

THE IMPACT OF MODERN TECHNOLOGY ON FIRST-YEAR COLLEGE STUDENTS' ENGAGEMENT AND ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE AT BESTLINK COLLEGE OF THE PHILIPPINES

ABSTRACT

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Technology plays a crucial role in modern student life, particularly at the college level. As institutions increasingly adopt digital tools, students are exposed to new and sometimes challenging learning environments. This study explored how technology can enhance student motivation and self-directed learning while also highlighting the potential risks of misuse. According to Upadhyaya and Vrinda (2021), students now rely on technology for nearly all academic tasks, including examinations and projects. While beneficial, improper use can lead to various challenges. The rise of Artificial Intelligence (AI) is unsurprising in this era. For students, AI supports academic tasks and boosts productivity; however, excessive reliance can weaken critical thinking, essential skills, and overall academic engagement. Basha et al. (2024) observed that students overly dependent on AI often struggle with basic skills, become less engaged, and face difficulties in independent problem-solving. Similarly, Kaite et al. (2021) found that while technology offers convenience and flexibility in learning, overuse can hinder fine motor development and cognitive skills. This study aimed to assess both the benefits and drawbacks of technology in education and provide recommendations for educators and school leaders on integrating technology effectively into learning environments. This study employed a quantitative cross-sectional design to examine the impact of modern technology on the academic performance of first-year students. Fifty freshmen from Bestlink College of the Philippines were randomly selected as participants. Data were collected through Google Forms, with the survey consisting primarily of open-ended items that encouraged students to reflect on both the benefits and challenges of using technology. This approach provided a comprehensive view of how technology influences academic outcomes and engagement. Most students agreed that digital tools helped them remain focused and motivated. However, approximately 40% reported that excessive reliance on technology diminished their critical thinking and writing abilities. Many also expressed reduced confidence in completing academic tasks without the aid of technology. Several respondents emphasized the importance of clear guidance from instructors to prevent overdependence on digital tools. The data indicate that technology has a strong influence on student motivation, self-directed learning, and collaboration. While many participants reported increased productivity, heavy reliance on technology was also seen as a potential threat to essential skills. Shared digital platforms facilitated teamwork but reduced opportunities for face-to-face interaction. Some students expressed concerns about the potential for increased academic dishonesty, highlighting the need for clearer guidelines and greater awareness.

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