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### RESEARCH ARTICLE

#### SMARTPHONE ADDICTION AS A PREDICTOR OF READING CULTURE: AN EMPIRICAL STUDY OF TERTIARY EDUCATION STUDENTS IN ANAMBRA STATE, NIGERIA.

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#### Abstract

Reading is a ubiquitous part of everyday life and an essential component of the educational ecosystem of every society. However, the reading culture in Nigeria's context has been fraught with many challenges, including the ever-increasing innovations in mobile technology. The present study examined smartphone addiction as a variable that could account for variations in reading culture among undergraduates. Five hundred and fifty-two undergraduates enrolled in three public higher education institutions in Anambra State participated in the survey. The respondents completed a self-report measure of the Smartphone Addiction Scale-Short Version (SAS-SV) and Reading Culture Scale. The simple regression analysis performed on the data revealed smartphone addiction as a positive predictor of reading culture. Indeed, the result showed that smartphone addiction explained 43.1% of the variance in reading culture. The practical implications and recommendations are discussed.

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#### Introduction:-

Reading is a ubiquitous part of everyday life and an essential component of the educational landscape in every society (Bassette & Taber-Doughty, 2016; Bigozzi et al., 2017; Ganie et al., 2019; Graham et al., 2018; Kiili & Leu, 2019; Krashen et al., 2021; Kung & Aziz, 2020; Linder et al., 2018; Paige et al., 2012; Taylor et al., 2020). Indeed, reading is among the primary purpose of the school system. Thus, reading acquisition is perceived as a transformational life process (Castles et al., 2018). Conceivably, a significant part of educational activities requires reading and writing (Kojo et al., 2018). Reading interests is essential in improving learners' success in school and out of school (Khairuddin, 2013). Accordingly, reading describes a necessary pathway to acquiring knowledge, skills, and expression of thought (Itsekor & Nwokeoma, 2017). The development of reading is a lifelong process that begins in early childhood before formal education and continues overtime (Alexander, 2005). Though reading is commonly associated with the school environment, however reading in other contexts contributes significantly to individual differences among learners' reading skills (Locher & Pfost, 2020)

Reading culture refers to habitual and regular reading of books and information materials. According to Nyam (2015), reading culture is the use of reading as an everyday activity. Thus, it is an activity meant to popularize reading and make it a lifelong hobby (Otiye, 2011). Reading culture entails absorbing good reading culture, especially the habit that stimulates reading and studying (Adimora et al., 2017). Notably, most people read for different reasons aside from education, including self-improvement, pleasure, and relaxation (Alex-Nmecha & Horsfall, 2019). Reading culture encompasses reading skills, attitudes, perceptions, and subjective norms. In other

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words, it entails the capability to read, a favorable evaluation, and what is obtainable in one's environment. Indeed, reading culture in contemporary societies is increasingly on the decline.

A review of the existing literature underscores the prevalence of poor reading culture in Nigeria (Ajidahun, 2015; Danladi & Soko, 2019; Fabunmi & Folorunso, 2010; Ifedili, 2009; Ihedioha, N., 2021; Ihejirika et al., 2021; Oji & Erubami, 2020; Okuonghae & Obadare, 2021; Olasehinde et al., 2015; Ukpebor, 2020). The poor reading culture in Nigeria is pervasive across education levels, and it has reached an alarming state. Accordingly, authors have noted that students' and youth's reading culture is poor because they perceive it as a non-money-making venture (Oribabor, 2014) and not associated with pleasure (Igwesi et al., 2012). Reading is an essential part of education and, most importantly, the purpose of schooling. Unfortunately, most students in tertiary institutions cannot commit their time to read. Several factors have been implicated in the student's poor reading culture, for example, teaching method (Nwosu et al., 2021), limited access to reading materials (Ruterana, 2012), non-integration of the library in the school curriculum (Adejimoh et al., 2021), inadequate library services (Emmanuel & Augustine, 2021), environmental factors (Florence, 2012), and academic engagement and achievement orientation (Adimora et al., 2017). However, smartphone addiction is a scarcely explored variable that could negatively impact students' reading culture.

A smartphone is a cutting-edge mobile phone device designed to solve daily accessibility problems. Smartphones provide many features and allow more than making phone calls and sending text messages. The smartphone plays a vital role in higher education as it serves as a device with multiple functions (Lei et al., 2020). Hence, it allows students to access information relative to academic development. However, smartphones for social purposes have superseded their use for academic achievement in recent times. Although they have become indispensable in modern-day lives, excessive smartphones pose significant psychosocial problems such as smartphone addiction (Choi et al., 2020). Smartphone addiction reflects compulsive overuse of mobile devices, usually measured as the number of times users access their devices and the total time, they are online over a specified period.

Compulsive mobile device usage among students has attracted huge research attention in Nigeria (Akpunne & Akinnawo, 2019; Ayandele et al., 2020; Balogun & Olatunde, 2020; Onuoha & Bada, 2018; Iorver et al., 2018; Obi et al., 2020; Onuoha, 2019). Many students commit most of their time surfing the internet using their mobile phones. Most importantly, their continued use of the internet is primarily for social interactions and other activities other than their educational pursuit (Enwereuzor et al., 2016). Due to smartphones' high accessibility and mobility, extensive and pervasive smartphone use has become the social norm, exposing users to numerous health and other risk factors (Yu & Sussman, 2020). The more students use a smartphone, the more they are exposed to many positive and negative impacts. For instance, the persistent buzz, ping, or beep of the smartphone can distract a student from essential tasks, slow their engagement to schoolwork, and interrupt moments crucial to reading books, interfering with students' reading culture.

### **Hypothesis:**

Smartphone addiction would significantly predict reading culture among undergraduates in Anambra State, Nigeria

### **Method:-**

#### **Participants**

Students from Tertiary Institutions in the Anambra State of Nigeria constituted the research population. A total of three hundred and fifty-two (n= 352) students within the age range of 18-30 years comprising male and female enrolled in undergraduate programs were randomly selected from three public tertiary institutions in the Anambra States of Nigeria. The study adopted a cross-sectional survey research design.

#### **Measures:-**

Smartphone addiction was assessed using the Smartphone Addiction Scale-Short Version (SAS-SV) developed by Kwon et al. (2013). The SAS-SV comprises ten items. Responses to each item were scored using a 6-point scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 6 (strongly agree). Sample items include: "Having my smartphone in my mind even when I am not using it," and "The people around me tell me that I use my smartphone too much." The score on the instrument ranged from 10 to 60. Higher scores signify more addiction to smartphones. The SAS-SV is internally consistent with Cronbach's  $\alpha$  coefficient of .73 obtained in the contemporary sample

Reading culture was measured with a modified version of the reading culture scale initially developed by (Türkel et al., 2017). The adapted 18 items Likert form scale measures reading habit, attitudes, and perception of reading in a 5-point response format. The reliability of the instrument was ascertained using Cronbach alpha. Items had mean internal consistency, which yielded 0.78. A higher score indicates a high reading culture.

### Procedure:-

With trained research assistants, students from three different tertiary institutions were recruited for the study. The respondents were mainly pooled from the student's lodges and classrooms. A total of 272 students were approached and asked to participate in a survey to understand their use of mobile devices. In all, 265 participants out of the 272 approached agreed to participate in the survey. Hence, the questionnaires were given to them. Two hundred and sixty-five (265) copies of the questionnaires administered were completed and recovered on the spot. Nonetheless, only the satisfactorily filled questionnaires (i.e., 252) were used for the study. The remaining 13 copies were discarded for wrongful filling.

### Result:-

A simple regression analysis was conducted to test the hypothesis that smartphone addiction would significantly predict reading culture among undergraduates in Anambra State, Nigeria. The investigation revealed that smartphone addiction statistically significantly predicted the respondent's reading culture  $F(1,250), 36.71, P<.000$ . Thus, the outcome indicates that the assumption that smartphone addiction would significantly predict reading culture among undergraduates in Anambra State was affirmed.

**Table 1:-** Table showing the simple regression result for smartphone addiction and reading culture.

	B	SEB	$\beta$	t	Sig
Constant	1.84	.033		53.67	.000
Smartphone addiction	-.73	.043	-.77	-16.71	.000
$R^2 .431$					

Note. B = Unstandardized regression coefficient; SEB = Standardized error of the coefficient;  $\beta$  = Standardized coefficient;  $R^2$  = Coefficient of determination. \* $P<.000$ .

### Discussion:-

The study examined smartphone addiction as a predictor of reading culture among students in Anambra State, Nigeria. Data from a convenience sample of two hundred and fifty-two undergraduates were analyzed using simple regression analysis. The result demonstrated that smartphone addiction statistically predicted reading culture among the respondents. More so, the result indicates that smartphone dependency accounted for about 43.1% of the variation in reading culture among undergraduates. This means that the compulsive use of mobile devices contributes significantly to students' overall reading culture in the modern-day educational system. The probable explanation for this outcome may be attributed to the multi-features of the recent mobile devices, which allow the user to engage in multitasking activities, such as instant messaging, gaming, selfies, social interactions, business exploration, and other fun activities. Also, reading in recent days has been disregarded by many students who perceive reading as necessary only for examination and that it provides no immediate reward compared to smartphone funs. The finding is consistent with previous studies (Anyira & Udem, 2020; Oji & Erubami, 2020). For instance, Bukhori et al. (2019) found that smartphone addiction correlated with textbook reading intensity among students. Recent research has established a significant positive relationship between smartphone addiction and the number of distractions experienced while reading (Gezgin et al., 2021). Indeed, research has found a link between smartphone addiction and reading attitudes (Çizmeçi, 2017; Levratto et al., 2021). The result can be explained based on the conception that compulsive phone use negatively impacts the motivation to engage in reading. The study's finding indicated that the respondents varied in reading habits which confirms the perpetual concern by educators over the poor reading culture by many students despite the importance attached to reading. Despite the increasing popularity of smartphones in contemporary societies, their overuse among students has been broadly discouraged

because of their negative impact on academic performance (Lin et al., 2021). Thus, the present finding proves that smartphone addiction is a significant correlate of reading culture in Nigeria's educational context.

### **Limitations, strengths, and future directions**

It is essential to report the observed limitation relative to the present study. Firstly, the sample size, comprising only students from tertiary institutions in Anambra states, limited the current study's generalization. The data used for the analysis was exclusively based on self-report, which could raise the issue of common method variance. However, the current study contributes to the literature by revealing smartphone addiction as an essential variable in the reading culture, expanding our understanding of the influencing variables in the poor reading culture among undergraduates in the Anambra State of Nigeria. Moreover, research attempting to investigate the relationship between smartphone addiction and reading culture using Nigerian samples is scarce, justifying the present study. Future studies should consider the use of data from more inclusive sources and endeavor to utilize data triangulation.

### **Practical implication**

The finding has provided evidence supporting the predictive effect of smartphone overuse in the increasing decline in reading among undergraduates. Also, the study helps provide relevant data to the education administrators, relevant stakeholders interested in promoting reading culture in Nigeria, and researchers since the result provided insight into the possible variable in poor reading culture.

### **Conclusion:-**

The current study is examined reading culture in the era of growing compulsive use of smart mobile devices among undergraduates. Five hundred and fifty-two undergraduates enrolled in three higher education institutions in Anambra state were recruited for the study. Indeed, the simple linear regression conducted on the data confirmed the study's expectation. Thus, the study concluded that smartphone addiction among undergraduates is crucial for determining student-reading status. However, it is unclear if other variables contributed to the study's outcome. More research is needed to determine other intervening variables in the relationship between smartphone addiction and reading culture in the Nigerian context. Furthermore, since most students are addicted to their mobile phones, e-books and e-assessments should be extensively employed to attract their attention to reading.

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