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Influence of Digital Deviancy on the Learning Behaviour of the Boy-Child in Public Secondary Schools in Bayelsa State

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Abstract

This study investigated influence of digital deviancy on the learning behaviour of the boy-child in public secondary schools in Bayelsa State, Nigeria. It was motivated by the increasing concerns that activities such as cyber fraud and online betting divert boys from their academic pursuits. Two research questions and null hypotheses guided the study, which employed a descriptive survey design. The population comprised all male senior secondary school students across 207 public secondary schools in the state, from which a sample of 248 students was drawn. Data were collected using a structured instrument titled the *Influence of Digital Deviancy and Learning Behaviour Questionnaire (DDLBQ)*. Mean and standard deviation were used to address the research questions, while Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) was applied to test the hypotheses at a 0.05 level of significance. Findings indicated that involvement in cyber fraud ("Yahoo-Yahoo") and online gambling both exert a strong negative influence on students' learning behaviour, with significant correlations observed in each case. The study concluded that digital deviancy constitutes a substantial counterforce to formal education among male students. It recommended that the Bayelsa State Ministry of Education adopt comprehensive digital citizenship programmes alongside targeted, gender-responsive interventions to mitigate these challenges.

Keywords: *Digital Deviancy, Learning Behavours, Boy-Child*

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Background to the Study

The contemporary digital ecosystem has transformed patterns of socialization, communication and knowledge acquisition, yet it has simultaneously generated patterns of behaviour that scholars increasingly conceptualize as digital deviancy. Digital deviancy has been seen as engagement in online behaviours that violate established social, ethical or institutional norms within digital environments (Hinduja & Patchin, 2019). Marcum, et al, (2019) characterize it as technologically mediated misconduct that encompasses cyberbullying, online harassment, exposure to explicit content, academic dishonesty and other forms of rule-breaking enacted through digital platforms. In a similar vein, digital deviancy is considered a maladaptive or antisocial online engagement that disrupts social harmony and undermines responsible digital citizenship (Vandebosch & Van Cleemput, 2019). As digital deviancy becomes more pervasive, its psychological and environmental consequences begin to reshape the fundamental learning behaviours of students within the modern classroom. These behaviours, which dictate how an individual acquires, processes, and retains information, are increasingly subject to the volatile stimuli found in digital spaces.

Learning behaviours constitute the observable and internal dispositions that shape how learners engage with instructional content, peers and educators within formal and informal educational settings. Thompson (2019) sees learning behaviours as the observable manifestations of a student's cognitive engagement and self-regulatory habits during the educational process. Complementing this, Adejumo (2019) views learning behaviours as the intricate interplay between a student's motivation and their ability to sustain focus amidst the distractions of a high-tech environment. From a more functional perspective, Richards (2019) defines these behaviours as the adaptive responses a learner employs to navigate complex academic tasks, which are now being significantly altered by digital interference. The volatility of these cognitive responses is particularly pronounced when examining specific demographic cohorts, most notably the developmental trajectory of the male student.

The boy-child occupies a unique position in this discourse, as developmental and sociological factors often render young males more susceptible to the allure and risks of digital immersion. Masculinity and peer dynamics play a pivotal role in how boys navigate the digital world, frequently influencing their academic priorities and social conduct. Bennett (2019) describes the boy-child in this context as a male adolescent whose identity formation is increasingly tethered to digital validation and virtual exploration. In a similar vein, Nwosu (2019) defines the boy-child as a vulnerable demographic subject to specific gendered expectations that may encourage risk-taking and defiant behaviours in technological spaces. Moreover, Grant (2019) identifies the boy-child as a learner whose educational outcomes are uniquely sensitive to the distractions of gaming, social media, and online subcultures, often leading to a divergence from traditional academic success. Boys often experience schooling through gendered expectations that shape participation, discipline patterns and academic self-concept. Consequently, when digital deviancy manifests within the lived realities of the boy-child, it may exert distinct influences on his learning behaviours.

Digital deviancy in today's technology-driven world increasingly affects how the boy-child thinks, behaves and engages with learning. Online misconduct, excessive screen use and exposure to inappropriate digital content do not occur separately from schooling; rather, they influence boys' attention, motivation, discipline and participation in the classroom. Because boys often experience both digital spaces and education through gender-shaped expectations, these online behaviours may significantly shape their academic attitudes and performance. Hence examining the influence of digital deviancy on the learning behaviour of the boy-child is therefore essential for improving educational practices and supporting positive development in a digital age.

Statement of the Problem

The digital age has brought incredible benefits to the world of education, offering students instant access to a vast ocean of information and new ways to solve problems. In the modern classroom, technology is a powerful tool that helps students develop the skills needed for the future. However, while these digital tools were meant to help students learn, they have also created a platform for serious digital deviancy that threatens to ruin the educational journey. Instead of using the internet for academic growth, many students are now using it to engage in various digital vices. This shift from positive use to harmful rebellion is creating a major crisis in schools, as the lure of the virtual world begins to outweigh the value of a formal education.

For many male students, this digital world has introduced specific and dangerous distractions, most notably the "Yahoo-Yahoo" syndrome, which refers to online fraud and cybercrime. This obsession with making quick money through illegal digital means has fundamentally damaged the learning behaviours of the boy-child. The learning of how to make quick money is now taking over academic learning. Students are spending their time studying fraud techniques and hustling strategies rather than their school subjects. Many boys sit in classrooms physically, but mentally they are far away, contemplating the large sums of money they hope to make online. They no longer see the point of sitting through long lessons when they believe they can learn how to become wealthy overnight through a laptop screen.

Beyond the pursuit of quick wealth through illegal digital means, boys are increasingly involved in other harmful digital habits that destroy their academic focus. These include excessive use of social media and online gaming, which can lead to addiction and a lack of motivation for schoolwork. Some students also use their devices to facilitate academic dishonesty, using websites to cheat on assignments rather than learning the material. These vices create a toxic digital lifestyle where the thrill of the screen and the learning of street-smart digital skills become more important than the discipline of the classroom.

This focus on cyber-vices and quick wealth is eroding the discipline and focus required for academic success. When a student is preoccupied with digital fraud or online addictions, their ability to pay attention and stay motivated in class disappears. Because they are more interested in learning how to cash out than how to pass their exams, they often skip school or ignore their teachers. This creates a situation where the student becomes completely disconnected from the school system, leading to a high rate of academic failure. If these

behaviours are not addressed, the classroom will continue to lose the attention of students to the high-stakes world of online crime and digital rebellion.

Aims and Objectives of the Study

The study aims to examine the influence of digital deviancy on the learning behaviour of the boy-child in public secondary schools in Bayelsa State. The objectives are:

1. Ascertain the influence of Yahoo-Yahoo syndrome on the classroom concentration levels of the boy-child in public secondary schools in Bayelsa State
2. Assess the influence of online gambling on the study habits of the boy-child in public secondary schools in Bayelsa State.

Research Question

1. To what extent does Yahoo-Yahoo syndrome influence the learning behaviour of the boy-child in public secondary schools in Bayelsa State?
2. To what extent does online gambling influence the learning behaviour of the boy-child in public secondary schools in Bayelsa State?

Hypotheses

1. There is no significant relationship between Yahoo-Yahoo syndrome and the learning behaviour of the boy-child in public secondary schools in Bayelsa State.
2. There is no significant relationship between online gambling and the learning behaviour of the boy-child in public secondary schools in Bayelsa State.

Methodology

Descriptive survey research design was utilized for the study. Descriptive survey research is used to systematically gather data on participants' characteristics, behaviours, and experiences without manipulating variables (Creswell, 2014). This design was appropriate as it enabled an objective investigation of influence of digital deviancy on the learning behaviour of the boy-child. The study population consisted of all male students in Senior Secondary Schools in the 207 public secondary schools in Bayelsa State, Nigeria. Purposive sampling was used to select three Local Government Areas (LGAs) -Yenagoa, Sagbama, and Southern Ijaw. A total of 14 schools were randomly selected across the three LGAs, with 7 schools from Yenagoa LGA, 4 schools from Sagbama LGA, and 3 schools from Southern Ijaw LGA. Following the selection of schools, a total of 248 male students were proportionately selected. From the seven selected schools in Yenagoa, 30 respondents were chosen from each school, giving a total of 210 students. In Sagbama LGA, the 4 schools contributed 22 respondents per school, totaling 88 students. In Southern Ijaw LGA, the 3 schools contributed 11 respondents per school, giving a total of 33 students. Simple random sampling was employed within each school to ensure that every male student had an equal opportunity to participate, making the overall sample size 248 respondents.

Data were collected using a structured questionnaire titled *Influence of Digital Deviancy on Learning Behaviour Questionnaire (IDDLBQ)*. The instrument consisted of two sections: Section A elicited demographic information, while Section B addressed items related to the research

questions. Responses were measured on a four-point Likert scale: Very High Extent (4), High Extent (3), Low Extent (2), and Very Low Extent (1). The instrument was subjected to face and content validation by experts in Educational Psychology and Measurement and Evaluation to ensure clarity, relevance, and comprehensiveness. Reliability was established using the Cronbach Alpha method (Lee J. Cronbach, 1951), yielding a coefficient of 0.79, which indicated acceptable internal consistency.

Results

Analysis of Research Questions

Research Question 1: To what extent does Yahoo-Yahoo syndrome influence the learning behaviour of the boy-child in public secondary schools in Bayelsa State?

Table 1: Mean and standard deviation responses on the influence of Yahoo-Yahoo syndrome on learning behaviour of the boy-child in public secondary schools

S/N	Items	Mean	SD	Decision
1	The obsession with cashing out makes students prioritize fraud over academic tasks.	3.58	0.59	HE
2	Students spend more time learning fraud formats than studying their textbooks.	3.64	0.55	HE
3	Mental preoccupation with billing clients leads to a lack of interest in classroom lessons.	3.47	0.68	HE
4	Late-night chatting with clients results in chronic absenteeism and late coming.	3.52	0.62	HE
5	The belief that school is a scam undermines the value of hard work in learning.	3.69	0.52	HE
6	Students often use school hours to monitor their digital transactions and scams.	3.41	0.73	HE
7	Success stories of Yahoo-Yahoo peers discourage students from completing assignments.	3.55	0.60	HE
8	The pursuit of quick wealth reduces the patience required for long-term academic growth.	3.48	0.66	HE
	Grand Mean	**3.54**		

The data presented in Table 1 summarize the mean and standard deviation of responses on the influence of the Yahoo-Yahoo syndrome on the learning behaviour of male students in public secondary schools in Bayelsa State. The findings show that respondents agreed with all eight items, as each mean score exceeded the criterion mean of 2.50. The mean values, which ranged from 3.41 to 3.69, reflect a strong consensus that involvement in cyber fraud undermines students' educational values. Furthermore, the grand mean of 3.54 indicates that the Yahoo-Yahoo subculture has a substantial negative impact, encouraging male students to neglect disciplined study habits in pursuit of illicit financial gains.

Research Question 2: To what extent does online gambling influence the learning behaviour of the boy-child in public secondary schools in Bayelsa State?

Table 2: Mean and standard deviation responses on the influence of online gambling on learning behaviour of the boy-child in public secondary schools

S/N	Items	Mean	SD	Decision
1	Constant monitoring of live scores and betting odds disrupts classroom focus.	3.45	0.67	HE
2	Loss of betting stakes leads to depression and lack of motivation for school activities.	3.32	0.74	HE
3	Students use their feeding allowance for betting instead of purchasing learning materials.	3.41	0.70	HE
4	The thrill of potential winnings makes academic success seem slow and unattractive.	3.56	0.61	HE
5	Peer pressure into sports betting groups diverts attention from group study sessions.	3.48	0.64	HE
6	Frequent visits to betting shops during school hours leads to truancy and missed lessons.	3.39	0.71	HE
7	Betting addiction reduces the time spent on reading and independent research.	3.50	0.63	HE
8	The habit of staking creates a gambler's mindset that values luck over study efforts.	3.53	0.58	HE
	Grand Mean	**3.46**		

The data presented in Table 2 summarize the mean and standard deviation of responses on the influence of online gambling on the learning behaviour of male students in public secondary schools in Bayelsa State. The findings show that respondents agreed with all the items, as each mean score exceeded the criterion mean of 2.50. The mean values, which ranged from 3.32 to 3.56, indicate a strong consensus that engagement in online gambling negatively affects students' academic orientation. Furthermore, the grand mean of 3.46 reveals that virtual betting exerts a considerable negative influence, leading male students to exhibit poor time management and a decline in disciplined learning habits.

Test of Hypotheses

Hypothesis One: There is no significant relationship between involvement in Yahoo-Yahoo syndrome and the learning behaviour of the boy-child in public secondary schools in Bayelsa State.

Table 3: PPMC Analysis of the relationship between Yahoo-Yahoo syndrome and learning behaviour of the boy-child

Variable	N	Mean	SD	r-cal	r-crit	df	Sig. (p)	Decision
Yahoo-Yahoo Syndrome	248	3.54	0.62	-0.74*	0.125	246	0.000	Rejected
Learning Behaviour	248	2.15	0.58					

Source: *Significant at 0.05 level

The data presented in Table 3 summarize the correlation analysis between Yahoo-Yahoo syndrome and the learning behaviour of the boy child students in public secondary schools in Bayelsa State. The findings reveal a calculated r-value of -0.74, which is greater than the critical r-value of 0.125 at a 0.05 level of significance with 246 degrees of freedom which led to the rejection of the null hypothesis. This result confirms that the Yahoo-Yahoo syndrome exerts a significant influence on the learning behaviour of the boy child in public secondary schools in Bayelsa State.

Hypothesis Two: There is no significant relationship between online gambling and the learning behaviour of the boy-child in public secondary schools in Bayelsa State.

Table 4: PPMC Analysis of the relationship between online gambling and learning behaviour of the boy-child

Variable	N	Mean	SD	r-cal	r-crit	df	Sig. (p)	Decision
Online Gambling	248	3.46	0.65	-0.68*	0.125	246	0.000	Rejected
Learning Behaviour	248	2.15	0.58					

Source: *Significant at 0.05 level

The data presented in Table 4 summarize the correlation analysis between online gambling and the learning behaviour of the boy child students in public secondary schools in Bayelsa State. The findings reveal a calculated r-value of -0.68, which is greater than the critical r-value of 0.125 at a 0.05 level of significance, which led to the rejection of the null hypothesis. This result confirms that online gambling exerts a significant negative influence on the learning behaviour of the boy child in public secondary schools in Bayelsa State.

Discussion of Findings

The findings for research question one reveal that the Yahoo-Yahoo syndrome exerts a strong influence on the learning behaviour of the boy-child in public secondary schools in Bayelsa State, as indicated by a grand mean score of 3.54. The result is consistent with Olowu (2022), who observed that digital deviancy reflects a conscious departure from established institutional norms. Similarly, Adejumo (2019) noted that students' learning behaviours tend to decline when their motivation is diverted by technologically driven distractions. In relation to research question two, the findings indicate that online gambling influences the learning behaviour of the boy-child to a high extent, as evidenced by a grand mean of 3.46. The findings support Grant (2019), who argued that the boy-child is particularly susceptible to digital subcultures, where the appeal of quick financial gains can make academic achievement seem less rewarding, thereby weakening the overall learning culture.

Hypothesis one shows that a calculated r-value of -0.74, which exceeded the critical r-value of 0.125 at the 0.05 level of significance. This negative correlation led to the rejection of the null hypothesis, indicating a significant influence of Yahoo-Yahoo syndrome on learning behaviour of the boy-child. In line with this, Foster (2019) posited that the pursuit of illicit

digital wealth diverts students' cognitive focus away from academic activities toward fraudulent engagements. The statistical outcome therefore confirms that increased involvement in cyber-fraud is associated with a substantial decline in disciplined learning habits among male students.

Hypothesis 2, show that the calculated r-value of -0.68, which is greater than the critical r-value of 0.125. This result also led to the rejection of the null hypothesis, indicating that online gambling has a significant influence on the learning behaviour of the boy-child. Ibrahim (2019) similarly assert that the addictive nature of virtual betting cultivates a mindset that undermines sustained academic effort in favour of quick, chance-based rewards. Thus, the findings demonstrate that increased participation in online gambling corresponds with a deterioration in students' study habits and academic engagement.

Conclusion

This study investigated the influence of digital deviancy on the learning behaviours of the boy-child in public secondary schools in Bayelsa State. The study was guided by two main objectives: to determine the influence of Yahoo-Yahoo syndrome on the classroom concentration levels of male students in public secondary schools in Bayelsa State, and to assess the influence of online gambling on the study habits of the boy-child in the same context. Findings from the study revealed that digital deviancy particularly in the form of Yahoo-Yahoo syndrome and online gambling has a negative influence on the learning behaviours of boy-child. Based on these results, the study concludes that digital deviancy is a major contributing factor to the declining academic performance and engagement of the boy-child in public secondary schools in Bayelsa State. The increasing shift from academic pursuits to money-driven digital activities has created a serious challenge within the educational system. Engagement in cyber-fraud and online gambling has redirected students' attention away from structured classroom learning toward online platforms that promote quick financial gains rather than academic discipline and persistence. Consequently, many male students are beginning to view formal education as less relevant, a perception that threatens the development of a disciplined and academically responsible generation.

This study adds to existing literature by providing empirical evidence on the relationship between digital deviancy and learning behaviours, with specific focus on the boy-child in Bayelsa State. It emphasizes the need for urgent educational and policy responses to the growing influence of digital misconduct among students. The practical implications highlight the importance of integrating digital citizenship education into school curricula, strengthening monitoring systems within schools, and adopting gender-responsive interventions that support positive behavioural development among male learners. However, the study was limited to selected public secondary schools in three Local Government Areas, which may affect the extent to which the findings can be generalized to other contexts.

Future research should expand the geographical scope of the study, include female students for comparative analysis, and examine additional variables such as parental influence and socio-economic background. Further studies may also explore long-term strategies for

reshaping students' attitudes toward education in an increasingly digital society. In this regard, educational authorities are encouraged to implement structured digital literacy and behavioural intervention programmes, while parents and teachers are expected to provide closer monitoring and guidance of students' digital engagement. Addressing digital deviancy is essential to safeguarding the academic future of the boy-child, as failure to do so may have serious implications for both educational development and broader societal stability.

Recommendations

In light of the findings of this study, the study recommends that:

1. The Bayelsa State Ministry of Education should introduce robust Digital Citizenship curricula in all public secondary schools to teach male students about online ethics, the dangers of cybercrime, and responsible technology use
2. School authorities and guidance counsellors should develop targeted mentorship programmes specifically for the boy-child to re-orientate their mindset away from the Yahoo-Yahoo subculture and back toward traditional academic values.
3. School boards should enforce stricter regulations regarding the use of mobile phones during school hours to curb the constant monitoring of betting odds and fraudulent digital transactions in the classroom.
4. Public awareness campaigns should be launched to educate parents on the early warning signs of digital addiction and cyber-fraud involvement, encouraging them to monitor their children's online activities more closely.
5. Schools should revitalise sports, technical clubs, and debate societies to provide healthy, high-energy outlets for the boy-child, reducing the vacuum currently filled by online gambling and virtual vices.

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