

Digital distractions in higher education students

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SUMMARY

EXISTING KNOWLEDGE

1. **Digital Distractions in Education:** The presence of digital devices in classrooms can enhance learning but often leads to off-task activities, negatively affecting academic performance and focus.
2. **Multitasking Limitations:** Research shows that multitasking, especially with digital media, impairs attention and increases cognitive load, reducing learning efficiency.
3. **Self-Regulation and Technology Use:** Effective self-regulation can mitigate the negative impacts of digital distractions, fostering better engagement and academic outcomes.

NEW INSIGHTS FROM THIS STUDY

1. **Student-Identified Distractors:** Pérez-Juárez et al. revealed that students view social media, messaging apps, and web browsing as the most significant digital distractions in laboratory classes, often hindering task focus and time management.
2. **Impact of External Factors:** Non-digital distractors, such as noisy environments, technical issues with equipment, and unclear instructions from professors, were also identified as

major contributors to reduced attention and performance.

3. **Performance Self-Assessment:** Nearly 70% of students felt they could use their time more effectively in lab sessions if distractions were managed better, highlighting a gap in both personal self-regulation and institutional support.

PUTTING RESEARCH INTO PRACTICE

1. **Educate on Digital Self-Regulation:** Institutions should implement programs to raise awareness about digital distractions and teach students strategies to self-regulate their use of technology during academic tasks.
2. **Improve Classroom Management:** Teachers can minimize distractions by addressing environmental issues like noise and faulty equipment, while creating engaging, well-structured lessons.
3. **Leverage Technology for Focus:** Rather than removing devices, educators can integrate them into learning activities to harness their potential as educational tools while reducing off-task behavior.

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Reference: Pérez-Juárez, M. Á., González-Ortega, D., & Aguiar-Pérez, J. M. (2023). Digital distractions from the point of view of higher education students. *Sustainability*, 15(7), 6044. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su15076044>