learning practices. This excessive dependency negates the building of intellectual autonomy, a prerequisite for critical thought, deep learning, and academic independence. Adebayo and Ogunlade (2022) have referred to this situation as "digital dependency," whereby learners become restless or inattentive when phones are not accessible, with this tending to result in lower classroom alertness and poorer academic discipline.

Overall, although cell phones are part of modern student life, unlimited usage generates a host of negative academic effects that range from cheating to compromised emotional health and intellectual dependency. Without deliberate interventions and formal digital literacy programs, these effects can persist in eroding the academic potential of students.

1.4 Findings

Empirical records from other Nigerian studies provide a clear indication of the effects of mobile phone use on the academic performance of students. While mobile phones can be effective tools in educational processes, their misuse for extraneous reasons may also have a negative impact on learning results. Such opposite effects

exist among Nigerian British University students, with extensive usage of mobile phones for learning enhancement as well as leisure.

Rabiu, Muhammed, and Umar (2016) showed that students who use smartphones for the primary purpose of academic work◎e.g., to view lecture notes, learn through study group collaboration, or tap into e-learning websites◎achieve better academically. These students benefit from the convenience and promptness provided by mobile technology as they can tap into educational videos, journal databases, and online libraries. For instance, a candidate who sits for an examination can readily view past questions, watch YouTube videos, or participate in WhatsApp study groups, hence optimizing their learning process. This concurs with findings by Adeleke (2017), who observed a robust positive relationship between phone academic use by university students and grade point averages (GPA) in southwest Nigeria.

At Nigerian British University, students who make use of mobile technology in learning are also able to achieve improved academic performance. These students normally make use of sites like Google Scholar, Coursera, Khan Academy, or learning platforms supported by their schools in order to process lecture notes better. Support of this nature is also enhanced through messaging apps, which aid simple coordination of group projects and immediate questioning of difficult course content. Edeh et al. (2024) noted that smartphone-based learning has grown significantly with management and business students in Nigerian universities, which has improved more independent research skills as well as early submission of assignments.

However, the potential is usually eroded by the allure of non-academic content. Social media platforms like Instagram, TikTok, and Twitter compete with students' attention, mostly at crucial study time. Empirical evidence identifies that multitasking of study activity and social media consumption leads to split attention, lower levels of retention, and lower levels of academic performance. Egielewa (2021) highlighted that screen usage for non-academic purposes is associated with low levels of concentration and lower motivation among university students. This becomes particularly problematic in universities like Nigerian

British University, where the school calendar is rigorous and requires longer concentration.

Multitasking and distraction are only part of the problem. Students glued to their phones throughout classes may miss subtle explanations, punctual class discussions, and spontaneous discussions required for comprehension. Adeleke (2017) emphasized that perpetual switching between learning and entertainment applications erodes cognitive control and ruins deep learning. Educational performance in such cases is destined to decline even when it was first meant for utilization in productive work.

In addition, students who extensively utilize smartphones for leisure activities are likely to struggle with managing academic time. Excessive usage of game apps or streaming shows during the semester leaves insufficient time for coursework, revision, or critical-thinking exercises. Such a process thus ends up in cramming before exams or submitting subpar assignments◎behaviors that negatively affect GPA outcomes. In Nigerian British University, where students live on campus and have considerable control over their daily lives, poor regulation of cell phone use can result in foregone learning opportunities.

Based on these findings, the presumption is that those Nigerian British University students using their phones solely for purposes of academic support will likely perform better academically than those who use their phones predominantly for entertainment or socialization while in class. The trend harmonizes with general trends in Nigerian universities, affirming that neither mobile phones are inherently good nor bad, but their academic impact is dependent on user intention and self-restraint (Rabiu et al., 2016; Egielewa, 2021). Thus, interventions to improve academic performance should not be aimed at the restriction of phone use in totality but at promoting good digital practice, digital literacy in the curriculum, and guiding students to optimize phone use for academic achievement.

1.5 Conclusion

Mobile phones are now the embodiment of embedded technologies in learning environments in the modern context, including Nigerian British University, where

they are core technologies for enhancing learning experience. When used appropriately, mobile phones enable academic achievement through improved access to learning material, improved communication with teachers and peers, and improved time management. The students are supported by quick access to lecture notes, online journals, and learning platforms, all of which translate to improved research and study habits. They also employ these mobile phones to schedule timetables, participate in virtual study groups, and interact with collaborative scholarly work, constructing a more dynamic and adaptive learning environment. But the very same ease of technology soon becomes a liability. Used primarily for non-scholarly purposes◎such as surfing social media, playing games, or passive content viewing◎mobile phones are distractions. Studies have proven that multitasking, particularly when it happens while studying, leads to fragmented attention and reduced information retention (Adeleke, 2017). Furthermore, excessive screen time, especially in the night, hinders sleeping patterns, which adversely affects concentration and daytime learning (Egielewa, 2021). Social comparison via internet platforms also might lead to mental burnout and reduced motivation (Egielewa, 2021).

The research therefore shows that the academic impact of mobile phones is not uniform but highly dependent on usage patterns. Students who self-regulate to use phones for academic tasks are likely to achieve more than those who use them for recreation during learning hours. In a bid to achieve maximum academic outcomes, there is a pressing need for institutional control and student self-regulation. Universities can provide digital literacy courses that instill proper use of phones, and students can learn to manage screen time and put educational material first. Finding balance between opportunity and discipline, mobile phones can be an asset to the academic experience rather than a liability.

1.6 Recommendations

To harness the academic potential of mobile phone use and limit its disruptive effects in Nigerian British University, a multi-faceted strategy involving institutional policies, student-led strategies, and further empirical studies is recommended. The university, first and foremost, should adopt overt institutional policies that promote productive mobile phone use in learning spaces. This could

include adding digital self-discipline workshops to orientation or general studies courses. These courses would equip students with methods to restrict screen time, disallow multitasking, and give priority to academic use. The university must also promote and facilitate the use of academic productivity tools such as Google Scholar, Notion, Mendeley, and learning systems such as Coursera. Concurrently, excessive phone use◎particularly for social media and entertainment◎during class hours must be avoided through stringent implementation of mobile usage regulations by lecturers and administrative officers.

Second, learners themselves must adopt individualized strategies for learning engagement. Structured study sessions with dedicated phone-free time can reduce distraction and improve concentration. Using apps that block or restrict social media use during study hours (e.g., Forest, Focus To-Do) might further support self-regulation. Establishing study habits centered on academic phone use◎such as watching lecture content, making reminders, or collaborating on academic websites◎can lead to measurable gains in performance.

Finally, further studies must be undertaken to understand the precise dynamics of the Nigerian British University environment. Surveys specifically of the population or mixed-method studies that pair interviews and usage analysis can provide data-driven information on student use of their phones, which programs work best to aid learning, and how distraction maps onto scholar metrics such as GPA. These findings can be employed to inform more context-sensitive policies and interventions tailored specifically to this particular campus environment. Through the integration of institutional regulation, self-regulation, and evidence-based research, mobile phones can be transformed from potential academic liabilities into instrumental learning tools.

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