

**THE EFFECT OF SOCIAL MEDIA USAGE ON READING AND WRITING
HABITS OF STUDENTS**

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DECLARATION

We have read the University College's regulations in respect to plagiarism and are certified that this report is entirely our own work and does not contain unacknowledged work from any other source; we also declare that we have been under supervision for this report herein submitted.

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SUPERVISOR'S DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the preparation and presentation of the dissertation were supervised in

Accordance with the guidelines on supervision laid down by Christian Service University College.

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DEDICATION

We dedicate this project work to the Almighty God for seeing us through these four years of our university education. This work is also dedicated to our families for their constant love and immense support and to all our hardworking lecturers who provided the needed guidance, support and encouragement in helping us to unearth our potentials.

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ABSTRACT

This is a study on the effect of social media usage on SHS students reading and writing habits. The analysis of the study is based on responses from students in Kumasi Secondary Technical School. In all (KSTS), responses were obtained from 50 respondents.

The study focused on how frequently students registered and logged on to social media platforms, how they communicated and the language used in communicating there. The study again looked at how the virtual mode of communication between students on social media affected their real time mode of communication in the formal setting.

By this we wanted to know whether students who are constantly engaged on social media platforms engage in any meaningful learning with each other on social media platforms and how that process affects how they relate to their formal reading and writing patterns. It was made known in the study that the reading and writing patterns and habits of students are not significantly affected by their constant interactions on social media, though the effects thereof are real.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the Study

A student is anybody under tutelage or someone getting an education of a sort. There are two forms of education. There is the formal education which is planned with a particular end in view and limited to a specific period with a well-defined and systematic curriculum. It is given by specifically qualified teachers and includes activities outside the classroom (Gauri Dushi, Preserve Article, 2012). It observes strict discipline. Then there is the informal kind of education which is a direct opposite of the formal education. What happens is that learning is incidental and spontaneous, not preplanned, nor imparted by any specialized agency with any prescribe time-table or curriculum (Gauri Dushi, Preserved articles, 2012). However, situations in real life will determine whether a learner has grasped the import of their informal learning.

In formal education, for a student to be noted to be educated or in the process of getting an education he or she has to know how to read and write. The ability to read and write is a measuring gauge to being educated. Literacy is a person's ability to read and write (American Speech-Language-Hearing Association, 2012). The key to literacy is reading, a skill that begins with the ability to understand spoken words and decode written words and culminates in a deep understanding of text.

In southern Mesopotamia about 3500-3000 BEC, literacy was largely a functional matter, propelled by the need to manage new qualities of information and a new type of government created by trade and a large scale production (Chrisomalis,2009). In recent times literacy has gone far beyond the formal need to keep records to the

ability to process, utilize and manage information for the betterment of oneself and the society at large.

English language proficiency is now a requirement in all areas of work, study, entertainment and communication. Reading and writing is used almost extensively in inter-state and international communication thus it is important to have a working literacy lifestyle (Morrisett, 1996).

Traditionally, there are materials that make the attempt at reading and writing very possible and accessible. These materials have been graded to meet the need of students at various levels on the rungs of the academic ladder (Wormeli, 2008). But technology advancements have made it possible to attain literacy aside the traditional means; books. These days students in developed and developing countries are privy to main electricity and subsequently technology. The Internet and Web 2.0 has made it possible to study beyond the classroom and books. They have various alternative approaches to attaining literacy.

1.1.1The Student and Social Media

It is estimated that adolescents the world over spend a considerable amount of their time online, where they gain access to most of the information they require. According to data from Global Web Index (2009), the average user logs 1.72 hours per day on social media platforms which represents about 28% of all online activities. Social media simply put, means websites that allows average users to create content and interact with each other around the world Social means people interacting with each other. Media (plural for medium) means the type of materials used to create

artwork and communicate information or ideas. Media can include video, photography, graphic design, writing, oil paints amongst others (Ephraim 2010).

Kaplan and Heinlein (2010 P61) defined social media as a “group of internet– based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundation of web 2.0, and that allow the creation and exchange of user generated content”. Social networking sites allow users to share activities, events, ideas and interests within their individual networks. Students use social networking for various reasons. Some use it to exchange ideas, feelings, personal information, pictures and videos (Loving & Ochoa, 2010). It is used for the purpose of connecting with friends and family (regardless of location), keeping up with the latest events and happenings and for academic purposes.

Social networking sites include: Twitter, Yahoo Messenger, Facebook, Messenger, Blackberry Messenger (BBM), Whatsapp messenger, messenger, Skype, Google talk, Google Messenger, iPhone and Androids. These networking sites are used by most people to interact with old and new friends, physical or internet friends (Asemah & Edegoh, 2012).

Reading habit is an important aspect for children to improve their language skills (Reyene 1998, 11). Bignold asserted that the habit of reading can develop children’s reading skills. Thus the habit of reading is essential for widening the experiences and knowledge of young people whether it is for pleasure or for the purpose of learning. (Green, 2002).

Today most youth and students possess Facebook accounts. The reason most of them perform badly in school might not be far- fetched. While many minds might be quick to blame the poor quality of teachers, they might have to think even harder, if they

have not heard of the Facebook frenzy (Oche&Aminu .2010). Olubiyi (2012) noted that these days' students are so engrossed in the social media that they are almost 24 hours online. Even in classrooms and lecture theatres, it has been observed that some students are always busy 'pinging' or Facebooking, while lectures are on. Times that ought to be channeled towards learning, academic research and innovating have been crushed by the passion for meeting new friends online, and most times busy discussing trivial issues. Hence most students' academics suffer setbacks as a result of distraction from the social media. Obi, Bulus, Adamu&Sala'at (2012). It was observed that the use of these sites also affects students' use of English and grammar. The students use short forms of writing words in their chat rooms; they forget and use the same in the classrooms.

1.2 Problem Statement

Reading and writing has become very important in the world today and traditional means of acquiring literacy is in competition with social media. Social media in contemporary times has become very important to bringing on-the-go information as and when you need it, at the doorstep of anyone who logs on to it. The question however is that since the student spends much of their time on social media, a problem arises when users are not able to differentiate between formal language and informal language, because often students are inclined to use improper formats and sentences that hinder Standard English writing and speaking.

1.3 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study is to determine the effect of social media usage on students' reading and writing habits.

1.4 Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the study are to find out;

1. What social media sites students use.
2. Why they use these sites.
3. How the sites affect their reading and writing habits.

1.5 Research Questions

The research questions are the following;

1. What social sites do students use?
2. Why do they use the sites?
3. How do social media affect the reading and writing habit of students?

1.6Significance of the Study

This study is significant to teachers, parents and students. This study will help the teachers of the school to know the influence that social media has on their students, so as to assist them to enlighten and create awareness to the students on the possible influence it has on them. The study is of significance to parents in the sense that they will know the possible effects social media usage has on their children, so as to serve as watch-dog to their children on the usage of social networking sites. Findings from the study will also contribute better insights to academia and ongoing research in the area.

1.7 Scope of Study

This study will cover the online presence of some selected students and its impact on their reading and writing habits. The study is limited to selected SHS students of Kumasi Secondary Technical School, (KSTS).

1.8 Organization of the Study

The research is structured into five chapters. Chapter one captures the General introduction to the study; chapter two reviews existing literature on the topic and theories; chapter three explains the methodology used for the study. Chapter four presents' findings of the study, analysis and discussion, and chapter five present the summary of findings, recommendations and conclusion of the study.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Theoretical Framework and Review of Related Literature

This chapter explores the theoretical framework and existing literature on the topic

2.2 Theoretical Framework

Uses and Gratifications is the appropriate theoretical frameworks for this study. Propounded by Elihu Katz, this theory posits that audiences choose the media they want depending on the satisfaction they will get from it. Uses and gratification is an approach to understanding why and how audiences seek out specific media to provide satisfaction to certain needs. It is an audience centered approach to understanding mass communication and diverges from the effect theories that question what do media do to people and focuses on what do people do with media?

It therefore says that audience are not passive participators in the choice of media as posited in the Hypodermic needle theory, but are active participants who choose media to suit their preference.

Beginning in the 1940s, researchers began seeing patterns under the perspective of the uses and gratifications theory in radio listeners. Early research was concerned with topics such as children's use of comics and the absence of newspapers during a newspaper strike. An interest in more psychological interpretations emerged during this period. In 1948, Lasswell introduced a four-functional interpretation of the media on a macrosociological level. He posited that media served the functions of surveillance, correlation, entertainment and cultural transmission for both society and individuals. Jay Blumler presented a number of interesting points, as to why Uses and

Gratification cannot measure an active audience. He stated, “The issue to be considered here is whether what has been thought about Uses and Gratifications Theory has been an article of faith and if it could now be converted into an empirical question such as: How to measure an active audience?” (Blumler, 1979). He then offered suggestions about the activities that audiences were engaged with in the forms of media. He classified them as:

- Utility: this means audience use the media to accomplish a specific task.
- Intentionality: This is when audiences’ prior motive determines the choice of a particular media.
- Selectivity: This means that the use of a particular media by audiences reflect their existing interest.
- Imperviousness to influence: This is when audience make their own meaning out of the content from the media. Audience choice of a media is dependent on the gratification of the media content perceived by the audience and therefore will choose a media on the basis of its satisfaction derived from it by the audience. (Katz, 1959).

The assumption of this theory as stated by Katz, Blumler and Gurevitch (1974) an individual is likely to choose a particular media if the individual perceives it to greatly fulfill his or her needs. Therefore if a person perceives that newspaper will provide his or her information needs, he or she is likely to choose newspaper over radio. McQuail (1987), offers the following common reasons for media use:

1. Information

- People find out about events and conditions in immediate environments, society and the world.

- People use the media to seek advice on issues or opinions and decision making.
- Audience may also use the media satisfy their curiosity and general interest on matters.
- People can self-educate themselves through the media.
- Gaining a sense of security through knowledge.

2. Personal Identity

- Audiences find reinforcement for their personal values.
- People use the media to find and inculcate into their lives, models of behavior.

3. Integration and Social Interaction

- The media helps people to gain insight into the circumstances of others thereby making audience have empathy for others.
- People gain a sense of belonging by identifying with others.
- Audience use the media in order to find a basis for conversation and social integration.

For instance, newspapers that give readers “something to talk about” with colleagues, friends and family create a positive experience and encourage a readership habit. If they could intensify that experience, the research suggests, they could enhance readership. (Readership Institute, 2003)

- The media can also become a substitute for real-life companionship.
- The media helps people to connect with family, friends and the society.

4. Entertainment

- The media serves as an escape route, diversion from life problems for people.
- The audience use the media for relaxation through the listening to music or watching of a movie. Blumber and Gurevitch (1995) also argue that audience media behavior is dependent on the audience's media needs. West and Turner (2004) put the theory of uses and gratification into these points.
- The audience is active and its media use is goal oriented. This point disagrees with the magic bullet theory that the media is all powerful. West and Turner believe that the audience choose the media they want to use not the other way round. By goal oriented, the audience choose a media if they perceive the media to provide for them or satisfy the needs they want.
- People have various uses (needs) they seek to satisfy through media. West and Turner found that people have needs which are different from others. These needs can be satisfied through the use of media. It goes to states that the media has the potential to satisfy the needs of the people that use them
- Audience members take initiative to link need gratification to a specific media.
- The media compete with other sources for need gratification. The media plurality has created audience fragmentation and therefore the content of media is directed towards a specific target audience.

The Uses and Gratification Theory has been criticized as being “vulgar gratificationism”. Morley (1992) acknowledges that individual differences in interpretation do exist, but he stresses the importance of sub-structural socio-economic differences in shaping the ways in which people interpret their experiences with media use. People seek out media to satisfy a personal need, especially to

entertain themselves (Lull, 2002). Lull suggested that audiences don't accept always the content of media and moreover not all media are meant to provide gratification or to a need for entertainment in people. According to Lull audiences don't always benefit from the use of media and more important they don't take on in media consumption willingly and independently.

Media Dependency Theory is another theory that supports this study. It focuses on audiences' goals for media consumption as the source of their dependency. While Uses and Gratification Theory focuses on audiences needs as drivers for media consumption, Media Dependency Theory states that as a person becomes increasingly dependent on media to satisfy their needs, that media will become more important in a person's life and thereby have increased influence on the person.

This theory states that the more an individual is on the media for having his or her needs fulfilled, the more important the media will be to that person (Ball-Rokeach and DeFleur, 1976). For example if a person gets his or hers satisfied by reading newspaper, he or she will then depend more on newspaper for such gratification. This will make newspaper become more important to the individual.

Dependency theory proposes an integral relationship among audiences, media and the larger social system. (DeFleur and Ball-Rokeach, 1989). This theory predicts that you depend on media information to meet certain needs and achieve certain goals just like Uses and Gratification but you do not depend on all media equally. Two factors influence the degree of media dependency. First, a person will become more dependent on media that meet a number of his or her needs than on media that can satisfy just a few of his or her needs. The second factor is social stability. When social change and conflict are high, established institutions, beliefs and practices are challenged, forcing one to do a reevaluation and make new choices. At such times, the

individual's reliance on media increases and on more stable times, media dependency reduces. (Blumler, 1979).

2.3The Use of Social Media by Adolescents

Three features define the characteristics of social media profile, friends, and travelling friends list. According to Livingstone (2008), social media coverage includes email services, messaging, website creation, diaries, photo album and music and video downloading. YouTube shares video but users can still add friends or subscribe to a members collection of videos. Some you tubers share only their videos but not personal details as exits on Facebook and Twitter.

There are opportunities to create profiles which include personal information (names, locations, affiliations, occupation and personal interest), indeed signaling theory by Donath (2007) contends that much of human interactions consist of signals that communicates the situations and characteristics of individuals.

Thus the way users present themselves on social media develops identity and a kind of trust for others. So in an effort to seem popular on social media people may add any and all kinds of friends request though that could damage credibility.

Walter, Heidi, Kim, Westerman and Tong (2008) speaking on the warranting theory, posit that people judge others based on what other people think or say about an individual, so that a positive or negative comment left on a person's face book wall for instance will determine to a large extent, whether it is seen as attractive. Thus on social media we are judged by the company we keep.

According to Donath and Boyd (2008, pg72) in the physical world, people display their connection in many ways. They have parties in which they introduce friends who

they think will like or impress each other. They drop the name of high status acquaintances casually in their conversations. They decorate their refrigerators with photos. Simply appearing in public with ones acquaintances is a display of connection.

Now the process of developing identity is crucial to an adolescent who is in a phase of rapid growth and development. Adolescent users of social media decide to place what they deem fit on their profile (Liu, 2007; Mango, Graham, and Khan, 2008) and what kind of friends to display for others to see (Boyd, 2006).

According to Ito et al, (2009)“in contemporary times, adolescents use technology to communicate with each other, teens gather in social networked public space to negotiate identity, gossip, support one another, jockey for status, collaborate, share information, flirt, joke and goof off”.

A national survey in 2009 found that 73% of online teenagers use a social media site which is an increase from 53% three years earlier (Lenhart, Purcell, Smith and Zickhur, 2010). While many scholars suggest that students learn in new ways via social media and that educators must embrace it, parents are fearful about safety and the effects on their wards social development. (Ito et al, 2009; Jenkins, 2006).

A number of studies also show that the media tools neither improve nor negatively impact learning when compared to the same teaching strategy in the classroom (Bernard et al... 2004; Clark.1983, 1991). Scholars however assert that social media makes available new skills set and ways of participating in the world. Jenkins (2006) says that if students are not allowed to use new technology and contribute to online communities, they would not be able to develop the necessary skills and technical literacy vital for the future. However, most teachers also assume that student’s online

social activities are devoid of substantive intellectual activities and distract students from academic activity.

Gee (2004) on the other hand states that affinity spaces (An **affinity space** is a place – virtual or physical – where informal learning takes place, its locations where groups of people are drawn together because of a shared, strong interest or engagement in a common activity) like Facebook, allow people to develop communicative skills in informal learning and creative, expressive forms of behavior.

2.4 Language Used On Social Media Platforms

There is a myriad of unfamiliar phrases or a series of recognizable words that have been purposed and defined among social media users (Green light, 2010).

There are some social media terminologies (lingo) that are peculiar to social media users that are not grammatically or syntactically recognized but are very much appreciated online. These lingos make writing easier and shorter, and one will have to be very familiar with the terms to understand them (Bonobo A. Computer-mediated Communication for Linguistics and Literature (2009)

The potential for this lingo to be translated into real life communication especially when writing language is very high. There have been instances where students have been reported to have written some of these lingos in formal examinations forgetting they are not accepted in real life academia. Apart from students writing them, they are also spotted using some in spoken language too. Also if a new word springs up on social media and begins to trend, students immediately imbibe them into their speech and writing in order to appear in vogue.

A research by Crystal D. (2011) on the reflections of student's language usage on social networking sites showed that students in Malaysia utilize more than half of their week engaging in social network sites leading to the creation of new phrases and words. The shortcut language used and created on instant messaging seems to be drastically deteriorating students' vocabulary.

According to the study many students learn the language through observation and imitation in both speaking and writing. For instance in Malaysia one linguistic feature emerging from this shortcut language is "Leet" (an alternative alphabet for many languages that is used primarily for the internet), deriving from the word "Elite". "Leet" speech serves as an alternative for the English Language usually used online or in chat-room (Crystal D. (2011))

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

The main objective of the study is to assess the social media and its impact on students reading and writing habits. The chapter looks at the research design, research method, population, sample size selected, sampling technique adopted, data collection sources employed and data analysis techniques used.

3.2 Research Method

A research method offers a guideline of procedures from collecting and analyzing the data necessary to help identify a problem or to help solve the problem at hand- Tull and Hawkins (1984). This study employs the qualitative method since it tries to explain the effect social media has on the reading and writing habits of students. This information is through face-to-face interviews with the students.

3.3 Research Design

This is a general map of how the research questions will be answered Saunders (2009) propose three types of research design; exploratory, explanatory and descriptive. The researchers used descriptive study to have an in-depth knowledge, and relationship between the student's online presence and the impact it has on his/her reading and writing habits. The study adopted the focus group approach to collect information which will be analyzed qualitatively.

3.4 Population of Study

The assessable population of this study comprised adolescent students with active online presence. The target populations for this study are some randomly selected students from K.S.T.S Kumasi.

3.5 Sample Size

A sample represents the number of respondents in the population that will serve as a representative of the entire group (Saunders et al. 2009). For the purpose of this study, samples of 50 were selected. The sample size selected were 50 respondents made up of selected students from K.S.T.S Kumasi. In this case the selected students were asked to answer the focus group interview guides.

3.6 Sampling Technique

The study adopted the non-probabilistic purposive sampling technique to select the respondents. Purposive sampling deals with selecting a sample on the basis of a researcher's own knowledge of the population, its elements, and the nature of the research objectives (Babbie, 1990). With purposive sampling, the population is non-randomly selected based on particular characteristics (Frey, *et al.* 2000).

3.7 Focus Group

A **focus group** is a gathering of deliberately selected people who participate in a planned discussion that is intended to elicit consumer perceptions about a particular topic or area of interest in an environment that is non-threatening and receptive.

3.8 Method of Data Collection

Data for this study was collected through in-depth interviews with randomly selected students. An interview guide was prepared to enable the researcher ask specific questions that address the objectives of the study. Discussions were recorded and written down as well.

3.9 Data Analysis

The data collected was analyzed through transcribing. The discussions were recorded by notes taking and with the help of a recorder. The recorded data was subsequently transcribed for analysis. The data collected was then grouped according to the questions asked. Issues of similarities and dissimilarities in the questions and answers were compared and emerging themes searched for. The emerging themes were then discussed in relation to the research objectives.

3.10 Ethical Consideration

Consent of the respondents was sought before collecting data for this study. Personal details of the respondents were included in the discussion to assure anonymity. They were assured of confidentiality that this study would be used strictly for academic purposes.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA ANALYSIS, FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

4.1 Introduction

The chapter discusses the demographics of the respondents for this study and provides responses from the respondents on specific questions that were asked during the focus group interviews. It also focuses on presenting and interpreting findings of the data collected from the selected students. The findings is grouped under the objectives. The data for this study is collected through focus group interviews.

4.2 Demographics of Respondents

The description below indicates the demographics of the interviewees who were sampled from Kumasi secondary technical school (K.S.T.S.) The study interviewed 50 students from Kumasi Secondary Technical School. Below is information on the gender, age range and how long they have been active registered members on social media sites.

Out of the fifty students interviewed, twenty four were males and twenty six were females. This shows that the study considered all gender and gave them a fair representation. Secondly, the age range was between 16 to 18 years. Thirdly most of them have been registered on social media sites for more than six years.

4.3 What is Social Media and how do Students Utilize Social Media Sites Particularly Face book and Whatsapp?

The study evaluated what social media was and how students utilized used it. It was revealed by whom that social media was a virtual community that provided platforms that allowed people to interact and communicate on friendly levels or for business. You first had to provide your personal details to secure an identity on the virtual front by which others can identify you easily. Arespondent in SHS 1 gave these as what social media was and how he utilized them.

“Social media is a platform that engages people in the interactions, sharing of ideas and other educative purposes. An example of social media is Whatsapp. Personally, I like Whatsapp from the lot of social media platforms because it is cheaper, more interactive and it helps to pass information around faster than the rest”.

A. We asked if socialization and interaction were the only benefit that students derived from social media. Another student in SHS 2 had this to say:

“Sometimes we create groups on Whatsapp where we share ideas on topics learnt in school, also on Facebook we learn new jargons that are in vogue and especially when there is a new social or political trend we learn things from other people’s comments and stuff like that”.

B. What kind of activities do you engage in on those sites?

“We use these sites to get in touch with friends. We also use it for academic purposesfor example during the course of our exams we use these sites to solve past questions.”

4.4What are your Usual Activities on Face book and Whatsapp?

According to the answer given to us by an SHS 3 student,

“On Faceoook we interact with our family and friends who are far away from us. We also go to Facebook to get hot details about celebrities and what is happening around us and also on whatsapp we discuss what has been trending”.

4.5 What are some of the Reasons why you use those Sites?

“According to some SHS students Whatsapp and Facebook are the sites that we are more convenient with. Apart from the easy access it also enables us to express ourselves freely by ways of using slang and other expressions of which we ourselves understand. And also it is easy and affordable and thus it enables us student to patronize it freely without hesitation”.

B. What are your usual activities on Facebook and Whatsapp?

“We engage ourselves in reseach works and other assignments given to us at school and we also interact with friends”.

C. Do you have groups or group chats that help facilitate and harness classroom learning?

“We have group forums and other chat platforms of which we freely express ourselves in our own slant language and artistic styles. Basically,by mode of interaction such as exhanging pleasantries and felicitations,we also embark on research studies and other class assignments”.

4.6 How Do Social Media Affect Your Reading And Writing Habits?

It is not in doubt that social media is a world of its own and as such has its unique lingo (languages used in social media) that identifies with its heterogeneous patrons. It is only in order that such unique language that permeates social media is consciously or unconsciously transferred to real life situations outside the social media platforms.

“I sometimes unconsciously write those short hands that are commonly used online in my essays in class only to be corrected by my teacher. That aside some people also use some of them in their spoken language, it’s kind of fun but it’s frustrating too.” – A student in SHS Isaid.

When it comes to reading, because the mode of communicating on social media is through texts, one has to have reading ability or be forced to learn it in order to

communicate. And so social media aids in helping students polish their reading skills.

One student buttressed this point by saying;

“You will have to read what is written on Facebook or WhatsApp or Instagram in order to communicate. If you can’t read then you cannot communicate there. So yes, social media helps you to read, it makes you improve upon your reading and writing....”

A What are your usual activities on Facebook and Whatsapp?

“Chating our friends and families browsing for new ideas and infotament”

4.7Discussions of Findings

4.7.1 What is social media and how do students utilize it?

The study evaluated what social media was and how students utilized and manipulated it. It was revealed that social media was a virtual community that provided platforms that allow people to interact and communicate on friendly levels or for business. There is the opportunity to create profiles which include personal information (names, location, affiliations, occupations and personal interests) by which others can identify you easily. Indeed signaling theory by Donath (2007) contends that much of human interactions consists of signals that communicate the situation and characteristics of an individual. According to Livingstone (2008, P394), social media converge email services, messaging, website creation, diaries, photo albums and music or video uploading or downloading. Three features define the characteristics of social media – profiles, friend, and traversing friends list.

4.7.2 How does Social Media create space for Academic Performance?

There is an important argument as to whether social media creates space for academic performance, so that people are left wondering if social media helps students to learn anything concretely related to classroom structured learning apart from the trifling fanfare and petty interactions characteristic of social media. Some of the interviewees clearly stated that some social media platforms really put some efforts into academic performance, but there are few challenges that retard its effectiveness.

Countless studies show that the media tool neither improves nor negatively impacts on learning when compared to the same teaching strategy in the classroom (Bernard et al 2004; Clark. (1983, 1991).

Scholars however assert that social media makes available new skills set of ways of participating in the world. Jenkins, (2006) says that if students are not allowed to use new technology and contribute to online communities they would not be able to develop the necessary skills and technical literacy vital for the future. However, most teachers also assume that students' online social activities are devoid of substantive intellectual activities and distract them from academic activity.

4.7.3 To what extent does Social Media Impact the Reading and Writing Habits of Students?

There is a myriad of unfamiliar phrases or a series of recognizable words that have been repurposed and redefined among social media users (Whitepapers by Green light, 2010). There are some terminologies that are peculiar to social media users that are not grammatically or syntactically recognized but are very much appreciated online. These lingos make writing easier and shorter, and you would have to be very familiar with them to understand them. The potential for this lingo to be translated

into real life communication especially written language is very high. There have been instances where students have been reported to have written some of these lingos in formal examinations forgetting that they are not accepted in real life academia. Apart from students writing them, they are also spotted using some in spoken language too. Also if a new word springs up on social media and begins to trend, students immediately imbibe them into their speech and writing in order to appear in vogue. A problem arises when users are not able to differentiate formal language from informal language, because more often than not students are inclined to use improper formats and sentences that hinder Standard English writing and speaking.

Research on the reflections of students' language usage on social networking sites showed that students in KSTS utilize more than half of their week engaging in social network sites leading to the creation of new phrases and words. The shortcut language used and created on instant messaging, on the offset; seem to be drastically deteriorating students' vocabulary. According to the study many students learn the language through observation and imitation in both speaking and writing.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1Introduction

This study observed the impact of media on teenagers. The literature review was concentrated on the media's impact on the teenagers, socially and intellectually. It was found that, based on interviews and observations, social media does impact teenagers basically in the area of socialization and on their academic lives. Studies in the area were reduced to the view points of guardians, educators, and students themselves. The impact of social media on students reading and writing habits were found to be both Positive and Negative.

5.2Summary of Research

Research was undertaken on the responses of K.S.T.S students in Kumasi. The intention was to find out the process of gaining a social media presence, how it is utilized, if it had any impact on academic performance and how it affected their reading and writing habits. The case study showed that students actually do learn some important communication skills on social media though it may not have very critical impact on their literacy. What happens is that they are forced to learn to read and write, howbeit, to aid in comprehension for communication.

On first objective study indicate that students use face book, Whatsapp, snap chat, twitter, instagram, imo and skype. But the commonly used social media sites students use are whatsapp and facebook.

The second objective is addressed and we found out through the research we conducted that students use social media sites for interaction, socialization and for academic work.

Regarding the third objective our research shows that social media affect students reading and writing habits both positively and negatively. It affects their reading and writing habit positively because you need to be a literate to be able to access these sites, and negatively because some of the languages (lingos) used on social media are introduced to academic work.

5.3 Conclusion

The impact of social media on students is very important because students spend most of their time online, eating very much into the times they would have otherwise given to their actual academic life and work. In the light of this, guardians and especially educators should get involved if the whole venture is to have a positive effect on the reading and writing habits of their wards and students. This study concludes that firstly, guardians could make time to search out topical social media platforms for their wards and whip up their interest in visiting and engaging on those sites.

Secondly, educators can also make their presence on social media be felt by introducing interactive sessions online which will engage students like virtual classrooms where they can discuss topics that are of interest and or that students have difficulty with. These sessions must be as interesting and interactive as possible to get them more in tune to academic work online. The difficulty with sustaining this is that social media as the name implies generally promotes

socialization and since students at that age rely mostly on the approval of their peers to build their self-esteem.

5.4 Recommendations for Further Research

Further studies into this area is very probable because the virtual world is dynamic. What worked and trended some years back on social media is changing per the day. So there may come a time when academia is given serious prominence on social media to cut down on actual classroom time. But for now, studies into the real importance of social media on the social, intellectual, and psychological development of students and how it immediately affects them is of great importance to their perception of life and the world as a whole.

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APPENDIX

INTERVIEW GUIDE

Interview Questions for Some Selected Students

This interview guide deals with general assessment of the interviewees. It also deals with items that helped in eliciting responses that are aimed at addressing the objectives of the study.

SECTION A

1. Can you tell us a little about yourself?
2. How long have you been a registered member of social media sites (Facebook and Whatsapp)?
3. How often are you online in the course of one week?

PART B How do you utilize social media sites particularly Facebook and Whatsapp?

4. What are your usual activities on Facebook and Whatsapp?

PART C Does social media platforms (Facebook and Whatsapp) create space for critical literacy?

1. How does social media platforms help your formal learning and education process?
2. Do you have groups or group chats that help facilitate and harness classroom learning?

PART D How does social media affect your reading and writing habits?

3. How does shortcut language used on social media affect your reading and writing?