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THREATS OF TECH-SAVVY ERA: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL ANALYSIS OF STUDENTS' ACADEMIC VALUING AMID THE RISE OF HIGH-TECHNOLOGICAL PLATFORMS

[1]Gretchell C. Yurag, LPT
Isulan National High School

[2]Josevic F. Hurtada, PhD
Deped Division of Sultan Kudarat

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ABSTRACT

The rapid advancement of digital technology has transformed students' learning environments, reshaping their academic values, study habits, and personal development. In the contemporary tech-savvy era, learners are increasingly exposed to digital platforms that offer both educational opportunities and potential distractions. This study aimed to explore the lived experiences of secondary school students in selected schools in Isulan, Sultan Kudarat, focusing on how high-technological platforms influenced their academic valuing, discipline, and motivation. Specifically, it sought to examine students' challenges, coping strategies, and perceptions of balancing academic responsibilities in a technology-driven context. A qualitative research design employing a phenomenological approach was used to capture rich, in-depth descriptions of students' experiences. Data were gathered through in-depth interviews and reflective discussions and were analyzed using thematic analysis to identify recurring patterns, meanings, and significant themes. Findings revealed that students experienced persistent challenges related to digital distractions, procrastination, and excessive exposure to social media and online gaming. Despite these difficulties, learners demonstrated adaptive strategies such as

time management, self-control, prioritization of academic tasks, and responsible use of digital tools. Students also utilized online resources to enhance learning, motivation, and productivity. However, overreliance on technology was found to limit deep learning and independent thinking. Household responsibilities further influenced study routines, contributing to fatigue and reduced concentration. The study concluded that while digital platforms serve as valuable academic support systems, they also demand strong self-discipline and conscious self-regulation. Technology functions as a double-edged tool that can either enhance or hinder academic growth depending on students' usage patterns. Developing responsible digital habits, critical awareness, and purposeful engagement is essential in maximizing educational benefits and minimizing risks.

Keywords: digital discipline, academic valuing, self-regulation, technology use

INTRODUCTION

Background of the Study

The rapid global advancement of digital technology has revolutionized the way students learn, interact, and process information. Educational institutions worldwide are increasingly embracing artificial intelligence (AI), digital platforms, and mobile-based applications to improve access and personalize learning experiences. However, as these high-technological platforms become integral to education, emerging concerns have surfaced about their potential to diminish students' intrinsic academic valuing.

In China, studies show that overreliance on technological aids—such as AI writing tools and automated summarizers—can contribute to reduced critical thinking, academic disengagement, and surface-level learning (Bulfin et al., 2020; Ouyang & Jiao, 2021). Yet much of the existing global research focuses on technological integration and performance metrics, leaving a gap in understanding how students personally interpret and experience academic value in highly digitized learning environments.

In the Philippine context, the shift to digital and hybrid learning intensified during and after the COVID-19 pandemic. With platforms such as Google Classroom, Canva for Education, and ChatGPT becoming commonplace, students are increasingly using these tools not only for communication but also for producing academic outputs (Javier & Resurreccion, 2023; Castillo & Marasigan, 2024). While this trend reflects adaptability and innovation, it also presents challenges—particularly the risk of students viewing academic work as a task to be completed through automation rather than as a process of meaningful learning. Despite the proliferation of educational technologies, research exploring students' lived experiences and sense-making regarding academic worth and technological convenience remains limited, especially in higher education institutions across the country (Reyes et al., 2021).

In South Central Mindanao, particularly Region XII (SOCCSKSARGEN), digital transformation in education is uneven. Urban institutions in General Santos and Koronadal benefit from improved infrastructure, while rural colleges face inconsistent connectivity and limited access to high-spec devices (Dela Cruz & Soriano, 2022). Students in provinces like Sultan Kudarat are increasingly exposed to digital tools but often in ways that challenge traditional academic engagement. Local institutions such as Sultan Kudarat State University (SKSU) continue to push for technological advancement in instruction and research (SKSU,

2023). Yet no existing study captures the phenomenological realities of how students from this region perceive the value of their academic work in the presence of high-tech conveniences. This localized literature gap calls for a deeper understanding of student attitudes, particularly technological accessibility, academic integrity, and intrinsic motivation. Aligned with Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4: Quality Education, this study underscores the importance of safeguarding the quality and meaning of education in an increasingly digital world. It also supports SDG 10: Reduced Inequalities, by highlighting how technological access and learning valuation differ across regions and social groups.

Thus, the goal of this study is to explore the lived experiences of students in selected secondary schools in Isulan, Sultan Kudarat, as they navigate academic life amid the growing presence of high-technological platforms. Local institutions such as Sultan Kudar at State University (SKSU) continue to push for technological advancement in instruction and research (SKSU, 2023). Yet no existing study captures the phenomenological realities of how students from this region perceive the value of their academic work in the presence of high-tech conveniences. This localized literature gap calls for a deeper understanding of student attitudes, particularly technological accessibility, academic integrity, and intrinsic motivation.

Research Questions

Generally, this study aimed to explore the students' lived experiences in selected secondary schools in Isulan, Sultan Kudarat, as they navigate academic life amid the growing presence of high-technological platforms. Specifically, the research problem revolved around understanding the following key questions:

1. What are the lived experiences of students in balancing academic responsibilities with the distractions and demands of high-technological platforms?

2. How do students perceive the impact of a tech-savvy environment on their academic motivation, focus, and priorities?

3. What meanings do students ascribe to their academic responsibilities in the context of increasing digital engagement and technological immersion?

4. How do students describe the influence of digital platforms on their sense of academic purpose, discipline, and personal growth?

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This chapter presents the study's research design and methods. It also discusses the instrumentation, the analysis method, and other qualitative processes used in the study.

Research Design

In this study, qualitative research, specifically the phenomenological approach, was employed to investigate the students' lived experiences in selected secondary schools in Isulan,

Sultan Kudarat, as they navigate academic life amid the growing presence of high-technological platforms.

Phenomenological research is a method that aims to delve into individuals' lived experiences to gain deeper insights into how they interpret these experiences. It assumes that individuals employ a universal structure or essence to derive meaning from their encounters. This research interprets participants' emotions, perceptions, and beliefs to shed light on the fundamental phenomenon under investigation. An essential aspect of the phenomenological research design is the researcher's obligation to set aside any preconceived assumptions about the experience or phenomenon (Delve & Limpaecher, 2012).

Participants of the Study

Table 1 presents the participants' qualifications, determined by the researcher's criteria, before selecting eligible informants for the study. The study involved a total of fifteen (15) students in selected secondary schools in Isulan, Sultan Kudarat, who met the researcher's specified inclusion criteria:

Table 1. Participants' Inclusion Criteria

Qualifications

Participants: 15 Students

1. **Current Enrollment** – Students must be currently enrolled in selected secondary schools in Isulan, Sultan Kudarat, for SY 2025-2026, ensuring relevance to the study's temporal and educational context.

2. **Exposure to High-Technological Platforms** – Students must regularly use high-technology platforms (e.g., social media, online games, digital learning tools) both inside and outside the classroom, as the study focuses on understanding their influence on academic valuing.

3. **Age and Grade Level** – Students must belong to the secondary level (Grades 7–12), as this group is developmentally appropriate for examining academic valuing in relation to technology use.

4. **Willingness to Participate** – Students must voluntarily agree to participate in interviews or focus group discussions and provide honest insights regarding their academic priorities and experiences with technology.

Sampling Technique

During the conduct of this study, a Purposive Sampling Technique was intentionally utilized to carefully select fifteen (15) students in selected secondary schools in Isulan, Sultan Kudarat, who met the researcher's specified inclusion criteria.

Purposive sampling, or judgmental, selective, or subjective sampling, constitutes a variant of non-probability sampling. Within this approach, researchers exercise acumen in selecting individuals from the population to partake in their survey endeavors (Alchemer, 2021). This sampling mandates that researchers possess prior knowledge of the objectives underpinning their study to identify and contact eligible participants on online survey platforms. Researchers resort to purposive sampling to secure access to a distinct subgroup of individuals; all survey respondents are meticulously chosen based on their alignment with a specific demographic or criterion.

Research Instruments

In this study, a semi-structured interview was used as an exploratory instrument during both in-depth interviews and Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) to uncover students' lived experiences in selected secondary schools in Isulan, Sultan Kudarat, in navigating academic life amid the growing presence of high-technological platforms. The validity and appropriateness of this tool were substantiated through a rigorous evaluation conducted by a panel of experts who possess expertise in the development of relevant research instruments.

Data Gathering Procedure

To ensure the research's reliability, strict adherence to a predefined set of procedures was maintained. The primary objective of this study was to uncover the lived experiences of students in selected secondary schools in Isulan, Sultan Kudarat, as they navigated academic life amid the growing presence of high-technological platforms.

In the initial phase, the researcher diligently sought formal authorization from both the Superintendent of DepEd–Sultan Kudarat and the Dean of the College of Graduate Studies (CGS). This authorization was essential in obtaining the necessary permissions to conduct the study and emphasized the importance of ethical considerations.

Following this, a secondary authorization letter was sent to the District Supervisor, explicitly requesting access to the specific data required for the research. A meticulously crafted survey questionnaire was developed, rigorously evaluated, and then administered to the targeted participants.

A meticulously crafted survey questionnaire was developed, rigorously evaluated, and then administered to the targeted participants.]Ultimately, the data collected from interviews and FGDs were systematically organized, comprehensively analyzed, and interpreted using the thematic analysis approach. This approach provided a deeper understanding of the issues under investigation.

Data Analysis

This study centered on uncovering the struggles of TVL students during work immersion activities, focusing on the lived experiences of students in selected secondary schools in Isulan, Sultan Kudarat, as they navigated academic life amid the growing presence of high-technological platforms. A content or thematic analysis approach was employed to examine the collected data.

This methodology, as described by Flick (2014), Ngag (2023), and Braun (2009), involved the systematic categorization of textual components, including statements, phrases, and words, into organized groupings or categories. These categories were either derived from established frameworks or custom-developed to align with the study's specific objectives.

To execute this analytical process, a series of essential steps were diligently followed.
Initially, all data sources, such as interview transcripts, notes from Focus Group Discussions (FGDs), and relevant documents, were meticulously organized and prepared for analysis. This phase ensured the systematic arrangement and accessibility of the data.
Subsequently, the researcher deeply engaged with the data by conducting a thorough review of interview transcripts and FGD notes. This immersive process allowed a comprehensive understanding of the content and context embedded within the collected information.
The third step involved initiating a systematic coding process. Initial codes were generated by identifying meaningful segments or patterns within the data. These codes captured essential concepts, ideas, or themes related to teachers' professional development and their outcomes in their teaching effectiveness.

Following coding, the identified codes were grouped into preliminary themes based on shared meaning or relevance. This step aimed to establish an initial structure for organizing the data.
Next, the emerging themes and their corresponding codes were reviewed and refined. The researcher ensured the consistency and clarity of these themes and made necessary adjustments. Each refined theme was assigned a descriptive name that succinctly represented the content, facilitating easy identification and interpretation.
Relevant data excerpts, such as quotes or segments extracted from interviews and FGDs, were selected and associated with the respective themes. These excerpts served as supporting evidence for the identified themes.

Finally, the thematic analysis extended beyond surface-level identification. The researcher interpreted the meaning and implications of each theme within the context of the study's objectives. Patterns, connections, and variations within the themes were examined to provide a comprehensive understanding of the teachers.
This meticulous, structured process of thematic analysis enabled the researcher to systematically explore and comprehend students' lived experiences in their academic life amid the growing presence of highly technological platforms in selected secondary schools in Isulan, Sultan Kudarat. Ethical Considerations
This meticulous, structured process of thematic analysis enabled the researcher to systematically explore and comprehend students' lived experiences in their academic life amid the growing presence of highly technological platforms in selected secondary schools in Isulan, Sultan Kudarat. Informed Consent:

Before participation, consent was diligently obtained from all school heads involved in the study. They were provided with a comprehensive understanding of the study's objectives, methodologies, potential risks, and benefits. Participation remained entirely voluntary, and participants were informed of their right to withdraw at any time without adverse consequences.
Anonymity and Confidentiality:

To safeguard the identities and responses of the teachers, rigorous measures were implemented to ensure anonymity and confidentiality. Pseudonyms or codes were used instead of actual names, and all collected data were securely stored with access limited to the research team.

Avoiding Harm:

Sensitive topics, such as challenges in professional roles, were discussed with careful consideration of potential emotional and psychological impacts. Strategies were implemented to minimize distress, and support mechanisms were made available when necessary.

Researcher-Participant Relationship:

The researcher maintained a professional and respectful rapport with the school heads. Any actions that could exploit or harm participants were strictly avoided, ensuring dignity and respect throughout the research process

Scope and Limitations

The study focused on exploring how the increasing use of high-tech platforms influenced the academic values and priorities of secondary school students. It specifically involved students enrolled in selected secondary schools in Isulan, Sultan Kudarat, during the school year 2025–2026, aiming to capture their lived experiences and perceptions in the impact of technology on learning habits, motivation, and academic commitment. Using a phenomenological approach, data were gathered through in-depth interviews and reflective discussions to understand how students navigated academic responsibilities in a technology-driven environment.

The study was delimited to students' perspectives within the chosen schools and timeframe, intentionally excluding other stakeholders such as teachers or parents, to provide focused insights into the challenges and opportunities that high-tech platforms presented to students' academic valuing. The rationale for this scope was to identify specific technological influences on learners' attitudes toward education and to inform strategies that could support balanced academic engagement in a digital era.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The rapid global advancement of digital technology has revolutionized the way students learn, interact, and process information. Qualitative research, specifically the phenomenological approach, investigated the lived experiences of students in selected secondary schools in Isulan, Sultan Kudarat, as they navigate academic life amid the growing presence of high-technological platforms.

The findings revealed that students experienced multiple challenges and adaptive strategies when balancing their academic responsibilities with high-technological platforms. Many learners struggled with digital distractions and procrastination, particularly due to social media and constant notifications, which often led to wasted time and unfinished academic tasks. Despite these challenges, students demonstrated awareness of the importance of time management by setting schedules, prioritizing schoolwork, and separating study time from leisure activities. Self-control and personal discipline also emerged as essential factors, as students

employed techniques such as limiting phone use, activating "Do Not Disturb" modes, and consciously prioritizing academic tasks. Moreover, learners utilized various study strategies, including listening to music, using timers, accessing online resources, and creating reward systems to sustain focus and productivity.

The results further showed that household responsibilities significantly influenced students' study routines, requiring them to balance chores and academic work, which sometimes led to fatigue and reduced concentration. Lastly, motivation and personal productivity were strengthened through self-encouragement, rest breaks, lesson repetitions and effective time management practices, enabling students to cope with the demands of digital and academic environments.

Also, the study revealed that students perceive technology as both a valuable educational tool and a potential source of distraction. Digital platforms were found to enhance learning by providing easy access to information, online tutorials, and academic support, which fostered engagement, motivation, and productivity. At the same time, social media, gaming, and notifications posed challenges to focus and time management. Students demonstrated awareness of these dual effects and employed strategies such as setting boundaries, prioritizing tasks, and regulating their technology use to maintain discipline and academic focus. Overall, the findings suggest that students recognize the importance of balancing the benefits and risks of technology to optimize their learning experiences and personal growth.

Further, the study shows that students perceive digital platforms as both a valuable support and a potential distraction in their academic lives. They recognize the need for self-discipline, responsible use, and time management to maintain focus and achieve goals. Digital tools were seen as helpful for research, learning, and accessing information, yet students emphasized the importance of independent thinking and not over-relying on technology. Motivation, personal values, and future aspirations guided their engagement with academic responsibilities, while balancing screen time with school tasks was central to sustaining productivity and growth.

Furthermore, the study revealed that digital platforms significantly influence students' academic purpose, discipline, and personal growth positively and negatively. Students perceive these platforms as powerful tools for accessing information, enhancing learning, and supporting research, promoting curiosity, motivation, and a deeper understanding of lessons. At the same time, digital platforms can serve as sources of distraction, leading to procrastination, gaming, or social media overuse, and diminished focus.

The results also highlighted that students exercise varying degrees of self-regulation and digital discipline, employing strategies such as limiting screen time and managing content to balance learning with responsible technology use.

Conclusion

The following conclusions were made considering this study's findings:

The lived experiences illustrate that balancing academic responsibilities in a highly technological environment requires not only access to digital tools but also strong self-discipline, effective time management, and intrinsic motivation. While technology offers valuable support for learning, it also presents constant distractions that challenge students' focus and productivity.

Reflecting on these findings, technology plays a central role in shaping students' academic behaviors and attitudes. While it offers unprecedented opportunities for self-directed learning and motivation, it also demands conscious self-regulation and responsibility.

Also, developing responsible digital habits is essential for students in the contemporary learning environment. While technology offers unprecedented access to information and opportunities for growth, its benefits are maximized only when paired with self-regulation, goal-setting, and mindful engagement.

Digital platforms are a double-edged sword in students' academic lives—they can enhance learning and personal growth when used intentionally but can also undermine focus and independent thinking if mismanaged. Developing self-regulation, critical awareness, and purposeful engagement with technology is essential for students to maximize its benefits while mitigating its risks.

Recommendations

Considering the findings of the study, the following were recommended:

The Department of Education (DepEd) may develop and implement guidelines on digital literacy and responsible technology use in schools, emphasizing time management, focus, and the risks of overreliance on social media and gaming. Programs could include workshops, online campaigns, and integration into student advisory sessions to help learners develop self-regulation and digital discipline.

School leaders may establish structured "tech-smart" schedules and policies that balance screen-based learning with offline tasks. This includes limiting unnecessary notifications during study hours, promoting focused study periods, and encouraging the use of digital platforms as supportive tools rather than replacements for independent learning.

Curriculum planners may integrate blended learning strategies that combine digital resources with hands-on and collaborative activities. Designing lessons that use technology purposefully, including offline exercises, can reduce digital fatigue, foster critical thinking, and prevent overdependence on technology.

Teachers may model and teach self-regulation strategies by guiding students on goal-setting, prioritization, and time management. They can also incorporate digital detox practices, such as scheduled breaks from devices, and encourage students to critically engage with online resources rather than passively consume content.

Future researchers may conduct longitudinal studies on students' digital habits and academic outcomes to examine how self-regulation, time management, and technology engagement evolve over time. Investigating the effectiveness of interventions that balance digital learning and personal discipline can inform policies and teaching strategies for sustainable academic growth.

Compliance with Ethical Standards

This meticulous, structured process of thematic analysis enabled the researcher to systematically explore and comprehend students' lived experiences in their academic life amid the growing presence of highly technological platforms in selected secondary schools in Isulan, Sultan Kudarat.

Informed Consent:

Before participation, consent was diligently obtained from all school heads involved in the study. They were provided with a comprehensive understanding of the study's objectives, methodologies, potential risks, and benefits. Participation remained entirely voluntary, and participants were informed of their right to withdraw at any time without adverse consequences.

Anonymity and Confidentiality:

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Avoiding Harm:

Sensitive topics, such as challenges in professional roles, were discussed with careful consideration of potential emotional and psychological impacts. Strategies were implemented to minimize distress, and support mechanisms were made available when necessary.

Researcher-Participant Relationship:

The researcher maintained a professional and respectful rapport with the school heads. Any actions that could exploit or harm participants were strictly avoided, ensuring dignity and respect throughout the research process.

Data Protection:

Data protection regulations and laws were strictly followed. Security systems were utilized to ensure the safe storage and transmission of information.

Voluntary Participation:

Participants were assured that their involvement was completely voluntary and free from coercion or external pressure.

Researcher Bias:

The researcher remained vigilant in identifying and minimizing potential biases that could influence data collection and analysis, thereby maintaining objectivity and transparency.

Institutional Approval:

Ethical clearance was obtained from the relevant institutional review boards and ethics committees before the conduct of the study.

Honesty and Integrity:

Research findings were reported truthfully and accurately, without manipulation or distortion to fit preconceived notions.

Beneficence:

The potential benefits of the study to educational practices and policies were carefully considered to ensure positive contributions to the education system.

Cultural Sensitivity:

The researcher demonstrated cultural sensitivity by respecting local customs, beliefs, practices and refraining from imposing external values on participants.

Inclusion and Diversity:

The study prioritized inclusivity and diversity by representing a wide range of student experiences in navigating academic life within high-technological environments.

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Declaration AI Tools Declaration

I do hereby declare the use AI tools, such as Chat GPT and Grammarly for grammar checking and sentence organization purposes only.

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