Education

Social media, technology, and academic outcomes in Lagos primary schools

Ireti Tina Odebowale[1], Collins Ifeanyichukwu Abanum[2*] and Isioma Stella Olagunju[3]

[1] Senior Lecturer, Department of Educational Foundations and Counseling Psychology, Faculty of Education, Lagos State University Ojo, Lagos, Nigeria

[2] Department of Science and Technology Education, Faculty of Education, Lagos State University Ojo, Lagos, Nigeria

[3] Department of Educational Foundations and Counseling Psychology, Faculty of Education, Lagos State University Ojo, Lagos, Nigeria

*Corresponding author: Collins Ifeanyichukwu Abanum

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Abstract

This study critically examined the influence of social media and digital technology on academic outcomes among primary school pupils in Lagos State. Employing a descriptive survey design, data were analyzed from 189 pupils across ten public and private schools. Results indicated high digital engagement, with 55% of pupils utilizing devices daily and 45% spending over two hours online. Pearson correlation analysis revealed a significant moderate negative relationship between frequency of technology use and academic performance ($r = –0.39$, $p < 0.001$). Conversely, parental supervision demonstrated a significant positive correlation with academic outcomes ($r = +0.34$, $p < 0.001$). Socioeconomic disparities were pronounced, as only 35% of pupils had computer access and 40% reported sufficient data support. Consequently, both null hypotheses were rejected. The study concludes that technology is neither inherently beneficial nor detrimental; its impact is contingent upon usage patterns, content quality, and adult mediation. Unregulated, entertainment-focused engagement diminishes performance, whereas guided educational use enhances it. To mitigate risks and maximize benefits, recommendations include integrating age-appropriate digital literacy modules into the primary curriculum, organizing community-based workshops to strengthen parental and teacher capacity, and partnering with telecommunications providers to offer subsidized access to educational platforms. Furthermore, schools should establish clear digital use guidelines, and policymakers must develop cohesive frameworks ensuring equitable access and contextually relevant content. A balanced, evidence-informed approach is essential to harness digital tools for equitable, high-quality primary education in Lagos.

Keywords: Academic performance, Parental mediation, Primary education, Social media, and Technology integration

1. Introduction

The contemporary educational landscape is increasingly defined by the pervasive integration of digital technologies and social media platforms, which have fundamentally altered how knowledge is disseminated and consumed. Globally, the proliferation of internet-enabled devices has democratized access to information, yet it has also introduced complex variables into the learning environment, particularly within developing nations like Nigeria. According to recent data, internet penetration in Nigeria has surged, influencing various sectors including education, where digital tools are now viewed as essential complements to traditional pedagogy. However, this rapid technological adoption often outpaces the development of regulatory frameworks and digital literacy programmes, creating a dichotomy where technology serves as both a catalyst for innovation and a potential source of disruption. For young learners, this digital immersion begins earlier than ever, raising pertinent questions about the suitability of such tools for foundational education stages where cognitive structures are still forming.

Children within the primary education bracket, generally spanning ages six to eleven, navigate a crucial developmental phase where habits regarding attention, social behaviour, and academic discipline are established. Integrating digital platforms and social media into their daily routine offers a complex duality regarding educational attainment. On one hand, educational applications and multimedia resources can enhance engagement and cater to diverse learning styles, potentially improving literacy and numeracy skills. Conversely, excessive exposure to non-educational content can fragment attention spans and reduce the time dedicated to structured study. Evidence suggests that without proper guidance, the addictive nature of social media platforms can displace essential academic activities, leading to diminished performance. This vulnerability is heightened by the fact that primary pupils often lack the self-regulation skills required to navigate digital spaces responsibly, making them susceptible to distractions that older students might manage more effectively.

Within the specific context of Lagos State, the government has initiated programmes such as Eko-Excel to digitize public primary education, aiming to bridge the gap between traditional teaching and modern technological demands.

Despite these efforts, the actualization of technology-enhanced learning faces significant infrastructural and pedagogical hurdles. Odebowale and Oyedapo (2022) [21] observed that while the Eko-Excel initiative has influenced the professional practice of caregivers, the effectiveness of such tools relies heavily on consistent power supply, device availability, and teacher competency. Furthermore, Odebowale, Olagunju, and Etobro (2021) [22] appraised access to learning in the early years, noting that employing innovation and technology often reveals disparities in resource distribution across different local government areas. In Ojo Local Government Education Area, these disparities are evident, where the promise of digital learning is frequently constrained by socioeconomic realities, thereby affecting the consistency of academic outcomes among pupils who rely on school-based technology access.

Beyond the classroom, the home environment and parental involvement play a pivotal role in mediating the impact of technology on a child's academic trajectory. In Nigerian society, where communal values and indigenous knowledge systems traditionally shape child-rearing, the influx of digital culture can create tension between modern connectivity and cultural preservation. Odebowale and Aina (2021) [18] emphasised that parental involvement significantly affects the academic performance of primary pupils, suggesting that without active monitoring, technology use may become unregulated. Additionally, Odebowale and Moronfolu (2025) [19] highlighted the perception of Lagos State early childhood education towards integrating indigenous learning systems, arguing that a balance must be struck to ensure technology does not erode cultural identity. When parents lack digital literacy or fail to enforce boundaries, pupils may prioritise social validation over academic responsibilities, thereby negating the potential benefits of educational technology.

Consequently, there remains a critical gap in empirical literature regarding the specific correlation between social media usage, technology integration, and academic performance among primary school pupils in Lagos State. While broader studies exist for secondary and tertiary institutions, the unique needs of younger learners in this locale require targeted investigation. Odebowale (2018) [17] previously examined the awareness, attitude, and practice of child-centred teaching methods in the Local Government Education Area of Lagos State, revealing that pedagogical approaches significantly influence learning outcomes. Building on this, it is evident that understanding the interplay between digital tools and established teaching methods is essential. This study, therefore, seeks to interrogate how social media and technology influence academic outcomes in Lagos primary schools, aiming to provide evidence-based recommendations that align technological adoption with cognitive development and cultural values.

2. Statement of the problem

The pervasive integration of social media and digital technologies into everyday life has fundamentally altered the educational experiences of primary school pupils in Nigeria, presenting a complex paradox for foundational learning. While digital platforms offer unprecedented access to educational resources and interactive pedagogical tools, their unregulated use among children aged six to eleven poses significant risks to cognitive development and academic attainment. Young learners, who are still cultivating essential self-regulation and literacy skills, are particularly susceptible to the distracting allure of non-educational content, which can fragment attention and displace time dedicated to structured academic tasks (Gordon & Ohannessian, 2024) [11]. Odebowale, Olagunju, and Etobro (2021) [22] appraised access to learning in the early years, noting that the deployment of innovation and technology often reveals critical disparities in how young pupils engage with digital tools, potentially exacerbating rather than alleviating learning gaps when implementation lacks pedagogical intentionality.

This challenge is acutely manifested within Ojo Local Government Education Area (LGEA), where socioeconomic constraints, cultural diversity, and infrastructural limitations intersect to shape pupils' technological engagement. The digital divide remains pronounced: children from low-income households frequently lack consistent access to devices or reliable internet, thereby missing opportunities for technology-enhanced learning (Digital Divide Council, 2020) [8]. Conversely, pupils with access may prioritise social media for entertainment, undermining academic focus. Compounding this is the limited digital literacy among parents and educators, which impedes effective mediation of children's online activities. Odebowale and Aina (2021) [18] emphasised that parental involvement significantly influences primary pupils' academic performance, yet many caregivers in Ojo LGA lack the training to guide productive technology use. Furthermore, Odebowale and Oyedapo (2022) [21] observed that while initiatives like Eko-Excel have influenced caregivers' professional practice in Lagos State, sustainable integration requires ongoing support, contextual adaptation, and alignment with child-centred pedagogical principles (Odebowale, 2018) [17].

Despite growing scholarly attention to technology in education, a critical empirical gap persists regarding its specific impact on primary school pupils in Ojo LGA. Existing literature predominantly focuses on secondary or tertiary institutions, or adopts broad national perspectives that overlook the unique socioeconomic and cultural dynamics of urban, underserved communities (Rithika & Selvaraj, 2013) [23]. Moreover, Nigerian primary schools often operate without structured digital literacy frameworks or policies to regulate pupils' technology use, leaving educators ill-equipped to harness benefits while mitigating risks. Odebowale, Moronfolu, and Ogunleye (2025) [19] highlighted the perception of Lagos State early childhood education towards integrating indigenous learning systems, underscoring the necessity of contextually grounded approaches that balance technological innovation with cultural relevance. Consequently, without localized evidence on how social media and technology influence foundational academic outcomes in Ojo LGA, policymakers and practitioners lack the insights needed to design targeted interventions. This study, therefore, seeks to

investigate the effect of social media and technology on the academic performance of primary school pupils in Ojo LGA, generating evidence to inform context-specific strategies that promote equitable, effective, and culturally responsive digital learning.

3. Purpose of the study

The primary objective of this study is to critically examine the influence of social media and digital technology on academic outcomes within Lagos primary schools. Given the increasing penetration of internet-enabled devices among young learners, it is essential to understand how these tools interact with foundational education processes. Specifically, the study seeks to determine whether the integration of platforms such as WhatsApp and YouTube, alongside hardware like tablets, serves as a pedagogical enhancer or a cognitive distractor for pupils aged six to eleven. Furthermore, it aims to explore the moderating roles of parental mediation and socioeconomic status, recognising that access and guidance vary significantly across the state. By synthesising these variables, the research intends to generate empirical data that can guide educators and policymakers in developing frameworks that maximise educational benefits while mitigating potential risks associated with early digital exposure.

4. Research questions

The study is answered the following research questions:

- To what extent does the utilisation of social media and digital technology influence academic outcomes among primary school pupils in Lagos State?
- How do parental mediation and socioeconomic factors moderate the relationship between technology usage and academic performance in Lagos primary schools?

5. Research hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were tested in the study:

$H_0$1: There is no significant relationship between the utilisation of social media and digital technology and the academic outcomes of primary school pupils in Lagos State.

$H_0$2: Parental mediation and socioeconomic factors do not significantly moderate the impact of technology usage on academic performance in Lagos primary schools.

6. Review of related literature

i. Social learning theory (Albert Bandura, 1977) [5]

Albert Bandura's Social Learning Theory (1977) posits that learning occurs principally through observation, imitation, and modelling within social contexts, rather than solely through direct reinforcement. This framework is particularly salient for understanding how primary school pupils in Lagos State engage with digital environments, as children frequently internalise behaviours demonstrated by peers, influencers, or educational content creators on platforms such as YouTube and WhatsApp (Odebowale & Oyedapo, 2022) [21]. According to Bandura (1986) [6], the processes of attention, retention, reproduction, and motivation govern observational learning; thus, when pupils encounter academically enriching material or positive digital role models, they may emulate productive study habits and collaborative problem-solving. Conversely, exposure to non-educational or disruptive content can equally shape behaviour, underscoring the theory's dual implication: technology-mediated interactions can either scaffold or undermine foundational learning, depending on the nature of observed models and the reinforcement structures surrounding them (Odebowale, Olagunju, & Etobro, 2021) [22].

The theory further illuminates how vicarious reinforcement whereby children observe the rewards or consequences accruing to others' actions may influence pupils' academic priorities in Ojo Local Government Area. When social media engagement yields immediate social validation through likes or comments, such reinforcement can inadvertently compete with the delayed gratification associated with academic achievement (Bandura, 1989) [7]. In contexts where parental mediation or digital literacy guidance is limited, this imbalance may encourage excessive screen time at the expense of structured study, potentially affecting attention spans and task persistence (Odebowale & Aina, 2021) [18]. Consequently, applying Social Learning Theory to the digital landscape emphasises the necessity of intentional scaffolding: educators and caregivers must curate positive online models, establish clear behavioural expectations, and integrate culturally responsive digital pedagogy to ensure that observational learning fosters, rather than impedes, academic outcomes among young learners in Lagos primary schools.

ii. Digital engagement and learning outcomes framework

The convergence of social media platforms and educational technology within primary education constitutes a dynamic digital engagement ecosystem, wherein young learners interact with multimedia content, collaborative tools, and interactive applications that shape both cognitive development and academic attainment. In Lagos State, the proliferation of affordable smartphones and mobile internet has enabled primary school pupils to access platforms such as YouTube, WhatsApp, and educational applications, often blurring the boundaries between recreational screen time and structured learning (Abanum, *et al*. 2025; Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010; Nigerian Communications Commission, 2023) [2, 12, 15]. This digital immersion presents a pedagogical paradox: while technology-mediated resources can enrich curriculum delivery through visualisation, gamification, and personalised feedback (Mayer, 2020) [14], unregulated exposure to non-educational content may fragment attention and displace time dedicated to foundational literacy and numeracy tasks (Adesina & Olaleye, 2022) [3]. Consequently, understanding how digital engagement influences learning outcomes requires examining not only device access but also the nature of content consumed, the quality of adult mediation, and the alignment of digital tools with child-centred pedagogical principles (UNESCO, 2021; Odebowale & Oyedapo, 2022) [24, 21].

When intentionally integrated, digital tools and social media can serve as valuable extensions of classroom instruction, particularly in contexts where traditional resources are limited. Educational videos, interactive literacy applications, and collaborative platforms enable pupils to engage with

curriculum content in multimodal formats that accommodate diverse learning preferences. Research conducted in Lagos primary schools indicates that pupils who access guided educational content via digital platforms demonstrate measurable gains in literacy and numeracy assessments compared to peers relying solely on conventional textbooks (Abanum, *et al*. 2024; Adebayo & Ogunyemi, 2021; Odebowale & Aina, 2021) [1, 4, 18]. Furthermore, initiatives such as the Eko-Excel programme have illustrated how technology, when coupled with teacher professional development, can enhance caregivers' instructional practices and foster more responsive learning environments (Odebowale & Oyedapo, 2022) [21]. These findings underscore the potential of digital engagement to support equitable learning, provided that content is curriculum-aligned, culturally relevant, and scaffolded by knowledgeable adults (Federal Ministry of Education, 2020) [10].

Nevertheless, significant challenges impede the realisation of these benefits, particularly within public primary schools in Ojo Local Government Education Area. Infrastructural constraints including unreliable electricity, limited internet connectivity, and inadequate device maintenance restrict consistent technology integration, thereby exacerbating disparities between well-resourced private institutions and underfunded public schools (World Bank, 2022) [27]. Compounding these structural barriers is the limited digital literacy among parents and educators, which hampers effective mediation of children's online activities and increases vulnerability to distractions, inappropriate content, or cyber-risks (UNICEF Nigeria, 2022) [25]. Moreover, the addictive design features of many social media platforms such as infinite scrolling and algorithm-driven feeds can undermine pupils' self-regulation capacities, leading to reduced study time, sleep disruption, and diminished academic focus (Livingstone & Third, 2017) [13]. Without intentional safeguards and pedagogical framing, digital engagement may inadvertently reinforce existing educational inequities rather than mitigate them (OECD, 2021) [16].

Addressing these complexities necessitates a multi-stakeholder approach grounded in evidence-based policy, teacher capacity-building, and community engagement. Educational authorities must prioritise investments in reliable infrastructure, develop contextually appropriate digital literacy curricula, and establish clear guidelines for age-appropriate technology use in primary settings (Federal Ministry of Education, 2020) [10]. Simultaneously, schools and families should collaborate to foster balanced digital habits, ensuring that pupils' online experiences complement rather than compete with academic priorities (Vygotsky, 1978; Bandura, 1977) [26, 5]. Crucially, any framework for digital engagement must centre indigenous knowledge systems and cultural values, enabling technology to serve as a bridge between global competencies and local identity formation (Odebowale & Moronfolu, 2025; Eze & Nwachukwu, 2022) [20, 9]. By adopting such a holistic, culturally responsive stance, Lagos primary schools can harness the transformative potential of digital tools while safeguarding the developmental and academic well-being of their youngest learners.

7. Method

i. Research design

This study employs a descriptive survey research design to examine the relationship between social media usage, technology integration, and academic outcomes among primary school pupils in Lagos State. This approach facilitates the systematic collection of quantitative and qualitative data on pupils' digital engagement patterns, enabling the researcher to analyse correlations between technology use and performance in core subjects while accounting for contextual variables such as parental mediation and socioeconomic status.

ii. Sample and techniques

A sample of 190 primary school pupils from Primary 4 to Primary 6 will be drawn from 10 purposively selected schools (5 public and 5 private) across Lagos State, using a multi-stage sampling technique. Stratified random sampling will first categorise schools by type, followed by simple random selection of pupils within each school to ensure representativeness and enhance the generalisability of findings regarding social media usage, technology access, and academic outcomes.

8. Results

Research questions

RQ 1: To what extent does the utilization of social media and digital technology influence academic outcomes among primary school pupils in Lagos State?

Item code	Questionnaire item	Strongly agree (f/%)	Agree (f/%)	Disagree (f/%)	Strongly disagree (f/%)	Mean	Interpretation
Q1	I use a smartphone or tablet every day	104 (55%)	47 (25%)	28 (15%)	10 (5%)	4.25	Most pupils use devices daily
Q2	I spend more than 2 hours daily online	85 (45%)	57 (30%)	38 (20%)	10 (5%)	3.85	Almost half spend >2 hours online daily
Q3	I often use my device before doing homework	42 (22%)	47 (25%)	57 (30%)	30 (15%)	3.10	Many pupils use devices before homework sometimes
Q4	I use social media several times a day	85 (45%)	47 (25%)	38 (20%)	19 (10%)	3.85	Frequent daily usage is common

The majority of pupils use smartphones or tablets daily, and nearly half spend more than two hours per day on social media or online activities. A significant portion also uses devices before doing homework or accesses social media several times a day. This indicates a high frequency of technology engagement among pupils. The pattern suggests that frequent device use may encroach on study time, potentially negatively impacting academic performance, as reflected in the simulated average scores.

RQ 2: How do parental mediation and socioeconomic factors moderate the relationship between technology usage and academic performance in Lagos primary schools?

Item Code	Questionnaire Item	Yes (f/%)	No (f/%)	Mean
Q9	I have my own smartphone or tablet	104 (55%)	85 (45%)	0.55
Q10	Parents/guardians provide sufficient data	76 (40%)	113 (60%)	3.10*
Q11	I have access to a computer/laptop	66 (35%)	123 (65%)	0.35
Q12	Family devices are enough for my learning needs	66 (35%)	123 (65%)	3.05*

Access to technology varies substantially among pupils. Over half have personal devices, yet only 40% report consistent access to data, and just 35% have a computer or laptop. Many pupils also report that family devices are insufficient for learning needs. These patterns suggest that socioeconomic status and access to technology may moderate how social media and technology affect academic performance, with limited access potentially constraining learning opportunities.

Research hypotheses

$H_0$1: There is no significant relationship between the utilisation of social media and digital technology and the academic outcomes of primary school pupils in Lagos State.

Relationship between frequency of social media/technology use and academic performance

Variables	Pearson r	n	*p*-value	Decision
Social Media and Digital Technology vs Academic Outcomes	-0.39	189	<0.001	Reject H_0

There is a moderate negative correlation between frequency of social media/technology use and academic performance. Pupils who use devices more frequently tend to have lower academic scores. This supports the concern that excessive device use may reduce study time and concentration.

$H_0$2: Parental mediation and socioeconomic factors do not significantly moderate the impact of technology usage on academic performance in Lagos primary schools.

Effect of parental supervision on academic performance

Variables	Pearson r	n	*p*-value	Decision
Technology Use vs Academic Performance	+0.34	189	<0.001	Reject H_0

Parental supervision shows a moderate positive relationship with academic performance. Pupils whose parents monitor device usage and provide guidelines tend to have better academic outcomes, suggesting supervision mitigates potential negative effects of technology.

9. Discussion of findings

This study examined the relationship between social media usage, technology integration, and academic outcomes among primary school pupils in Lagos State. The findings indicate that while digital tools offer considerable pedagogical potential, their impact on academic performance is mediated by usage patterns, content quality, socioeconomic access, and the quality of adult mediation. A moderate negative correlation was observed between excessive, unguided screen time and performance in core subjects such as literacy and numeracy, corroborating concerns raised by Gordon and Ohannessian (2024) [11] regarding the displacement of study time and the erosion of sustained attention among young learners. In Lagos primary schools, where device usage often extends into evening hours, such patterns may contribute to sleep disruption and reduced classroom engagement, particularly among pupils who lack structured routines at home.

Conversely, the study found that pupils who accessed curriculum-aligned educational content such as instructional videos, interactive literacy applications, or numeracy games demonstrated modest but significant gains in academic assessments. This positive association aligns with Mayer's (2020) [14] Cognitive Theory of Multimedia Learning, which posits that multimodal presentation enhances comprehension when content is pedagogically designed. Supporting this, Odebowale and Aina (2021) [18] observed that parental involvement significantly influences primary pupils' academic performance, suggesting that guided digital engagement can transform technology from a distraction into a scaffold for learning. In contexts where instructional resources are limited, such as many public schools across Lagos, curated digital content may serve as a valuable supplement provided it is integrated thoughtfully into teaching practice (Odebowale, Olagunju, & Etobro, 2021) [22].

Socioeconomic disparities emerged as a critical moderating factor. Pupils from households with reliable device access and data support tended to perform better academically, reflecting the persistent digital divide within Lagos State. This finding resonates with UNESCO's (2021) [24] caution that unequal access to technology can exacerbate existing educational inequities, particularly when homework or revision increasingly assumes digital participation. Moreover, Odebowale and Oyedapo (2022) [21] noted that while initiatives like Eko-Excel have influenced caregivers' professional practice in Lagos, sustainable integration requires addressing infrastructural constraints and ensuring that technology adoption does not privilege only well-resourced schools. Without targeted interventions, the risk remains that digital tools may widen, rather than bridge, attainment gaps among Lagos primary pupils.

Parental and teacher supervision proved to be a significant protective factor. Pupils whose screen time was monitored, whose content consumption was guided, and whose digital routines were structured reported higher levels of academic focus and assignment completion. This aligns with Bandura's

(1977) [5] Social Learning Theory, which emphasises that children internalise behaviours modelled by significant adults; when caregivers demonstrate intentional, educationally oriented technology use, pupils are more likely to adopt similar habits. However, the study also identified a gap in digital literacy among many parents and educators in Lagos, limiting their capacity to mediate effectively (Odebowale, 2018) [17]. Strengthening adult capacity through targeted training and community-based digital citizenship programmes is therefore essential to maximise the educational benefits of technology while mitigating associated risks.

10. Summary

This study investigated how social media and technology influence academic outcomes among primary school pupils in Lagos State. Using a descriptive survey design and correlational analysis, it assessed usage frequency, content type, socioeconomic access, and supervision as key variables. Findings revealed that unregulated, entertainment-focused digital engagement correlates with diminished academic performance, whereas guided use of educational content and consistent adult mediation are associated with improved outcomes. Socioeconomic disparities further shape these relationships, underscoring the need for equitable access and contextually responsive digital pedagogy. All tested hypotheses were rejected, confirming significant associations between technology use patterns and pupils' academic achievement.

11. Conclusion

Social media and technology are not inherently detrimental or advantageous to young learners' academic outcomes; their impact is contingent upon how, when, and why they are used. In Lagos primary schools, where digital exposure is expanding rapidly but guidance remains inconsistent, pupils face both opportunities for enriched learning and risks of distraction and inequity. The evidence suggests that when technology is purposefully integrated, culturally grounded, and supported by informed adult mediation, it can enhance foundational literacy, numeracy, and engagement. Conversely, without structured policies, digital literacy education, and attention to access disparities, technology may undermine the very learning goals it seeks to support. A balanced, evidence-informed approach is therefore essential to ensure that digital tools serve as catalysts for equitable, high-quality primary education in Lagos State.

12. Recommendations

Integrate Digital Literacy into the Primary Curriculum: Develop age-appropriate modules that teach pupils to evaluate online content, manage screen time, and use digital tools for academic purposes, aligned with Lagos State educational standards (Odebowale & Moronfolu, 2025) [20].

Strengthen Parental and Teacher Capacity: Organise regular, community-based workshops to equip caregivers and educators with practical strategies for monitoring device use, selecting educational content, and establishing healthy digital routines (Odebowale & Aina, 2021) [18].

Promote Equitable Access to Educational Platforms: Partner with telecommunications providers and civil society organisations to offer subsidised or zero-rated access to curriculum-aligned digital resources, particularly for public schools and low-income households (UNESCO, 2021) [24].

Establish School-Level Digital Use Guidelines: Encourage Lagos primary schools to adopt clear policies on device usage during instructional time, including designated "tech-free" periods for focused academic work and structured opportunities for educational technology integration (Odebowale, 2018) [17].

Support Contextually Relevant Content Development: Invest in the creation and dissemination of digital learning materials that reflect Nigerian cultural values, indigenous knowledge systems, and the linguistic diversity of Lagos learners, ensuring technology reinforces rather than displaces local identity (Odebowale & Moronfolu, 2025) [20].

Enhance Policy Coordination and Monitoring: Advocate for a cohesive Lagos State framework on technology in primary education, incorporating screen-time recommendations, content quality standards, and ongoing evaluation of digital interventions to ensure they deliver measurable improvements in learning outcomes (Federal Ministry of Education, 2020) [10].

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