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Exploring Social Media Use of Filipino Learners: How it Impacts Reading Attitudes and Competence

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Abstract---Profusely widespread use of social media opened multiple reading opportunities for learners. However, educators have growing concern that excessive use of social media compromises learners' reading competence and, eventually, academic performance. The current work aimed to examine the extent to which social media use may affect the university students' (N=101) reading attitudes and competence, which are the backbone of scholastic performance. A mixed-methods approach was applied in the study. The data collected were analyzed using version 26 of the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) software. Interview answers were qualitatively analyzed. Results indicate that social media platforms (SMPs) were least used for educational purposes. Students showed positive reading attitudes emphasizing their accorded importance to reading and finding happiness to learn new things. However, as they managed to read posts daily, lesser inclination was accorded to productive reading attitudes such as finding time to read during vacant hours and having enthusiasm towards advanced reading and reading with friends. Overall, reading competence indicated ineptitude. This study provides insights into the context of social media use in shaping learners' reading attitudes and affecting their level of reading competence.

Keywords---academic performance, learners, reading attitudes, reading competence, social media use.

Introduction

Today's massive presence of social media platforms (SMPs) and the students' heavy use are additions to the difficulty in effecting reading comprehension (Cain & Gradisar, 2010; Leung, 2014; Oberst et al., 2017). It is getting quite natural for students to check notifications during non-class hours, post selfies, browse for updates, listen to music, and view videos rather than read lessons. In extreme cases, students even browse while classes are ongoing; thus, multitasking

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happens which utterly affects their concentration (Lau, 2017; Ravizza et al., 2014; Wood & Zivcakova, 2015). These social media moments snatch their time for academic-related reading, putting them and their teachers at a more disadvantaged point. Developing students' reading skills, thus, has become an excruciating challenge for educators. Despite the various methodologies, strategies, and techniques, students struggle to make sense of the pieces they have endeavored to understand. Unfortunately, social media use and how it shapes the reading attitudes and affects the competence of today's learners have also not been widely studied. This study aims to add to the body of information in this context by presenting existing social media connections and reading attitudes and skills. In Digital 2020: Global Digital Overview, the Philippines' social media use was reported highly active with an average of three hours and 53 minutes, which is significantly higher to the global average of two hours 24 minutes making it rank first among the countries surveyed (Kemp, 2020). Meanwhile, the country ranked last in reading comprehension of the 79 countries that participated in the 2018 Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) (Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development [OECD]). These results sounded the alarm for educators. The prevalent issue now is: Does the excessive use of social media contribute to dismal reading competence?

The current digital environment of learners may pose positive or negative reinforcements in their acquisition of knowledge, skills, and values. The use of social media in a highly permissive environment, if left unchecked, could negatively impact the learners. Some schools are still studying the possibilities in some countries to focus on learning and maintaining discipline. At the same time, some have already begun implementing strict rules against gadget use during school hours. In South Africa, Maphalala & Nzama (2014) indicated that the regular teaching flow becomes discomposed due to students' cellphone use during classes. On the other hand, in Canada, with a study involving high school students, it was found that school officials posed differing opinions (Domitrek & Raby, 2008). On a positive note, cellphones are a great help for education because students can search for topic-related information as the need arises (Bosch, 2008; Libro et al., 2007). In shaping the attitudes and competence of a person, the environment plays a key role. This study intends to shed light on reading now becoming more digital, ubiquitous, and unavoidably social media-linked. In particular, this investigation aims to seek answers to the following questions:

- What are the social media platforms that students use?
- For what purposes do students use social media platforms?
- To what extent do students manifest their reading attitudes?
- What is the level of reading competence of the students?

Literature review

Emerging technologies, social media, and learning

Part of today's teaching pedagogy is the integration of technology. Therefore, Blended Learning (BL) becomes a popular approach in many Higher Education Institutions (HEI) (Dziuban et al., 2018). In a similar view, Evans (2014) investigated the use of social media platform Twitter for educational purposes.

The study found out that communicating via Twitter with tutors resulted in students' engagement in school activities but did not bridge interpersonal relationships between students and their tutor. Also, social media plays a vital role in the future of distance learning online. Kaplan & Haenlein (2016) projected that "not only are these future students more comfortable substituting a Massive Online Open Course (MOOC) for a traditional face-to-face lecture, but they also expect social media applications and user-generated content, in general, to be integrated into offline classes as well" (Chamorro-Premuzic & Furnham, 2008; Duff et al., 2004).

Students' usage of the Internet in low-income communities presented problems Haythornthwaite & Kendall (2010); Kandell (1998) like the use of social media while class lectures are on-going for the fear of missing out (Dhir et al., 2018; Oberst et al., 2017; Przybylski et al., 2013). In the Philippines, because social media access is frequently offered for free by different network providers, users have greater chances to access (Consunji, 2013). Without much critical thought, they spend considerable time browsing and viewing to the neglect of their schedule. If left unchecked, students lose track of their time for their studies (Alwagait et al., 2015).

The use of social media and its implications are currently attracting worldwide coverage, thereby warranting greater comprehension. In Hong Kong, Lau (2017) stated that "the use of social media for academic purposes as calculated by the cumulative grade point average was not a major predictor of academic success". Studies further revealed that undergraduate students' academic performance might be adversely affected by prolonged social media use (David et al., 2012; Ravizza et al., 2014). They become more sleep-deprived leading to difficulty concentrating and less active participation in class activities (Curcio et al., 2006; Woods & Scott, 2016). As students become increasingly confident and engrossed in the social media use, the more they become inclined to using them in ubiquity and in a carefree manner that might worrisomely lead to fatigue, anxiety, and depression (Bright et al., 2015; Dhir et al., 2018; Salanova et al., 2012; Spilkova et al., 2017; Stavros et al., 2014). Also, excessive use can trigger conflicts as "individuals can feel irritated by family and friend grievances or quarrels with parents or couples due to real-world negligence when individuals are excessively active in virtual social connections and activities" (Zheng & Lee, 2016). This real-world neglect phenomenon presents theoretical underpinnings why learners gradually dread academic reading and persistently use social media instead (Spratt, 1999; Laurillard, 1998). These studies have highlighted three important points about emerging technologies, social media, and learning. First is that emerging technologies are indispensable. Second, learners are generally engrossed in social media use. Finally, learning is affected by these emerging technologies and social media use. Therefore, this research aimed to explore how social media use affects reading attitudes and impacts reading skills (Morni & Sahari, 2013; Hall, 2005).

Reading attitudes and competence

Reading is a key school activity, and comprehension strategies are needed to decode an entire text (McNamara, 2007). Many students, however, have reading

difficulties. According to [Hughes-Hassell & Rodge \(2007\)](#), “Professors and students alike get irritated. As non-readers or poor readers, students come to think less about themselves. Some stop reading and are waiting to be told by the teacher what they need to do. Others seek to become invisible, while others are already acting out, creating distractions to cover up their shortcomings”. Very low enthusiasm for reading was reported in the study ([Applegate et al., 2014](#)). They discovered that among the 1,000 college sophomores, enthusiastic readers only account for 46.6%, and engaged and avid readers were only 5.7% ([Dörfler et al., 2009](#); [Calet et al., 2017](#)).

Several problems also surface for non-native speakers of the English language, affecting their dispositions towards reading and, ultimately, their competence ([OECD, 2018](#)). With the considerable time spent online and in social media, today’s learners have manifested changes in their reading attitudes. Many learners exhibit a strong digital preference compared to paper-based reading ([Chen & Chen, 2014](#)). [Shen \(2006\)](#), emphasized that Taiwanese college students' preference for internet-based reading increased online information and emails. [Huang et al. \(2014\)](#), reported the highest percentage the students spend weekly on Internet reading, which was significantly higher than academic and extracurricular reading. [Foasberg \(2014\)](#), study, however, presents a paradox. In her assessment of the difference in college students’ reading practices in print and electronic media, she found out that students still prefer print than electronic for academic reading ([Diga & Kelleher, 2009](#); [Vannucci et al., 2017](#)). [Gil-Flores et al. \(2012\)](#), research carried out among 15-year-old Spanish students emphasized the students’ online reading experiences. They found that chatting online for social purposes is what often happens. Those with the lowest frequency took part in community discussions or forums online, read the news, and searched online for practical knowledge. A significant finding was that “social interactions have a weaker effect on their digital reading output than performing information-seeking interactions”. The results showed that “it seems necessary to emphasize information- seeking activities for students to develop digital reading skills since they can help perform academic work at home” ([Lema et al., 2018](#); [Gabriel, 2018](#)).

A study of children in New Zealand presented a somewhat similar perspective. “Though reading success improved significantly from age 8 to age 12, enjoyment of reading and self-efficacy of reading decreased” ([Smith et al., 2012](#)). This trend was attributable to the children's self-perception of efficacy with their classmates. The environment indeed influences the reading attitudes and habits of students ([Garces-Bacsal & Yeo, 2017](#)). The revealed decline in reading enjoyment was similar to the findings of five years of study of pupils in years 4-6 in the United Kingdom (UK) ([Sainsbury & Schagen, 2004](#)). In China, [Meng \(2009\)](#) stated that extensive reading “is sure to enhance the reading skills and linguistic capabilities of students”. This aligns with the growing pursuance of learning English in the country due to its link to its open-door policy and world affairs ([Jin & Cortazzi, 2002](#)). Moreover, in the Philippines, the study of [Lituanas et al. \(2001\)](#) provides support to the results above. With the 6-month experimental research involving 60 students split into control and experimental groups that undergo 40-minute English instruction with an additional remedial class daily, it was found that more improvements were achieved through extensive reading. With this method, Thorndike’s Law of Exercise is aptly applied and affirmed ([Beatty, 1998](#)). The

pivotal role of reading competence was further asserted in the study (Imam et al., 2013). They investigated the relationship of reading comprehension skills to the mathematical competence of the 666 students. Results showed that knowing the meaning of words, having the main concept, and making inferences substantially predict students' mathematical abilities (Tomas & Dulin, 2021; Rosramadhana et al., 2021). Highly positive reading attitudes contribute to the reading competence that is indeed essential in one's academic success (Ilustre, 2011). With what Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory posits, learners can enhance reading competence as an influence of their reading-conducive and learning-friendly environments (Darling, 2007; Lim et al., 2003; Pilgreen, 2000). Moreover, the role of intrinsic motivation to an individual's reading competence cannot be underestimated Schiefele et al. (2012), as it holds the key for engaged reading, which plays a vital role in developing reading ability (Guthrie & Wigfield, 2000).

Methodology

Participants

The participants were the 101 first-year higher education students in a state university in the Philippines. Fifty-one (51) of them take Bachelor of Science (BS) in Psychology course and 50 take Bachelor of Arts (BA). There are 36 males and 65 females. The majority belonged to the cohort of Generation Z (92.1%) and the remaining are Millennial (7.9%). They had, on average, 7-9 years of experience in using social media, especially Facebook. Daily, 54.5% of the participants spend 6-10 hours online (Suryasa et al., 2019; Wong, 2021).

Data collection and analysis

The analysis applied a mixed-method of research. Quantitative and qualitative approaches have been used to collect data (Creswell & Báez, 2020). The 101 college freshmen were administered two researcher-made and expert-validated instruments: the questionnaire-checklist based on gathering data for reading attitudes and the 20-item multiple-choice reading test for reading competence. A semi-structured interview was also conducted to gather supplemental data and perform triangulation. Before administering the instruments, permission was sought from the university officials. During the data collection, to ensure students' thorough analysis of the items, one class meeting (1.5 hours) was allotted for the survey that contained 20 items relating to reading attitudes. Another class meeting was for the reading competence test. The literary piece "The Story of an Hour" by Kate Chopin (KateChopin.org, n.d.) served as the input selection and individual copies of the story were given first with read-thoroughly direction. Once a student finished reading, the copy of the piece was returned to the researcher to exchange with the 20-item multiple-choice test.

A five-point Likert scale was employed for mean values on reading attitudes using the following range and verbal interpretations: 4.2 - 5.0 (5 A - Always), 3.4 - 4.19 (4 O - Often), 2.6 - 3.39 (3 S - Sometimes), 1.8 - 2.59 (2 SE - Seldom) and 1.0 - 1.79 (1 N - Never). Zipgrade™ was utilized for the reading test checking, and scores were transmuted using the university transmutation table with the following descriptors: 1.0 - 1.3 (E-Excellent), 1.4 - 1.7 (VG-Very Good), 1.8 - 2.1

(G-Good), 2.2 - 3.0 (FR-Fair) and 3.1 - 5.0 (FD-Failed). Using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 26 software at the University Statistical Center, the quantitative data were analyzed. Interview answers were analyzed qualitatively and sorted in themes (Creswell & Báez, 2015).

Findings

RQ 1: What are the social media platforms that students use?

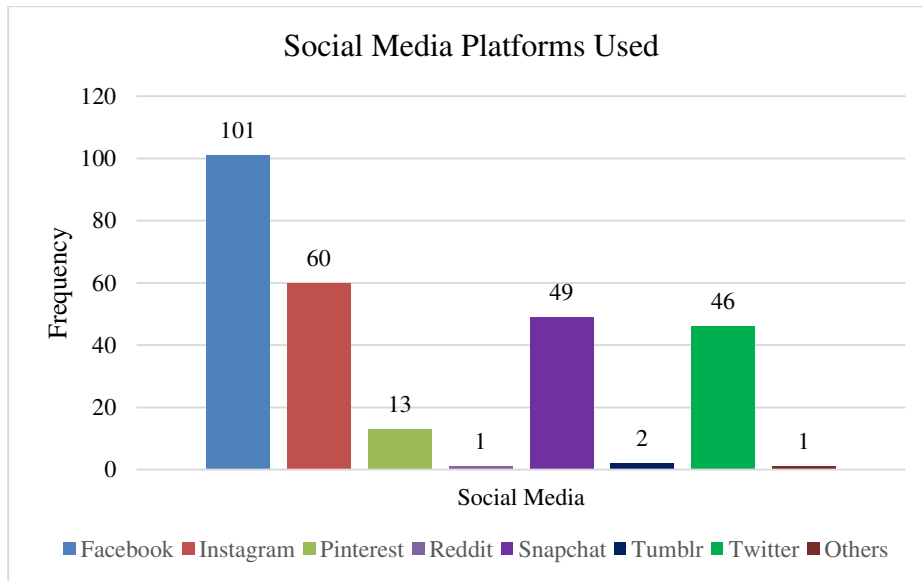


Figure 1: Social media platforms used by students

As depicted in Figure 1, all the participants used various social media sites with Facebook as the topmost having 100% of the population (N=101). Instagram followed with 59.45% (N=60), Snapchat at third rank with 48.5% (N=49), and Twitter at fourth rank with 45.5% (N=46). With very few users were Reddit and Tumblr that both obtained 1.0% (N=1). One did not specify an answer. These figures imply that though students utilize multiple SMPs, Facebook remained as everyone's staple.

RQ 2: For what purposes do students use social media platforms?

Table 1
Purposes for social media use

Social Media Platform	Education		Entertainment		Socialization	
	f	%	f	%	f	%
Facebook	46	45.5	74	73.3	79	78.2
Instagram	10	9.9	48	47.5	44	43.6
Pinterest	6	5.9	12	11.9	1	1.0
Reddit	-	-	1	1.0	-	-

Snapchat	3	3.0	38	37.6	16	15.8
Tumblr	1	1.0	-	-	-	-
Twitter	5	5.0	33	32.7	36	35.6
Others	2	2.0	1	1.0	1	1.0

Note: Participants were allowed to reflect multiple answers.

The majority of the participants used SMPs primarily for socialization (Facebook N=79 and Twitter N=36), secondarily for entertainment (Facebook N=74 and Twitter N=33) and tertiary for education (Facebook N=46, Instagram N=10, Snapchat N=3, and Twitter N=5). Instagram, Pinterest, and Snapchat users indicated that they primarily use them for entertainment (N=48, N=12, and N=38 respectively), Pinterest (N=6) was secondarily for education while Instagram and Snapchat were for socialization (N=44 and N=16 respectively). These imply that SMPs are rarely used for academic purposes.

RQ 3: To what extent do students manifest their reading attitudes?

Table 2
Extent of attitudes towards reading

No	Attitudes in Reading	BA		BS		Overall	
		Mean	VI	Mean	VI	Mean	VI
1	I enjoy reading in our class.	3.86	O	4.00	O	3.93	O
2	I enjoy reading in our home.	3.74	O	3.82	O	3.78	O
3	I am happy to learn new things when I read.	4.60	A	4.63	A	4.61	A
4	I like to read with friends.	3.42	O	3.24	S	3.33	S
5	I like it when the teacher asks me to read.	3.96	O	3.67	O	3.81	O
6	I am comfortable to read aloud in class.	3.74	O	3.37	S	3.55	O
7	I search for good topics that I will soon read.	3.76	O	3.33	S	3.54	O
8	I think reading is very important.	4.96	A	4.80	A	4.88	A
9	I feel delighted to consult other references when need arises.	3.82	O	3.76	O	3.79	O
10	I feel inspired every time I see reading materials.	3.80	O	3.59	O	3.69	O
11	I tend to read more on my cellphone.	4.14	O	3.88	O	4.01	O
12	I like to read internet materials such as articles and blogs than books.	3.78	O	3.65	O	3.71	O
13	I see to it that I can read posts at social media every day.	4.30	A	4.08	O	4.19	O
14	I have fun reading multiple pages of any literary piece.	3.32	S	3.39	S	3.36	S
15	I feel happy whenever the teachers give reading tasks homework.	3.60	O	3.45	O	3.52	O
16	I feel confident to read lengthy topics that are in line with my course.	3.72	O	4.10	O	3.91	O
17	I find time to read during vacant hours.	3.26	S	2.98	S	3.12	S
18	I am fond of doing an advanced reading.	3.30	S	3.20	S	3.25	S
19	I feel a sense of relaxation when I am reading.	3.60	O	3.57	O	3.58	O
20	I enjoy sharing what I have read.	3.84	O	3.82	O	3.83	O
	Grand Mean	3.83	O	3.72	O	3.77	O

Note: A – Always, O – Often, S – Seldom

Overall, the participants highly manifested positive attitudes on item 8 *I think reading is very important* (4.88). This was closely followed by item 3 *I am happy to learn new things when I read* (4.61), item 13 *I see to it that I can read posts at social media every day* (4.19) and item 11 *I tend to read more in my cellphone* (4.01). Both groups of students indicated similar items for the top 2 ranks but differed in the third that was item 13 for BA and item 16 *I feel confident to read lengthy topics that are in line with my course* for BS. In the fourth rank, a difference was also manifested wherein BA had item 11 while BS had item 13. The highest mean values imply that reading was perceived important and information-giving; however, tendencies were cellphone-based and mainly concerned with social media posts. On the contrary, they reported negative viewpoints on item 17 *I find time to read during vacant hours* (3.12) closely followed by item 18 *I am fond of doing an advanced reading* (3.25), item 4 *I like to read with friends* (3.33) and item 14 *I have fun reading multiple pages of any literary piece* (3.36). It is worth noting that for BA, the third lowest was *I have fun reading multiple pages of any literary piece*. Their mean values were all verbally interpreted as “Seldom.” These figures reveal a pattern of opposition to academically-inclined reading attitudes.

RQ 4: What is the level of reading competence of the students?

Table 3
Level of competence in reading

Participants	Mean	Sd.	VI
BA	3.51	.699	FD
BS	3.17	.504	FD
Overall	3.34	.628	

Note: FD - Failed

Generally, both groups of participants obtained below passing grades in the 20-item reading competence test. BS had a mean of 3.17 although 33.3% (N=17) of the class obtained passing grades ranging from 1.7 to 3.0. BA had a mean of 3.51 with 20% (N=10) of the class obtained passing grades ranging from 2.5 to 3.0. This rating range was closer to the passing cut-off rating of 3.0 and was much lower than what the BS group garnered. Overall, the classes failed in the study's reading competence test. This implies that some university students have reading comprehension problems.

Discussion

This research investigated how the use of social media affects university students' reading attitudes and competence. Social media use has become omnipresent in this modern time, and it is no secret that learners have become heavy users. Of the eight SMPs, Facebook emerged uppermost with all participants using it and other SMPs such as Instagram, Snapchat, and Twitter. Learners, thus, never stick to only one SMP (Greenwood, 2013). Admittedly, the moment they wake up, they start browsing their accounts for updates and check what has taken place in the social media world while they are asleep. While social media offer copious amounts of information, findings revealed that the students' use was primarily for socialization and entertainment, and less on education. For instance, Facebook

use alone accounted for 78.2% socialization, 73.3% entertainment, and 45.4% education, which articulated that several purposes are onboard in every visit, but what dominates is socialization. This affirms the study of David et al. (2012), which indicated that students' use of SMP is more of "socializing activities rather than academic". Further, this study provides a snapshot of the connections between the results of Digital 2020: Global Digital Overview and PISA 2018. Students' attention becomes diverted and off-task use Wood & Zivcakova (2015), hence negatively affecting their reading competence and academic performance in general (David et al., 2012; Gil- Flores et al., 2012; Lau, 2017).

Unfortunately, in the study, both groups of students registered below passing ratings in the reading competence test, thus revealing ineptitude. This result is supportive of David et al. (2012), research that academic performance is in a way affected by social media use. The students manifested problems in analyzing and understanding the short story, which substantially surfaced in their answers' quality. One male student commented, "I feel bored when I read many paragraphs." Another expressed, "I cannot clearly recall the details in the story." It may be argued that these instances could be attributable to the nature of their reading orientation and attitudes or the experienced frequent sleep deprivation and poor concentration. Empirically, they think that reading is important and they are happy to learn new things when they read, but in a strong sense, that reading had been channeled into SMPs seeing to it that they can read posts daily, thus, avoiding being left behind (Dhir et al., 2018; Oberst et al., 2017; Przybylski et al., 2013). Ironically, they indicated a lesser preference for productive reading, specifically finding time to read during vacant hours, having a preference to do an advanced reading, reading with friends, and reading multiple pages of literary pieces. The negative view to these aspects led them into selective reading, underdeveloped endurance to read lengthy academic-related materials, and only preferring to read whatever is light, funny, dramatic, or anything that goes with compulsive searching (Chen & Chen, 2014; Dhir et al., 2018; Hughes-Hassell & Rodge, 2007). Unknowingly and unfortunately, these compromised their reading competence. The present study shows how excessive social media use Spilkova et al. (2017); Zheng & Lee (2016), can negatively affect not only students' reading attitudes and competence but also their studies in general (Alwagait et al., 2015; David et al., 2012; Lau, 2017; Ravizza et al., 2014). Some students expressed that:

It is easy to read in social media because there's no pressure, unlike in academic reading that you have to understand. After all, your answers are needed afterward fully. So, reading of lessons seems difficult.

Social media attract my interest more than reading. Instead of reading books, I would prefer online articles and blogs that are also credible. I find them more convenient than an actual textbook.

When I am reading our lesson, and suddenly a notification alerts me, I always check on it even if I'm not yet finished in the task.

Sometimes, it's hard for me to focus on reading in school because I slept for a few hours only; much of my time the past nights were spent in browsing updates and gaming.

It affects me in a way that I am giving most of my attention to socialization as a coping mechanism for boredom than spending my time reading.

There are instances wherein my time was mostly spent using Facebook. I don't find it productive enough to see the updates from the pages I like and people I follow online, but I keep doing it.

Sometimes, I've been focusing on Facebook before I do my paperwork, and it reduced my time to be productive and to finish it on time.
Before, I experienced sleeping late even though there is an examination for the next day because I was too hooked on what I am watching.
It makes me less productive because I am spending more time on social media.
Using social media while studying really tests my focus and concentration. It consumes and lessens the time allotted for my subjects.
Social media greatly impact my studies because of the entertainment they show that make me addicted to and lazy in terms of studies.
It eats a lot of my time, and there are times that I experienced failures in exams because of my bad hobby. Instead of studying, I scrolled down like there's no tomorrow. I was too "pleasured," and I almost forgot which one to prioritize. I woke up in an unending indulgence after seeing my grades turning bad.
Being slaved by social media, I ended up submitting an unsatisfactory project, for I ran out of time.
Social media use drives me to procrastinate.

These comments concurred with the survey results of [Alwagait et al. \(2015\)](#) which reported that several factors affect academics and that poor time management can aggravate it. Combatting boredom is another issue. Most youths easily feel bored, lacks sleep, and are anxious. Handling those frequently involves the use of social media which in turn reduces their time and weakens their desire to read academic and literary items ([Dhir et al., 2018](#); [Hughes-Hassell & Rodge, 2007](#); [Oberst et al., 2017](#); [Woods & Scott, 2016](#)). As an antidote, a male student suggested to "avoid using your phone and put focus only on the assignment." He further expressed, "Social media cannot be used for educational purposes, it is just for communication and sharing of information". In contrast, other participants acknowledged that social media helped them in their studies by providing a venue for information-dissemination, accomplishing tasks, and submitting outputs. Students can easily communicate with peers and teachers on matters related to their activities in the coming days ([Bright et al., 2014](#); [Esteves, 2012](#); [Evans, 2014](#)). High-achieving students shared:

Somehow, Facebook helps me to comply with academic requirements that need to be sent using the said medium.
Social media greatly impact my studies because they help me communicate easily with my classmates and with my group mates. Also, they help me to disseminate information and tasks to everyone.

Despite claims that SMP use leads to weakened scholastic performance [David et al. \(2012\)](#); [Gil-Flores et al. \(2012\)](#); [Lau \(2017\)](#), some students reported that they become informed, curious, analytical, and speculative, brought about by the necessary alertness whenever using them. They expressed:

I gain knowledge and information from other social media platforms.
They help me to be informed about the latest news.
I become speculative with the information I read online.
When I see a topic and discuss certain things, I read it and even filter if it's beneficial.
I read and analyze situations. Also, I must understand before I share information if it is legit and has reliable sources and commenting.
Reading in social media makes me more curious about the articles and gather important details and messages.
Every time I read my Facebook friends' posts, I critique the grammar, and in that way, I enhance my reading competence. Another is when I'm reading a long story in FB, especially one that's written in English. Also, when I encounter unfamiliar words in social media, I "Google" them.

They (SMPs) help me be more watchful of false articles I may encounter, and I learn how to analyze and do thorough verification.

The comments depicted how engaged students are in social media use. While these attested to how involved in online socializing they are (see also Table 1), one particular finding revealed that they do not fully subscribe to the idea of collaborative reading (see Table 2). Practically, this does not follow through what is outlined in the 21st-century skills. Learning and innovation skills, including communication and teamwork in line with critical thought, problem-solving, imagination, and innovation, are among the three main categories (Trilling & Fadel, 2009). Collaboration is an essential element in improving reading competence, as it significantly enhances students' content understanding and communication skills (Chen & Chen, 2014). It promotes enjoyable and stress-free learning environments where team members learn together, and where scaffolding is usually an ingredient towards attaining goals. Without collaboration, more and more students, especially the timid ones, suffer in silence and perform poorly in their academics. Collaboration is a promising strategy to mitigate students' growing inclination to social reading over academic reading.

Conclusion

This research indicated that the prevalence of social media uses among university students adversely affects their reading competence. In contrast, their reading attitudes were both positive and negative, with the more productive and scholarly reading perspectives less prioritized. The findings, which corroborated with previous studies, further provided the insight that though in some instances SMPs provide information, awaken students' curiosity and analytical ability, and provide a venue for information-dissemination and outputs submission, they generally serve less for educational purposes.

These findings create a paramount challenge to educators, school officials, parents, and learners to be more aware and vigilant on how social media and other emerging digital applications can distract students from academic reading and scholastic performance. More specifically, the following recommendations are advanced to properly guide them towards molding disciplined, and academically inclined learners: 1) the school administrators must issue guidelines for academic-related cellphone use in school premises to ensure that students focus on their lessons; 2) the teachers should reinforce the students' reading competence by providing engaging reading activities and homework, and by coordinating with parents and guardians for a more comprehensive and dynamic follow-up and monitoring; 3) they should also offer more collaborative reading activities and include peer mentoring strategies to enhance the students' reading comprehension skills as well as teamwork skills; 4) the Office of Student Development Services may institute sustainable reading programs and partnerships to promote the value of reading; 5) the students should devote considerable time and efforts for academic reading to remarkably improve their level of competence; and 6) the parents and guardians should closely monitor their children's mobile phone and social media uses, and as needed, establish agreements to ensure the latter's uncompromising focus on studies.

Caution must be exercised as the generalizability is restricted in the following points to discuss this analysis's outcomes and consequences. First, with a limited number of participants, the analysis was performed. Second, the geographical location of the university is in a semirural area. Third, only one reading selection was included in assessing the reading competence of university students. Future studies may involve more participants strategically classified as beginner, intermediate, and expert in social media use to distinguish their reading performance carefully in light of the cited limitations. Universities in purely rural and urban places may be included for a more comprehensive survey. More reading selections or standardized reading tests may be utilized for reading competence assessment to yield more robust results. The future of SMPs' use for education remains a challenging dimension that merits further investigation.

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