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Academic Culture, Internet Use, And Psychological Well-Being: a Qualitative Exploration Of Undergraduate Students' Experiences In Ebonyi State University

¹Eze Ogbonnia Eze*,
²Igwe Prince Benedict
³Onuigwe Oluchukwu K.

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Authors' Affiliation

^{1,2,3}Department of Psychology,
Ebonyi State University
Abakaliki.

*Correspondence:

eze.ogbonnia@ebsu.edu.ng,

+2348034554687

<https://orcid.org/0000-0001-7943-9240>

ABSTRACT

The increasing integration of digital technologies into higher education has raised concerns about how academic environments and internet use collectively influence students' psychological well-being. This study explored undergraduate students' experiences of academic culture, internet use, and psychological well-being in Ebonyi State University. A qualitative phenomenological design was adopted to obtain in-depth insight into students lived experiences. Twenty (20) undergraduate students were purposively selected and interviewed using a semi-structured interview guide. Data were analyzed thematically following Braun and Clarke (2006) approach. Findings revealed that academic culture is perceived as demanding and performance-oriented, significantly shaping students' reliance on the internet for academic purposes. Internet use served both academic and non-academic functions, acting as a learning tool and a source of distraction. Participants reported mixed psychological experiences, including stress, anxiety, emotional fatigue, and occasional relief from academic pressure. Academic culture strongly influenced patterns of internet use, while students adopted coping strategies such as time management and digital self-regulation. The study concludes that internet use is deeply embedded within academic culture and has complex implications for psychological well-being. It recommends the promotion of digital well-being awareness, balanced academic workloads, and institutional support systems that foster healthy internet use among undergraduate students.

Keywords: Academic culture, digital well-being, internet use, qualitative phenomenological design, time management, undergraduate students.

Introduction

The rapid expansion of digital technologies has significantly reshaped higher education globally, altering how students learn, communicate, and engage with academic content. Internet access has become an indispensable component of university education, enabling students to retrieve learning materials, participate in online academic activities, and maintain social connections within and beyond the university environment. In contemporary higher education, particularly following the post-pandemic shift toward blended and digital learning, internet use is no longer optional but central to academic engagement and student life (Jiang et al., 2024; Zewude et al., 2024).

While the internet offers substantial educational benefits, concerns have increasingly been raised about its implications for students' psychological well-being. Empirical studies have shown that excessive or poorly regulated internet use may be associated with depression, anxiety, sleep disruption, and reduced life satisfaction among university students (Elhai et al., 2020; Zewude et al., 2024). Similarly, a growing body of research indicates that problematic internet use often conceptualized as internet addiction or compulsive digital engagement can negatively affect emotional stability and overall mental health outcomes in young adults (Kuss & Griffiths, 2017; Montag & Walla, 2021).

Meanwhile, the relationship between internet use and psychological well-being is not consistently negative. Some studies suggest that digital engagement can also enhance well-being by providing access to social support, academic resources, and opportunities for self-expression and learning (Orben & Przybylski, 2019). These mixed findings suggest that the effects of internet use are complex and context-dependent, influenced by individual differences, usage patterns, and the environments in which digital engagement occurs.

Within higher education settings, academic culture represents a critical but often underexplored contextual factor shaping students' digital behaviours. Academic culture refers to the shared norms, expectations, teaching practices, and institutional values that guide how learning is structured and experienced within universities. It influences

students' academic workload, perceptions of performance pressure, engagement with lecturers, peer interactions, and strategies for managing academic demands. Recent literature emphasizes that students' digital engagement should not be understood solely as an individual behaviour but as something embedded within institutional and cultural learning environments (Tariq et al., 2023; Jiang et al., 2024).

In many universities, academic demands increasingly drive students toward intensive internet use for research, assignment completion, communication, and examination preparation. At the same time, the same digital platforms used for academic purposes also serve as sources of distraction, entertainment, and social interaction, potentially blurring the boundaries between productive and non-productive use. Studies have highlighted that such digital multitasking and online engagement patterns may contribute to reduced academic focus and emotional fatigue among students (Pérez-Juárez et al., 2023).

In the Nigerian university context, these dynamics are further complicated by infrastructural challenges, varying levels of digital literacy, and increasing academic expectations. Undergraduate students are required to navigate a demanding academic environment where internet access is essential for learning, yet often inconsistently available or unevenly utilized. Despite this, there remains limited qualitative evidence capturing how students themselves experience the intersection of academic culture, internet use, and psychological well-being within Nigerian universities, including Ebonyi State University.

The increasing integration of digital technologies into higher education has transformed how university students learn, communicate, access information, and engage with academic environments. Internet use has become a core component of contemporary university life, supporting academic research, online learning, and social interaction. However, recent scholarships have raised concerns about the implications of intensive internet engagement for students' psychological well-being. Studies have shown that while internet use can enhance learning opportunities, access to information, and social connectedness, excessive or uncontrolled use may contribute to stress, anxiety, reduced academic engagement, and

diminished well-being (Kuss & Griffiths, 2017; Przybylski & Weinstein, 2019).

A systematic review of university students' internet behaviours indicates that problematic internet use is associated with multiple psychological risk factors, including stress, impulsivity, poor sleep quality, and negative emotional states (Sánchez-Fernández et al., 2023). Similarly, studies have conceptualized problematic internet use as a continuum ranging from functional engagement to maladaptive or addictive behaviours that interfere with academic and personal functioning (Kuss & Griffiths, 2017; Elhai et al., 2020).

Recent research further highlights that internet use among students is not limited to academic purposes but extends to entertainment, social networking, gaming, and multitasking across platforms, which can lead to digital distraction and reduced academic efficiency (Pérez-Juárez et al., 2024). This dual nature of internet use both beneficial and potentially harmful makes it a complex phenomenon requiring context-sensitive interpretation.

Studies on digital learning environments suggest that institutional factors such as teaching strategies, lecturer support, workload expectations, and assessment practices significantly influence students' engagement and well-being (Topluk & Genc, 2025). In particular, digital academic environments require students to continuously adapt to online learning systems, which may increase both academic flexibility and psychological pressure.

Recent studies show that psychological well-being among university students are increasingly influenced by digital engagement patterns. While moderate internet use can enhance social connection and access to support systems, excessive or uncontrolled use has been associated with stress, anxiety, and reduced well-being (Elhai et al., 2020; Zewude et al., 2024).

A growing body of literature also suggests that the relationship between internet use and psychological well-being is not linear. Instead, it depends on the quality, purpose, and context of use. For example, purposeful academic use may enhance well-being by reducing academic stress, whereas compulsive or fragmented use may contribute to cognitive overload and emotional fatigue (Montag & Walla, 2021).

Empirical research has consistently examined the relationship between internet use and psychological well-being, with mixed findings. Some studies report negative associations between problematic internet use and well-being indicators such as depression, anxiety, and sleep disturbance (Elhai et al., 2020). Other studies, however, highlight that digital engagement can also provide psychological benefits, including emotional support, social connection, and academic assistance (Orben & Przybylski, 2019).

A meta-analytic review of digital well-being research suggests that the impact of internet use depends largely on patterns of engagement rather than total screen time (Orben & Przybylski, 2019). Similarly, systematic reviews indicate that contextual factors such as academic demands, institutional structure, and social environment play important roles in shaping how internet use affects psychological outcomes (Sánchez-Fernández et al., 2023).

Current research in higher education further highlights that digital learning environments can both enhance and undermine well-being depending on how students interact with technology and how institutions structure learning experiences (Topluk & Genc, 2025). This reinforces the need to understand internet use within specific academic cultures rather than as an isolated behavioural variable.

Other recent reviews emphasize the need for qualitative and context-sensitive approaches that capture students' lived experiences within digital academic environments (Topluk & Genc, 2025; Sánchez-Fernández et al., 2023). In Nigerian universities, particularly Ebonyi State University, there remains limited empirical evidence exploring how academic culture shapes students' internet engagement and psychological well-being from a lived-experience perspective.

Most existing studies in this area have adopted quantitative approaches, focusing on measuring internet addiction levels, predicting psychological distress, or examining correlations between digital use and academic performance. While these studies provide valuable statistical insights, they do not adequately capture students' lived experiences, interpretations, and meanings attached to their digital engagement within academic contexts (Elhai et al., 2020; Montag & Walla, 2021). Consequently, there is

a need for qualitative inquiry that foregrounds students' voices and explores how academic culture shapes their internet use practices and psychological well-being in everyday university life.

This gap justifies the need for qualitative exploration that gives voice to students' experiences and provides deeper insight into how academic and digital environments interact to influence psychological well-being.

The aim of this study is to explore undergraduate students' experiences of academic culture, internet use, and psychological well-being in Ebonyi State University. The specific objectives of the study are to:

- i. Explore how undergraduate students of Ebonyi State University perceived and experienced the academic culture within the institution.
- ii. Examine the ways in which students describe their patterns and purposes of internet use within academic and non-academic contexts.
- iii. Investigate students' perceptions of how internet use influenced their psychological well-being, including emotional, social, and academic functioning.
- iv. Explore how academic culture shaped students' engagement with internet use in their academic activities and daily lives.
- v. Understand the coping strategies students adopted in managing academic demands and digital engagement in relation to their psychological well-being.

Method

Participants

The study involved 20 undergraduate students of Ebonyi State University Abakaliki. The participants comprised of 10 males and 10 females, within the age range of 18 to 27 years (Mean age = 22.1 years). Participants were purposively sampled from 5 faculties to ensure diversity of experiences regarding academic culture, internet use, and psychological well-being. They were enrolled in various academic disciplines, including Psychology, Nursing, Law, Public Administration and Computer Science. Participants also represented different years of study, ranging from first-year to final-year undergraduate

students. The diversity of the participant pool enhanced the richness of the data by capturing multiple perspectives on the interplay between academic culture, internet use, and psychological well-being within the university context.

The study was conducted at Ebonyi State University Abakaliki, a public tertiary institution located in Abakaliki. Established in 1999, the university serves students from diverse socio-economic, ethnic, and cultural backgrounds across Nigeria. The institution comprises multiple faculties and departments, providing a broad academic environment characterized by varying disciplinary cultures, academic expectations, and patterns of student engagement. The university was selected as the research site because it offers a context in which academic demands, widespread access to digital technologies, and students' psychological experiences intersect. As with many contemporary Nigerian universities, undergraduate students at Ebonyi State University rely extensively on internet-enabled devices for academic activities, social interaction, communication, and entertainment. Furthermore, the university's diverse student population provided an opportunity to capture a range of perspectives and experiences regarding academic pressures, online engagement, coping strategies, and mental well-being. The context of Ebonyi State University therefore offered a rich setting for exploring the meanings students attach to their academic and digital experiences and how these experiences influence their psychological well-being.

Data Collection

Data collection was done with a semi-structured interview guide developed by the researchers. The interview guide contained open-ended questions designed to elicit detailed responses about students' experiences of academic culture, internet use, and psychological well-being. The interview guide was reviewed for clarity and relevance before administration to ensure it aligned with the objectives of the study. Data were collected through in-depth interviews conducted with the selected participants. After obtaining oral informed consent, participants were interviewed individually in a quiet and comfortable environment within the university setting to ensure privacy and encourage openness. Each interview lasted approximately 30 to 45 minutes and was audio-recorded with participants' permission.

Field notes were also taken to capture non-verbal cues and contextual observations. The interviews were conducted in English and transcribed verbatim for analysis. Participation was voluntary, and confidentiality was strictly maintained throughout the study. Participants were assured that their identities would not be disclosed and that the data would be used solely for academic purposes.

Design

The study adopted a phenomenological research design to explore how undergraduate students made sense of their experiences of academic culture, internet use, and psychological well-being within Ebonyi State University. Consistent with the phenomenological orientation of the study, data were analysed using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA), which focuses on understanding how individuals interpret and attach meaning to their lived experiences.

Data Analysis

Data were analysed using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) as proposed by Smith, Flowers, and Larkin (2009). IPA was considered appropriate because the study sought to understand how undergraduate students perceived and made sense of their experiences of academic culture, internet use, and psychological well-being. The analysis involved repeated reading of transcripts, initial noting, development of emergent themes, identification of connections among themes within individual cases, and examination of patterns across participants. Throughout the process, attention was given to the meanings participants attached to their experiences and the researcher's interpretative engagement with those meanings.

Findings

Analysis of participants' narratives revealed five superordinate themes that captured how undergraduate students interpreted their experiences of academic culture, internet use, and psychological well-being within Ebonyi State University. These themes were: (1) Negotiating Academic Expectations and Pressures, (2) The Internet as a Dual Resource for Learning and Social Connection, (3) Experiencing the Psychological Consequences of Digital

Engagement, (4) Academic Culture as a Driver of Internet Use, and (5) Striving for Balance and Well-Being.

Superordinate Theme 1: Negotiating Academic Expectations and Pressures

Participants described the academic culture of Ebonyi State University as demanding, competitive, and highly achievement-oriented. Academic success was often interpreted as a pathway to future economic security and social mobility. Consequently, many students experienced significant pressure to perform well academically.

For several participants, academic demands extended beyond classroom activities and influenced their daily routines, social interactions, and emotional experiences. While some viewed these expectations as motivating, others perceived them as sources of stress and anxiety. One participant noted:

“You always feel that you have to do more. If you are not reading, you feel guilty because everybody is trying to pass.”

This account suggests that academic engagement was experienced not merely as an educational requirement but as a continuous obligation that shaped students' sense of self and achievement.

Superordinate Theme 2: The Internet as a Dual Resource for Learning and Social Connection

Participants commonly described the internet as an indispensable aspect of university life. They perceived digital technologies as essential tools for accessing academic materials, completing assignments, communicating with classmates, and obtaining information beyond classroom instruction.

At the same time, participants viewed the internet as a means of maintaining social relationships and escaping academic pressures. Social media platforms provided opportunities for interaction, entertainment, and emotional connection. As one participant explained:

“Sometimes I go online to search for school work, but after that I stay because I want to chat with friends or watch videos.”

Participants therefore interpreted internet use as serving both academic and personal needs, often moving fluidly between these functions.

Superordinate Theme 3: Experiencing the Psychological Consequences of Digital Engagement

Students reported mixed perceptions regarding the influence of internet use on their psychological well-being. Many participants described positive experiences such as relaxation, access to supportive online communities, and opportunities for stress relief. The internet was often viewed as a coping resource during periods of academic strain.

However, participants also acknowledged negative consequences associated with excessive online engagement. These included distraction, procrastination, reduced concentration, and feelings of anxiety. One participant remarked:

“When I spend too much time online, I become worried because I know I have wasted time that I should have used for studying.”

Such narratives indicate that participants experienced internet use as both beneficial and potentially harmful, depending on how it was managed and integrated into daily academic life.

Superordinate Theme 4: Academic Culture as a Driver of Internet Use

Participants consistently linked their internet behaviours to the academic demands of the university environment. The increasing reliance on online resources, digital communication, and electronic learning materials encouraged frequent internet use. Students perceived digital engagement as a necessity for meeting academic expectations.

Many participants indicated that academic requirements influenced not only the amount of time spent online but also the nature of their internet activities. One participant stated:

“Most of the time I go online because of assignments, but once I am there, other things begin to attract my attention.”

This finding suggests that academic culture did not merely encourage internet use but also created opportunities for broader digital engagement, which students continuously negotiated.

Superordinate Theme 5: Striving for Balance and Well-Being

A prominent aspect of participants' narratives involved efforts to maintain balance between academic responsibilities, internet use, and psychological well-being. Students described adopting various coping strategies, including setting study schedules, limiting social media use, seeking peer support, and engaging in religious or recreational activities.

Participants generally viewed self-discipline as essential for managing competing demands. One participant explained:

“I try to keep my phone away when I am reading because if I don't control it, I can spend hours online.”

These accounts reflect an ongoing process of self-regulation through which students attempted to protect their psychological well-being while meeting academic expectations and remaining digitally connected.

Summary of Findings

The findings suggest that students interpreted academic culture, internet use, and psychological well-being as deeply interconnected aspects of their university experience. Academic demands encouraged extensive internet use, while digital technologies simultaneously served as academic resources and sources of social engagement. Although internet use offered emotional support and academic benefits, students also recognised its potential to contribute to distraction, stress, and reduced productivity. Consequently, participants continually engaged in strategies aimed at balancing academic success, digital engagement, and psychological well-being.

Discussion

This study explored how undergraduate students at Ebonyi State University made sense of their experiences of academic culture, internet use, and psychological well-being. The findings revealed that students perceived these experiences as closely interconnected, with academic demands shaping patterns of internet use and, in turn, influencing psychological well-being. Through an interpretative phenomenological lens, the study highlights how students actively negotiated the opportunities and challenges presented by both the academic environment and digital technologies.

The first superordinate theme, *Negotiating Academic Expectations and Pressures*, revealed that participants experienced the university's academic culture as demanding and achievement-oriented. Students interpreted academic success as a critical determinant of future opportunities and social mobility, leading many to experience pressure to perform. This finding aligns with previous studies indicating that academic demands and performance expectations are significant sources of stress among university students and can influence their psychological well-being (Beiter et al., 2015; Stallman, 2010). University life often requires students to balance academic responsibilities, social relationships, and future career concerns, all of which contribute to psychological pressure and adjustment challenges (Bewick et al., 2010). The participants' narratives suggest that academic pressure was not merely an institutional expectation but a deeply personal experience shaped by family expectations, societal values, and individual aspirations.

The second theme, *The Internet as a Dual Resource for Learning and Social Connection*, demonstrated that students viewed the internet as an indispensable component of contemporary university life. Participants relied on digital platforms for accessing academic resources, completing coursework, and maintaining communication with peers. At the same time, the internet functioned as a space for social interaction, entertainment, and emotional connection. This finding supports evidence that digital technologies play an increasingly important role in students' academic and social lives, providing access to information, peer networks, and psychological support resources (Montagni et al., 2020; Helsper & Eynon, 2010). The findings suggest that students interpreted internet use not merely as a technological

activity but as an essential resource for navigating the demands of university life.

The third theme, *Experiencing the Psychological Consequences of Digital Engagement*, highlighted the complex relationship between internet use and psychological well-being. Participants reported that internet use offered opportunities for relaxation, social support, and stress relief. However, they also described experiences of distraction, anxiety, guilt, and reduced concentration arising from excessive online engagement. These findings are consistent with studies showing that problematic internet use among university students is associated with adverse psychological outcomes, including stress, anxiety, depression, and reduced academic functioning (Kuss & Lopez-Fernandez, 2016; Sánchez-Fernández et al., 2023). At the same time, digital platforms may facilitate social connectedness and emotional support when used appropriately (Ferrari et al., 2022). The findings therefore reinforce the view that the psychological consequences of internet use depend largely on the nature and extent of engagement.

The fourth theme, *Academic Culture as a Driver of Internet Use*, demonstrated that students perceived academic demands as a major factor influencing their online behaviour. Participants frequently reported using the internet for assignments, research, and communication related to coursework. This finding reflects the increasing integration of digital technologies into higher education and supports evidence that internet use has become an essential component of academic participation (Selwyn, 2016). However, participants also noted that academic internet use often extended into recreational activities, suggesting that the boundaries between educational and non-academic online engagement are increasingly blurred. Similar observations have been reported in studies showing that extensive internet engagement may expose students to distractions that can negatively affect academic performance (Junco, 2012; Kirschner & Karpinski, 2010).

The final theme, *Striving for Balance and Well-Being*, revealed that students actively employed coping strategies to manage academic pressures and digital engagement. Participants described regulating their social media use, developing study schedules, seeking peer support, and engaging in religious and recreational activities to maintain psychological well-

being. These findings suggest that students are not passive recipients of academic and technological pressures but actively engage in self-regulation to preserve their well-being. Previous studies have similarly highlighted the importance of coping mechanisms, resilience, and self-management strategies in promoting positive psychological outcomes among university students facing academic and digital challenges (Hartley, 2011; Regehr et al., 2013). From an interpretative perspective, students viewed well-being not as a fixed state but as an ongoing process requiring continuous adjustment and balance.

Overall, the findings suggest that academic culture, internet use, and psychological well-being are deeply interconnected dimensions of students' lived experiences. Students viewed the internet as both an academic necessity and a social resource, while simultaneously recognising its potential to contribute to distraction and psychological strain. The study therefore underscores the need for universities to promote digital well-being, strengthen student support services, and create academic environments that foster both educational success and psychological health.

Implications

This finding of this study implies that university academic culture and digital engagement are closely linked to students' psychological well-being. It highlights the need for universities to reduce excessive academic pressure through balanced assessment practices and supportive learning environments. It also underscores the importance of integrating digital well-being and self-regulation training into student support services to help students manage internet use effectively. Overall, the findings call for a more holistic approach to student welfare that addresses both academic demands and digital lifestyle.

Limitations of the Study

The study was limited to undergraduate students of Ebonyi State University; therefore, findings may not be fully transferable to other institutional contexts. In addition, the study relied on self-reported data, which may be subject to recall bias and social desirability effects. Finally, the relatively small sample size,

typical of qualitative research, may limit the breadth of perspectives captured, although data saturation was achieved.

Conclusion and Recommendation

This study explored undergraduate students' experiences of academic culture, internet use, and psychological well-being within Ebonyi State University. The findings revealed that students perceive the university academic environment as highly demanding and performance-oriented, creating pressures that significantly shape their daily experiences. The study further demonstrated that internet use has become an integral part of students' academic and social lives, serving simultaneously as a resource for learning, communication, and stress relief, while also contributing to distraction, emotional fatigue, and psychological strain when poorly managed.

A key contribution of the study is its demonstration that academic culture and internet use are closely interconnected. Academic expectations often require students to remain continuously engaged with digital technologies, making internet use not merely a personal choice but a response to institutional demands. At the same time, students actively employ various coping strategies to balance academic responsibilities, online engagement, and psychological well-being. The following recommendations are made.

First, university management should develop policies and programmes that promote healthy digital engagement among students. Digital literacy initiatives should go beyond technical skills to include digital well-being, responsible internet use, and strategies for managing online distractions.

Second, lecturers should be mindful of the cumulative academic demands placed on students and adopt balanced instructional approaches that encourage effective learning without creating unnecessary pressure. Greater attention should be given to coordinating deadlines and promoting supportive learning environments.

Third, university counseling and student support services should incorporate programmes focused on stress management, self-regulation, time management,

and digital wellness. Such interventions may help students develop healthier relationships with technology while maintaining academic productivity.

Fourth, peer support initiatives and student-led awareness campaigns should be encouraged to foster conversations about academic stress, internet use, and mental well-being. These initiatives can create supportive communities where students share effective coping strategies and seek help when necessary.

Finally, future research should examine these issues across multiple universities and cultural contexts to determine how variations in institutional environments influence students' experiences. Comparative studies involving public and private universities, as well as mixed-method investigations, would further deepen understanding of the complex relationships among academic culture, internet use, and psychological well-being.

Overall, the study highlights the need for universities to recognize that students' academic experiences, digital behaviours, and psychological well-being are deeply interconnected. Supporting student success therefore requires not only academic excellence but also institutional efforts that promote healthy and sustainable engagement with digital technologies.

Compliance with ethical standards

The study was conducted in accordance with established ethical principles for research involving human participants. Informed and written consent was obtained such that participants were informed that their participation was entirely voluntary and that they could withdraw from the study at any stage without any negative consequences. Confidentiality and anonymity was maintained such that participants' names and other identifying information were not included in the research records or final report. Pseudonyms were used during data analysis and reporting of findings. Audio recordings and interview transcripts were securely stored and were accessible only to the researchers.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this study.

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APPENDIX

SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW GUIDE

Title of Study: Academic Culture, Internet Use, and Psychological Well-Being: A Qualitative Exploration of Undergraduate Students' Experiences in Ebonyi State University

Introduction

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this study. The purpose of this interview is to explore undergraduate students' experiences of academic culture, internet use, and psychological well-being within Ebonyi State University. There are no right or wrong answers. We are interested in your personal experiences and perspectives. All information provided will be treated confidentially and used strictly for research purposes.

SECTION A: DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

1. How old are you?
2. What is your sex?
3. What is your current level of study?
4. What faculty and department are you enrolled in?
5. How many years have you spent in the university?

OBJECTIVE 1:

To explore how undergraduate students of Ebonyi State University perceived and experienced the academic culture within the institution.

6. How would you describe the academic culture of Ebonyi State University?
7. What are the major academic expectations placed on students in this university?
8. How do these expectations influence your daily academic life?
9. How would you describe your interactions with lecturers and fellow students in academic settings?
10. What aspects of the academic environment do you find most supportive?
11. What aspects of the academic environment do you find most challenging?
12. How does the academic culture affect your motivation and performance as a student?

Possible Probes:

- Academic workload
- Competition among students
- Continuous assessment and examinations
- Lecturer-student relationships
- Academic support systems

OBJECTIVE 2:

To examine the ways in which students described their patterns and purposes of internet use within academic and non-academic contexts.

13. How frequently do you use the internet?
14. What are the main reasons you use the internet?
15. How do you use the internet for academic purposes?
16. How do you use the internet for non-academic purposes?
17. Which online platforms or applications do you use most often?
18. How important is internet access in your daily life as a student?
19. How has your internet use changed since gaining admission into the university?

Possible Probes:

- Research and assignments
- Online learning resources
- Social media
- Entertainment
- Communication with peers and lecturers

OBJECTIVE 3:

To investigate students' perceptions of how internet use influenced their psychological well-being, including emotional, social, and academic functioning.

20. In what ways has internet use affected your emotional well-being?
21. Can you describe any positive experiences you have had through internet use?
22. Can you describe any negative experiences associated with internet use?
23. How does internet use affect your stress levels?
24. How does internet use affect your social relationships?
25. How does internet use affect your academic concentration and productivity?
26. Have there been occasions when internet use improved or worsened your mood? Please explain.

Possible Probes:

- Anxiety and stress
- Relaxation and emotional support
- Social connectedness
- Sleep quality
- Academic distraction
- Information overload

OBJECTIVE 4:

To explore how academic culture shaped students' engagement with internet use in their academic activities and daily lives.

27. How do academic requirements influence the amount of time you spend online?
28. In what ways do assignments, tests, and examinations affect your internet use?
29. How important is the internet in helping you meet academic expectations?
30. Do you feel that the university environment encourages students to remain constantly connected online? Why?
31. How has academic pressure influenced your use of digital technologies?

32. If academic demands were different, do you think your internet use would change? Please explain.

Possible Probes:

- Academic research
- Online collaboration
- Access to learning materials
- Academic communication
- Digital learning practices

OBJECTIVE 5:

To understand the coping strategies students adopted in managing academic demands and digital engagement in relation to their psychological well-being.

- 33. What strategies do you use to cope with academic pressures?
- 34. How do you manage your internet use when you need to focus on academic tasks?
- 35. What methods do you use to balance academic work and online activities?
- 36. How do you maintain your psychological well-being during stressful academic periods?
- 37. Have you developed any personal rules or routines regarding internet use? Please explain.
- 38. What support systems help you cope with academic and digital demands?

Possible Probes:

- Time management
- Limiting social media use
- Seeking social support
- Religious or spiritual coping
- Recreational activities
- Self-regulation strategies

CLOSING QUESTIONS

- 39. Looking back on your experiences, what do you think is the relationship between academic culture, internet use, and students' psychological well-being?
- 40. What recommendations would you make to the university to better support students in these areas?
- 41. Is there anything else you would like to share that we have not discussed?

Thank you for your participation.