2026 Volume: 02 Issue: 04 www.ijrpa.com ISSN 2456-9995 Research Article

International Journal Research Publication Analysis

Page: 01-11

DIGITAL MINIMALISM PRACTICES AND STUDENTS' ACADEMIC WELL-BEING

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Article Received: 25 February 2026
Article Revised: 15 March 2026
Published on: 05 April 2026

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DOI: https://doi-doi.org/101555/ijrpa.5051

ABSTRACT

This study aimed to examine the Digital Minimalism Practices and Students' Academic Well-Being. This study employed a descriptive correlational research design to determine the relationship between digital minimalism practices and students' academic well-being. The participants in the study were public High School students in Kadingilan, Bukidnon, District 2, specifically from San Andres National High School, Grade 11 and Grade 12, using purposive sampling to ensure relevance to the research focus. The result revealed that learners demonstrate a high level of Digital Minimalism Practices, including limiting social media use, indicating that they are generally mindful of managing their online engagement. Another significant finding showed that students' perceived Academic Well-Being was interpreted as "always," reflecting a consistently positive academic experience. The analysis further revealed a significant relationship between the level of Digital Minimalism Practices and students' Academic Well-Being. These suggest that school administrators continue to promote digital minimalism practices among learners. Programs and activities that encourage responsible social media use and greater engagement in offline activities should be strengthened. They may continue to strengthen programs that support students' academic well-being. Schools may conduct seminars and workshops that promote healthy digital habits and responsible technology use. Teachers may integrate digital well-being discussions into lessons to reinforce self-regulation skills and encourage learners by modeling balanced digital habits at home. Teachers are encouraged to guide students in managing online distractions while maximizing the use of digital tools for learning. Peer support initiatives and collaborative learning activities should be promoted to maintain positive relationships.

KEYWORDS: *Digital Minimalism Practices, Students' Academic Well-Being, limiting social media use, prioritizing offline activities.*

INTRODUCTION

In the current digital age, students are constantly exposed to a multitude of digital devices, social media platforms, and online applications that demand their attention. While technology offers numerous benefits for learning and communication, excessive use can negatively impact students' focus, productivity, and overall academic performance. Digital minimalism, a concept popularized by Cal Newport, emphasizes intentional and meaningful use of digital tools while reducing unnecessary screen time. This practice encourages students to prioritize tasks that align with their academic goals and personal growth, potentially enhancing their academic well-being. Understanding the relationship between digital minimalism and academic outcomes is crucial as educational environments increasingly rely on technology.

Despite the growing adoption of technology in education, many students struggle with distractions from excessive screen time, leading to poor time management, decreased engagement, and increased stress. Some students may find it challenging to balance academic responsibilities with digital entertainment or social media usage, which could negatively affect their academic well-being. The problem addressed in this study is the lack of empirical evidence on how digital minimalism practices influence students' academic performance, motivation, and overall sense of well-being in academic settings. By investigating this relationship, the study aims to provide insights into strategies that can help students optimize their digital habits for better academic outcomes.

Recent research supports the idea that intentional technology use can improve academic focus and psychological health. Studies by Li, X., et.al. (2025) suggest that limiting non-essential digital distractions can enhance concentration and learning efficiency. Furthermore, research by Schraggeová, M., & colleagues (2021) indicates that students who practice mindful digital consumption report lower stress levels and higher satisfaction with their academic achievements. These findings reinforce the notion that digital minimalism is not about eliminating technology but about using it strategically to support academic goals. Such evidence provides a strong foundation for exploring the specific impact of digital minimalism practices on students' academic well-being.

This study is significant because it offers practical implications for students, educators, and policymakers. For students, it can provide strategies to balance technology use and academic responsibilities effectively. For educators, understanding students' digital habits can guide the development of interventions, workshops, or policies that promote healthy digital behaviors in academic settings. Additionally, policymakers in educational institutions can use the findings to design frameworks that encourage intentional technology use, thereby fostering a positive learning environment. Ultimately, the study contributes to improving students' academic well-being and long-term success in a digital-first world.

Although prior studies highlight the benefits of mindful digital use, there is limited research specifically addressing the relationship between digital minimalism practices and students' academic well-being. Most studies focus either on general technology use, internet addiction, or mental health outcomes separately, without linking these practices to academic performance and well-being comprehensively. This gap necessitates a focused investigation into how digital minimalism strategies, such as screen time management, prioritizing essential digital activities, and minimizing distractions, can enhance students' academic satisfaction, motivation, and overall well-being. Filling this gap will provide evidence-based guidance for educational interventions.

The primary objective of this study is to examine the influence of digital minimalism practices on students' academic well-being. The study also seeks to provide students with recommendations for effectively implementing digital minimalism strategies. By achieving this objective, the research aims to inform educators and institutions about the potential benefits of promoting intentional technology use to enhance students' academic performance and overall well-being.

Conceptual Framework

This study was anchored on Autonomy, Competence, Relatedness Theory by Deci and Ryan (1985). This theory is about human motivation and what drives people to grow, learn, and engage in activities. It emphasizes that people have innate psychological needs, and satisfying these needs leads to motivation and well-being.

Applying this theory to the present study, digital minimalism enables students to exercise autonomy by consciously controlling their screen time and digital interactions, competence by channeling their efforts toward academic tasks without distraction, and relatedness by

fostering deeper, face-to-face social connections. As a result, students practicing digital minimalism are more likely to experience improved academic well-being, as they can manage stress, enhance focus, and maintain a healthier balance between academic demands and personal growth.

The practice of digital minimalism, particularly limiting social media use, is significantly associated with students' academic well-being. Excessive social media engagement is often linked to distractions, reduced focus, and procrastination, which negatively affect learning performance. When learners consciously regulate their time online, especially by limiting social media use, they develop greater self-discipline and focus on academic tasks. This self-regulation helps minimize cognitive overload, leading to improved concentration, better study habits, and reduced academic stress, all of which contribute positively to their overall academic well-being. Similarly, prioritizing offline activities strengthens the connection between digital minimalism and academic well-being.

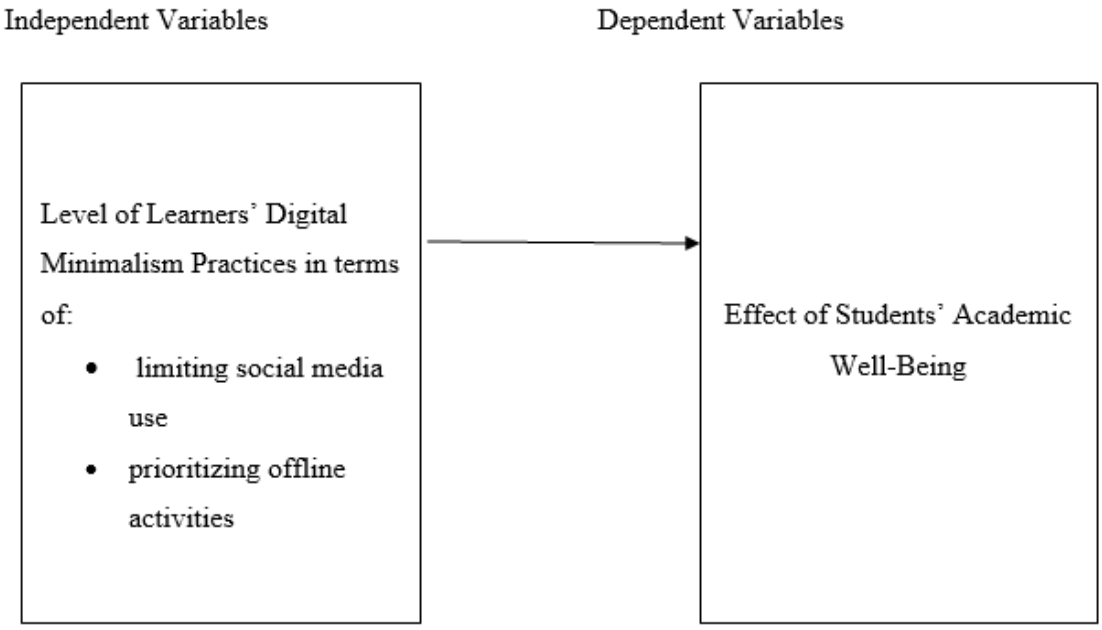

Figure 1. ***Schematic Presentation Showing the Relationship Between the Independent and Dependent Variables of the Study***

Statement of the Problem

This study aimed to examine the Digital Minimalism Practices and Students' Academic Well-Being. Specifically, this study aimed to answer the following questions:

1. What is the level of Learners' Digital Minimalism Practices in terms of limiting social media use and prioritizing offline activities?

2. What is the perception of Students' Academic Well-Being?
3. Is there a significant relationship between the level of Digital Minimalism Practices and Students' Academic Well-Being?

Delimitation of the Study

The study on the relationship between digital minimalism practices and students' academic well-being focused on San Andres National High School, Grades 11 and 12, examining how their intentional reduction and mindful use of digital devices influence their academic performance, focus, and overall well-being. The scope includes analyzing specific digital minimalism practices, such as limiting social media use and prioritizing offline activities, and measuring their impact on students' academic engagement, stress levels, and satisfaction with learning. The study was delimited to a particular age group and educational setting, excluding students outside the selected institutions or those with underlying conditions that may significantly affect academic well-being, such as diagnosed learning disabilities or severe mental health disorders. Data were collected through surveys and questionnaires, relying on self-reported practices and perceptions, which may not fully capture all dimensions of digital behavior or academic outcomes.

Review of the Literature

Level of Learners' Digital Minimalism Practices

Learners' adoption of digital minimalism—intentionally limiting social media to protect attention and well-being—remains uneven and largely reactive. Twenge (2020) documents rising adolescent distress alongside increased smartphone and social-media use, highlighting why calls for limits have grown but not produced uniform behavior change. Boer et al. (2020) found that intense social-media use can enhance perceived friend support, whereas problematic use correlates with poorer well-being, explaining why students resist strict limits even when some need them for mental-health reasons. Pilot studies with university students (El-Khoury et al., 2020) show that short-term detoxes and ad-hoc restrictions offer mood and productivity benefits but often lack durability without structural support. Clinical and observational work (Vidal et al., 2020; Ophir, Nass, & Wagner, 2019) emphasizes that the quality of social-media use matters more than raw time, supporting selective, meaningful use and incremental, socially aware minimalism rather than one-size-fits-all bans.

Prioritizing offline activities further supports cognitive and academic gains. Tindell and Bohlander (2021) argue that withdrawing from optional digital consumption frees attention for high-value tasks like deep study, socializing, and hobbies. Large-scale analyses by Orben and Przybylski (2019) suggest population-level effects of digital reduction are small, but epidemiological work (Riehm et al., 2019; Twenge, 2019) identifies high-use adolescents at risk for internalizing mental-health problems who could benefit from offline prioritization. Attia et al. (2018) highlight that social norms, platform design, and academic pressures limit learners' actual offline engagement. Overall, the literature indicates that promoting digital minimalism and offline prioritization requires both individual habit tools and systemic supports to help learners act without social costs, targeting both typical behavior and vulnerable high-use subgroups to improve well-being and academic outcomes.

Students' Academic Well-Being

Large-scale survey and observational research shows that excessive or unstructured screen use can negatively affect students' mental health, behavior, sleep, and academic performance. Paulich et al. (2021) found that greater overall screen time was moderately linked to worse mental-health indicators, behavioral problems, poorer sleep, and lower academic achievement, suggesting that reducing non-essential screen use could improve focus and grades (Kirschner & van Merriënboer, 2020). Haddad et al. (2021) similarly reported that problematic social-media use during the COVID era correlated with worse mental-health outcomes, though psychological resources such as mindfulness and cognitive reappraisal buffered these effects (Salari, 2025). These findings indicate that lowering compulsive, low-value digital engagement—a core principle of digital minimalism—can reduce stress, enhance concentration, and support both academic and psychological well-being.

At the same time, intentional, purposeful use of digital tools can be beneficial. Ashraf et al. (2021) observed positive academic outcomes when social media was used to support learning, while Vornholt et al. (2021) showed that curated social-media resources with therapeutic or academic intent can bolster well-being. Jin et al. (2024) emphasize that digital minimalism is not total abstinence but deliberate curation, keeping tools that aid goals and discarding low-value distractions. Evidence from Zapata-Lamana et al. (2021) and Cain (2019) reinforces that excessive recreational screen time is associated with poorer school performance, supporting interventions such as device-free study blocks and limiting low-value digital engagement. Collectively, these studies advocate for a balanced approach:

reducing harmful or distracting use while maintaining intentional, goal-directed digital engagement to maximize both academic and mental-health outcomes.

Research Methodology

This study employed a descriptive correlational research design to determine the relationship between digital minimalism practices and students' academic well-being. The participants in the study are public High school students in Kadingilan, Bukidnon, District 2, specifically from San Andres National High School, Grade 11 and Grade 12, using purposive sampling to ensure relevance to the research focus. Data collection procedures included distributing questionnaires during scheduled school visits, with necessary coordination and consent from school heads. The responses were tallied, encoded, and analyzed using statistical tools such as mean, standard deviation, and Pearson's correlation coefficient to determine the nature and strength of the relationship between the two main variables.

Findings

Presented below are the findings derived from this study.

The findings indicate that learners demonstrate a high level of digital minimalism, limiting social media use, reflecting their mindfulness in managing online engagement. They also show a very high level of prioritizing offline activities, highlighting a strong preference for face-to-face interactions and real-world experiences over excessive digital involvement. Overall, these practices suggest that students are intentionally adopting balanced digital habits that support healthier and more focused lifestyles. However, these findings are limited because they rely on self-reported data from a specific group of students, which may not fully represent all learners, and the study cannot establish causation between digital minimalism practices and improvements in academic well-being.

Another significant finding revealed that students' perceived academic well-being was interpreted as "always," indicating a consistently positive academic experience. This suggests that learners frequently feel satisfied, motivated, and emotionally supported within their academic environment. It reflects a stable sense of well-being that can enhance their engagement, focus, and persistence in school tasks. However, this finding is limited by its reliance on self-reported perceptions, which may be influenced by personal biases and may not fully capture all aspects of students' academic experiences.

The findings reveal a significant relationship between digital minimalism practices and students' academic well-being. Limiting social media use shows a very strong association with improved academic well-being, while prioritizing offline activities shows a meaningful but comparatively weaker association. Overall, the combined digital minimalism practices indicate a strong connection with students' academic well-being, suggesting that responsible digital use may support better academic experiences. However, these findings are limited because they show only relationships and cannot confirm direct cause-and-effect, and because the data were collected from a specific group of students, which may not represent all learners.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Drawing from the study's findings, the following conclusions can be made:

A high level of digital minimalism practices, including limiting social media use, and a very high level of prioritizing offline activities. These findings indicate that learners are generally mindful of their digital behavior and can regulate their social media use, particularly in academic contexts. Their strong preference for offline interactions and activities reflects a healthy balance between digital engagement and real-life experiences. Such practices suggest growing digital awareness and self-discipline among learners. Overall, digital minimalism supports learners' focus, emotional well-being, and academic functioning. The study highlights the importance of intentional technology use in promoting positive academic and personal outcomes.

Students' perceived academic well-being was interpreted as Always, indicating a consistently positive academic experience. The result suggests that students frequently feel motivated, emotionally healthy, and supported in their academic journey. Their ability to manage academic demands while maintaining a positive attitude reflects strong psychological and emotional resilience. The findings imply that students experience a supportive learning environment that contributes to their sense of purpose and fulfillment. High levels of academic well-being enhance students' engagement, concentration, and overall academic performance. Overall, the result highlights the stability and strength of students' academic well-being.

A significant relationship between the level of digital minimalism practices and students' academic well-being. The result indicates that students who intentionally manage their digital behaviors tend to experience higher levels of motivation, focus, and emotional stability in

their academic lives. Limiting social media use and prioritizing offline activities are important for supporting positive academic experiences. The findings suggest that digital minimalism contributes meaningfully to students' overall academic functioning. Moreover, intentional digital habits help reduce academic stress and improve learning engagement. Overall, digital minimalism emerges as a valuable factor in promoting students' academic well-being.

Derived from the study's conclusions, the following recommendations are proposed:
To the School Administrators. School Administrators may continue to promote digital minimalism practices among learners. Programs and activities that encourage responsible social media use and greater engagement in offline activities should be strengthened. They may continue to strengthen programs that support students' academic well-being. Schools may conduct seminars and workshops that promote healthy digital habits and responsible technology use.

To the Teachers. Teachers may integrate digital well-being discussions into lessons to reinforce self-regulation skills and encourage learners by modeling balanced digital habits at home. Teachers are encouraged to guide students in managing online distractions while maximizing the use of digital tools for learning. Peer support initiatives and collaborative learning activities should be promoted to maintain positive relationships.

To the Parents. Parents may support balanced digital practices at home to reinforce positive behaviors. School administrators may consider developing policies that encourage mindful technology use without limiting access to educational resources. Parents and guardians are encouraged to provide emotional and academic support at home.

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