Study Habits and Academic Performance Among Undergraduate Students in Nigerian Universities: A Secondary-Data Integrative Review

Adebisi Saheedah Fagbemi
Department of Psychology
Lead City University, Ibadan, Nigeria
Email address: fagbemisaheedah138@gmail.com
Mobile number: 09134957259
ORCID ID NUMBER: 0009000499070873
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Abstract
Academic performance among undergraduate students is influenced by a combination of cognitive, motivational, behavioural, institutional and environmental factors. Among these, study habits are particularly important because they represent the regular behaviours through which students organize, monitor and execute learning activities. In Nigerian universities, increasing access to digital technologies, social media, electronic learning resources and mobile devices has changed the ways students' study, while persistent challenges involving time management, lecture attendance, examination preparation and access to learning resources continue to affect students' academic experiences. This article examines the relationship between study habits and academic performance among undergraduate students in Nigerian universities using published secondary evidence. An integrative secondary-data review design was adopted. Published journal articles, scholarly databases and accessible academic reports concerning study habits, study skills, time management, lecture attendance, digital engagement and academic performance among Nigerian university students were examined. The literature was examined thematically, focusing on time management, lecture attendance, reading and revision practices, assignment completion, study environment, use of learning resources and students' digital engagement. Developing structured, consistent and self-regulated learning practices can help students improve their academic engagement and achievement. Universities should therefore strengthen academic advising, study-skills training, time-management programmes, library and digital-learning support, and other interventions that promote effective learning behaviours among undergraduate students.

Keywords *Academic performance, Self-regulated learning, Study skills, Time management, Undergraduate students*

Introduction

University education is widely regarded as an important mechanism for individual development, professional preparation and national human-capital development. For undergraduate students, academic performance is an important indicator of progress through higher education and may influence graduation, professional opportunities and further educational attainment. Academic

performance, however, is not determined by intellectual ability alone. Students' approaches to learning, motivation, use of time, attendance, preparation, engagement with learning resources and ability to regulate their own learning can all influence academic outcomes (Kolawole & Obembe, 2014). Study habits refer broadly to the relatively consistent behaviours and strategies students employ when learning. They may include the organization of study time, regularity of study, note-taking, reading, revision, preparation for examinations, assignment completion, use of libraries and electronic resources, concentration, class attendance and the management of distractions. The concept therefore extends beyond the number of hours a student spends reading. A student may spend considerable time studying but obtain limited academic benefit if the study process is poorly organized or characterized by ineffective strategies (Obadara & Olaopa, 2017).

The importance of study habits is supported by broader educational research. Credé and Kuncel, (2008) large meta-analysis of 344 studies involving 72,431 college students found that study habits, skills and attitudes had substantial relationships with academic performance. Study motivation and study skills were among the strongest study-related predictors of grade point average and course grades. The Nigerian context warrants specific attention because university students operate within educational, technological and socioeconomic environments that may differ from those in which much of the international literature was developed. Nigerian undergraduates increasingly combine traditional resources such as lecture notes, textbooks and libraries with smartphones, social media, laptops, online databases and other digital learning resources. Recent Nigerian research, for example, has examined the relationships among social-media utilization, study habits and undergraduate academic performance (Okodaso & Kifordu, 2026). At the same time, the relationship between study behaviour and academic performance is not necessarily uniform across students or academic disciplines. A study of undergraduate chemistry students in Rivers State reported positive relationships between academic performance and lecture attendance, assignment completion, personal preparatory study and use of library facilities. Direct Research Journals Similarly, research involving first-year medical students in selected state universities in Delta State reported significant predictive relationships involving study habits and time-management practices (Onuegbu & Offor, 2025).

These findings make it necessary to examine the available evidence systematically and conceptually. Rather than generating another isolated survey from a single institution, this article synthesizes existing evidence to provide a broader understanding of how study habits relate to academic performance among undergraduate students in Nigerian universities.

Statement of the Problem

Poor academic performance among university students is a recurring concern in higher education. Students may experience difficulties arising from ineffective time management, irregular study schedules, inadequate preparation for examinations, poor concentration, procrastination, low engagement with academic resources and competing social or digital activities.

The expansion of digital technologies has added another dimension to the issue. Smartphones and social media can provide access to educational materials and communication but may also introduce distractions. Evidence from a Nigerian university has linked social-media utilization, study habits and academic performance, illustrating the complexity of digital engagement rather than supporting a simple assumption that technology is either wholly beneficial or wholly harmful.

Another problem concerns the tendency to treat "study habits" as a single variable. Effective learning actually consists of several behaviours, including attending lectures, reviewing material, managing time, completing assignments, using appropriate learning resources and engaging in

purposeful revision. Consequently, a meaningful analysis should identify the specific behaviours that may contribute to academic achievement. There is therefore a need to synthesize existing Nigerian evidence and situate it within established scholarship on study skills and self-regulated learning.

Objectives of the Study

The general objective of this article is to examine the relationship between study habits and academic performance among undergraduate students in Nigerian universities using secondary data.

The specific objectives are to:

1. Examine the concept and dimensions of study habits among undergraduate students;
2. Review empirical evidence concerning study habits and academic performance in Nigerian universities;
3. Examine the role of time management, lecture attendance, assignment completion and personal study in academic performance;

Research Questions

The review was guided by the following questions:

1. What study habits are commonly associated with undergraduate academic performance?
2. What does existing Nigerian evidence indicate about the relationship between study habits and academic performance?
3. How do time management, lecture attendance, assignment completion and personal study relate to academic achievement?

Conceptual Review

Study habits are recurring patterns of behaviour associated with learning. They include when, where, how and for what purpose students' study. Productive study habits generally involve planning, consistency, concentration, active engagement with learning materials, revision and monitoring of one's understanding. Study habits should be distinguished from study time. Study time represents the quantity of time devoted to learning, whereas study habits incorporate the quality, organization and regularity of learning behaviour. Credé and Kuncel conceptualized study habits and skills as important non cognitive components of academic success. Their meta-analysis found that traditional study-habit and attitude measures demonstrated meaningful relationships with college performance, while study motivation and study skills were particularly important.

Academic Performance

Academic performance refers to the extent to which a student achieves expected educational outcomes. In university research, it may be measured through grade point average (GPA), examination scores, course grades, cumulative academic results or other institutional assessment indicators. The Nigerian universities employ different grading systems and programmes, studies may operationalize academic performance differently. Consequently, comparisons across studies should consider differences in discipline, year of study, institutional type and measurement procedures.

Time Management

Time management involves planning and allocating available time among academic and non-academic activities. Effective time management may enable students to distribute learning activities over time rather than relying heavily on last-minute examination preparation. Recent Nigerian research involving first-year medical students in selected state universities in Delta State found significant relationships between time-management practices, study habits and academic performance (Zimmerman, 2002).

Lecture Attendance

Lecture attendance represents another important academic behaviour. Attending lectures provides opportunities for students to receive explanations, examples, clarification and guidance from instructors. The Nigerian literature also supports attention to attendance. Research involving undergraduate chemistry students found a positive relationship between lecture attendance and academic performance alongside other study-related variables. Direct Research Journals Internationally, a meta-analytic review of college class attendance found that attendance explains substantial unique variance in college grades, although attendance should be interpreted as one component of a wider academic-behavioural system (Onuegbu & Offor, 2025).

Reading and Revision

Reading and revision are traditional components of university study. Effective revision is more than repeatedly reading the same material; it involves retrieving information, identifying areas of misunderstanding, solving problems and connecting concepts. Students who develop regular revision schedules may avoid the excessive cognitive and emotional pressure associated with attempting to learn large amounts of material immediately before examinations.

Assignment Completion

Assignments provide opportunities for students to practise concepts, receive feedback and identify gaps in understanding. Nigerian evidence involving undergraduate chemistry students reported a positive relationship between efficient assignment delivery and academic performance. Direct Research Journals

Library and Learning-Resource Use

Libraries remain important academic resources despite the growth of digital learning. They provide access to textbooks, scholarly journals, databases and other materials that may not be readily available to individual students. The Nigerian chemistry study reviewed in this article reported a positive relationship between use of library facilities and academic performance. Direct Research Journals

Theoretical Framework

Self-Regulated Learning Theory

This article is primarily anchored in **Self-Regulated Learning (SRL) theory**. Self-regulated learning emphasizes the learner's active role in setting goals, selecting strategies, monitoring progress and adjusting behaviour. Zimmerman's work describes self-regulated learning as involving processes through which learners actively regulate aspects of their cognition, motivation and behaviour in pursuit of academic goals.

Applied to university students, SRL provides a useful explanation for why two students exposed to the same lecture may achieve different results. One student may plan study sessions, monitor comprehension, seek assistance and revise systematically, while another may study irregularly and depend heavily on last-minute preparation. The theory therefore connects study habits with academic performance through a cycle of planning, performance and self-reflection.

Study-Skills Perspective

The study-skills perspective complements SRL by emphasizing concrete learning behaviours. Credé and Kuncel's meta-analysis provides substantial evidence that study habits, skills and attitudes contribute to college academic performance beyond conventional academic indicators. Together, the two perspectives suggest that academic success depends not merely on students' ability but also on how they organize and regulate learning.

Methodology

Research Design

The study adopted a secondary-data integrative review design. This approach was selected because the objective was to synthesize existing empirical and theoretical evidence concerning study habits and academic performance among undergraduate students in Nigerian universities.

The study did not administer questionnaires, conduct interviews or collect new student records. Accordingly, no primary-sample statistics have been presented as though they were generated by the present study.

Sources of Data

Secondary information was obtained from:

- peer-reviewed journal articles;
- scholarly electronic databases;
- university repositories;
- research-indexing platforms;
- academic publications concerning Nigerian university students; and
- established international literature on study habits, study skills and academic achievement.

The literature search focused on combinations of terms including *study habits*, *study skills*, *academic performance*, *academic achievement*, *undergraduate students*, *university students*, *Nigeria*, *time management*, *lecture attendance*, *social media* and *self-regulated learning*.

Inclusion Criteria

Studies were considered particularly relevant when they:

1. examined university or undergraduate students;
2. investigated study habits, study skills or closely related learning behaviours;
3. examined academic performance or achievement;
4. involved Nigerian students or provided established theoretical/empirical evidence relevant to university learning; and
5. provided sufficient information to identify the study population, variables and principal findings. Studies involving secondary-school students were not treated as direct evidence about Nigerian undergraduates, although selected studies were consulted for contextual comparison where conceptually relevant.

Data Analysis

The extracted literature was subjected to thematic synthesis. Evidence was organized around:

- study habits and academic performance;
- time management;
- lecture attendance;
- personal preparatory study;
- assignment completion;
- library/resource utilization;
- social media and digital engagement; and
- self-regulated learning.

The analysis was interpretive rather than a formal statistical meta-analysis. Consequently, differences in reported correlation coefficients or regression coefficients across studies were not statistically pooled.

Ethical Considerations

Because the research relied exclusively on publicly available secondary literature and did not involve direct interaction with human participants, no new participant consent or primary-data ethical approval was required for this review. Authors and original publications were acknowledged through appropriate citation

Evidence from Nigerian Universities

Evidence from Nigerian universities generally supports an association between study habits and academic performance, although the specific dimensions of study behaviour and the strength of relationships differ across populations. Kolawole and Obembe investigated entry qualification, self-concept and study habits as predictors of academic performance among 919 students from three universities in South-West Nigeria. Their analysis reported significant positive relationships between study habits and academic performance, while the three independent variables jointly predicted academic performance.

This finding is important because it demonstrates that study habits operate alongside other characteristics rather than in isolation. Academic performance is a multidimensional outcome and should not be attributed exclusively to students' study behaviour.

Obadara and Olaopa examined social-media utilization, study habits and academic performance among undergraduates at Tai Solarin University of Education. The study involved 2,905 students and reported significant relationships among social-media utilization, study habits and academic performance. The authors also reported relatively low study-habit patterns among the undergraduate population examined. More recent Nigerian research has focused on discipline-specific groups. A 2025 study of undergraduate chemistry students in universities in Rivers State reported significant relationships between academic performance and lecture attendance, assignment delivery, personal preparatory study and library use.

A 2026 study of first-year medical students in selected state universities in Delta State likewise reported significant relationships involving study habits and time-management practices. The study reported that study habits and time management significantly predicted academic performance within its sample. African Journals Online Taken together, these studies suggest that study habits are relevant to academic achievement across different Nigerian university contexts. Nevertheless, their results should not be treated as establishing a universal causal effect because they differ in design, population, discipline, measurement and institutional context.

International Evidence

The Nigerian evidence is broadly consistent with international scholarship. Credé and Kuncel's meta-analysis examined 344 studies involving 72,431 college students and found meaningful relationships between study habits, skills and attitudes and academic performance. Study motivation and study skills showed particularly strong relationships with GPA and individual course grades.

Robbins and colleagues' meta-analysis similarly found that academic self-efficacy and achievement motivation were associated with college GPA, while academic-related skills were associated with college outcomes. These findings reinforce the argument that successful university learning involves more than subject knowledge. Students must also possess behaviours and motivational resources that enable them to convert educational opportunities into academic achievement.

Study Habits in the Digital Era

The meaning of study habits has changed as university students increasingly use digital devices for academic purposes. A contemporary student may read an electronic textbook, watch a recorded lecture, participate in an online discussion, search a database, communicate with classmates and use a smartphone-based learning application within a single study session.

Digital technology can therefore support productive study habits when it is used purposefully. However, the same devices may facilitate interruptions, multitasking and non-academic engagement. Evidence from a 2025 study of 271 private-university students in Nigeria illustrates the complexity of this issue. The study examined recreational and non-recreational screen time and academic performance. It reported that moderate screen use was common, with academic research identified as a major purpose of use; its regression analysis found a positive association between recreational screen time and academic performance, while the association involving non-recreational screen time was positive but statistically non-significant.

Similarly, earlier Nigerian research found significant relationships between social-media utilization, study habits and academic performance. The practical implication is that universities should emphasize digital self-regulation rather than merely prohibiting technology. Students need to learn how to distinguish productive academic technology use from distracting digital activity.

Discussion

The evidence reviewed suggests that study habits constitute an important component of academic performance among undergraduate students in Nigerian universities. However, the relationship should be understood as multidimensional and contextual. First, effective study habits provide structure for learning. Students who plan their study time, attend lectures, complete assignments, revise regularly and engage with academic resources have more opportunities to encounter, practice and consolidate course content.

Second, study habits are closely related to self-regulation. A student who identifies learning goals, plans activities, monitors comprehension and modifies ineffective strategies demonstrates self-regulated learning. Zimmerman’s framework provides a useful theoretical explanation for this process. Third, the evidence suggests that the quality of study may matter as much as the quantity. Spending many hours with textbooks or electronic devices does not automatically indicate effective learning. Productive study involves attention, purposeful engagement, retrieval, practice, feedback and reflection.

Fourth, the Nigerian evidence indicates that study habits interact with contextual variables. Kolawole and Obembe's findings demonstrate that entry qualification and self-concept may also contribute to academic performance. Thus, interventions focused exclusively on study habits may have limited effects if broader academic and socioeconomic barriers are ignored.

Fifth, technology has introduced both opportunities and challenges. Nigerian students can access educational resources more easily than previous generations, but digital environments can also compete for attention. The available evidence therefore supports a balanced perspective in which purposeful digital learning is encouraged while students develop strategies for controlling distraction. ScienceDirect+1

Finally, differences across disciplines are important. The study habits that are particularly useful in chemistry or medicine may not be identical to those required in literature, law, engineering or social sciences. Consequently, university academic-support programmes should combine general study-skills principles with discipline-specific learning strategies.

Implications for Nigerian Universities

The reviewed evidence has several implications for higher education.

Orientation programmes

Universities should introduce structured academic-skills orientation for newly admitted students. Such programmes can address:

- time management;
- lecture preparation;
- note-taking;
- reading strategies;
- examination preparation;
- assignment management;
- library use;
- digital research skills; and
- self-monitoring.

Academic advising

Academic advisers should help students identify ineffective study patterns early. Advising should move beyond course registration to include learning strategies and academic planning.

Library and digital resources

Universities should strengthen access to both physical and electronic learning resources. Students should also be trained to locate, evaluate and appropriately use scholarly information.

Digital-literacy education

Rather than treating smartphones and social media solely as threats, institutions should teach students how to use digital technologies purposefully while managing notifications, interruptions and competing online activities.

Early academic intervention

Students experiencing declining academic performance should receive timely academic support. Early identification can prevent poor study patterns from becoming entrenched.

Discipline-specific support

Study-skills programmes should be adapted to disciplinary requirements. For example, students in laboratory-based programmes may need substantial practice and problem-solving, whereas students in reading-intensive programmes may require stronger strategies for critical reading, synthesis and writing.

Conclusion

This secondary-data integrative review examined the relationship between study habits and academic performance among undergraduate students in Nigerian universities. The evidence reviewed generally indicates that effective study habits are associated with better academic outcomes, although the strength of the relationship varies across studies and contexts.

The most consistently relevant dimensions include organized study schedules, time management, lecture attendance, assignment completion, personal preparatory study, effective use of learning resources and purposeful engagement with digital technologies. Nigerian studies involving general undergraduate populations and discipline-specific groups provide evidence supporting the importance of these behaviours.

The review also demonstrates that study habits do not operate independently of other factors. Motivation, self-efficacy, prior preparation, self-concept, institutional conditions and the digital environment can influence how study behaviour translates into academic achievement. International meta-analytic evidence similarly places study skills and motivation among important contributors to collegiate performance.

Therefore, improving academic performance among Nigerian undergraduates requires more than encouraging students to "read harder." Universities should help students develop planned, purposeful, self-regulated and sustainable learning behaviours, while simultaneously improving academic resources and institutional support.

Recommendations

Based on the evidence reviewed, the following recommendations are made:

1. Universities should institutionalize study-skills programmes for newly admitted undergraduate students.
2. Time-management and self-regulation should be incorporated into academic orientation, particularly during students' first year.
3. Academic advisers should monitor students' learning behaviours, not merely their examination results.
4. Students should be encouraged to develop regular study schedules rather than depending predominantly on last-minute examination preparation.
5. Universities should strengthen library and electronic-resource orientation so that students can make effective use of available academic materials.
6. Digital-literacy programmes should emphasize purposeful technology use, including strategies for managing social-media and smartphone distractions.
7. Lecturers should provide meaningful feedback on **assignments**, enabling students to identify and correct weaknesses before major examinations.
8. Academic-support interventions should be discipline-specific where appropriate.
9. Further Nigerian research should use longitudinal designs to examine whether changes in study habits precede changes in academic performance.

10. Future studies should employ larger, geographically diverse **samples** involving federal, state and private universities to improve generalizability.

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