



Nurturing reading cultures and literacies in post-pandemic ecosystems

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Exploring the effects of social media on the reading culture of students at the University of Limpopo

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Organisation of the Presentation

- Introduction and background of the study
- Problem statement
- Aim of the study
- Literature review
- Research Methodology
- Results and discussion of the findings
- Conclusion and Recommendations

Introduction and background of the study

- The prevalent use of social media such as Facebook, WhatsApp, Twitter, YouTube, and Instagram has grabbed the attention of people all over the world. - students at universities are not exempted.
- However, if not used for the right purpose, social media may impact on the reading culture of the people.
- Reading culture is the acts of consciously and consistently making reading a daily part of one's life activity with the sole aim of being well grounded in general knowledge.
- Numerous activities of educational development require the ability to read and write.
- Reading in general aids in the development of the mind and the personality of any individual.
- It also enhances an individual's intellectual capabilities.

Introduction and background of the study

- However, with the growing influence and liking of social media, the reading culture of many young people in South Africa has declined.
- The purpose of this study was to explore the effects of social media on the reading culture of students at the University of Limpopo.
- Social media is the latest technological explosion in the information world
- Though social media use cuts across all age groups, studies have however shown that it is predominant among young persons – including university students

Introduction and background of the study

- Social media has arguably changed the way in which students learn and educators teach in the 21st century.
- Social media is not necessarily useful unless it can be used effectively.
- Tertiary students use social media for various reasons. Some use it to exchange ideas, feelings, personal information, pictures and video.
- The use of social media by students may have negative implications for the reading culture of students.

Problem statement

- Reading has been a great source of information and knowledge at all the times and in all ages.
- The use of social media is extensively increasing worldwide, and the same phenomenon exist in South Africa. However, if these social media are not used for the right purpose may affect the reading culture of the people in the country.
- It would seem that students at universities spend too much of their time on social media and that has affected their reading culture.
- The concept of reading is one of the essential building blocks of learning across the globe. It is a process that requires the use of complex thought processes to interpret printed symbols as meaningful units and to comprehend them as thought units in order to understand them.

Problem statement

- This implies that reading is a process of interpreting symbols in order to derive meaning to shape the mind. Beyond shaping the mind, reading is an important element for everyday activities of being informed.
- Reading is a significant aspect of creating a literate society. It helps individuals to develop a good thinking ability that can help them make a good decisions.
- Also, when one is reading; one is thinking, predicting, questioning, evaluating and redefining a concept(s). To read is to carefully understand written words and the meaning it conveys.
- Reading helps individuals to be better informed and have a better understanding of themselves and others.

Problem statement

- Globally, there seems to be a decline in the reading culture which has become a global phenomenon. Studies such as Kamalova and Koletvinova (2016) and Watson (2019) affirm that reading culture is on the decline both in Russian and American societies.
- Reading culture, especially in Africa has been on the decline for a very long time. With the emergence of digital technologies and various modes of social interaction, reading seems to be on a decline among young people because of their interest in social media and internet-based activities.
- According to Owusu (2020), the poor reading culture of students in developing countries in Africa is due to the habit of reading. This has affected Nigeria, Zambia, **South Africa**, Uganda, Malawi and Rwanda. Ruterana (2012) reported that in Rwanda most adults hardly read books and student often read for exam purposes and stops to read after they finish writing their exams.
- Against this backdrop, this study sought to explore the effects of social media on the reading culture of students at the University of Limpopo.

Aim of the study

- The aim of this study was to explore the effects of social media on the reading culture of students at the University of Limpopo.
- The objectives of the study were to find out the most commonly used social media platform, investigate the purpose of using social media among university students and also explore the effect of social media on students' reading culture among students.

Literature Review

The concept of social media

- Social media, according to Ezeah et al. (2013) describe social media as a modern interactive communication channel through which people connect to one another, and share ideas, experiences, pictures, messages and information of common interest.
- Since the advent of social networking sites in 1994, social media has enabled extensive communication with people around the world and beyond. It is common knowledge that millions of people across the world use social media on a regular basis for various reasons making the world a global village (Daluba & Maxwell, 2013).
- In 2020, there were 3.8 billion social media users worldwide. The average person spends about 2.5 h each day on social media (Allcott et al., 2021; Kemp, 2020).
- Globally, there is a rapid increase in the number of young people who have joined popular social media sites such as Facebook, WhatsApp, Twitter, LinkedIn and Instagram. According to Onuoha and Saheed (2011), the use of social media is predominant among young people in society including tertiary students.
- Individuals visit social media sites to engage in many different types of entertainment and social activity including playing games, socializing, passing time, communicating, and posting pictures (Allen, Ryan, Gray, McInerney, & Waters, 2014).

The positive impact of social media

- Social media provides tools for people to communicate, create relationships and share information. It affects how we receive information and the dynamics of social interaction (Asur and Huberman, 2010).
- Social media enables users to share information and diverse content, including news and status updates, with a network of connections (Steinfeld et al., 2013).
- The most commonly cited benefit of social media is its ability to facilitate communication and collaboration among peers (ibid).

Social media for educational purposes

- Tertiary students use social media for various reasons. Some use it to exchange ideas, feelings, personal information, pictures and videos (Loving & Ochoa, 2010). While some use it to connect with friends and family regardless of location and sometimes for academic purposes.
- Lusk (2010), considered some positive aspects of social media. He specified that going online can afford tertiary students' academic support. Hence, social media provides easy access to virtual space, which tertiary students can explore with friends with similar academic needs. Tertiary students who may be reluctant to express their feelings in class find blogs and other interactive web tools rewarding (Brydolf 2007).

The use of social media among students

- Social media has a great role to play in our daily lives by connecting individuals. Students also use it for multiple purposes.
- Hung (2010) examined Taiwanese students in particular and found that they experience feelings of connectedness and favourability when social networks are used as an educational tool. Kaplan (2010) demonstrates through qualitative and quantitative measures that a blogging project can lead to a range of positive outcomes in the classroom.
- Rinaldo et al. (2011) explore the use of a microblogging tool, Twitter, in a business classroom and advocate its benefits for student engagement in experiential learning.
- The authors found that the tool aids in reaching educational goals with particular benefits in cases where the students interact with the professor on Twitter.

Negative impacts of social media on students

- While some studies have found positive associations with social media use, many others suggest the opposite. As social media platforms such as Facebook, YouTube and Twitter gain in popularity, they also increasingly allow students to procrastinate their reading and other projects such as writing their homework (Kalpidou et al., 2011).
- Similarly, Wang et al. (2011) researched the effects of social media on college students. Their findings suggested that social media use is negatively associated with reading and academic performance. They also noted that about two-thirds of college students were found using social media while in class or reading. This multitasking increases distraction and becomes detrimental to student reading abilities.
- In addition, Aina, Okusaga, Taiwo & Ogundipe, (2011) alluded that there is an overriding desire amongst young people to spend more time with their friends than remain reading academic materials.

The concept of reading culture

- Reading culture is regarded as the highest pursuit of enlightenment. According to Nyam (2015), reading culture is a regular activity involving the cultivation of an attitude and the possession of skills that make reading pleasurable and constant activity.
- Ailakhu and Unegbu (2017) are also of the view that reading culture is having the habit of reading in every life and not just for school purposes.
- The authors added that there is a link between reading culture and academic pursuit in that students who have the habit of reading tend to perform well in school.
- Because of the widespread use of social media among college students, there is a great deal of interest in how social media use is related to academic performance; as well as reading culture.

Factors affecting reading culture among students

- Hou et al. (2019) provided evidence that prolonged use of social media was negatively associated with students' mental health and academic performance. Moreover, Kuss and Griffith, (2011), alluded that most students engage in a variety of activities relative to social media of which some may be potentially addictive.
- In their study, Shehu and Shehu (2014) found that the majority of undergraduate students in Nigeria used social media for non-academic purposes such as chatting with friends and sharing photos. Nearly 70% of respondents to the survey agreed or strongly agreed that social media distracted them while reading or in class. Over 75% believed that social media reduced time for reading other materials. Thus, social media has contributed to the decline in reading culture.

Factors affecting reading culture among student

- Tertiary students spend more time on Facebook, Twitter and other social media through smartphones that are now in abundance. Many students cannot go for two-three hours without checking and updating their profiles on these social networks even to the detriment of reading activities. A trend that might affect their academic, social and spiritual lives negatively if not controlled.
- To rub salt in the wound, Bello (2012) noted that if the dangerous trend of social media obsession is left unchecked, it may affect an already collapsing education system, especially in countries like South Africa.

Social media and reading culture

- Kojo and Arthur (2018) conducted at Tamale Technical University, Ghana. Their study sought to explore the effects of social media on the reading culture of tertiary students. The study demonstrates that students are negatively affected by their constant access to social media platforms. Further, the findings also revealed that excessive use of social media by students has a statistically significant impact on the reading culture and to an extent their academic performance.
- Sotiloye and Bodunde (2018) carried out a study on the assessment of students' trends of reading in eight Nigerian universities. The findings revealed that most students only read to pass examinations as they hardly engaged in any reading outside school books.

Social media and reading culture

- The advent of social media has afforded many tertiary students the opportunity to spend quality time surfing the internet. However, they spend time surfing gossip and other immaterial issues.
- In most tertiary institutions, learners do not read, even the few who read, only do so as a means of passing their examinations (Paul et al. 2012). The libraries that are intended for reading have now been turned into browsing centres, points of reference and copying of lecture notes as only a few students are seen reading in the libraries most times.
- Reading is the fundamental factor that determines the foundation of prominence in people's lives irrespective of status, gender, and age. Maurice (2019) discussed the decline in literacy amid the rise of social media. She wondered whether the “shift away from time spent reading books herald[s] a decline in literacy or simply a new kind of reading.”
- Different studies have revealed that most individuals never finish reading a fiction book from cover to cover after leaving school (Brydolf 2007). Also, there are distinct investigations which reveal that many students have graduated from institutions with inadequate reading abilities, attributing it to the weak culture developed during their university days (see Singh 2011).
- In a nutshell, obsessive engagement with social media has affected many aspects of our daily life, including reading.

Research Methodology

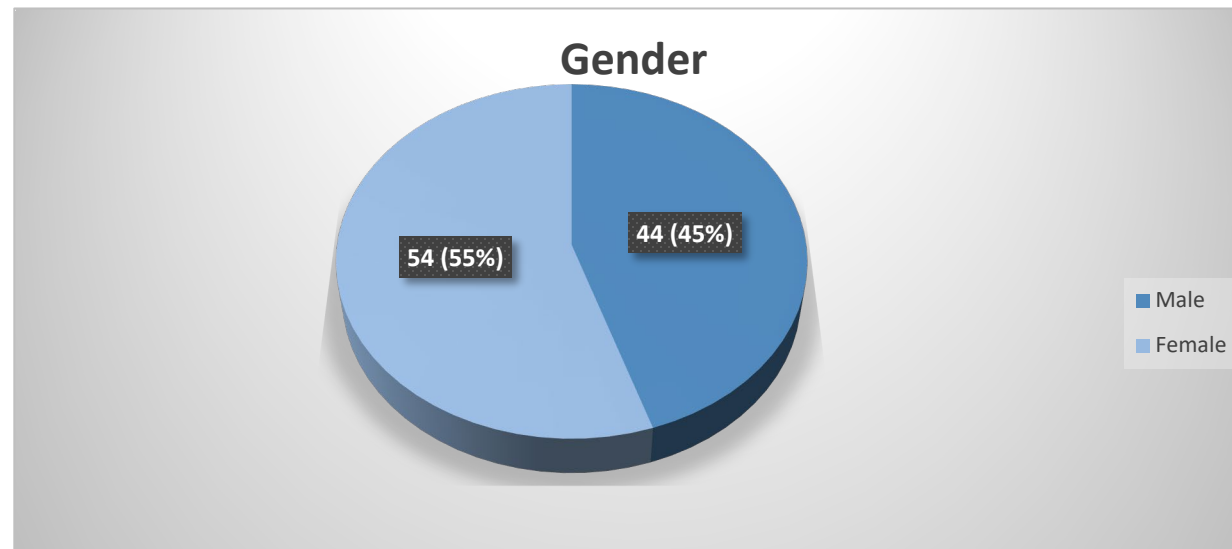
- This quantitative study used a survey in the form of a self-administered questionnaire to collect data at the UL.
- Only final-year students in the School of Education and Programme of Information Studies were selected.
- The total population of the two schools were 302.
- To improve the reliability and validity of the data collection instrument, the questionnaire was pilot tested on a similar, but smaller sample group, from the Post-Graduate Diploma in Information Studies class at the UL.
- Errors discovered were corrected and incorporated into the main data collection instrument.
- Copies of the questionnaire were administered to students at the UL at the end of lectures.

Research Methodology

- A total of 150 questionnaires were distributed and only 98 were returned and analysed.
- The aim was to cover a total of 20 per cent of the population, which is considered as good. According to Ngulube (2005), a minimum of 10 per cent of the sample, especially for a large population, is good enough to draw valid and reliable data.
- Microsoft Excel was used to capture, calculate and organise collected quantitative data, which was presented in visual overviews, such as pie charts for a holistic understanding.

Results and discussion of findings

- Out of the 150 students who were selected to participate in the study, only 98 returned the questionnaires and served as respondents in this study. A total of 44 (45%) of the respondents were males while 54 (55 %) were females.

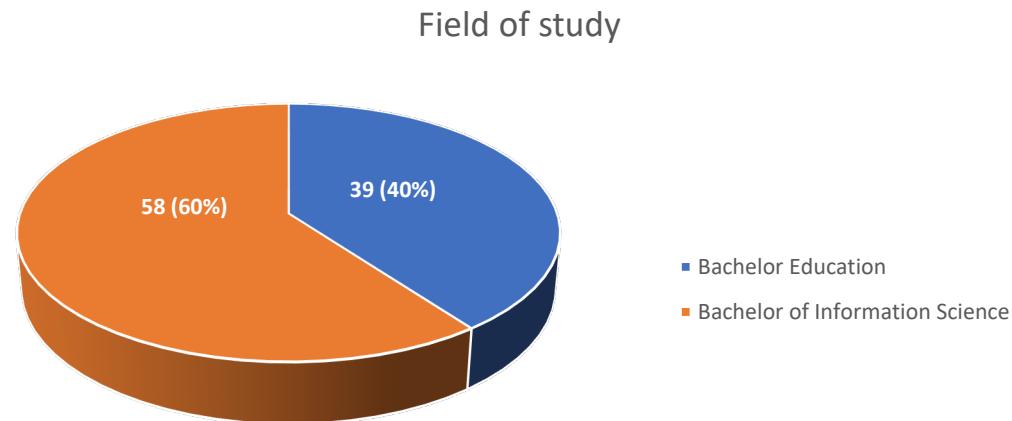


Results and discussion of findings

- Figure above shows that the majority of the respondents (41: 42%) were 26 years old and older, while 36 (37 %) were between the ages of 23 and 25, while 17 (18%) were between the ages of 20 and 22 and 3 (3%) were between the ages of 17 and 19.

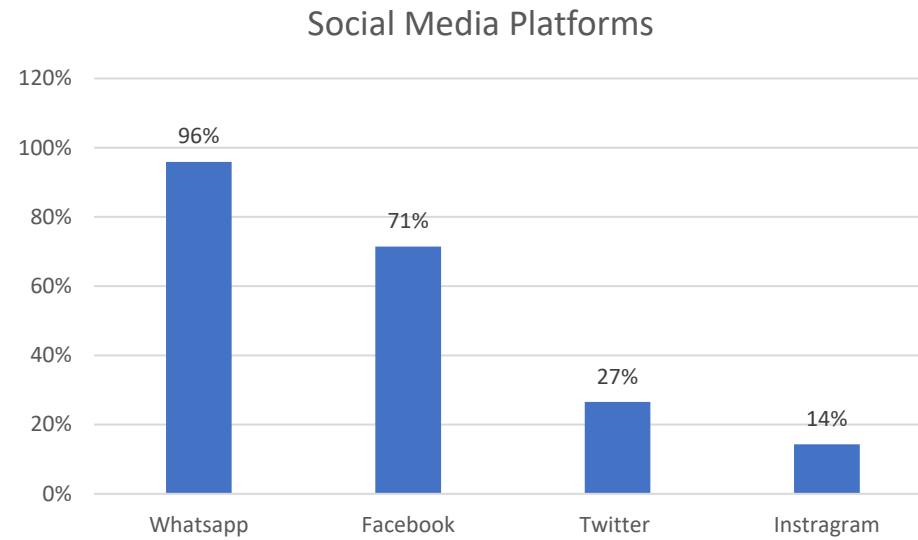
Results and discussion of findings

- Figure below shows that the majority (58: 60%) of the respondents were studying towards a Bachelor of Information Science degree, while only 39 (40 %) of the respondents were studying towards a degree in Bachelor of Education.



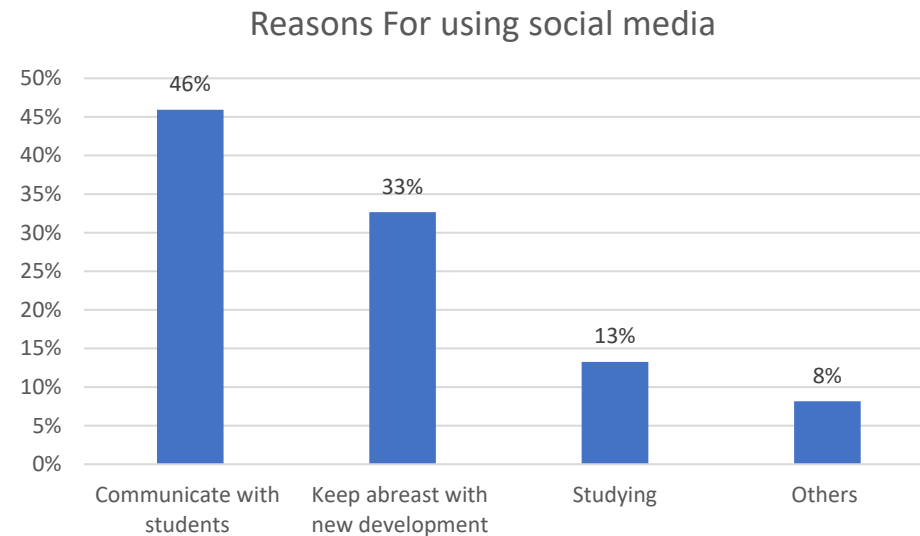
Results and discussion of findings

- The respondents were asked to indicate the most commonly used social media platform. The figure below indicate that most commonly used social media platform by students.



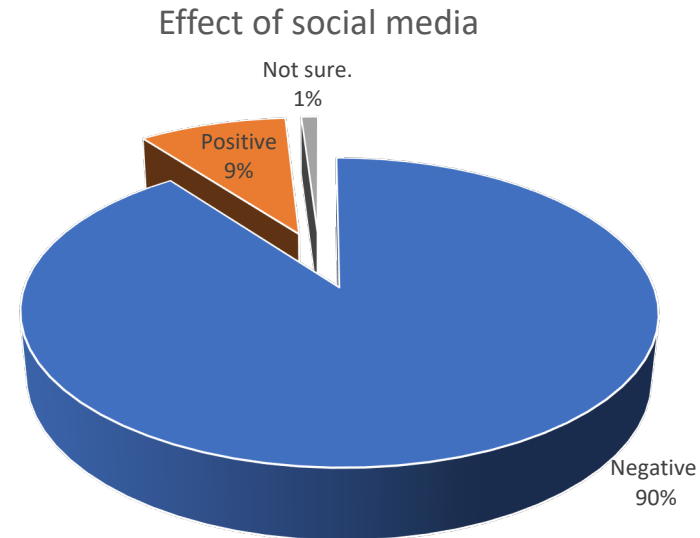
Results and discussion of findings

- The respondents were also asked to indicate the reasons of using social media. The figure below indicates the reasons of using social media by students.



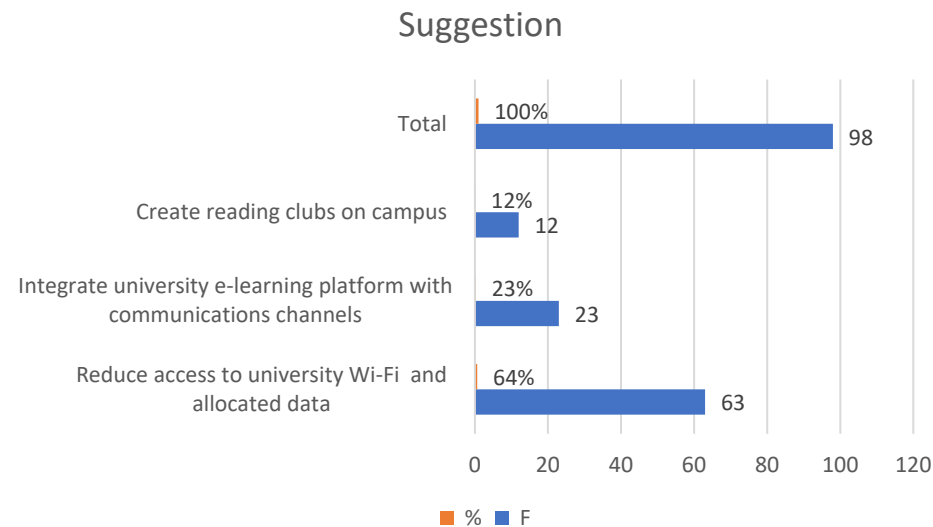
Results and discussion of findings

- The respondents were also asked to indicate the effect of social media on student's reading culture. The figure below present the findings of the study.



Results and discussion of findings

- The respondents were also asked to provide suggestions for reducing the effects of social media on reading culture. The figure below present the findings of the study.



Results and discussions of findings

- The findings of the study revealed that the most common or most used social media platform was WhatsApp, followed by Facebook, Twitter and Instagram.
- The findings further revealed that the majority of students used social media to communicate with fellow students on WhatsApp groups and keep abreast with daily news and share information.
- However, students indicated that the social media platform also negatively affect their reading culture as they spent more time on social media than reading books.
- The findings further revealed that students rely on university Wi-Fi networks to access digital platforms and applications such as Instagram and YouTube to view and share videos and pictures.

Conclusion and recommendations

- Based on the findings, it is recommended that management at tertiary institutions must come up with rules and regulations that will reduce the usage of social media platforms by students during lectures and library sessions.
- It is also recommended that the university library must introduce recreational reading materials to make it possible for students to read for pleasure.
- Lastly, it is recommended that lecturers should inspire and enable students to read other materials than their notebooks and handouts in order for students to be exposed to diverse and wider reading materials for the improvement of their reading culture.

Conclusion and recommendations

- The study has succeeded in investigating the impact of social media on the reading culture of students at the University of Limpopo.
- It is also noteworthy that social media if used wisely can be an important element that can drive the reading culture amongst students.
- Social media should be used to obtain relevant information that will enhance academic growth and reading culture.
- The researchers, therefore, concluded that constant access to social media platforms by students at the University of Limpopo has a negative effect on their reading culture.
- Conclusively, reading culture remains the way through which people of all ages can achieve success through reading, which implies reading regularly for achievable goals. It is important to put this culture of reading up through the library collections, readership promotion campaigns, reading clubs, World Book Day activities and Summits/Conferences such as this.