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Navigating Digital Distractions: A Phenomenological Study of Students' Lived Experiences in Technology-Rich Learning Environments

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Abstract. Digital devices support learning but can also divert students' attention, and little is known about how students experience this in technology-rich classrooms in Bukidnon, Philippines. This qualitative study used a descriptive phenomenological design to explore the lived experiences of Grade 12 Humanities and Social Sciences students with digital distractions at Bocboc National High School during school year 2026–2027. Fifteen students were purposively selected and interviewed individually using a researcher-made, semi-structured interview guide. The interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed, and the transcripts were analyzed through reflexive thematic analysis. Four themes emerged. In interrupted flow, learning was broken by digital pulls and followed by guilt, anxiety, and embarrassment. In a layered pull against focus, distraction arose from habit and platform design, peer pressure, fatigue, and home and school conditions such as shared devices, weak connectivity, and unclear device rules. In reclaiming control, students removed tempting sources, structured their time, set boundaries with others, and drew on personal motivation. In shared responsibility, students called on teachers, parents, peers, and the school for clear rules, engaging teaching, and support. Two accounts differed from the rest, attributing distraction to lesson quality and to limited access, respectively. Learning in a technology-rich environment therefore appeared as a continuous negotiation between digital temptation and academic purpose. The study addresses a gap in Philippine phenomenological research, which has centered on the Visayas and Davao, by describing student experiences in an inland province of Northern Mindanao. Supporting focused learning may require student self-management together with consistent device policies, purposeful instruction, and stable, equitable access to connectivity. Future studies may include other schools, compare urban and upland settings, and add teachers' and parents' perspectives.

Keywords: Digital Distraction; Lived Experiences; Phenomenological Study; Senior High School Students; Technology-Rich Learning Environments

Introduction

Digital devices, learning platforms, and constant internet access are now part of how many students learn, yet evidence that this improves learning remains limited (UNESCO, 2023). One concern is distracted learning, in which students shift between schoolwork and other media. Schmidt (2020) reviewed research showing that this shifting interferes with attention and working memory, and that many students believe they multitask well enough to be unaffected.

In the Philippines, a Senate committee analysis of PISA 2022 data reported that about 8 in 10 Filipino 15-year-olds were distracted by their own smartphones and about 8 in 10 by those of other students. Distraction was linked to lower scores of about 9.3 points in mathematics, 12.2 in science, and 15.04 in reading (Gatchalian, 2024). Qualitative work has begun to describe what this looks like for students. Grade 11 students in Davao City found mobile devices useful for learning but also distracting (Lim & Arcilla, 2021), and education students in Cebu described interrupted learning flow, a sense of falling behind, and a struggle with digital discipline (Consolacion et al., 2025).

Survey and test data show how widespread distraction is, but they say little about how students experience it in classrooms where devices and platforms compete for their attention. The Philippine

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https://ijroms.com
Original Article

phenomenological studies identified involved few participants and were conducted in the Visayas and Davao; none from Bukidnon, and none focused on Grade 12 Humanities and Social Sciences (HUMSS) students, were found. Bukidnon, an inland province in Northern Mindanao with both urban school centers and upland communities, likely offers varied access to devices and connectivity, which may shape how distraction is experienced.

Research Questions

This study therefore explored and described the lived experiences of Grade 12 HUMSS students with digital distractions in technology-rich learning environments at Bocboc National High School, Don Carlos III District, Bukidnon, Philippines, during school year 2026–2027. Specifically, it sought to answer the following research questions:

1. What specific experiences do Grade 12 HUMSS students have when using gadgets, computers, or other digital tools during learning, and what is it like for them when something distracts them from a school task?
2. What challenges or difficulties do they encounter in staying focused on their lessons when digital devices, online games, videos, or social media are available around them?
3. What strategies or ways do they use to manage or overcome digital distractions so that they can finish their learning activities and understand their lessons?
4. What recommendations or suggestions can they give to their teachers, classmates, parents, or school to help students use technology for learning while avoiding digital distractions?

Scope and Delimitation of the Study

The study focused on Grade 12 HUMSS students' experiences in using digital devices, applications, and online platforms during learning activities, specifically their experiences of digital distraction, the challenges they met in staying focused, the strategies they used to manage distraction, and their recommendations for improving technology use in learning. Data were gathered through semi-structured, open-ended interviews and analyzed thematically to identify shared meanings and patterns in the participants' accounts. The study was delimited to Grade 12 HUMSS students of Bocboc National High School and did not include learners from other grade levels, strands, or schools, nor teachers, parents, or school administrators. It centered on participants' subjective experiences and interpretations rather than on measurements of academic performance, screen time, gadget ownership, or the statistical effects of technology use on learning outcomes. Because the findings rest on the narratives of the selected participants and are interpreted within the context of their school, they are not intended to represent the experiences of all senior high school students in other schools, districts, divisions, or countries.

Literature Review

Digital devices, applications, and internet-based resources give learners greater access to information and interactive learning opportunities, but the same tools can divert attention toward games, social media, videos, and messaging (Al-Furaih & Almalki, 2022). Reviews agree that this dual role is best understood as the product of several interacting sources rather than a single cause. Martin et al. (2025) described digital distraction as the interruption of learners' concentration during academic tasks and grouped its causes into technological, personal, and instructional-environment factors, and Deng et al. (2024) likewise separated internal conditions, such as cognitive overload, boredom, stress, and lack of motivation, from external ones, such as the physical classroom, peer behavior, and the design of digital tools. Students' own reports fit this picture: they describe being drawn away by notifications, entertainment applications, social media, online games, and the habit of multitasking (Al-Furaih & Almalki, 2022). The resulting paradox, in which students benefit from digital resources while becoming vulnerable to distraction when devices are readily accessible during lessons (González-Ortega & Aguiar-Pérez, 2023), is why a phenomenological perspective that attends to how students perceive and give meaning to these experiences is appropriate (González-Ortega & Aguiar-Pérez, 2023).

Studies of effects point in the same direction but differ in what they emphasize. Leisure use of smartphones and other devices during school time is associated with lower learning outcomes, which suggests that unregulated use competes with academic tasks for limited attentional resources (OECD, 2024). Other work focuses on the strain of the digital environment itself, showing that overload from multiple platforms, applications, and communication channels can produce technostress, mental fatigue, and reduced engagement (Tafesse et al., 2024). The first line of evidence treats distraction as a matter of how devices are used, while the second treats it as a consequence of how digital demands accumulate; neither describes how students interpret these pressures in their own classrooms. Reviews of classroom disruptions in digital

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Original Article

teaching add that the topic has received little attention and that existing studies are strongly teacher-focused (Meinokat & Wagner, 2022), so students' own accounts remain underrepresented.

On coping, the literature offers lists of strategies and differing views of what drives them. Common strategies include limiting access to distracting applications, silencing notifications, structuring the study environment, setting learning goals, managing time, prioritizing academic platforms, and reducing social media use (Tafesse et al., 2024), and goal setting, environmental structuring, and time management have been found to occur most consistently with lower levels of digital distraction (Shi et al., 2026). Aagaard (2021), however, described students' anti-distraction practices as intentional actions that protect attention and sustain engagement, which indicates that coping is not simply a matter of self-control. Taken together, these studies suggest that coping depends on students' awareness of distraction, their motivation to learn, and their ability to monitor and adjust their behavior, but the studies reviewed here say little about how circumstances such as shared devices or unreliable connectivity limit the strategies available.

Prevention research shows a similar split. Martin et al. (2025) identified regulating the classroom environment, using appropriate technology controls, providing clear rules on device use, and implementing personal behavioral interventions as prevention strategies, and Awofala et al. (2023) recommended classroom management technology as a way to monitor and reduce off-task digital behavior without completely restricting access to educational technology. Flanigan et al. (2023) agree that clear expectations help, but they add a caution: in a survey of undergraduates, course policies against digital distraction improved student buy-in and perceptions of rapport with instructors, yet confrontational enforcement was judged the most effective method and also the most damaging to rapport. Teachers may therefore reduce distraction through positive student–instructor relationships, clear expectations, and activities that actively engage students (Flanigan et al., 2023). Overall, the literature suggests a balanced approach that develops students' self-regulation while providing structured guidance, supportive relationships, and purposeful technology integration.

Taken together, this body of work draws largely on university students, large-scale surveys, and reviews. Philippine qualitative studies are few: Grade 11 students in Davao City and education students in Cebu have been studied (Consolacion et al., 2025; Lim & Arcilla, 2021), but no phenomenological study of Grade 12 HUMSS students in Bukidnon was found. The present study addresses this gap by describing, in the students' own words, how digital distraction is experienced, what makes it hard to resist, how students manage it, and what they ask of teachers, families, and schools in an inland province where access to devices and connectivity may vary.

Methodology

Research Design

This study used a qualitative research design, specifically the descriptive phenomenological approach, to explore and describe the lived experiences of Grade 12 HUMSS students with digital distractions in technology-rich learning environments. A phenomenological design was appropriate because it centers on participants' personal experiences, perceptions, and the meanings they give to digital distraction as it occurs in their actual learning situations. The researcher gathered these accounts through individual, semi-structured interviews and analyzed them thematically, as described in the sections that follow.

Research Locale

The study was conducted at Bocboc National High School in the Don Carlos III District, Province of Bukidnon, Philippines. The school is a public secondary school under the Division of Bukidnon, Department of Education (DepEd), and serves learners from the surrounding communities. It was chosen because it implements technology-supported learning activities in which students use digital devices, educational applications, online platforms, and internet-based resources, which made it an appropriate setting for exploring students' experiences of digital distraction.

Research Participants

The participants were 15 Grade 12 HUMSS students of Bocboc National High School who met the established inclusion criteria. To protect their privacy, they were assigned participant codes K1 to K15 throughout the paper. The participants were within the age range of 16-19, with 6 male and 9 female students. Regarding their use of technology, participants commonly accessed digital learning materials through smartphones, laptops, or tablets, while their internet connectivity was primarily obtained through mobile data, household Wi-Fi, or a combination of both. These profile characteristics are presented in aggregate form to minimize the risk of identifying individual participants. As senior high school students who

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Original Article

used digital devices or online platforms for learning, they were able to share their experiences, challenges, coping strategies, and recommendations concerning digital distraction in the learning environment.

Research Instrument

Data were gathered with a researcher-made, semi-structured interview guide of open-ended questions. Its four areas matched the four research questions: participants' experiences of digital distraction, the challenges they met in maintaining focus, the strategies they used to manage distraction, and their recommendations for improving technology use in learning. Experts in qualitative research and education reviewed and validated the guide to ensure that the questions were clear, relevant, and aligned with the objectives of the study. Follow-up questions and probes were used to obtain deeper, richer, and more detailed responses.

Data Gathering Procedure

After permission was secured from the school administration, eligible students were invited to participate in the study. Individual interviews were conducted after the necessary consent and assent had been obtained. Each interview was held in a private setting outside class hours, without teachers present, at a time agreed upon with the participant. The interviews were conducted in Cebuano/Bisaya, Filipino, English, or a combination of these languages and lasted approximately 30-35 minutes each. The researcher followed the semi-structured interview guide, asked follow-up questions and probing questions when necessary, and allowed participants to describe their experiences in their own words. When responses were given in Cebuano/Bisaya or Filipino, they were transcribed in the original language and translated into English for analysis and presentation in the manuscript. The translations were checked against the original transcripts to preserve the participants' intended meanings. With separate consent, the interviews were audio-recorded. The recordings were transcribed and the transcripts verified for accuracy. Following verification and in accordance with the study's data-management procedures, the audio recordings were destroyed. Participants were identified in all research records and in the presentation of findings using codes K1 to K15 to maintain confidentiality.

Results and Discussions

Research Question 1: What specific experiences do Grade 12 HUMSS students have when using gadgets, computers, or other digital tools during learning, and what is it like for them when something distracts them from a school task?

On the specific experiences in using gadgets, computers, or other digital tools during learning, and what it was like when something distracted them from a school task.

Participants described distraction as breaks in a task they had already started, followed by feelings about the break. Brief intentions turned into long detours: "I told myself one game only, but it became two hours" (K1). Alerts pulled attention away even when the student had no plan to leave the task. K4 said, "My eyes just go to it automatically. I don't even decide to look. After that I can't pick up where the teacher stopped, so my notes have gaps." Distraction was not always obvious to the student, either. K9 described a research session in which "it feels productive because I'm reading, but it's not what I need for the task."

The emotional aftermath was consistent across accounts, though its form varied. K1 reported guilt over an unfinished report, K6 described feeling "left behind" when classmates had already submitted, and K11 recalled being embarrassed after being caught on a game site. For some, the effects reached beyond the task. K15 explained, "I would wake up tired and miss my first class," and K13 became aware of the pattern only after failing a quiz. One participant described the experience differently: K14 said distraction occurs mainly with boring or difficult tasks and added, "If I understand the lesson, I forget my phone exists."

Emerging Theme: Interrupted Flow: Learning Punctuated by Digital Pulls and Their Emotional Aftermath

These accounts agree with research showing that switching between schoolwork and other media interferes with attention and working memory (Schmidt, 2020). K4's notes with gaps show what that interference looks like inside an actual lesson, and K9's research session that felt productive but missed the task shows that distraction is not always noticed, which relates to Schmidt's observation that many students believe they are unaffected. K1's one game that became two hours is consistent with a meta-analysis of 44 studies in which more phone use while studying was linked to a greater negative effect on learning and achievement (Sunday et al., 2021), although the present data describe how the lost time was experienced and do not measure its effect. The consequences that K13 and K15 described, a failed quiz and a missed first class,

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Original Article

extend survey findings that higher smartphone dependence goes with difficulty concentrating and procrastination (Agostini & Petrucco, 2023) by showing how such difficulties can carry into the next school day.

The emotional aftermath adds a dimension that attention-focused studies do not capture. Guilt, feeling left behind, and embarrassment resemble the dissonance that followed distraction in online courses (Chen, 2026) and the feelings of falling behind reported by education students in Cebu (Consolacion et al., 2025). Finding these experiences among senior high school students in Bukidnon suggests that they are not confined to university or Visayan samples. K14's account differs from the habit-centered explanations: distraction that occurs mainly with boring or difficult tasks and fades when the lesson is understood suggests that comprehension of the lesson may shape how strongly digital pulls act. Together, the accounts contribute a description of distraction as an interruption with an emotional cost, and not only as a loss of attention.

Research Question 2: What challenges or difficulties do they encounter in staying focused on their lessons when digital devices, online games, videos, or social media are available around them?

On the challenges or difficulties they encounter in staying focused on their lessons when digital devices, online games, videos, or social media are available around them.

Participants named several overlapping sources of difficulty, and few named only one. The first was the design of the technology. K1 said, "The temptation is always one tap away," and K3 said of autoplay, "I don't choose the next video, it just starts." The second was social. K5 monitored a class group chat for deadline changes and was drawn into unrelated messages, and K8's gaming teammates kept inviting him even after he declined. The third was personal energy. K2, a working student, said, "Self-control is hardest when I'm tired," and K15's late-night use affected concentration the next day, "even without my phone."

The fourth layer was the environment at home and school. K12 was distracted by siblings' videos in a shared household, K11 was unsure which behavior each teacher allowed ("When the rules aren't clear, I test how far I can go"), and K14 linked lapses to long, slide-reading lessons. Access differences produced different problems. K7, who relied on a shared phone and weak signal, described "switch to other apps while waiting" for materials to load, so limited connectivity created distraction of its own.

Emerging Theme: A Layered Pull Against Focus: Design, Peers, Fatigue, and Conditions

The layers participants described match the multiple sources of distraction identified in the literature, and they show how those sources combine in a single learner. Habit and design appear in K1's temptation that is "one tap away" and K3's autoplay, which is consistent with a survey of 426 university students in the United States in which habitual technology use was the strongest determinant of digital distraction, ahead of attentional impulsiveness and Internet addiction (Chen et al., 2020). The social layer agrees with evidence that classmates' devices matter: across OECD countries, students distracted by other students' devices in at least some mathematics lessons scored about 15 points lower than those who were not (OECD, 2023), and the Philippine figures cited in the Introduction point the same way. K5's case adds a nuance. K5 was pulled into unrelated messages while checking a class group chat for deadline changes, so the pull came attached to a legitimate academic purpose, which sets it apart from the fear of missing out that Chen (2026) described as an added source of distraction. Romanian college students were twice as likely to report distraction from multitasking in online classes as in face-to-face classes (Aivaz & Teodorescu, 2022), which suggests that the pull of peers and platforms grows when learning and social channels coincide, as they did for K5 and K8.

The fatigue and conditions layers are where these accounts add most to the literature. Fatigue appears in the literature as a result of digital overload (Tafesse et al., 2024), but K2 and K15 described it as a condition that weakens self-control and as a result of late-night use, so tiredness and distraction appeared to feed each other. Home and school conditions, such as siblings' videos in a shared household, unclear rules, and long slide-reading lessons, correspond to the external conditions that Deng et al. (2024) distinguished from internal ones. K7's account of a shared phone and weak signal is the clearest example of why conditions matter: waiting for materials to load led to switching apps, so limited connectivity produced distraction of its own. UNESCO (2023) noted that the use of digital technology in education varies by community, socioeconomic level, and teacher preparedness; K7's account shows how that variation is felt by an individual learner, which national figures on distraction cannot show.

Research Question 3: What strategies or ways do they use to manage or overcome digital distractions so that they can finish their learning activities and understand their lessons?

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https://ijroms.com
Original Article

On the strategies or ways they use to manage or overcome digital distractions so that they can finish their learning activities and understand their lessons.

Participants did not describe themselves as passive. Their strategies fell into four groups. Some removed the source: K1 uninstalled a game during exam weeks, K15 deleted TikTok and charged the phone in another room, and K4 used airplane mode in class. Others structured time and tasks. K6 used 25-minute study blocks, K9 wrote unrelated ideas on a sticky note "for later," K3 and K7 downloaded materials to use offline, and K11 limited browsing to sites named in the task.

A third group set boundaries with other people. K5 muted the group chat and checked it during breaks, K10 posted a "studying, will reply later" status, K8 made an agreement with friends not to play on school days, and K12 explained her phone use to her mother. The fourth group relied on motivation and reflection. K14 connected lessons to personal interests, and K13 prayed before studying: "it calms me and helps me start." The strategies were practical and often tied to a participant's circumstances, and several (K7, K12) were shaped by limits on access or space.

Emerging Theme: Reclaiming Control: Self-Directed Strategies of Removal, Structure, Boundaries, and Purpose

Participants' strategies are consistent with those proposed in the self-regulation literature. Removing sources, such as uninstalling a game or using airplane mode, and structuring time and tasks, such as study blocks and a sticky note for unrelated ideas, correspond to limiting access to distracting applications, structuring the study environment, and managing time (Tafesse et al., 2024), and to the environmental structuring and time management that Shi et al. (2026) found to occur most consistently with lower distraction. Their reliance on planning and reflection also fits the self-regulated learning strategies that Wang et al. (2022) proposed for reducing digital distraction, and the purposeful character of these actions agrees with Aagaard's (2021) description of anti-distraction practices as intentional. The Cebu students' "trials of digital discipline" (Consolacion et al., 2025) are echoed in the effort participants put into these routines, which suggests that self-management is ongoing and not a one-time decision.

Three features of the participants' accounts go beyond the strategies listed in the studies cited here. First, setting boundaries with other people, such as muting a group chat, posting a status, and making agreements with friends or family, treats self-regulation as a social act, and it is not among the strategies listed by Tafesse et al. (2024). Second, K13's prayer before studying is a culturally grounded way of starting a task that does not appear in the cited studies. Third, K7 and K12 adapted their strategies to limits on access and space, which qualifies framings that place control mainly inside the student, such as the internal locus of control described by Schmidt (2020) or the emphasis on students' ability to manage their own digital behavior in Self-Regulation Theory (Kuş, 2025). Awodiji and Baluka (2023) concluded that responsible use, digital literacy, and online safety habits should be developed among university students; participants' accounts suggest that such habits also depend on access and space. The contribution of these findings is to show self-regulation among these students as practical, relational, and dependent on circumstances.

Research Question 4: What recommendations or suggestions can they give to their teachers, classmates, parents, or school to help students use technology for learning while avoiding digital distractions?

On the recommendations or suggestions they can give to their teachers, classmates, parents, or school to help them use technology for learning while avoiding digital distractions.

Recommendations asked for action beyond the individual student. Teachers were asked to design purposeful activities ("quizzes or research with a time limit," K1), to model good device use (K9), and to make lessons interactive (K14). Participants wanted clear and consistent policies, such as "a phone parking area" (K4) and rules that are "the same across teachers" (K11). Some preferred scheduled access to outright bans: "Maybe allow a schedule, like weekends only" (K8).

Participants also asked for support. K7 requested stable school Wi-Fi and download points, K2 requested flexible deadlines for working students, and K6 requested counseling on digital habits and stress. Family and peers were included: K15 proposed a household no-phone hour at night, K5 proposed separate class chats for announcements and jokes, and K13 added that "it's not only the teacher's job."

Emerging Theme: Shared Responsibility: Calls for Clear Rules, Engaging Teaching, and Support

Participants' calls for clear and consistent rules agree with prevention research that emphasizes clear rules on device use and regulation of the classroom environment (Martin et al., 2025), and the study by Flanigan et al. (2023) discussed earlier shows why the manner of enforcement matters. Participants

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Volume 1, Issue 10, pp. 567-575, November 2026
https://ijroms.com
Original Article

described that balance in their own terms. K4's phone parking area and K11's rules that are the same across teachers are structural measures, yet participants paired them with requests for purposeful activities, modeling of good device use, and interactive lessons (K1, K9, K14) and for scheduled access in place of outright bans (K8). This is closer to monitoring and managing devices without removing educational access (Awofala et al., 2023) than to confrontational enforcement. That students themselves proposed restrictions suggests that rules may be more acceptable when framed as shared agreements; the rapport findings of Flanigan et al. (2023) came from undergraduates in the United States, so this possibility needs to be tested with senior high school students.

The requests for support go further than current policy proposals. The proposed Senate measure would prohibit mobile devices during class hours while allowing learning-related exceptions (Gatchalian, 2024), and students in Davao City likewise recommended guidelines for responsible classroom use (Lim & Arcilla, 2021). Participants asked for rules, but they also asked for stable school Wi-Fi and download points (K7), flexible deadlines for working students (K2), counseling on digital habits and stress (K6), a household no-phone hour (K15), and separate class chats for announcements and jokes (K5). These requests match the advice of UNESCO (2023) that technology be introduced on evidence that it is appropriate, equitable, and sustainable, that governments regulate its use to protect learners, and that teachers be prepared. They also support the view that responsibility lies with teachers, schools, families, and students together and not with students alone, as K13 put it: "it's not only the teacher's job."

Ethical Considerations

The researcher adhered to the ethical principles of respect for persons, beneficence, and justice outlined in the Belmont Report (National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects of Biomedical and Behavioral Research, 1979), as well as applicable Philippine Department of Education guidelines on research involving learners (DepEd, 2017). The study was reviewed and approved by the Institutional Research Ethics Committee. Permission to conduct the study was also granted by the Schools Division Superintendent and the school head of Bocboc National High School. Informed consent and, where applicable, parental or guardian consent and student assent were obtained before data collection. Participation was voluntary, and confidentiality was maintained by assigning codes K1 to K15 to the participants. The researcher protected the participants' privacy and ensured that the collected information was used solely for the stated research purposes. Participants were informed of the purpose of the study, the voluntary nature of their participation, and their right to withdraw at any time without penalty. Participants aged 18 and above gave written informed consent, while those below 18 gave written assent together with parental or guardian consent; separate consent was obtained for audio recording. To reduce power imbalances, students from the researcher's own classes were not recruited, and teachers were not present during interviews. Interviews were held privately outside class hours. Participants were identified by codes (K1 to K15), and quotations were screened to prevent identification. In accordance with the Data Privacy Act, data were collected for the stated purpose only and stored securely (Data Privacy Act of 2012). Recordings were destroyed after transcripts were verified. Interviewers used a non-judgmental approach and were prepared to pause an interview if a participant became distressed. Disclosures of abuse or risk of harm were to be referred to the school guidance counselor under the Child Protection Policy (DepEd, 2012), and participants were informed of this limit on confidentiality.

Conclusion

This study described how Grade 12 HUMSS students at Bocboc National High School experience digital distraction in technology-rich learning environments. Students described distraction as repeated interruption of learning, in which a brief check of a phone or one more video led to lost time and unfinished tasks, followed by guilt, anxiety, and embarrassment. The pull away from lessons came from several sources at once: habit and platform design, peer and group-chat pressure, fatigue, and home and school conditions such as shared devices, weak connectivity, and unclear rules. Students also acted to regain focus by removing tempting apps, structuring study time, setting boundaries with others, and drawing on personal motivation, and they asked teachers, parents, peers, and the school to share responsibility. Two accounts differed from the rest, attributing distraction to lesson quality and to limited access, respectively, which suggests that distraction has more than one cause. Taken together, these findings show learning in a technology-rich environment as a continuous negotiation between digital temptation and academic purpose, one in which students' self-management is real but depends on the rules, access, and support around them. The study contributes student accounts from an inland province of Northern Mindanao and from a Grade 12 HUMSS group, neither of which was represented in the Philippine phenomenological studies reviewed. It also adds to the literature by showing distraction as an emotional experience, as a product of both personal and structural conditions, and as something students manage through social as well as individual means. Understanding

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https://ijroms.com
Original Article

digital distraction in this way matters for education because the same devices that distract students also give them access to learning, and schools can support focused learning only by responding to what students actually experience in their classrooms.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following recommendations are offered, each linked to a challenge that participants identified. *Inconsistent device-use policies.* Because participants were unsure which behavior each teacher allowed and asked for rules that are "the same across teachers," school heads and teachers may agree on one written device-use policy for the school, developed with student input and applied consistently across classes. The policy may use scheduled or task-specific access, such as a phone parking area during lessons and limited device use for assigned activities, in place of outright bans, and may be enforced in ways that protect rapport with students. *Limited internet connectivity.* Because K7's weak signal and shared phone led to switching apps while waiting for materials to load, schools and education authorities may provide stable school Wi-Fi and download points, and teachers may release materials in advance so that students can use them offline. *Students' varying access to digital resources and differing circumstances.* Because access to devices, space, and time differed among participants, as in K7's shared phone, K12's shared household, and K2's work, teachers may design tasks that do not assume a personal device and allow flexible deadlines for working students, and schools may offer guidance on digital habits and stress through the guidance office, as K6 requested. *Habit, platform design, and peer pressure.* Because habit, autoplay, and group chats were the most immediate pulls, students may adopt the strategies that participants found workable, such as removing tempting apps during study periods, muting group chats and checking them during breaks, and preparing offline materials. Teachers may also keep lessons interactive and use devices for specific learning tasks, since K14 reported that distraction occurs mainly with boring or difficult tasks. *Home conditions.* Because siblings' videos and late-night phone use affected concentration, parents may agree on shared household routines, such as a no-phone hour at night. *Future research.* Future studies may include other schools in Bukidnon, compare urban and upland settings, add teachers' and parents' perspectives, and test whether the strategies students described reduce distraction in practice.

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