

Original Article

Scrolling Minds, Struggling Grades: The Impact of Digital Distraction on Students' Focus and Academic Performance

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Abstract

This study examined the relationship between digital distractions, students' focus, and academic performance among Grade 6 pupils. Digital distractions, operationally defined in this study as interruptions caused by social media usage, online and offline gaming, video and music streaming, and messaging notifications, were examined in relation to students' focus and academic performance. This study examined how exposure to digital devices affects learners' concentration and academic outcomes in an elementary school context. A descriptive–correlational research design was employed, and data were collected through a validated survey administered to 51 Grade 6 pupils from three selected elementary schools using stratified proportional sampling. The findings revealed that students experienced high levels of digital distraction, with messaging applications and chat notifications identified as the most prevalent sources. In terms of student focus, learners demonstrated low focus, suggesting that exposure to digital distractions adversely affects concentration during academic tasks. Regarding academic performance, most students maintained outstanding academic achievement, suggesting that distractions had noticeable but not severely damaging effects on their grades. Statistical analysis further indicated significant relationships between digital distraction and student focus, as well as between digital distraction and academic performance. Overall, the study concludes that digital distractions are prevalent among

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elementary learners and have significant implications for students' focus and academic outcomes, underscoring the need for responsible and regulated use of digital technologies in educational contexts.

Keywords: academic performance, descriptive–correlational design, digital distractions, Pearson R correlation, Philippines, student focus

1. Introduction

The rapid integration of digital technology into education has transformed how students access information, communicate, and engage in learning activities. Devices such as smartphones, tablets, and laptops have become essential tools for academic tasks, enabling learners to participate in virtual classes, access online educational resources, and collaborate through digital platforms. This transformation also aligns with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4: Quality Education), which promotes inclusive, equitable quality education and lifelong learning opportunities for all by encouraging the effective and responsible integration of technology into learning environments. At the same time, however, these technologies expose students to various forms of digital distraction, including social media notifications, online gaming, streaming platforms, and instant messaging applications. These interruptions often compete with academic tasks for students' attention and may disrupt concentration during classroom instruction and independent study (Pérez-Juárez et al., 2023). As digital technology becomes increasingly embedded in educational environments, concerns regarding its influence on students' focus and academic performance continue to grow.

In the Philippines, the widespread use of smartphones, affordable internet access, and the growing popularity of social media platforms have intensified students' engagement with digital devices. According to Kemp (2023), Filipinos spend an average of 3 hours and 43 minutes daily on social media, ranking among the highest users worldwide. Platforms such as Facebook, TikTok, YouTube, and mobile gaming applications occupy a substantial portion of students' daily routines and influence how they study, communicate, and manage academic responsibilities. While these digital platforms provide opportunities for online learning and educational content, they also encourage multitasking and constant connectivity, which may reduce students' ability to sustain attention on academic activities.

Existing studies suggest that excessive exposure to digital distractions negatively affects cognitive functioning and learning processes. Frequent engagement with digital technologies and multitasking can diminish students' ability to sustain attention, interfere with cognitive control, and reduce the effectiveness of learning processes (Uncapher & Wagner, 2018). Research further indicates that students often alternate

between academic tasks and non-academic digital activities, such as checking social media, replying to messages, or browsing online content. Although many learners perceive multitasking as productive, evidence shows that repeated task-switching increases cognitive load, reduces comprehension efficiency, and weakens working memory performance. Moreover, even brief digital interruptions, such as smartphone notifications and multitasking, can disrupt students' learning flow, reduce sustained attention, and make it more difficult to refocus on academic tasks, ultimately affecting the quality of their academic performance (May & Elder, 2018).

Despite the growing body of literature on educational technology, limited research comprehensively examines how continuous exposure to digital distractions directly influences students' focus and academic achievement, particularly within the context of students' lived experiences. Previous studies have primarily emphasized the benefits of technology integration in education. In contrast, fewer have examined the adverse effects of excessive digital engagement, including social media overuse, online gaming, and constant mobile phone interruptions during learning activities (Kus, 2025).

Furthermore, there remains insufficient evidence linking students' experiences of digital distraction to measurable outcomes such as reduced concentration, shorter attention spans, and declining academic performance. This gap in the literature highlights the need for further investigation into the relationship between digital distractions and students' learning outcomes.

Although previous studies generally report that digital distractions negatively influence students' attention and academic performance, findings across different educational contexts are not always consistent. Variations in learners' characteristics, technology use, learning environments, and measurement approaches may produce different patterns of association. Therefore, the present study does not assume a predetermined relationship; rather, it seeks to empirically examine the relationship among digital distraction, students' focus, and academic performance among Grade 6 pupils in the selected public elementary schools.

2. Methodology

This study employed a quantitative descriptive-correlational research design to examine the relationship between digital distractions, students' focus, and academic performance among Grade 6 pupils. The descriptive component was utilized to identify and describe the types, frequency, and perceived effects of digital distractions experienced by the respondents. Meanwhile, the correlational component assessed whether significant relationships existed among the level of digital distraction, students' focus, and academic performance. This design was considered appropriate because the study aimed to observe naturally occurring conditions without manipulating any variables. Descriptive-correlational research is commonly applied in

educational studies to explore associations among variables without establishing direct causality (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

The study was conducted during the School Year 2025–2026 in three public elementary schools located in Lutayan, Sultan Kudarat: Blingkong Central Elementary School, Palavilla Integrated School, and Quevedo-Baptista Elementary School. These schools were selected because of the increasing exposure of pupils to digital technologies both inside and outside the classroom. The growing use of smartphones, internet-based activities, and digital media among learners provided a suitable setting for examining how digital distractions relate to students' focus and academic performance in an actual educational environment.

The respondents consisted of fifty-one (51) Grade 6 pupils enrolled in the selected schools during the School Year 2025–2026. The total Grade 6 population across the three participating schools was fifty-six (56) pupils: 10 from Blingkong Central Elementary School, 30 from Palavilla Integrated School, and 16 from Quevedo-Baptista Elementary School. A stratified proportional allocation sampling technique was employed to ensure that each participating school was represented in proportion to its Grade 6 population size. The sample size was determined using Slovin's Formula with a 4% margin of error: $n = N / [1 + N(e^2)] = 56 / [1 + 56(0.04^2)] = 56 / 1.0896 = 51.39$, which was rounded to 51 respondents. The 51 respondents were proportionally allocated across the three schools as follows: 9 from Blingkong Central Elementary School, 27 from Palavilla Integrated School, and 15 from Quevedo-Baptista Elementary School. The inclusion criteria included officially enrolled Grade 6 pupils whose parents or legal guardians provided informed consent and who voluntarily agreed to participate through assent. Pupils who did not obtain parental consent, declined participation, or were absent during data collection were excluded from the study. Although the sampling procedure enhanced the representativeness of the selected schools, the relatively small sample size limits the generalizability of the findings beyond the participating schools. Therefore, the results should be interpreted within the context of the study population.

Data were collected using a structured survey questionnaire adapted from previously validated instruments. Specifically, the questionnaire was based on the Smartphone Distraction Scale, validated by Guo et al. (2024), and on a digital distraction instrument adapted from the framework proposed by Dontre (2021). The questionnaire was modified to suit the objectives and context of the present study while maintaining the validity of the original constructs. The instrument measured respondents' levels of digital distraction, students' focus, and academic performance. Prior to administration, the questionnaire underwent content validation by field experts to ensure clarity, relevance, and appropriateness for Grade 6 pupils. Following expert validation, the instrument was pilot-tested with 30 Grade 6 pupils from Tamnag Central Elementary School who were not included in the actual study. Reliability testing using Cronbach's Alpha yielded $\alpha = 0.963$, indicating excellent internal consistency. Since the obtained reliability coefficient exceeded the acceptable threshold of 0.70, the questionnaire was considered reliable for data collection.

The data-gathering procedure followed a systematic approach. Before conducting the study, the researcher secured approval from the appropriate university officials and sought permission from the Schools Division Office, school principals, and Grade 6 class advisers of the participating schools. Written informed consent was obtained from the parents or legal guardians of the pupils, while informed assent was secured from the pupils before their participation. The purpose of the study, the procedures involved, and the voluntary nature of participation were clearly explained. Respondents were informed that they could decline to participate or withdraw from the study at any time without penalty. During data collection, the questionnaires were administered in class during a single sitting under the researcher's supervision. Clear instructions were provided to ensure that the pupils understood each item before answering.

Ethical principles were strictly observed throughout the study. The identities of the respondents were kept confidential by assigning codes instead of recording names on the questionnaires. All responses were treated with strict confidentiality and were used solely for academic and research purposes. The collected data were stored securely and were accessible only to the researcher and adviser. No information that could identify individual respondents was included in the presentation or reporting of the findings. The study adhered to the ethical principles of voluntary participation, informed consent, confidentiality, anonymity, and respect for the rights and welfare of child participants.

The gathered data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistical tools. The weighted mean was utilized to determine the level of digital distractions and students' focus based on the responses in Parts I and II of the questionnaire using a five-point Likert scale, Strongly Agree (5), Agree (4), Moderately Agree (3), Disagree (2), Strongly Disagree (1). Academic performance was classified using the following descriptors: Outstanding (90–100), Very Satisfactory (85–89), Satisfactory (80–84), Fairly Satisfactory (75–79), and Did Not Meet Expectations (Below 75). Pearson's Product-Moment Correlation Coefficient (Pearson's r) was used to assess the significance, strength, and direction of the relationship among digital distractions, students' focus, and academic performance. Statistical analyses were performed using appropriate software, with a significance level of 0.05. Considering the descriptive-correlational design and the relatively small sample size, the findings describe relationships within the study sample and should not be interpreted as establishing causal relationships or generalized to broader populations without further investigation.

3. Results

The study examines the impact of digital distractions on students' focus and academic performance among Grade 6 pupils in selected elementary schools in Lutayan, Sultan Kudarat. The findings are presented in tables to provide a clear and organized view of the results. The analysis focuses on the level of digital distractions in terms of social media usage, gaming activities, streaming videos and music, and messaging applications, as well as students' focus and academic performance. The discussion interprets the findings in relation to relevant literature and explains their implications for students' learning and academic success.

Table 1. Level of digital distraction as experienced by the respondents

Variables	Mean	SD	Interpretation
Social Media Usage	3.69	0.97	High
Online and Offline Gaming Activities	3.60	0.99	High
Streaming Videos and Music	3.56	1.03	High
Messaging Apps or Notifications	3.75	0.94	High
Overall mean	3.65	0.98	High

Legend: 4.20–5.00, Very High; 3.40–4.19, High; 2.60–3.39, Moderate; 1.80–2.59, Low; 1.00–1.79, Very Low.

Table 1 presents the level of digital distraction experienced by the respondents across social media usage, gaming activities, streaming videos and music, and messaging applications and notifications. The findings revealed that messaging apps or notifications obtained the highest mean score ($M = 3.75$, $SD = 0.94$), interpreted as High. This indicates that respondents frequently experience distraction from messaging platforms and notifications. Social media usage also showed a high level of distraction, with a mean of 3.69 ($SD = 0.97$), followed by online and offline gaming activities, with a mean of 3.60 ($SD = 0.99$), both interpreted as High. Meanwhile, streaming videos and music received the lowest mean score ($M = 3.56$, $SD = 1.03$), although it was still interpreted as High. The overall mean score of 3.65 ($SD = 0.98$) indicates that the respondents generally experience a high level of digital distraction across all indicators.

Table 2 presents the level of student focus as exposed to digital distraction. The statement, *"I feel my focus decreases when I try to study with digital devices nearby,"* received the highest mean score of 2.27, with a standard deviation of 0.60, which was interpreted as Low Focus. This indicates that respondents reported experiencing reduced concentration when digital devices were present during study sessions. On the other hand, the statement *"I lose track of my tasks when I use social media or watch videos during study time"* received the lowest mean score of 1.76, with a standard deviation of 0.65, interpreted as Very Low Focus. This indicates that respondents also reported difficulty maintaining attention while using social media or watching videos during study time. Moreover, the overall section mean was 2.00, with a standard deviation of 0.67, which was interpreted as Low Focus. Overall, the findings indicate

that the respondents experienced a generally low level of focus when exposed to digital distractions. Since the questionnaire items were negatively worded, the interpretation of the results depends on the scoring procedure applied. If reverse-coding was not performed prior to analysis, the findings should be interpreted as reflecting lower levels of student focus rather than high focus.

Table 2. Level of student focus as exposed in digital distraction.

Variables	Mean	SD	Interpretation
1. I find it difficult to concentrate on my schoolwork when using digital devices.	2.02	0.76	Low Focus
2. I get easily distracted by notifications or messages while studying.	1.92	0.63	Low Focus
3. I lose track of my tasks when I use social media or watch videos during study time.	1.76	0.65	Very Low Focus
4. I often need to pause or restart my work because digital distractions interrupt me.	2.04	0.69	Low Focus
5. I feel my focus decreases when I try to study with digital devices nearby.	2.27	0.60	Low Focus
Overall mean	2.00	0.67	Low Focus

Legend: 4.20–5.00, Very High; 3.40–4.19, High; 2.60–3.39, Moderate; 1.80–2.59, Low; 1.00–1.79, Very Low

Table 3. Level of academic performance of respondents as exposed in digital distraction.

Range of Academic Performance	Frequency (n= 51)	Percentage
90 – 100	26	50.98%
85 – 89	14	27.45%
80 – 84	11	21.57%

Table 3 presents the academic performance of the respondents based on their final grades obtained from the official school records for the School Year 2025–2026. The majority of respondents fell within the 90–100 grade range, with a frequency of 26 (50.98%), interpreted as Outstanding. This indicates that more than half of the respondents achieved excellent academic performance during the study period. On the other hand, the lowest proportion of respondents fell within the 80–84 grade range, with a frequency of 11 (21.57%), interpreted as Satisfactory. Although this category had the fewest respondents, the findings show that all respondents obtained at least satisfactory academic performance. Furthermore, the respondents obtained an overall mean grade of 90, described as Outstanding, indicating generally high academic achievement among the participants. Since the grades were based on official school records, they reflect the respondents' recorded academic performance during the study period. However, these results should be interpreted with caution, as academic grades may also be influenced by school-level grading practices, teacher assessment methods, and other educational factors not examined in the present study.

Table 4. Relationship between the level of digital distraction and the level of student focus.

Variable	r-value	p-value	Interpretation	Remarks	Decision
Digital Distraction and Student Focus	0.80	< .001	Strong Positive Correlation	Significant	Reject the Null Hypothesis

Note. * $p < .05$, $r^2 = 0.64$

Table 4 presents the relationship between the level of digital distraction and students' focus. Pearson's Product-Moment Correlation analysis revealed a statistically significant strong positive relationship between the two variables, with an r-value of 0.80 and a p-value of $< .001$, indicating that the variables were strongly associated within the study sample. Furthermore, the coefficient of determination ($r^2 = 0.64$) indicates that approximately 64% of the variation in students' focus was explained by the level of digital distraction, while the remaining 36% may be attributable to other factors not included in the study. The significant p-value indicates that the observed relationship is statistically significant. The positive direction indicates that higher reported levels of digital distraction were associated with higher reported levels of student focus in the present dataset. However, this unexpected positive relationship should be interpreted with caution, particularly because the items may have been negatively worded and may require reverse scoring; therefore, the findings should not be interpreted as evidence that digital distraction improves students' focus. Further validation of the instrument and scoring procedures, as well as additional research, are recommended to clarify this relationship.

Table 5. Relationship between the level of digital distraction and the level of academic performance.

Variable	r-value	p-value	Interpretation	Remarks	Decision
Digital Distraction and Academic Performance	0.338	0.015	Low positive correlation	Significant	Reject the Null Hypothesis

Note. * $p < .05$, $r^2 = 11.42\%$

Table 5 presents the significant relationship between digital distraction and academic performance. The analysis revealed a low positive correlation between the two variables, with a Pearson's r of 0.338 and a p-value of 0.015, which is below the 0.05 significance level. Thus, the null hypothesis was rejected, indicating a statistically significant relationship between digital distraction and academic performance. The positive correlation suggests that higher levels of digital distraction are associated with higher academic performance among respondents; however, it indicates an association rather than a causal effect.

4. Discussion

The findings suggest that messaging applications and notifications are the most prominent sources of digital distraction among the respondents. The high mean score and relatively lower standard deviation imply that most students consistently experience interruptions from messages and notifications. Frequent alerts and instant communication features may interrupt concentration and redirect students' attention away from academic tasks. This finding is consistent with Rosen et al. (2013), who examined middle school, high school, and university students while they were studying and found that technology-related activities, including texting and Facebook use, were associated with task-switching during study periods.

Social media usage and gaming activities also contributed to the overall level of digital distraction among the respondents. The high mean scores indicate that students commonly experienced these forms of digital engagement during study time or learning activities. These distractions may affect students' ability to focus on academic tasks because social media and games can encourage prolonged screen time and multitasking. The finding concerning social media use is consistent with Junco (2012), who reported a relationship between multiple indicators of Facebook use and academic performance. However, the present study did not separately examine the effects of gaming on academic performance; therefore, the gaming finding should be interpreted as a descriptive result of the present sample rather than as a conclusion established by Junco (2012).

Although streaming videos and music obtained the lowest mean among the indicators, it was still interpreted as High. The relatively high standard deviation suggests that respondents differed in the extent to which streaming content affected their focus and study habits. While some students may use music or videos to study, others may be more distracted by entertainment content. Because the present study did not examine the reasons for these differences, these interpretations should be viewed as possible explanations rather than established findings. Nevertheless, this finding aligns with the report of Rideout and Robb (2019), which noted that adolescents spend considerable time consuming digital media, although its effects vary across individuals.

Overall, the high level of digital distraction, as reflected in the mean score, indicates that digital technologies continually compete for students' attention. Excessive engagement with digital platforms may reduce concentration and interfere with academic responsibilities when not properly managed. However, the present study measured only the level of digital distraction and did not investigate other factors that may influence students' responses. This finding supports the OECD's (2021) report, which emphasized that excessive use of digital technologies may negatively affect students' concentration, productivity, and academic performance.

Additionally, the findings indicate that digital distractions affect students' focus, particularly when digital devices are present during study sessions. The highest mean score, interpreted as Low Focus, suggests that students experience reduced

concentration when surrounded by smartphones, laptops, and other digital devices. Even when not in active use, the presence of these devices may divide students' attention as they anticipate notifications, messages, or online engagement. According to Ward et al. (2017), the mere presence of digital devices can reduce cognitive capacity and attention because individuals become mentally preoccupied with potential digital interactions.

Meanwhile, the statement regarding losing track of tasks while using social media or watching videos during study time obtained the lowest mean and was interpreted as Very Low Focus. This finding suggests that entertainment-based digital activities may interfere with students' ability to concentrate and manage academic tasks effectively. Social media platforms and video streaming applications may encourage multitasking, which can weaken attention span and reduce information retention. Research by May and Elder (2018) found that media multitasking during academic activities divides students' attention, reduces working memory efficiency, and negatively affects learning performance.

Despite these distractions, the overall section mean was interpreted as High Focus, indicating that students generally maintained concentration on academic tasks. One possible interpretation is that factors not examined in the present study, such as study habits, learning environment, or individual differences, may have influenced students' ability to remain focused despite digital distractions. However, because these variables were not directly measured, no conclusions can be drawn regarding their contribution to the observed findings.

The findings suggest that digital distraction does not necessarily prevent students from maintaining focus during their studies. However, the reasons underlying this result cannot be determined from the present study because potential influencing factors were beyond its scope. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (2021) noted that students who practice digital self-control and structured study routines may be better able to sustain attention and remain productive in technology-rich learning environments. Since these characteristics were not assessed in the present study, they should be considered only as possible explanations supported by previous literature.

In this regard, the findings suggest that educators and parents should encourage responsible technology use and provide learning environments that minimize unnecessary digital distractions during study sessions. Schools may also implement programs that promote effective time management and responsible use of digital devices. Future studies may include variables such as self-regulation, study habits, and learning environment to better explain how students maintain focus despite exposure to digital distractions.

Moreover, digital distraction does not necessarily correlate with poor academic performance among the respondents. The large proportion of respondents who achieved Outstanding grades indicates that high academic performance was observed despite the reported level of digital distraction. One possible interpretation is that factors not examined in the present study, such as study habits, learning environment,

motivation, or self-regulation, may have contributed to these academic outcomes. However, because these variables were not directly measured, no conclusions can be drawn regarding their influence.

Meanwhile, the respondents who obtained grades within the 80–84 range still demonstrated satisfactory academic performance. This suggests that although some students may experience challenges related to digital distraction, these distractions do not necessarily result in poor academic achievement. The findings are consistent with the idea that the relationship between digital media use and academic performance may vary across students. Junco (2012) reported a relationship between Facebook use and academic performance, indicating that patterns of social media engagement may be relevant to academic outcomes. Since the present study did not assess specific patterns, purposes, or frequency of social media use beyond the measured digital-distraction indicators, these factors cannot be confirmed as explanations for the observed results.

Additionally, the overall mean grade of 90, interpreted as Outstanding, indicates that the respondents generally achieved high academic performance despite reporting exposure to digital distractions. This finding suggests that digital distraction alone may not fully explain students' academic performance. Other factors not included in the present study may also have contributed to the respondents' academic achievement. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (2021) explained that academic success in digital learning environments may be associated with students' ability to regulate their use of technology. However, because this variable was not measured in the present study, it should be considered only as a possible interpretation supported by previous research rather than a conclusion drawn from the present findings.

Furthermore, there is a strong positive relationship between digital distractions and students' focus. Although digital distractions are commonly associated with reduced attention, the positive correlation observed in the present study suggests that the relationship between these variables may be more complex than expected. One possible interpretation is that students use digital devices for both academic and non-academic purposes, resulting in varying effects on their ability to focus. However, the present study did not examine how students used digital technology; therefore, no definitive explanation can be drawn from the findings. According to Deng et al. (2024), students with strong self-regulation skills are better able to manage digital distractions and maintain focus during academic activities. Since self-regulation was not measured in this study, this explanation should be regarded only as a possible interpretation supported by previous research.

Moreover, the findings support the idea that digital technology can have both positive and negative effects on learning. Digital devices may be a source of distraction, but they can also provide access to educational resources and learning opportunities. Pérez-Juárez et al. (2023) explained that students remain actively engaged in digital learning environments despite the presence of distractions, suggesting that technology can simultaneously support and hinder focus depending on

how it is used. This perspective may help explain the observed relationship; however, the present study did not assess students' patterns of technology use or other related factors. Therefore, this explanation should be interpreted with caution.

However, the findings should still be interpreted with caution, as several studies have reported negative effects of digital distractions on attention and academic performance. Research by May and Elder (2018) found that media multitasking can divide attention, reduce working memory capacity, and negatively affect academic outcomes. Other studies likewise suggest that excessive digital distractions may lead to superficial learning, reduced engagement, and difficulty concentrating due to increased cognitive load. These contrasting findings indicate that the relationship between digital distraction and student focus may vary with factors not examined in the present study.

Given these contrasting perspectives, the strong positive correlation observed in the present study may have been influenced by variables beyond the scope of this research, such as digital literacy, motivation, learning environment, study habits, or self-regulation. Because these variables were not directly measured, their influence cannot be confirmed and should be considered only as possible explanations. Future research should examine these variables to understand better the relationship between digital distraction and students' focus.

In this regard, educators are encouraged to create structured, guided digital learning environments that promote responsible technology use and effective learning practices. Schools may also provide programs that enhance students' digital literacy and responsible use of technology. Future studies are recommended to investigate additional variables, such as learning strategies, motivation, study habits, classroom environment, and self-regulation, to provide a more comprehensive explanation of the relationship between digital distraction and students' focus.

On the other hand, indicates a significantly low positive relationship between digital distraction and academic performance. This finding suggests that respondents who reported higher levels of digital distraction also tended to maintain favorable academic performance. Although digital distractions are commonly associated with reduced concentration and lower academic achievement, the present findings indicate that the relationship between digital distraction and academic performance may vary among students. However, because the study employed a descriptive-correlational design, the observed relationship should not be interpreted as evidence that digital distraction improves academic performance.

One possible interpretation is that factors not measured in the present study may have influenced the relationship between digital distraction and academic performance. According to Pérez-Juárez et al. (2023), the effects of digital technologies on academic outcomes depend largely on how students use digital platforms and balance academic and non-academic activities. Since factors such as self-regulation and digital literacy were not assessed in the present study, they should be regarded only as possible explanations supported by previous literature rather than as confirmed reasons for the observed findings.

Furthermore, the findings may also reflect differences in how students use digital platforms. Pérez-Juárez et al. (2023) explained that digital technologies, including social media and communication platforms, can serve both educational and recreational purposes. When used appropriately, these platforms may facilitate communication, collaboration, and access to learning resources, whereas excessive or non-academic use may contribute to distraction. It is possible that some respondents used digital platforms for both academic and non-academic purposes. However, the present study did not distinguish between these types of digital activities; therefore, this interpretation cannot be confirmed.

Similarly, Henderson et al. (2017) reported that university students identified several practical benefits of digital technologies, including flexibility, organization and management of study tasks, and access to or revisiting of learning materials. This perspective may help explain why digital technology can be both useful and distracting. However, the present study did not examine the specific academic and non-academic purposes for which respondents used digital technologies; consequently, this source should be understood as contextual support rather than evidence that the respondents' high academic performance resulted from extensive technology use.

However, the low strength of the correlation indicates that digital distraction is only one of many factors that may be associated with academic performance. Other variables, such as study habits, motivation, family support, learning environment, and self-regulation, may also influence students' academic achievement. Because these variables were not measured in the present study, their contribution cannot be determined. Therefore, digital distraction should not be considered the sole predictor of students' academic performance.

In this regard, the findings suggest that educators and parents should guide students toward the responsible and productive use of technology rather than completely restricting digital device use. Schools may implement programs that promote responsible digital practices and effective technology use in learning. Future studies are encouraged to examine additional variables, such as self-regulation, study habits, motivation, family support, learning environment, and the specific types of digital activities, to provide a more comprehensive explanation of the relationship between digital distraction and academic performance.

6. Conclusion

The findings of the study indicate that Grade 6 pupils generally experienced high levels of digital distraction, with messaging applications identified as the most common source, followed by social media, gaming, and streaming. In terms of student focus, learners demonstrated low focus, suggesting that exposure to digital distractions adversely affects concentration during academic tasks. Although the respondents' academic performance was generally rated as outstanding, the results should be

interpreted with caution, as factors beyond digital distraction may influence academic achievement. The statistical analysis showed a significant relationship between digital distractions and both student focus and academic performance within the study sample. However, these findings should not be interpreted as evidence of a cause-and-effect relationship due to the descriptive-correlational research design. Moreover, the relatively small sample size, reliance on self-reported questionnaire responses, and potential limitations in the measurement and scoring of variables may have affected the results. Overall, the study suggests that digital distractions are associated with students' focus and academic performance among the selected Grade 6 pupils. Nevertheless, further studies involving larger and more diverse samples, improved measurement instruments, and more rigorous research designs are recommended to validate and strengthen these findings.

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Conflict of Interest Statement

The authors declare no relevant financial or non-financial conflicts of interest with respect to this manuscript.

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