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Digital Study Tools and Student Performance: A Comparative Analysis

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ABSTRACT :

The existing evidence on the use of digital learning resources including e-learning platforms, AI-powered personalized systems, online learning courses, and online evaluations in enhancing student performance interaction, and self-efficacy conditions on all levels of education. In particular, computer-aided instruction in subjects like mathematics and science has shown better outcomes compared to conventional teaching methods. Casting adaptable feedbacks and learning channels also significantly foster student motivation and knowledge adoption through the use of AI tools. However, there are still issues, such as digital divide, disparity in the access to technology, digital competence disparities between students and teachers, and continuing professional development in learners. The success of the digital study tools is closely interrelated with the pedagogical alignment, sufficient infrastructural support, and digital literacy development in the teachers and their students. The paper recommends the longitudinal research to be available in the future to assess the long-term effects, cost-effectiveness, and inclusivity of educational technologies and locate digital tools in the framework of wider pedagogical and equity discourse.

Keywords: Digital Study Tools, Educational Technology, Student Performance Blended Learning, Computer-Assisted Instruction (CAI), E-learning Platforms, AI-powered Learning Tools, Digital Note-taking, Student Engagement

1. Introduction

The use of digital study tools has become a part of contemporary education, something that has been hastened by the globalization to the use of technology-enhanced learning. They are adopted in primary, secondary, and higher education where they are frequently placed in the role of drivers of student engagement, autonomy, and better academic results. These tools differ between online environments, gamified software, and computer based note-taking systems and simulation-based and learning management systems with each offering distinct types of personalization, feedback, and accessibility. The comparative research shows that despite the potential of digital tools to promote motivation, interactive learning, and autonomous learning, the effect depends on the situational factors like the digital skills of students, instructors, and institutional resources. As an example, the students with high incomes are prone to better digital resource utilization and self-efficacy, whereas the low-income students are still held by the barriers of access and uneven implementation. Similarly, meta-analyses on professional education demonstrate that e-learning has no less advantages than face-to-face education but is not universally better and that the degree of interactivity and feedback design is a determinant of the benefits of learning. Although the results are promising, some challenges remain, namely, digital distractions, lack of the same integration across the subjects, and lack of access to everyone still have an effect. These contradictions demonstrate the necessity of strict comparative literature reviews that go beyond binary judgments of the usefulness or uselessness of particular digital tools and discuss the mediation of their impact by particular digital tools, pedagogical design, and socioeconomic circumstances. Placing the digital study tools in this comparative frame, one can have a more advanced perspective on the role of the latter in reorganizing the student learning environment, both cognitively and behaviorally, as well as on the way it may influence the future educational policy and practice. The last ten years extended the period of increasing popularity and advancement of the digital study applications intended to serve learners of different education levels and circumstances. These tools, which are available in smartphones, tablets, and computers, are supposed to improve the presence of more accessibility, engagement, and customization of learning. They include e-learning systems, note taking software, time management software, gamified learning software and smart tutoring software. Collectively they are a part of a dynamic ecosystem that goes beyond standard classroom mechanisms.

E-learning platforms: One of the best-known digital study tools is e-learning studies like Moodle, Coursera and Khan Academy. These systems offer systematic training, video lessons, and exams by which students can study either as distance learners or in addition to the classroom training. They are often embedded within institutional learning management systems; this makes them useful both within formal and informal learning environments. In a time when in-person education is not possible, programs such as Zoom and Google Classroom reached the final people and instructors with a new and increasingly important movement when it comes to digital learning in frameworks.

Digital note-taking tools: Various apps like Notion, Evernote, and Microsoft OneNote are created to help students organise, retrieve and synthesise information. Online taking of notes will enable use of multimodal learning in that it allows blending of text, images, links and collaboration. Whether alone or with retrieval practice and review functions, there is empirical evidence that combination of digital note-taking and organizational abilities may double the performance on declarative and procedural knowledge tasks and also improves memory performance.

Flashcard and memory apps: Quizlet, Anki, and Brainscape are very popular learning tools, which are based on the principles of cognitive-psychology as spaced repetition and active recall. Such applications allow the students to practice the concepts with the help of digital-based flashcards, and quizzes that have been proved to facilitate long-term memory. Their ability to track gains and caliber of questions is also a factor in their drive to individualize education processes.

Focus and productivity apps: Forest, Pomodone, and Habitica are tools to overcome an increasing issue of the digital era, staying focused. These applications promote discipline and self-control among the students through gamification of concentration and efficiency, discouraging students who have limited focus capacity to go off track, and thus be distracted easily. Even though they themselves do not present any content, they serve a very important purpose in defining study habits and enabling regular study routines.

Intelligent and smarter tools: The more recent wave of digitized learning apps embrace artificial intelligence to offer learners incredibly personalized study experiences. As an example, Duolingo uses adaptive algorithms to personalise the content of language lessons and intelligent tutoring systems adjust the pacing and also the feedback actions according to the student performance. These advances add interactivity and productivity, and yet they also poses a risks of addiction to technology and the opacity of the algorithm that determines the course of learning.

Co-operation and interactive devices: In addition to personal study, there are many applications that can be used to collaborate with the peers and study together. Google Docs, Padlet and Edmodo provide students with the possibility to collaborate and share resources, as well as to provide feedback in real time. These platforms do not only contribute to knowledge acquisition but also to communication, collaboration and digitally literate skills which are now being considered as critical in the twenty first century.

Digital assessment and monitoring tools: Lastly, another growing group of tools is dedicated to assessment, analytics and tracking of progress. Learning systems like Gradescope and online tracking boards provide educators and learners with information about the performance levels, engagement, as well as learning habits. These understandings can be used to create specific interventions and be more responsive.

When combined, digital study applications represent a wide range of different tools, such as content delivery, memory aids, and productivity enhancers and collaborative platforms. This variety of theirs is in line with the complexity nature of the idea of learning, which is not limited to a cognitive result i.e. in terms of retention and performance but, behavioral and affective ones, i.e. in terms of being motivated, focused and confident. The versatility of this large landscape gives the basis to the comparison of the efficacy of digital tools, which are discussed in the literature reviewed by this study.

To answer these questions, this review uses empirical studies, systematic reviews and meta-analyses in a methodical manner and considers methodological stringency and contextual disparity. The methodology in the research of identifying and analyzing appropriate research has been started as follows.

2. Literature review

The high adoption rate of digital study tools in the educational setting has seen widespread comparative studies on the tool to be tested against the conventional forms of teaching. The review synthesizes and critically evaluates the findings of the systematic reviews, meta-analyses, experimental and large-scale international assessments with special emphasis laid on the influence of methodological approaches, tools, and contextual factors on the issue.

2.1. Comparative Approaches and Methodologies

Several methodological paradigms have been used here. Synthetic reviews and meta-analyses would have the most robust evidence base as they bring together the data of hundreds of studies; the examples would be Topping et al., who synthesized 1,355 studies and divided them into online, blended, computer-assisted instruction (CAI) and games and comparisons with the regular instruction. Experimental and quasi-experimental designs, in turn, compare the performance of students at back and after the implementation of digital tools, usually utilizing randomized controlled trials or pre/test-post-study designs. More massive cross-national datasets like PISA 2022 broaden this comparative prism by looking at the trends of national digital resources usage, self-efficacy and success. Combined, these methodological solutions bring about consistent results in understanding the general success of the use of digital tools and also create approaches that modulate those processes.

2.2. Tools and Modalities Compared

All evidences lead to the relative success of blended learning models. The combination strategies, i.e. a digital and a traditional instruction, tend to be more effective than completely online as well as purely face-to-face strategies, and CAI is particularly effective. Online/digital note-taking was also found to increase student achievement in declarative, procedural, and conditional knowledge areas resulting in significant improvements in students at the high and low performance levels. In the same way adaptive AI-assisted tools offer customized differentiated paths and time management efficiency which avails 21st-century achievements; however, the over-dependence and issues of integration still exist. Active interactions and collaborative learning through interactive digital applications, like Google Classroom, require a solid infrastructure and teacher facilitation because of their potential success. Digital monitoring tools for facing teachers display moderate improvements, particularly in reading and mathematics, but available evidence is both more compartmentalised and deals with a relatively small magnitude of improvements.

2.3. Critical Insights and Emerging Patterns

In systematic reviews, it has been established that about 85% of studies established that digital tools dominated regular instruction, but the poorer students usually do not gain the same utility of digital instruction. Authentic research articles continue to record elevated enhancements in the form of a higher number of test results in students with digital tools in place, but the results are in many cases constrained by smaller sample sizes, and must be replicated in differing settings. Cross-national studies reveal that people reside in heterogeneous societies: the utilization of digital tools and connectivity to self-efficacy are higher in high-income localities, and underutilization and infrastructural limitations dominate most of the low-income environments. The

evidence related to tools helps emphasize the flexibility of digital tools: note-taking parts of the devices enhance knowledge-based learning; AI-based technologies enhance GPA and significantly decrease study time; and social interaction can be enhanced by discussing tools, which is limited by network connectivity. The latter findings highlight the dual nature that digital tools have the potential to improve learning results though not hit upon all situations with equal response.

2.4. Synthesis and Gaps

Although digital study technologies have a high potential to improve student performance in general, their effectiveness is context-contingent dependent on factors of: access, digital literacy, and teacher preparation. The literature repeatedly highlights the fact that blended strategies, combined with professional development that is specific to educators, have the most reliable positive effect. However, to the areas with disadvantaged or lower-incomes, equity issues are still expressed: students still experience difficulties in access, capabilities, and infrastructures and cannot benefit to the same extent as digital-based innovations do. Also, a good amount of existing evidence is short-term in nature, with unanswered questions regarding the sustainability, cost-efficacy, and other long-term effects of digital study tools. Such loopholes have to be tackled so that the fruits of digital learning can become equally distributed.

Overall digital study resources, when administered with appropriate attention and fair inclusion as depicted in the literature, may confer significant returns in respect to performance, student participation, and student self-determination. They eventually do well, though, on the basis of their implementation in the context of a context-sensitive approach, and budgeting in the infrastructure sector and continued effort of educators. Further research should involve longitudinal data and cost-efficient analyses and address emerging modalities, which will provide a more comprehensive picture on how the learning procedures of students can be re-formed by implementing the digital study tools into the learning mechanisms in different educational systems. Although these results indicate a heterogeneous landscape of tools and results, the major difficulty is to generalize patterns between studies. The section below hence offers critical analysis and discussion on comparative effectiveness, engagement and implementation issues.

Table 1: A Comparative Analysis of Study Focus, Methods, and Key Findings on Digital Education

Author(s), Year	Paper Title	Study focus/ Methods	Key Findings
Abdykerimova et al., 2025	Systematic Review of Digital Tools' Impact on Primary and Secondary Education Outcomes	Systematic review (31 studies, 2018–2023)	Digital tools enhance interaction and performance; availability and training of teachers are major issues.
Akbari & Heidari, 2023	The Effect of Online Quizlet Flashcards and Student-Created Quizlet Flashcards on Learning and Retention of Productive and Receptive Vocabulary Knowledge of Elementary Iranian EFL Learners	Quasi-experimental	Quizlet flashcard, created by students worked better than pre-prepared sets of flashcards as a method of learning and retaining vocabulary, particularly productive knowledge.
Butler-Henderson & Crawford, 2020	A systematic review of online examinations: A pedagogical innovation for scalable authentication and integrity	Systematic Literature Review (PRISMA)	Online exams are usually favored by students and there is no noticeable performance gap. Insists that more studies be done regarding pedagogy and governance.
Carl Abrahams, 2024	Effectiveness of Mobile Learning Applications on Academic Performance in Online Education in Jamaica	Desk Study / Secondary Research	Academic performance has improved through the use of mobile learning applications. The obstacles are mainly device compatibility and the connection with the internet.
Faber et al., 2023	A best-evidence meta-analysis of the effects of digital monitoring tools for teachers on student achievement	Meta-analysis (14 studies)	There are moderate positive effects of digital monitoring tools, in particular, in reading and math.
Farooqi, Siddique, & Awan, 2024	The effectiveness of educational software and applications for primary students' learning outcomes: A systematic review	Systematic Review	Educational software enhances mathematical, scientific and literacy performance.
Gordillo-Tenori et al., 2023	Information Technologies that Help Improve Academic Performance, A Review of the Literature	Systematic Literature Review (PRISMA)	Digital tools were effective at improving academic performance, especially when combined with a comprehensible and accessible user experience.
Hattie, Sahlberg & Comer, 2023	Impact of Mobile Learning Apps on Study Habits and Academic Performance of College Students in	Literature review	Apps contribute to the engagement and performance by allowing flexibility and personalization, but distractions and

	the United States: A Review of Literature		access inequality represent a major issue.
Joshi et al., 2025	The impact of digital resource utilization on student learning outcomes and self-efficacy across different economic contexts	PISA 2022 data, cross-country	Digital resources are mostly used by high-income students; equity gaps in digital feedback tools have not been effectively used.
Kumar, S., 2024	The Impact of Technology on Students Engagement and Learning Outcomes	Mixed-Methods (Survey of ~100 students)	Students are very keen on tech learning, which also enhances engagement. The problem mainly includes technical issues and digital distractions. Overall satisfaction is high, yet the preferences concerning the learning styles are heterogeneous.
Kyaw et al., 2019	Effectiveness of Digital Education on Communication Skills Among Medical Students: Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis by the Digital Health Education Collaboration	Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis (12 studies)	Digital education is as effective as traditional methods for teaching medical students communication skills
Makri, Vlachopoulos & Martina, 2021	Digital Escape Rooms as Innovative Pedagogical Tools in Education: A Systematic Literature Review	Systematic literature review	Digital escape rooms are particularly effective in terms of student engagement, motivation, and problem-solving which is a group process, reinforcing the benefits of gamification on learning.
Mosquera-Gende, I, 2023	DIGITAL TOOLS AND ACTIVE LEARNING IN AN ONLINE UNIVERSITY:IMPROVING THE ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE OF FUTURE TEACHERS	Pre-experimental, future teachers	The increased use of digital tools is attributed to increased achievement and the participation.
Pechenkina et al., 2017	Using a gamified mobile app to increase student engagement, retention and academic achievement	Quantitative analysis	High app performance was positively linked to better academic results.
Topping et al., 2022	Effectiveness of online and blended learning from schools: A systematic review	Systematic review	Students utilizing the digital tools performed better compared to students who adopted the traditional ways of learning, particularly among the primary learners and English language learners.

3. Analysis and Discussion

Empirical and review-based research findings are becoming increasingly supportive of the comparative efficacy of digital tools in studying student performance, but the results are affected by the context and pedagogical, and equity-related elements.

3.1. Effectiveness and Learning Outcomes

There is a wide opinion that digital study resources such as online platform applications, AI or smart applications, online note-taking systems, web-based interactive resources are at least equally effective as, and in most instances, more effective than face-to-face learning. The systematic reviews and meta-analyses demonstrate findings of significant change in favor of digital methodologies implementation, with particularly high effects of blended learning and computer-assisted instruction (CAI) methodologies. As an example, mathematics education research has shown significantly greater gains in digital resource users over traditional resource users and digital note-taking has been shown to have a positive impact on both higher and lower-achieving students. These results indicate that digital tools will be able to lead not only to the overall performance, but also to equity in classrooms once implemented properly.

3.2. Engagement, Autonomy, and Self-Efficacy

In addition to cognitive performance, digital tools promotes more engagement, autonomy and self-managed learning. Individually adaptive personalization, instant feedback, and flexible pacing are the qualities that increase motivation and develop student self-efficacy, which is one of the

driving factors with regards to academic success. At the same time, these advantages depend on the digital literacy of the students as well as the quality of instructional integration. Digital tools are less effective in situations in which the learners are not confident with technology or when the teachers are not adequately scaffolding them.

3.3. Tool-Specific Insights and Limitations

Tools that are powered by AI: Pursuing conscious individualization of learning pathways and time management can be associated with improved academic performance, yet there are questions concerning the over-reliance and doing so as an addition to existing curricula. Digital monitoring and analytics tools: Exhibit small, but significant gains especially on subjects like reading and mathematics even though data is limited. Interactive platforms and digital textbooks: Enhance interaction and cooperative learning although its potentials are greatly affected by good infrastructure and constant involvement of the teacher.

3.4. Equity and Access

Nevertheless, despite of the identified opportunities, there still exist considerable gaps in the availability of digital tools. In high income settings, students are more confident, utilize, and benefit more in terms of performance as compared to low income settings where students are faced with a lot of restrictions due to inadequate infrastructure, expensive nature, and lack of digital skills. This digital divide has been one of the most urgent challenges that hamper the comprehensive use of technology-enhanced learning. To fill these gaps, specific actions are needed such as, the professional growth of teachers and investment in infrastructure.

3.5. Implementation Challenges

Digital tools can be effective in the teaching practice only when parent and child pay very close attention to their integration within the pedagogy. There have been indications that improperly done digital digitally mediated instruction, teacher untrained and institutionally encouraged/supporting may put serious limitations on- or possibly eliminate the gains of digital learning as a whole. On the other hand, hybrid practices which complement instead of replacing traditional instruction reap more benefits and have a higher level of permanence regarding attainment.

On balance, when properly managed and guided, digital study tools may contribute in a dramatic way to student performance, engagement, and autonomy. However, their efficacy is context-based through the elements of equity of access, teacher preparedness, and support of the policy. Future research must not be confined in the short term effect but investigate the long term effects, cost-effectiveness and novel design elements, which will bring about a better and more balanced perception of the digital student learning tool remodeling.

Markers of current systematic review trials show a digital impact study tools offering significant advantages compared to conventional instructional techniques in about 85% of the investigated situations; the significant majority of these analyses, however, are based on interventions with a very short duration. As a result, the challenges of sustainability, cost-effectiveness and the generalizability of the results in various areas of subjects under study have not been studied to the full extent. Digital tools positively impact learning and this aligns with the constructivist learning theory which cherishes active participation and feedback in knowledge construction. On the same note, the self-regulated learning theory assists in ascertaining why self-interested and timetable management provisioned tools (e.g. AI apps or productivity applications) reduce results. Similar reports have been released by UNESCO and OECD, which in some respects replicate the results and report that although digital tools can enhance performance, equality persists in how they are offset by various countries.

4. Conclusion

The available literature depicts that digital research instruments such as online university services and bi-modal courses, as well as AI-services and other digital systems to record notes, help improve preeminently, and at any rate, the final results of traditional teaching measures. The systematic review, meta-analyses, and experimental studies arguing point out to the fact that adding value to student performance, engagement, and self efficacy is not an item added without evidence to the list of these tools. It has been emphasized throughout that blended learning and computer-assisted instruction (CAI) methods are specifically shown to be especially effective, and in most instances, digital-based interventions perform better compared to traditional teaching. Along with the effect on performance outcomes, promoting learner agency, flexibility, and provision of instant and tailored feedback, which are all directly associated with increased outcomes in academic success and long-term self-motivation, digital tools enable learning outcomes to be optimized.

At the same time, ongoing discussions in the literature find some deeper worries that diminish trust in online education tools. An unequal opportunity to access equipment, quality and stable internet connectivity, and quality resources is quite a burning problem, especially in the situations of low- and middle-income countries. Digital literacy, self-efficacy, student attitude, teacher and their readiness, infrastructure, and policy support are both individual, and institutional moderators that favorably influence the effect of digital interventions being implemented on students, and educators.

It is worth noting that despite the fact that digitally enhanced learning is one of the most powerful opportunities most students are capable of successfully discovering, it could be said that marginalized students and disadvantaged students with special educational needs do not receive equal opportunities without adherence to additional scaffolding and specific intervention techniques. This highlights the fact that technology is only part of the problem, thus, its successful implementation can only be achieved by employing it in an intentional and integrative way.

Overall, digital study tools are a revolution in the field of education that can also have a positive impact on the results of schools and universities in terms of performance, engagement, and autonomy of a student, provided that all these elements are put in their proper place. Nevertheless, their success does not necessarily come on a silver plate: this needs leveled accessibility, adequate infrastructure, enabling policies, and high focus on preparedness of the

teaching staff. Addressing enduring inequalities, implementing situational responses, and examining the long-term and innovative aspects of digital learning, the future research can guarantee that these tools live up to expectations in transforming student learning in various educational environments. In conclusion, digital study tools cannot be discussed as a panacea and a fad that disappears over time; however, they serve as a ground-changing supplement to the traditional methods of teaching. The effectiveness of these tools depends, on the fair access, smooth pedagogic implementation, and continuous academic research.

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