

**INVESTIGATING THE INFLUENCE OF WHATSAPP AND FACEBOOK ON
SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS' WRITING SKILLS**

By

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DECLARATION

I, Nancy O. Nyirenda, declare that the organisation and writing of this thesis is entirely of my own and has been carried out at Mzuzu University under the supervision of Dr. Agness Chimangeni Chaliwa Hara. It has not been submitted for any other degree than the degree of Master of Education, Teacher Education of Mzuzu University. All borrowed ideas, sources have been duly acknowledged.

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DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my husband Milonde Chimangeni for his loving and caring spirit, who humbled himself to an extent of becoming my classmate, a thing which very rarely happens among couples. I do not hesitate to say it plainly that he is the one who has made me what I am today. The project is also dedicated to my parents Oliver and Teleza Nyirenda for the upbringing and moral guidance. May the almighty God continue blessing you abundantly.

ABSTRACT

The aim of this paper was to investigate the influence of WhatsApp and Facebook on secondary school students English writing skills. A direct relationship exists between social media usage and academic performance of students in secondary schools. Social networking sites have been recognised as an important resource for education today. In order to investigate the influence of WhatsApp and Facebook on secondary school students' English writing, the study adopted a descriptive case study to collect qualitative data. The researcher engaged 30 sampled students on online conversation through Facebook and WhatsApp as one way of collecting data. An in-depth interview was conducted for both students and teachers using a voice recorder. Data was coded, transcribed and developed into themes for thorough analysis. The research findings the study indicate that students' writing are abound by writing errors. Letter or word omissions, vocabulary incompetence, non-words, abbreviations, acronyms, short forms and slangs and apostrophe misappropriation were evident. This shows that students use Facebook and WhatsApp in a negative way and this has an influence on students' writing. The study, however, recommends that learners should be encouraged to focus more on the academic relevance of Facebook and WhatsApp sites instead of using them for negative purposes. Furthermore, secondary school students must identify, learn and adopt the correct orthography of the English language to forestall spelling errors arising from the use of Facebook and WhatsApp. In addition, the study encourages teachers to vary methods of teaching to combat the problems influenced by Facebook and WhatsApp.

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ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

CDSS:	Community Day Secondary School
DBMS:	Database Management Systems
EDM:	Education Division Manager
ICT:	Information and Communication Technology
MH:	Mangochi
MZUNIREC:	Mzuzu University Research Committee
SEED:	South East Education Division
SMS:	Short Message Services

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Chapter overview

This chapter presents an introduction and background to the study on the influence of Facebook and WhatsApp on students' academic writing skills. The section presents background information, statement of the problem, research objectives, scope of the study, significance of the study, delimitation of the study, operational definitions of terms and organisation of the study.

1.2 Background information

Today's connected world has witnessed radical change that has gathered people around the globe closer regardless of distance. The tremendous development made in the field of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) that resulted from globalisation, has brought a digital age that keeps surging and advancing (Boyd, 2017). This digital age has led to the development of new concepts such as digital literacy. As such, individuals need to have a background knowledge about computers and smart phones. This knowledge is a necessity to human beings in order to cope with the needs of the contemporary society (Boyd, 2017). The rapid evolution of technology facilitates the birth of fast- growing social media.

Nowadays, social media such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and WhatsApp are very popular among the young generation, and they are easily influenced by these technologies (Kamnoetsin, 2014). With the frequency of using technologies as well as smart phones for texting, the youth are learning and creating new language through conversation on social media (Hashim, 2017). Students are more exposed and influenced by social media since it is a medium of social

interaction in the present day. Besides that, social media has been used in many ways for different purposes.

According to Asur and Huberman (2010), social media platforms allow the transfer of digital content such as texts, audio, photos and general information. They are a popular means of interaction employed by many companies, various institutions as well as millions of people all over the world as an essential part of their everyday life. They allow individuals, who share the same interests, to discuss online with each other, to comment on issues and exchange information, thoughts, news, pictures and videos, to find friends and relatives, or to take part in online communities. These operations occur by creating a profile, either private or public and a personal account with one's information (Ellison, 2007). They provide individuals with the opportunity to communicate effectively using their electronic devices such as mobile phones and personal computers.

People use social media for different purposes. The growing popularity and use of social media have influenced every facet of people's lives. One facet that has been widely affected is the education sector. Meanwhile, students use social media widely in their daily routine and learning activities, including writing. Students socialise, share information, discuss assignments, debate and chat using social media (Fatimayin, 2015). Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp, text messages and Instagram are popular forms of social media platforms with a high rate of secondary students' demography, hence they could be employed as mobile tools to positively impact English language learning (Gettman & Cortijo, 2015). However, English language learning has a number of dimensions, which include the development of oral expression, writing skills, literature, and

creativity. Among these dimensions, writing is considered to be a more difficult and important dimension than any other language skill. As such, it requires special attention (Kellog 2008). Similarly, Richards and Rodgers (2014) state that writing is a significant skill in language production as its role is to convey the message accurately and effectively. Its proficiency plays a major part in communication.

Social media provides wider chances for second language learners. It helps them to occupy daily writing activities and further improve their writing progress in the classroom environment (Warshauser 2018). This shows the potential social media has as a method for online learning. Quan-Haase and Young (2010) found that 82% of school students reported logging into Facebook several times each day. Hence, social media can be used to accommodate both the social and the educational aspects. In other words, social media can be a tool for supporting teaching and learning on one hand, and a means of socialising on the other.

However, Boyd (2010) argues that social media has affected the society as a whole. It has affected students and all users as they use shortened words, slang words and instant messages when they socialise or communicate formal issues. Similarly, Kaitlin (2010) opines that social networking websites affect the way people receive information and news. In his studies Kaitlin (2010) also found that the way web users interact and talk to each other has changed and continues to change due to contact with social media sites. Communication through the internet and social networking websites is quite different from communicating person to person or face to face. When users communicate through websites, they use things like instant messages and chatting, as well as status or Twitter updates to talk to friends and express themselves (Kaitlin,

2010). Social media has taken away from people socialisation and communication that has been around for some time in the past years.

Using of social media is not only limited to socialisation and communication but it is also widely used in educational sectors by the students. The major educational implication of social media is the apparently changing nature of learners' relationships with information and knowledge (Mardiana, 2016). With the advancement of technology and the help of the internet, a new internet language is created. This internet language creates new forms of writing which people, especially younger generation, use for communication. Internet language, which is also known as internet slang, refers to different kinds of slang used by different people in communicating on the internet (Hashim, 2018). Internet slang provides a channel which facilitates and constrains the ability to communicate in ways that are fundamentally different in terms of the various writing aspects (Abe, 2013). The usage of internet slang is very common in social media since the language is easier, instant and saves time when communicating online. Therefore, teachers are worried about their students' language acquisition which has an impact on their writing skills.

With the increasing number of social media sites in existence and the increasing number of registered users, therefore, there is no doubt that popular sites like Facebook and WhatsApp are influencing the writing and speaking of students. It has become a new challenge for teachers to make sure students comply with the rules of language. For that reason, this study investigates how Facebook and WhatsApp influences students writing skills in secondary schools.

1.3 Statement of the problem

Although writing is one of the most important skills, it is rather regarded as a complex skill to master for educational success. By posing their well-known cognitive model of writing processes, Flower and Hayes (1980) emphasise on the map of the complication of writing. Many students at secondary school in Malawi are very weak in writing. In fact, the examiners cut down a sorry figure. Chief examiners report on English Paper II indicates that (MANEB, 2018; 2019; 2020; 2021) students use internet slang and unconventional symbols in note making exercises. Due to the unsatisfactory level of performance in English subject, the entire results of public examination have been negatively affected. Secondary school students face challenges in their academic and professional lives due to inadequacies in writing skill. It is a major concern that secondary school students in Malawi are struggling to abide by the guided rules and regulations of communication in English.

The advent of Facebook and WhatsApp has brought about new ways of writing which contravenes with guiding principles of writing in English. It is observed that the language used for online communication through different social media platforms, particularly Facebook and WhatsApp, does not follow the standard language rules. For instance, the spelling and grammar rules are overlooked in communicating informally on Facebook and WhatsApp. However, research has mainly focused on the advantages of using social media for various activities. In Malawi there is little literature on the ground which looks at the negative effects of social media towards pupils' achievement and development in language learning, especially writing skills has been done despite the outcry that writing creatively and formally is a challenge for learners (Mbano, 2004). This study would add stake to the literature already on the ground. This study

therefore sought to analyse the influence of WhatsApp and Facebook on writing skills of secondary school students.

1.4 General Objective

The main objective of the study was to investigate the influence of social media on students' English writing skills.

1.4.1 Specific Objectives

Specifically, the study aimed to:

- i. To find out students' perceptions towards WhatsApp and Facebook in relation to students English writing skills.
- ii. To discuss the influence of WhatsApp and Facebook on students' academic writing skills
- iii. To describe ways to improve students writing skills in the view of the influences caused by Facebook and WhatsApp.

1.5 The Scope of the Study

The study focused on the influence of WhatsApp and Facebook on writing skills among secondary school students in Malawi. It also aimed at finding out how secondary school students generally perceive or feel when using WhatsApp and Facebook.

1.6 Significance of the study

The study was worth conducting because it adds to the body of knowledge on how best social media can be used to the benefit of the learner to master the skill of writing in English. In

addition, the current study serves as the eye opener to learners of English to know the impact of social media on their academic writing skills. The results of this study will influence teachers of English to take serious action on controlling students from using informal writing in classroom work. The findings of this study will also influence schools to include programmes that can motivate learners to stick to formal writing. Furthermore, the findings of this study will aid social media users, students and professionals alike to consciously avoid the use of inappropriate written forms by making deliberate efforts to imbibe the standard orthography of the English language. Lastly, the findings of this study will enrich the literature for the pedagogy of the English language and serve as a reference tool for other researchers on the discourse.

1.7 Delimitation

This research work is limited to social media and its influence on secondary school students writing. It is restricted to the influence of Facebook and WhatsApp as popular social media sites among students that affect writing skills. The constraints associated with time did not allow the researcher to stretch his hands to investigate other social media platforms that the study is not analysing at the moment.

1.8. Operational definition of terms

To avoid misinterpreting and misunderstanding this study, the researcher provides some key terms and their meanings as follows:

1.8.1. Influence

According to Hornby (1995), influence means the power to affect somebody's actions, character or beliefs, especially by providing an example for them to follow, winning their admiration or

making them afraid to disagree. Thus, influence in this study means power of social media language and writing style that can motivate students on how to write their academic work.

1.8.2. Skill

It is the ability and capacity acquired through deliberate, systematic, and sustained effort to smoothly and adaptively carry out complex activities. Furthermore, a skill may be a craft, trade, or job requiring manual dexterity or special training in which a person has competence and experience (Yanto, 2014). In this study, skill means ability to write formally and creatively.

1.8.3. Writing

According to Alsaawi (2015), writing is defined as a method of transferring spoken language from being heard to being seen and consequently read. Freeman (2016) defines writing as a medium of human communication that represents language and emotion through the inscription or recording of signs and symbols.

1.8.4. Social media

Social media are means of interaction among people in which they create, share or exchange information and ideas in virtual communities and networks (Ahlqvist et al., 2008).

1.8.5. Social media sites, tools or platforms

These are a popular means of interaction such as Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp, text messages Instagram. etc., which are employed by a number of companies and various institutions as well people all over the world to transfer digital content such as texts, audio, photos and general information.

1.9. Organisation of the study

This study is organised into five chapters as follows:

1.9.1 Chapter one

This chapter provides the introduction of the study, background of the study, statement of the problem, objectives of the study, significance of the study, operational definition of terms and organisation of the study.

1.9.2 Chapter two

This chapter has reviewed relevant literature and provides the conceptual and the theoretical framework of the study. These include: constructivism and social learning theories.

1.9.3 Chapter three

This chapter provides research methodology. It has explained the research design and how data were analysed with justification for the methods used. It has also explained the study site and sample of the study.

1.9.4 Chapter four

This chapter presents the results and discussion of the findings. It will discuss what will be observed and what it entails.

1.9.5 Chapter five

This chapter presents conclusion of the findings, recommendations and area(s) for further studies.

Finally, it will present the list of references and materials used for conducting the study.

1.10 Chapter summary

The chapter has presented the introduction and background to the study. The chapter has also presented statement of the problem, research objectives, significance of the study, scope and delimitation of the study, operational definition of terms and conclusion.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Chapter overview

A literature review is an attempt to interpret and synthesise what has been studied, researched and published in an area of interest (Lungu, 2009). This chapter therefore, presents a review of relevant literature to the current study. It also highlights the theoretical framework of the study. The section deals with the three different categories of studies reviewed, following the lineup of the objectives of this study. Firstly, it reviews studies which talked about the students' perception towards their use of Facebook and WhatsApp, followed by studies which analysed the influence of Facebook and WhatsApp on writing skills. Lastly, this section reviews studies which analysed the ways on how to improve students' academic writing skills in view of the influences of WhatsApp and Facebook on students writing skills. The last part of this chapter discusses theoretical framework of the study which is constructivism for the digital age in social network sites called social learning theory.

2.2 Perceptions Towards the use of WhatsApp and Facebook

Mao (2014) investigated a few aspects of students and their use of social media. The aspects investigated included: students' affordability for social media, their attitudes and beliefs on new technologies, and related impediments and issues in using social media. Findings to Mao's investigation indicated that students displayed positive attitudes and beliefs about social media use in education. For instance, the study stipulated that social media improve their learning when using social media for an assignment. With most school activities communicated online, students use of social media has been enhanced (Raut & Patil, 2016). However, studies show that students, who attempt to multi-task, checking social media sites while studying, show reduced

academic performance (Ahmed &Qazi, 2011; Raut & Patil, 2016). It is believed that students' ability to concentrate on the task at hand is significantly reduced by the distractions that are brought about by social media platforms. Mao's (2014) findings also suggest that scaffolding is necessary for social media to be used as effective learning tools.

A number of studies have attempted to show how social media is beneficial to its users. An investigation conducted by Odoh Eke and Omekwu (2014) among secondary school students, showed that one of such benefits is that it encourages virtual meeting with co-research scholars. It also builds self-esteem and strengthens interpersonal relationship among the students. Additionally, social media is helpful when students are conducting research and other learning activities. According to Mac Cay Peet and Quan-Haase (2017) social media are web-based services that allow individuals, communities and organisations to collaborate connect, interact and build community by enabling them to create, cocreate modifies share and engage with user generated content that is easily accessible. Odoh Eke, and Omekwu (2014) findings also indicated that a majority of students showed positive attitude and great willingness towards the use of social media in the classroom activities. However, factors such as large classes, lack of training on the use of the internet and lack of facilities could be possible barriers to the use of social media in the classroom. Much as social media is perceived as beneficial, the current study investigated how English writing skill is influenced by the usage of WhatsApp and Facebook.

Research conducted by Wheeler (2007), Rifkin, Longnecker, Leach and Ortia (2009) indicated four major advantages that social media brings to students. These include: enhancing relationships, improving learning motivation, offering personalised content (subject) material and developing collaborative abilities. Social media enhances relationships because a lot of people nowadays communicate with their friends every now and then on Facebook and WhatsApp.

Social media in the recent times has improved learning motivation as students can download materials and share with their fellow students.

Khan, Ayaz and Faheem (2016) in their descriptive study, investigated the role of social media in English vocabulary development among students in public and private universities in Malaysia. Using a sample of 36 university teachers selected randomly, Khan, Ayaz and Faheem study concluded that social media role is dominant in vocabulary development of English language at university level. Their findings noted that social media facilitates the learning of English in the sense that learners are able to learn new words and phrases and improve their vocabulary. However, much as vocabulary can be developed from other social media and other contexts, this study focused on the writing skill of the vocabulary acquired by students in public secondary school. The main objective was to assess the influence of social media on the writing student's skills.

2.3 Influence of WhatsApp and Facebook on students writing skills

White (2009) undertook a tremendously significant five-week study titled: "The use of Facebook to improve motivation and academic writing" on Japanese university students to see whether or not Facebook contributes to effective learning by creating a discussion group on Facebook. This scholar proceeded by providing, each week for five weeks, a question for discussion on Facebook. Students received prompt feedback on their writings. In their first week of the discussion group, 87 grammar mistakes were noted. These types of mistakes were actually due to students' use of informal English. The teacher gave them feedback in this area and addressed common issues pertaining to their writings for improvement's sake. The second week saw a decrease in terms of grammar mistakes by almost two thirds. The teacher kept their progress under watch using four elements, namely grammar mistakes, spelling mistakes, words written

and motivation. Once spotted, common grammatical mistakes were posted on the Facebook group wall for discussion. Hence, students learnt from their own and their peers' previous mistakes and heeded the grammar advice for further writings. At the end of the fifth week, they witnessed great improvements in grammar and spelling. White (2009)'s study came up with the conclusion that Facebook contributes to positive learning outcomes on students written assignments as well as on their motivation for learning. This idea is corroborated by Promnitz-Hayashi (2011) in his study titled: "A Learning Success Story Using Facebook" by asserting that "simple activities in Facebook helped a lower language proficient class to become more comfortable participating in online discussions, giving their opinions and forging closer relationships with their fellow classmates" (Promnitz – Hayashi, 2011, p 309).

Rodríguez-Hoyos and colleagues (2015) also discuss the most recurrent lines of research since the emergence of language of Facebook and WhatsApp tools in education. They argue that most studies are carried out in higher education and that the largest category consists of research that focused on the analysis of the potential of Facebook and WhatsApp as educational tools, such as the development of teaching-learning processes, the transformation of social relations, the discussion about the benefits, potential and attitudes of different educational agents and students, and the ethical implications arising from the use of these sites for educational aims. The authors also demonstrate the need to widen lines of research on Facebook and WhatsApp to include unexplored or little explored dimensions, such as how children are using these sites outside school that could impact on their academic performance, geographical differences in the use of these sites that could influence attitudes, resistance as well as actual uses, and gender differences in the use and the construction of symbolic representations of these tools.

Likewise, a study conducted in Taiwan by Wang, Lin, Yu, Wu (2013) yielded the same result. In this study, students demonstrated positive attitudes toward language learning, participated in online discussions in an enjoyable and motivating way and were able to build confidence as well. Similarly, McCarthy (2010) confirmed similar results in his four-year study to evaluate the use of Facebook as an online learning environment between 2008 and 2011. Among the key findings of his study is that Facebook is an educational tool that “negates key pitfall such as language barriers and social inhibitions” (McCarthy, 2010, p. 341).

A very recent study, conducted by Chepkemai, Situma & Murunga (2018), sought to probe the impacts of social media use on students written assignments. These scholars found that informal language creeps into students’ academic writings. Accordingly, this study recommends that students should write formal English in social media platforms. In addition, Shih (2011) investigated how the use of Facebook as a blended learning tool affected the learner’s writing abilities when integrated with writing class instruction.

Broadly, studies on the relationship between social media use and writing ability are not all homogenous and consistent. Some argue in favour of the beneficial academic aspect of social media use while others have contrary opinion. In a nutshell, different uses of social media applications and how users use technology is a determining factor which impacts students writing performances. Certain uses result in good productivity while other uses lead to language deterioration.

2.4 How to improve students' academic Writing Skills in view of the influence of WhatsApp and Facebook

In this study, the researcher focused on writing skill, especially writing sentences. Writing is considered as a productive skill. In writing, students learn how to write words, sentences, paragraph, and texts in grammatically correct ways. In addition, Raimes (1983) explains that writing is also important to help students in learning the foreign language; first, it reinforces the grammatical structure, idioms, and vocabulary that the teacher has been teaching students.

Further, when the students write, they also have a chance to be adventurous with the language and become very involved with the new language. Using social media, students' express ideas coupled with constant use of eye, hand and brain is a unique way to new language is reinforced. In addition, Sharples (1999) states that writing is an opportunity that allows students to express themselves, explore and explain ideas. Hence, writing is an excellent communication tool. It is one of the ways to communicate to others. Since, communication is not only in spoken form, but also in the written form.

It is noticeable that with the introduction of social media onto the scene, the effect it has on students writing is gradually but surely manifesting. The effect of social media language is mostly seen in these areas: grammar and spelling errors and the usage of text language. Grammar and spelling errors are the common errors social media language has brought on to the English Language. Nowadays, writing on social media is quite trendy and social media users are in a hurry to put things out in written forms without giving recourse to the quality of information they put out. They do not consider to review their status updates and even graphics before uploading them, even though the application or site makes adequate provisions for that. They just put it out

there and expect that society will excuse any spelling error as typographical or a newly introduced form of writing.

Facebook and WhatsApp have brought conflicts to writing as students transfer these inappropriate and incorrect grammar and spellings in social media to their writings at school. Abbreviations, symbols and short forms that are common in social media are frowned upon in formal writing. It is sad to note that students' academic writing is now marked by social media abbreviated words (text speak) and slang even though teachers emphasise on the need for students to spell words correctly and not use text speak or slang.

In a study carried out by Ebele and Nwanua (2017) on the features of English on social media, it was discovered that many students use Facebook as part of their daily lives to connect with friends, share and receive when others update their statuses. Though their study is near synonymous with this study, it differs based on the fact that theirs is limited to Nigerian students' use of the social media platform while this has targeted the influence of Facebook and WhatsApp on secondary school students writing skill in Malawi. In a study carried out by Ebele and Nwanua (2017) on the features of English on social media, it was discovered that many students use Facebook as part of their daily lives to connect with friends, share and receive when others update their statuses. Though their study is near synonymous with this study, it differs based on the fact that theirs is limited to Nigerian students' use of the social media platform while this has targeted the influence of Facebook and WhatsApp on secondary school students writing skill in Malawi.

In Malawian secondary schools, learners are encouraged to learn language skills such as speaking, listening, writing and reading (Government of Malawi, 2013). This is done in the learning of a language such as English or Chichewa which are official and national medium of communication in Malawi, respectively. However, the process of learning language skills is done with difficulty. Mbano (2004) supports this point by stressing that on the teaching of composition writing in Community Day Secondary Schools, writing creatively is a major challenge for learners. In most cases learners have problems in a variety of aspects of writing. These problems range from linguistic or rhetorical skills to producing appropriate responses in different forms and functions (Mbano, 2004). Mbano (2004) stresses that in linguistic skills, learners' construction of sentences is riddled or confused with fragmented run-on sentences. Similarly, in rhetorical skills, organisation of ideas to develop a coherent paragraph is difficult. They often have difficulties in the use of different forms and functions of writing and choosing appropriate style which matches the text. Their language therefore, fails to achieve lucidity of language and thought

From the reviewed literature, the authors have pointed out that excessive use of social media has become harmful to young learners and leads to failure to master proper writing skills in the English language. The authors have further stated that social media activities have a negative effect on basic academic and scientific learning and writing skills. The study conducted by Adawiah and Rachmawati (2021) has shown that academic writing skills among learners in high schools and universities are affected significantly and adversely by social media activities. The authors have pointed out that learners often take shortcuts in school writing activities, and that shortcuts and abbreviations that are commonly used on social networks often result in poor

written language. The authors have also found that text-shortcuts and abbreviations are increasingly being used in formal written language. The aim of the study is to investigate and analyse the influence of Facebook and WhatsApp on secondary school students writing skills.

2.5 Theoretical Framework

In order to investigate the influence of Facebook and WhatsApp on secondary school students writing skills, the study used two theories of Constructivist theory by Bruner (1966) and Writing Approaches by Braddock et al. (1963).

2.5.1 Constructivism

Constructivism is a learning theory deep-rooted in psychology that explains how people learn and how they acquire knowledge. This theory has a direct implication for education. In a nutshell, the Constructivism Theory advocates that humans construct knowledge and meaning from their experiences (Bada & Olusegun, 2015). The core element of this theory is that human learning is constructed where new knowledge is built upon the foundation of prior learning and experiences. The two fundamental notions that orbit around constructed knowledge are that learners modify new learning experiences according to their previous knowledge. The second notion is that the learning is active and not passive. These notions imply that the constructivist teacher is not “a sage on the stage” but rather a “guide on the side” (Hoover 2015).

In addition, constructivist theory is based on the idea that learners are active participants in their learning journey and that knowledge is constructed based on experiences. As events occur, each person reflects on their experience and incorporates the new ideas with their prior knowledge. The theory of constructivist learning is vital to understanding how students learn. The idea that students actively construct knowledge is central to constructivism. Students add (or build) their

new experiences on top of their current foundation of understanding. As stated by Woolfolk (1993, p. 14) “learning is active mental work, not passive reception of teaching”.

Constructivist theory relates to the study because students search for the truth using the medium of social media which encourages social interaction between teacher and student, and student and student. The knowledge is acquired through a shared understanding between learner and educator. This study focuses on social interaction through the medium of social media (learning process) where learning takes place that improves knowledge and skills. Secore (2017) briefly explains that knowledge is constructed by the learner where their existing knowledge is transformed through experiences. Since learning is a social process, the Social Constructivist Theory can be applied. However, since the social milieu of social media learning has many facets, it is important to understand the social context in which this learning takes place.

Mobile learning through a social media application allows for both individualised and collaborative learning to take place. Mobile learning studies have provided empirical evidence which supports its effectiveness in the learning process. These social learning activities include: the sharing of information, debates, and discussions (Chuchu 2019). The social learning activities suggest that the Social Constructivist Theory is appropriate to this study. It forms the cornerstone of this study and thrives on the fact that social media, and more specifically WhatsApp and Facebook, being a social tool, can also be viewed as a learning tool and a platform in which the process of learning takes place. The constructivist approach attaches much importance to the journey (a process of learning) as it does to the destination (acquisition of knowledge) (Lynch, 2016).

Social media provides new means and opportunities for learning that are consistent with major tenets of both, social and cognitive constructivism, and extend the process of learning and

meaning construction to more diverse communities and universally accessible shared activities that are jointly and concurrently engaged in by both peers and experts. The study has focused much on the influence of social media on secondary school learners writing skill.

2.5.2 Writing Approaches

The development in ESL composition has, to some extent, been influenced by developments in the teaching of writing to native speakers of English. “A simplistic view of writing would assume that written language is simply the graphic representation of spoken language...” (Brown, 2001 p. 335). Writing is more complex than this; hence writing pedagogy is important, as Brown states by claiming that writing is “as different from speaking as swimming is from walking” (2001.p. 335). This is supported and developed by Hedge, who states that writing is more than producing accurate and complete sentences and phrases. She states that writing is about guiding students to: “produce whole pieces of communication, to link and develop information, ideas, or arguments for a particular reader or a group of readers...” (2005 p.10). Therefore, effective writing requires several things: a high degree of organisation regarding the development and structuring of ideas, information and arguments.

2.6 Chapter Summary

The chapter analysed literature from several studies that form the basis of this study. The major premise from these studies is that social media networks have an impact on students learning outcome. The literature review has also highlighted the theoretical framework of the study.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 Chapter overview

This chapter mainly deals with the methodology which was used in this study for collecting data and selecting participants. The chapter consists of the following sections: research approach, research design, research paradigm, area of the study, population of the study, sample selection, sampling techniques, data collection instruments, trustworthiness and credibility of instruments, data analysis techniques and ethical considerations.

3.2 Research Approach

The study adopted a qualitative approach which allowed the researcher to go into the in depth of issues so that one understands the issues. For the researcher to come up with how the social media affect writing skills in secondary school students, there is need to listen to their narratives hence the qualitative approach. This approach also enabled a researcher to understand social problems from multiple perspectives. The qualitative approach also helped in gaining insight and understanding of the influence of whatsapp and Facebook, also aims at exploring the experiences of the students and teachers (Kothari, 2009; Creswell et.al (2009).

Creswell (2012) agrees when he states that qualitative research helps in exploring a problem and developing a detailed understanding of a central phenomenon.

3.3 Research Design

This study used a descriptive case study design. The study used teachers of English and students of the selected schools P, Q, and R in Mangochi district. Greig et al. (2007) define a case study as an investigation of an individual, a family, a group, an institution, a community or even a resource programme or intervention. In this study, a case study was a strategy of inquiry in which the researcher explored in depth the influence of social media platforms such as Facebook and WhatsApp on students writing skill.

Case studies are advantageous because learners are studied in their naturalistic school environment. This can provide information on both, their relationships and the process required to achieve English language writing proficiency (Denscombe, 2007). However, case studies have been criticised for lack of generalisability. The information which is obtained is often seen as only being applicable to the case under investigation and yet qualitative researchers consider case study as bedrock of scientific inquiry (Broomley, 1986). The fact is that many discoveries and advances in theory have been spurred by case study research.

3.4 Research paradigm

The study used the interpretivism research paradigm. According to Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2012), the interpretive researcher assumes that access to reality is only through social constructions such as language consciousness, shared meanings and instructions. It is originally rooted in the fact that methods used to understand knowledge related to human and social science cannot be the same as its usage in physical sciences, because human beings interpret their world differently. Then they act based on such interpretation of their world.

In this case, the researcher explored multiple views on students' perception towards the use of WhatsApp and Facebook through interviews. This paradigm helped the researcher to gain deeper understanding of the concept, in its unique context instead of trying to generalise the base of understanding for the whole population. Interpretations helped the researcher to understand the diverse ways of seeing and experiencing the world through different contexts and cultures thereby trying to avoid bias in his study.

The main advantage of the interpretive paradigm is that, with the diverse views to look into the phenomena, the researcher not only describes objects, humans, or events, but also deeply understand them in social context (Creswell, 2007). This helped the researcher to have a true reflection on how the participants behave in their natural setting through interviews and document analysis and direct interaction online. Using this paradigm, the researcher critically analysed how students use the language in their writings. Having deep insights on the issue under study helped the researcher to have more authentic information related to the objectives of the study (Tuli, 2010). Therefore, interpretivism was a suitable paradigm for this study because it provided the opportunity to the researcher to collect data which was relevant to the study. This also helped the researcher to come up with a true reflection on how students are influenced by social media in Malawian secondary schools other than generalising the phenomena.

3.5 Research site

The study was conducted in Mangochi cluster in Mangochi District. This cluster falls under the South East Education Division (SEED). The researcher selected three schools namely: P, Q and R. The schools were chosen because they are located in an area where it is likely that the students in these schools must be users of Facebook and WhatsApp. Mostly, people in the urban

centre are more likely to access technology more than those in remote areas. Smart phones for example, requires constant charging and availability of data for the access of Facebook and WhatsApp so electricity and financial security for data are more accessible to the youth in urban areas. This is the case since parents are mostly employed or do businesses and electricity is plenty.

Table 3.1 shows the list of the schools where the research study was conducted. The MH in the school's name column stands for Mangochi.

Table 3. 1: Names of Research schools

SCHOOL NO	NAME OF SCHOOL
1	MH. P
2	MH. Q
3	MH. R

3.6 Target population

The study was conducted in form 3 class. This was the case because the senior class has matured students. They can ably use smartphones for different purposes. Form four class was not the option because they were busy preparing for their examinations at the time data was being collected as such the researcher saw it fit to purposively choose form three class so that the form fours are not disturbed.

The researcher randomly selected teachers to the sample in the schools under study. The teachers whom the researcher targeted are those teaching languages more specifically English. This is the case because the researcher would like to investigate how social media influence the writings in English.

3.7 Sampling techniques and sample size

The researcher came up with a representative sample of the study as follows:

3.7.1 Sampling techniques

The primary purpose of sampling was to select a suitable population that could minimise time and financial resources. Purposive sampling was used to come with a sample in order to learn how social media has influenced students English writing skills. The choice of a class to be form three was purposively done as stated area on. The participants to the study again were those who use social media at their free times, in short those who have access to social media. This was also purposively done though the students were stratified into two groups; those with access to social media and those who have no access.

The group which comprised those who access social media was considered in the first category. From this group the researcher used a systematic random sampling to come up with the sample representative. The target sample was five per school. The researcher also target two teachers from each school and these are English teachers. English teachers were selected randomly. The names of the teachers were written on small papers and placed in a box and the papers were mixed and two papers were selected. The names on those papers participated to the study. This was done per school.

3.7.2 Sample size

The researchers wanted an in depth interaction with the participants as such the sample number was reduced so that the chats should be rich. The sample considered to the study is five students per school and two teachers per school as well. The total sample from schools were fifteen students and six teachers. The researcher also interacted with other nine students who were

picked at random on social media platform and the chat was online. To appreciate how they actually use language on social media.

Table 3. 2: Study sample size

Sample	Number of Participants
Teachers	6
Students	24
Total	30

3.8 Data Collection procedure

The data collected was both primary and secondary data. Secondary data was collected from artifacts mainly document analysis while primary data was collected from the representatives of the sample. Interviews of the participants, analysis of documents and smartphone conversation analysis.

3.8.1 Smartphone conversational screenshots

The researcher engaged with the targeted students into a WhatsApp or Facebook interaction. The collection of screenshots that capture the exact words and images that secondary students converse on their digital devices and the order and timeframe were collected. The researcher presented a composition topic or an issue for discussion on a WhatsApp forum to the nine participants. Each participant was asked to write their input on the issue at hand. This was done in order to understand how WhatsApp and Facebook has influenced their writing. The researcher used the screenshots since it represented threads of experience on their writing skills through content of their conversation.

3.8.2 Interviews

The researcher used interviews to collect data. The interview schedule was designed so that it should remain as a framework for questions. Some follow up questions will be asked basing on the responses of the participants. The teachers had their own interview schedule different from that of the students. The researcher recorded all the responses from each participant so that they would be used later. These interviews were done so that the researchers gets the in depth of the information one requires. The interview guides were necessary so that the chats are guided and the required data is filtered. Creswell (2014) argues that use of interview as a method of data generation may provide information in a designated place rather than the natural field setting and it should be taken into account that not all people are equally accurate and perceptive. Since participants may not be accurate, the researcher also analysed documents for easy triangulation.

3.8.3 Document Analysis (DA)

The researcher reviewed some existing documents produced by the students such as letters and written essays. The analysis aimed at pointing out the formation of words which might be associated with media usage. For example the short forms of some elements and the spelling of other elements. These writing would be matched with those found on social media platforms such as Whatsapp and Facebook. The researcher generated these essays from the participating students. The researcher reviewed documents to substantiate to the data generated during the interviews.

3.9 Data Collection Instruments

Data collection tools refer to the devices/instruments used to collect data, such as a paper questionnaire or computer-assisted interviewing system. Checklists, Interview guide and a voice recorder were used to collect data.

3.9.1 Interview guide

The researcher products a set of questions to be asked to the participants and the researcher took the role of the interviewer and recorded all the responses. Each participant was interviewed separately and privately so that other participants do not listen to the responses of the interviewed participants to avoid a tendency of participants giving same responses.

3.9.2 Notepad

The researcher came up with a list of items and things which were to be checked during the observations. In the current study, the researcher came up with a checklist of grammatical and mechanical errors in the written documents of students, who do and do not use social media. The researcher used the checklist in order to identify grammatical and mechanical errors committed by students who do and do not use social media.

3.9.3 Voice Recorder

The researcher recorded the conversations with the respondents. This was done to cover up for the shortfalls in writing responses to the interview question. In addition, using a voice recorder helped the researcher to keep record of the interview and to revisit them in case of gaps in the collected information.

3.10 Data Analysis

Data analysis involves a systematic search for meaning from the data collected in order to communicate the findings to others effectively (Creswell, 2012). The data collected in this study was qualitative in nature hence subjected to thematic analysis. Thematic organisation and analysis refer to the process that identifies, analyses and reports the occurrence of themes in the collected data. The process followed the six steps: familiarising with the data, transcribing data, generation of initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing the themes, defining and naming themes that were developed and producing the reports (Braun and Clarke, 2013). Firstly, interview notes and audio recordings were transcribed verbatim. This work started as soon as data was collected to ensure the researcher did not miss any information due to time passage.

3.11 Trustworthiness and credibility

Trustworthiness assurance is particularly vital in qualitative research, where the researcher's subjectivity can so readily influence interpretation of the data (Creswell, 2013). In order to mitigate biasedness, the researcher used the triangulation approach of data collection in order to assure credibility of data. Triangulation works on the assumption that, when different methods of data collection yield similar findings on the same research questions, the research findings are judged to be credible the research, researcher must obtain data that is valid.

3.11.1 Triangulation

Triangulation refers to the use of multiple methods or data sources in qualitative research to develop a comprehensive understanding of phenomena (Patton, 2002). Triangulation also has been viewed as a qualitative research strategy to test validity through the convergence of

information from different sources. Moleong (2011) states that triangulation is a technique that utilises data validity that exploits something else. Triangulation was a method to enhance researchers understanding about what was being investigated.

3.11.2 Peer review

Peer review and checking have been used to enhance the accuracy of the findings. This process involves locating some people as peer reviewers who review, proofread and ask questions about the study (Creswell, 2009). This has assisted in identifying errors and ambiguity of concepts for correction and rephrasing of ideas in the study.

3.11.3 Use of participants verbatim quotes

Including verbatim spoken words from research participants has become effectively standard practice in much qualitative social research. In order to ensure credibility and trustworthiness of the study, the researcher used participants' quotes in some instances to show the actual information generated from a respondent (Harding, 2013). Direct quotations from respondents show what they know and their attitudes and perceptions on a particular issue, which in turn ensures authenticity.

3.12 Ethical issues and consideration

Ethical issues are intended to serve as guidelines for practice to ensure that participants in research projects are protected from harm and are not deceived. Therefore, every researcher needs to consider carefully before, during and after the conduct of a research study, the ethical concerns that can affect their research participants (McMillan & Schumacher, 1993). Bearing this important aspect in mind, the researcher took into consideration the following ethical issues to

ensure that the participants were protected from any harm for the information that they provided in the study.

3.12.1 Privacy and confidentiality

Firstly, participants were assured of maximum privacy and confidentiality. The researcher did not disclose their names, identities or information which they provided to other people anyhow throughout the study. Additionally, no any identification marks were written on any page of the interview guide questions. The researcher also clearly explained the purpose and importance of the study to them and how their involvement fits in the research as a whole. Moreover, every participant's right to information about the research before, during and after data generation was highly respected.

3.12.2 Deception and consent

Besides privacy and confidentiality, the researcher also ensured that there was informed consent of the participants (Appendix 3). To ensure this, the researcher made an agreement with the participants by informing them that their participation in the study was willfully and voluntary. Therefore, participants were informed that they had the right to participate, or not to participate, and to withdraw from the study at any time they feel uncomfortable with the study. In addition, for identity purposes of the researcher, the researcher provided her school identity card in order to convince the participants that the data she collected was for academic purposes only.

3.12.3 Getting permission from gate keepers

Lastly, the researcher got a letter of clearance from MZUNIREC (Appendix 4), an introductory letter from Mzuzu University registry (Appendix 5) and permission letter from the Education Division Manager (EDM) to carry out the research (Appendix 6).

3.13 Chapter Summary

This chapter has discussed the methodological framework that was used in the study. The general approach focusing on data generating methods and methods of analysing data have been presented. Furthermore, negotiations on the research site, ethical issues, credibility and trustworthiness of the study has also been highlighted.

CHAPTER 4

PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS

4.1 Chapter Overview

This chapter presents and discusses the findings of the study according to the objectives that were set out at the beginning and the themes that emerged from the data yielded by the study. The study sought to investigate the influence of Facebook and WhatsApp on secondary school students writing skills. The three specific objectives were: to find out students' perception towards WhatsApp and Facebook in relation to students English writing skills, discuss the influence of WhatsApp and Facebook on students' academic writing skills and describe ways on how to improve students writing skills in view of the influences caused by the influence of WhatsApp and Facebook. As a preamble to the presentation and discussion of the findings, the chapter, firstly, highlights the demographic data of the study sites and study participants.

4.2 Demographic data

The researcher conducted the study at three secondary schools in Mangochi district of South East Education Division (SEED) in Malawi. Mangochi, a district that lies on the lakeshore of Lake Malawi, has lagged behind in education performance in the country. The schools were coded P, Q and R. Demographically, Mangochi is the second district with the largest population in Malawi and has an estimated 12,000 secondary school going students. With a specific focus on the use of WhatsApp and Facebook among secondary school learners in formal educational settings, Mangochi is one of the districts that has a high influx of smart phones due to high rate of people who trek to South Africa for green pastures, which in turn has led to a lot of students being exposed to WhatsApp and Facebook. Table 4.1 provides the characteristics of research sites that were involved in the study.

Table 4. 1: Characteristics of Research Sites

Characteristics	School P	School Q	School R
Learners access to smartphones	No easy access (strict policy of no phones)	Easy access to phones (no strict policy)	Secretly had access to phones
Schools' environment	Restricted Boarding (Conducive learning)	Day scholars (Not conducive)	Day Scholars Semi-restricted (conductive learning)
Accessibility to smartphones at home	During holidays had easy access to phones	At home it was not easy to access their phones (parents/guardians monitored their studies)	Had the liberty to access the phones
Type of school	District Boarding	CDSS	Conventional Day
Uses of the phone	Calling	Messaging	Calling & messaging

In School P, students were not allowed to have/possess smart phones, they have a strict policy of no phones for students. School Q and R are not boarding schools, as such students have access to smart phones both at school and home, respectively. The specific uses of the phones when at school are for calling and messaging. This use can also be accessed on Facebook and WhatsApp as popular social media sites among secondary school students.

To obtain socio-demographic characteristics, the schools name, type of school, accessibility to smartphones/phones (both at school and home) and type of usage were questioned. In addition,

the students' birth date and gender were inquired. Among the participants, most students in school Q recorded high access to smart phones (33%) compared to school P (17%) and Q (21%) due to strict rules of no phone at school. A higher proportion (47%) of girls were using smartphones compared to boys (33%). The students mostly used smartphones for text messaging (WhatsApp and Facebook), across all schools rather than voice calls. This pattern was also reflected in their preference to use data bundles and voice bundles. The study drew inspiration largely from sociocultural constructivism as espoused by Vygotsky (1978). Socio-cultural constructivism construes learning as a social activity which asserts that social interaction is an essential component of cognitive development in learning (Vygotsky, 1978). As such, WhatsApp and Facebook are social media tools that enhance social interaction among learners in secondary schools.

4.3 Participants Bio-data

This study had sampled 15 learners (5 from each school), 6 teachers (2 from each school) and purposively sampled 9 learners who were active users of WhatsApp and Facebook, to have a hands -on experience on the effects of WhatsApp and Facebook on learners academic writing skills. Table 4.2 below shows the participants' bio-data from the three schools.

Table 4. 2: Participants Bio data

	School P	School Q	School R
Male Learners	3	2	2
Female Learners	2	3	3
Age 10-14	4	3	4
Age 15-19	1	1	1
Age 20 above	0	1	0
Male Teacher	1	1	1
Female Teacher	1	1	1

Male active users	2	1	1
Female active users	1	2	2

Table 4.2 presents the demographic characteristics of the research participants. It could be seen that 7 respondents representing 46.6% were male learners while 8 respondents representing 53.3% were female learners. In the age distribution category, age 10-14 had the highest number of participants (73.3%) compared to age 15-19 (20%) and age 20 above (6.6%). On teachers' distribution, it was a 50:50 representation. Lastly, 4 respondents representing 44.4% were male learners who were active users of Facebook and WhatsApp while 8 participants representing 55.5% were female learners who were active users of Facebook and WhatsApp.

4.4 Access to ICT tools

The technological advancement and innovations in information and communication technology paved the way to use the internet as a daily routine activity for the digital society. Today, mostly 16 to 24-year-old people are regularly connected with internet through wired or wireless technology to incorporate various features in the same device such as listening to music, calling, internet surfing, instant messaging, social networking and so on (Barnes & Mattson, 2009). Students are using Smartphone, computer (both desktop and laptop), iPad which attracts them more towards using various social media platforms as their daily routine and maximum access as well (Al Harrasi & Al-badi, 2014). Thus, broadly considering the association between social media and education, the further discussion is directed toward positive as well as negative prospects. Table 4.3 below summarises access to ICT tools in the study.

Table 4. 3: Access to ICT tools

ACCESS	YES	NO
Computer	47.5%	52.5%

Laptop	2.5%	97.5%
iPad	30%	70%
Internet	100%	0%
Smartphone	97.5%	2.5%

As **Table 4.3** shows, accessibility towards information and communication technology (ICT) depends on the participants' exposure to different technological gadgets. Among all these, all respondents had access to the Internet. This is followed by 97.5% of the respondents' accessing smartphones. The reason they could easily access WhatsApp and Facebook using smartphones and easy mobile data subscription. As most of the applications are easy to install and user friendly, most of the respondents had accessibility to the Internet and social media. About 2.5% of the respondents had access to a laptop while 97.5% did not. Most of them agreed that they only used the laptops during learning sessions in school with the guide of teachers and peers. The lowest can be seen where only 30% of respondents have access to iPad and 70% did not. Since iPads are quite costly and some of them could not afford to have one, they switched to a better option, smartphones. Thanks to these social network technologies, users take charge of their own learning by communicating and sharing their concepts on various topics and issues. At present, the most popular and attractive social networking communities include WhatsApp and Facebook. Hence, the study investigated the influence of WhatsApp and Facebook on secondary school students writing skills.

4.5 The perceptions of secondary students towards the use of WhatsApp and Facebook in relation to writing skills

4.5.1 Factors influencing students to use social media

Using the interview method, the researcher discovered that a large number of students identified factors influencing the use of Facebook and WhatsApp. This in itself revealed their perception towards the use of WhatsApp and Facebook. To every student, social media means a lot and brings in an attitude within them towards one or both forms of social media. Respondents were first asked a question on the types of social media platforms that are mostly used. This required them to respond affirmatively or in negation. In general, twelve student respondents and four teacher respondents were seemingly affirmative and they pointed out several social media platforms that are mostly used. However, a closer examination of the responses on types of social media platforms frequently used revealed that there are social media platforms which are preferred most than others. For example, the majority of the respondents said that Facebook was frequently used. Again, a statistically, higher proportion of respondents. The other respondents on a smaller scale also pointed out about YouTube, Instagram, Skype and Twitter as some of the social media platforms used by students. These findings correlate with the findings by Lenhart (2015) who states that Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, online games and Snap chat are the common social media platforms used by students and the youth. The study however, opted for Facebook and Whatsapp for they are the most prominently used among the youths of this sampled site for the research.

As regards the factors influencing the use of social media by students, several factors were identified including learning, having fun, developing friendship and interaction. In this regard students were using social media such as YouTube to view video clips from television shows, movies and home videos. They also used WhatsApp when their phones are connected to the

internet to send and receive messages, calls, photos or videos. This was followed by developing relationships which enabled them to establish friendship with other people on the online community and connecting with other people whom they chat with while learning or playing. The results further revealed that students highly used social media to share interest with other people and for learning purposes. In terms of learning, Facebook and WhatsApp as the frequently used platforms, provides an exciting learning platform where students can access information outside related to their studies. They also share books and notes on various subjects using the platforms. . They provide easy access to audio-visual materials and they also enhance learning. This is in line with what constructivist theory advocates that students add (or build) their new experiences on top of their current foundation of understanding. As stated by Woolfolk (1993, p. 14) “learning is active mental work, not passive reception of teaching”. The more they interact on social media the more they gain new knowledge. In addition, students can form study groups which facilitate better means through which students improve their studies. Also, teachers connect with students to provide ready study materials that are helpful and useful. There is a positive and significant influence of the nature of usage with students’ academic performance. Similar findings by Anne (2019) reveal that social networking sites provide an avenue for students to join interesting groups that allow them to learn new skills in the area of their choice.

These findings resonate with the study by de Haan and Huysmans (2002) which shows that students are increasingly spending most of their free time on social media. Also, the study by Boyd (2017) shows that students use social media due to a range of reasons such as students need to continue relationship or connect with others, or play online games with others. In enhancing learning, the above findings are justified by Paul (2012) who revealed that social media influence students’ academic performance. Some students can spend time on social media platforms and yet their performance for the term or academic year still remains the same. There is a positive and significant relationship between friends and people connections, and students’ academic performance.

4.5.2 Social media and language

The responses from the teachers from the three selected schools, revealed that the quality of language spoken and written by secondary school students is gradually deteriorating and deviating from the conventional standard as a result of improper and unprofessional usage on social media communication, which ultimately brings to fore new phrases and words.

4.5.3 Usage of Facebook and WhatsApp among secondary school students

Facebook and WhatsApp are global large social media platforms that boost more than one billion users, and are one of the fastest growing and best-known sites on internet these days. The interactive feature of Facebook and WhatsApp is believed to provide students with great opportunities to practice their writing. In other words, students post their written pieces, receive comments, write and post their own comments and reply to other Facebook group members. Therefore, this interactive communication enables students to actively engage in the writing process and improve their writing skills.

4.5.3.1 Students learn to write English through the usage of Facebook and WhatsApp

In response to this objective, respondents said social media especially WhatsApp and Facebook are of great benefit to them socially and academically as far as writing is concerned. Students perceive Facebook and WhatsApp as useful tools for formal teaching and learning especially writing as revealed by one of the students in the following excerpt:

I practice my writing abilities on social media applications especially Facebook and WhatsApp better than in a classroom situation. In classroom we are always bound by time set for us by our teachers during lesson delivery (S5 interview, 2022).

Some students still perceive social media as a destructive platform. To them it just wastes their time since they find themselves attracted to other activities other than education issues.

Me I feel like being disturbed because of social media. I find it time consuming that is why sometimes I fail to meet my target in education
(S8 interview, 2022).

Facebook and WhatsApp are large global social media platforms that boost more than one billion users, and are one of the fastest growing and best-known sites on internet. The interactive feature of Facebook and WhatsApp is believed to provide students with great opportunities to practice their writing. In other words, students post their written pieces, receive comments, write and posts their own comments and reply to other Facebook group members. Therefore, this interactive communication enables students to actively engage in the writing process and improve their writing skills. This idea is supported by Top (2012), who states that although social media was perceived as a type of technology used mainly for social and entertainment purposes, it has gradually been adapted for use in education.

According to Lau (2012), online social networks help initiate learning activities among students. Thus, students who use online social networks develop their writing abilities. This finding has also been supported by Mao (2014), who says that social media is believed to be so useful in education, especially writing. True to this, most students believe they can improve their learning when using WhatsApp, and some students enjoy using social media for an assignment or their own learning after school. The study itself found that some students benefit from the use of

Facebook and Whatsapp while others get exploited and fail heavily. This implies that Facebook and Whatsapp impacts students writing abilities both positively and negatively.

4.5.3.2 Improved writing abilities through the use of Facebook and WhatsApp

In continuation, some respondents showed their positive perception towards the use of Facebook and WhatsApp. Students feel like these platforms provide good learning environment for English writing. They revealed that they were really impressed with their involvement in WhatsApp conversations as it helps them to develop and improve their English writing skills. In trying to find out how, respondents said it is possible to make such improvements since they do write some comments, responses and different ideas on different topics raised on their respective forums by friends. One student was quoted saying

Mostly, we chat in English, and I also write my ideas in English without looking at mistakes, little by little I improve my writing capability (S9 interview, 2022)

The study found that secondary school students find it a pleasure to be on Facebook and Whatsapp. This is because to them they improve their writing skills. Constructivism supports this as it advocates that learning occurs when individuals are actively involved (Biggie & Wilson, 2006). However, the study through document analysis discovered that students writing ability is somehow affected by some elements found on Whatsapp and Facebook. Thus, the reality on the ground is that they feature in what they experience on platforms hence language destruction. This has been supported by the study which was done by Adawiah and Rachmawati (2021) in which they found that academic writing skills among secondary and universities is affected significantly by social media activities.

4.5.3.3 Use of Facebook and WhatsApp on vocabulary improvement among students

The study found that students developed positive attitudes towards the use of Facebook and WhatsApp in writing for it helps them improve their vocabulary in English. As respondents comment on what their friends have posted they not only improve in writing but also gain critical thinking skills as they discuss on Facebook and WhatsApp.

During the interview session conducted at school P in May, 2022, S7 stated that:

Uhh... Ahh. Since WhatsApp and FB as I said that there are many information about school books that we learn on school, so many students can improve in writing capabilities since information what they collect from FB and WhatsApp. If we related it to what we learn and increases our vocabulary when you are making more information as I said it (S7 interview, 2022).

This finding is supported by Al-Fahad, whose study found that the use of WhatsApp increases the chances of vocabulary learning and it can provide explanation and elaboration of new words (Al-Fahad, 2009). Learners' group discussion and creating new sentences can also foster the process of vocabulary retention effectively as it allows learner to retrieve information. This helped learner to retain the words and use them in their speaking discussion. Hence their attitudes towards the used of the Whatsapp application turned positive during the interview sessions. Additionally, Whatsapp application proved to be a useful tool for developing speaking skills by increasing their developing their vocabulary which resultantly helped in improving their writing capability.

4.5.3.4 Students perceive the use of Facebook and WhatsApp as a motivating instrument for learning

The findings to the first specific objective also revealed that some students find this as a motivating platform to learn English as they interact with friends and relatives on WhatsApp and Facebook. During interview, one respondent came up confidently saying that through his daily scribbling on his smart phone he understands what people try to mean in what they write as quoted below:

I am greatly motivated to learn how to write in English. This is the sole reason I take social media as being so helpful. *Anzanga akamalemba chizungu ndimasilira nkuyesera, pangonopangono ndikumadziwa kulemba mchizungucho.* (I admire my friends who present their ideas and comments in English. So follow suit hence learning to write in English.) (S4 interview, 2022).

The study revealed that there were many students who were motivated and they plainly said they do participate in Facebook discussions. In a classroom situation, most students do not gather courage to share their ideas to peers. They are very open enough to write anything they feel is worth on social media platforms unlike when in classroom where they are restricted with rules of writing and time among other factors.

The motivation point has been supported by Murphy (2009) who affirmed that Facebook as an important platform, allows anonymous communication which help to create a state of anxiety free relaxation. Thus, Facebook can be used as a tool to facilitate active participation. On the same, Murphy's research found that much as active participation motivates students, it drives

them into becoming bad writers because they miss the writing rules which to them in this case is boring and time waster. This study would therefore, urge teachers to strongly advise their students on the demerits of ignoring classroom participation because of social media because they are automatically left behind. Studies by Al-Rahmi & Zeki 2017, Soufi et al, Soufi et al, Sheeran & Cummings 2018 have also shown that many students attribute social media such as Twitter, Facebook, and Whatsapp as an effective method of enhancing motivation and increasing interest in the learning environment. For instance, Soufi et al. (2015) conducted a study aiming to investigate the benefits of social platforms in education, particularly the impact on students' critical thinking and motivation to engage in learning. Research findings indicate that Whatsapp can nurture critical thinking and enhance motivation among students which state that their interest about content grows by using Whatsapp, and they are more inclined to read, write, and improve learning skills due to effects from social media. Based on these findings, the impactful influence of social media on student perceptions could be used as a motivational factor in learning environments (Soufi et al., 2015).

4.5.4 Influence of Facebook and WhatsApp on student's spellings in English written compositions

4.5.4.1 The use Facebook and Whatsapp has distracted student's quality of writing leading to informality.

The objective of the study was to find out the influence of Facebook and WhatsApp on students English writing skills. The researcher sought to know whether the use of Facebook and WhatsApp platforms influenced their writing skills. During the interviews, students responded

about their general experience on Facebook and WhatsApp, some of them described it as a positive experience.

Student H commented that:

Using Facebook and WhatsApp is not new or difficult and it makes me feel more comfortable than only depending on the teachers' instructional support. "Although I was not very active writer because I did not have a lot of free time, I liked coming to the platforms and see what everybody else was writing, and I used that as help for my writing (student, school P).

The researcher also sought to know whether the spelling check feature on Facebook and WhatsApp reduces spelling errors in English written compositions. Majority of the respondents agreed that they pay little attention to spellings when posting opinions on Facebook and WhatsApp because friends care less about spelling mistakes. The study established that students use short forms when commenting on their friend's posts or statuses. It was further established that most of the posts on Facebook and WhatsApp which had to do with academic spellings were seriously considered. One student respondent said that spelling check feature on Facebook and WhatsApp helps him reduce spelling errors in English composition writing. Some respondents disagreed with the statement that the spelling check feature in Facebook and WhatsApp help students reduce spelling errors in English compositions. This is because of their trend of majority paying little attention to spellings when posting opinions on Facebook and WhatsApp as their friends do.

The outcome of this study is consistent with the findings by Aydin (2012) who noted that words, abbreviations used on virtual platforms deteriorate student' vocabulary. Many learn the language

through observation and imitation in both speaking and writing. According to Aydin (2012), alternative words such as “sup” derived from “whats up” and “wuh” from “what” are good examples of elements deteriorating conventional spoken language and vocabulary. However, generally this study stands on the fact that social media affects students spelling during examination and when writing compositions, the negative effect also alters their conventional way of writing, which is unhealthy academically and formally.

The majority of the respondents also revealed that there are a number of challenges that students encounter when using social media. This has been influenced by their exposure to social media. The collected data from both interviews and smart phone conversations revealed that the totality of students had access to social media creating a sort of addiction, mainly to Facebook, which was reflected in the fact that they spend a long period of time using it. This dependence was harmful and influenced their writing abilities, an assumption confirmed by the teachers from all the three schools under study. Ghouali & Benmoussat, 2019 asserted that the extensive usage of social media devaluated the students’ lack of mastery and systemic language, insufficient reading and effortless work that were behind their low linguistic proficiency, and the non-respect of the English language norms. Through interviews and document analysis, it was noted that, the existence of Facebook and WhatsApp at school P has in one way or the other, greatly influenced students’ way of writing. Students tend to forget the formal way of writing which they were taught by their teachers.

One of the student respondents came up with this challenge, where she said:

In Facebook we use short forms when writing so that it should not consume our time. So when it comes to school, when in school, we forget that we are in class and we find we are copying the short forms that we are doing in media and put it in our exercises at school, this has affected many students (S1 interview, May, 2022).

The excerpt above shows that students writing skills have been challenged with the coming in of Facebook and WhatsApp. This is because these platforms have unique forms of writing which impresses students and happen to be time savers. This, however, conquers with Boyd's (2010) argument which says that social media has affected the society as a whole. It has affected students and all users to use shortened words, slang words and instant message when they socialize or communicate formal issues. Bandura (1977) says that through social learning system, new pattern of behaviour can be acquired through direct experience or by observing the behaviour of others. According to Bandura, a person cannot learn much by observation if he does not attend to, or recognise the essential features of the models behaviour. Holding the same views, one of the respondents, teacher G complained that teachers faced a lot of challenges at school, which hindered their students from effective display of academic writing skills as reflected in this excerpt:

Ok, the first problem is with those who use Facebook or whatsapp a lot because it's a social media which has no rules, which accepts both formality and informality those who use whatsapp are more prone to informality so even if they are writing, they will come up with some informal writings because they have been in social media which has both people (formal and informal). (T M, interview, May 2022).

Thus, students' exposure to writing experiences on Whatsapp and Facebook as observed by this teacher has made it difficult for students to gain their writing abilities with correctness and following the rules of grammar. This is in line with the study by Nitza and Roman (2016) which revealed that, WhatsApp instead of making communication easier and faster, thereby enhancing effective flow of information and idea sharing among undergraduate students, it rather has impacted negatively on the performance of students. They further noted that WhatsApp takes much of students study time; resulting in procrastination-related problems, destroys students' spelling and grammatical construction of sentences, leads to lack of concentration during lessons, resulting in difficulty in balancing online activities (WhatsApp) and academic preparation and distracts students from completing their assignments this finding is similar to that of yeboah and Ewu (2022) Constructivism conquer with this as it advocates that humans construct knowledge and meaning from their experiences (Bada & Olusegun, 2015). Students apply what they experience in their social platforms, become addicted hence messing up some formal writing rules and regulations.

4.5.4.2 Students have lost consciousness in grammar writing

The study noticed teachers concerns on their experiences they have had during their class interactions with their students. Students' ways of writing do not match with what teachers demand from them. According to student participants, they care less about the type of words or grammar they use. In their explanation, what matters is the message they convey not how they write. The researcher noticed that students' freedom of expression on social platforms has really influenced the way they write in academic tasks. One of the student respondents agrees to what students from school R said as in this excerpt:

Our freedom of expression on FB and WAP leads us to becoming unconscious in as far as our writing is concerned. We express our thoughts and opinions without checking on our spellings and grammar, we are therefore led to abbreviating, even words unknowingly (Student School Q)

True to this study it is revealed that use of Whatsapp and Facebook text messaging language has negative effects on students' academic writings and it highly touches the performance of the students. Positively, students will blend to technology in terms of social media. Nevertheless, the negative implication of it is that text messaging language is gradual progression in writing process and it definitely affected the writing performance of students to a greater extent. Text message is seen as a fractured language and definitely not as polished as Standard English language is concern. It is also indicated in this study that the students are having problems with knowing how to make use of good punctuation and spelling words correctly despite the fact that students believe that text messaging language they learn from Facebook and Whatsapp is one of the fastest means of writing, they also admit that it affects their academic writings. This equally affects and slows down their writing speed and accuracy. According to Nuttall (2005), learning how to spell and punctuate words correctly is vital, and it enhances writing standard.

The experiences students gain from the social media has a bearing on their writing abilities. This drive us to the conclusion that social media affect users negatively on language usage. The theory used in the study advocates that humans construct knowledge and meaning from their experiences (Bada & Olusegun, 2015).

4.6 How to improve student's writing skills in view of the use of WhatsApp and Facebook

The last objective was to discuss ways on how to improve students writing skills irrespective of them disturbed by WhatsApp and Facebook. Student respondents were asked if they see any hope in improving their ways of writing. They were positive in their responses. Findings on this objective also revealed that although there are challenges on students' way of writing with the coming in of Facebook and WhatsApp, there is still room for change since teachers and other

stakeholders are still in control. Through interviews the following were the themes developed which talks to the objective.

4.6.1 Providing students with helpful feedback after checking on their writing activities

In response to this objective, one among the student respondents plainly said that she misses her teachers' comments and remarks on what she has written.

The respondent said,

.....madam does not mark my compositions, so it is a problem for us to realise our mistakes. As I said, we are overtaken by joy I can say, and find ourselves using simple words without knowing we are becoming informal in our writing.

Teachers were also asked to make an evaluation on their learners' writing skills. Upon assessment of students' compositions and assignments, it was found that students committed spelling mistakes and opted for short forms of words instead of writing the full forms. With this statement they saw the reason why teachers should provide their students with regular feedback on their written compositions and any written work. One teacher from school P came out clearly and said that he makes sure he assists those students with writing problems.

Below is the excerpt:

I usually make sure I give my students feedback, it is through this that they know where they went wrong. I also believe in individual help whereby I handle my students depending on their individual problems. (Teacher G, school P).

In teaching and learning writing, of course, writing cannot be separated from the existence of feedback. Giving feedback to students during learning sessions is quite important and interesting for them. Students like to be provided feedback from their teachers because they want to know their level of knowledge. All respondents chose to agree with this statement. Respondents also said receiving feedback from the teacher and friends helped them in learning. There were also seven students who seemed to be very anxious to receive their feedback after writing exercises. According to the findings in the interviews, students feel curious about what their teachers think about their work, so sending feedback to them makes it easy for them to express their thought and correct their errors and mistakes where necessary. Compliments given by the teacher also make them feel happy and motivated to do the assignment better. Feedback from the teacher also help them in revising their work. They need direction in the form of constructive feedback in order to improve their writing, therefore, feedback makes them aware of mistakes made in writing (F. Handayani & Handayani, 2020; Faroha et al., 2016). Having great knowledge, students take such a teacher as a role model. The quality feedback will always improve students' way of thinking through its specific tips and corrections for each and every student. Through this, they will know where they have gone wrong. Little by little, they will change for the better.

The study through document analysis came across some of the writing mistakes made by students which were also in line with what teachers observed in their students works:

- ✓ Have instead of having (short forms)
- ✓ Buzy in place of busy (incorrect spellings)
- ✓ Bt for but
- ✓ Because spelled as bc. bcoz
- ✓ Diffrent for different

- ✓ Gud instead of good
- ✓ Sth for something
- ✓ btwn instead of between
- ✓ week in place of weak (confusing in identifying the correct pair of the word)
- ✓ then for than
- ✓ their instead of there

The above data suggest that the use of Facebook and WhatsApp text messaging negatively affects the writing skills of students. As a result, they unconsciously adopt the informal method of writing in their academic writings as well. The errors committed by the students in their compositions (essays) point towards their writing habits of Facebook and WhatsApp. They use short forms, incorrect spellings and are unable to differentiate between the pairs of words due to their poor writing habits on Facebook and WhatsApp messaging.

One of the teachers reported that:

Use of misspelled and/or shortened forms of English words such as u for you, ppo/pple for people, btwn for between, gud / bho for good, xool for school, dollar for money, chilling to mean chatting, chick to mean girl, bcoz to mean because, coz to mean cause, and et cetera (Teacher, School P)

This is a reflection of informal writing style hence it is true that students employ informal writing in academic written works. Overall, the majority of the teachers stated that students employ informal writing in English academic written work. Anika (2014) concurs with these findings by stressing that the use of abbreviated text spelling in students writing indicates that students employ informal writing style in academic written

works. She further asserts that her English language development students were more likely to write phrases that they see in text messages, such as “smthng or smbdy rather than learn to spell the word correctly. Harris (1993) concurs with Anika by stressing that the overused abbreviations, acronyms in students’ academic written work reflect the social media environment and informal writing. This is illustrated in Figure 4.1 below.

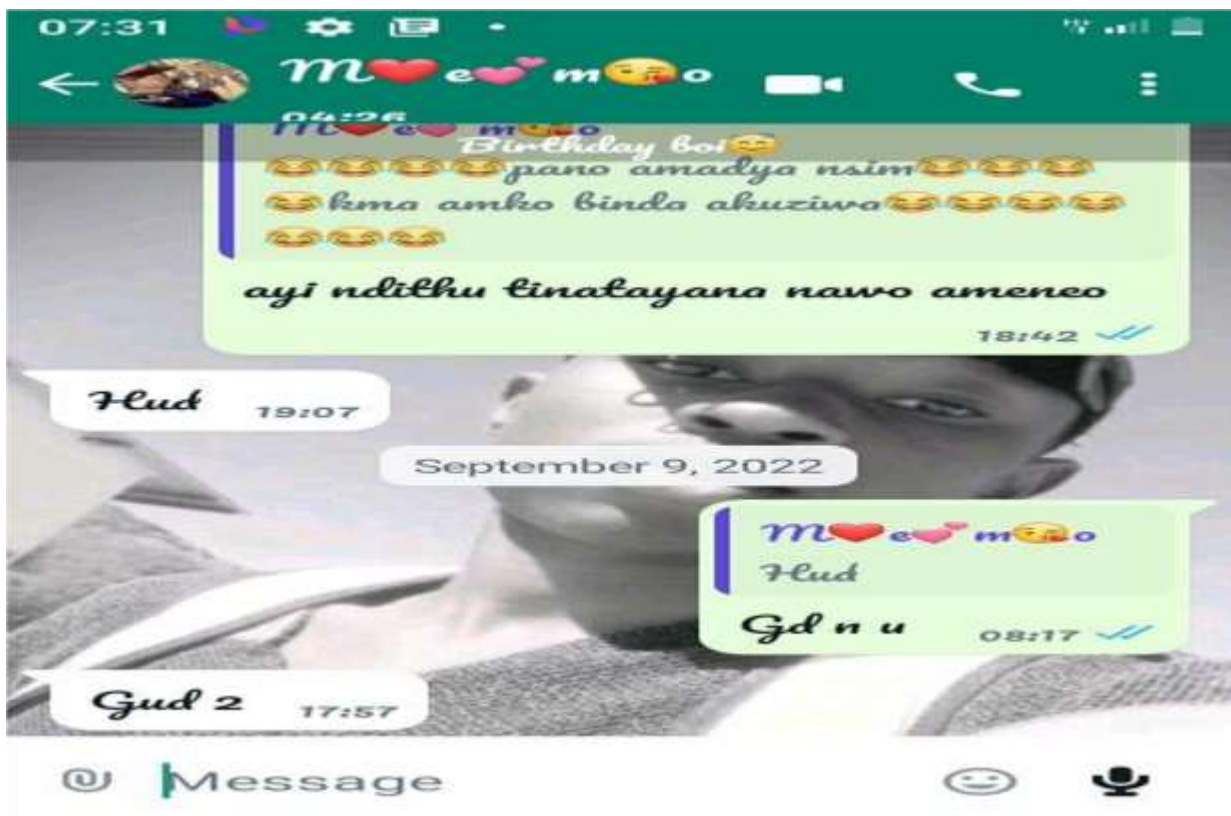


Figure 4. 1: Informal writing

As illustrated in Figure 4.1, students are really creative when it comes to communication, both formal and informal. Abbreviations are a great way for them to make conversations convenient and engaging, saving time and space in written communication.

An analysis of documents revealed that participants trend of writing on WhatsApp and Facebook affected their writings. From their samples, respondents produced various trends of writing as depicted in Figure 4.1. Forkosh -Baruch and Hershkoviz (2012) view Facebook and WhatsApp as having huge potential for forming online communities of practice favouring informal learning for individuals who consume content as well as collaborate with others. Therefore, Facebook and WhatsApp can be regarded as the place where learners can appreciate the benefits of collaborative learning, and can link students with one another using networks whose nature is social and academic at the same time (Yunus et al., 2011).

The flexible environment provided by social media tools allows diverse needs in the classroom to be met by providing language learners with extra time beyond class boundaries and helping teachers understand the areas in which their students need further scaffolding (Marks, 2015). Positive attitudes of the learners regarding the potential of WhatsApp and; Facebook as instructional tools for learning English therefore, comes as no surprise in this investigation. Students usually expressed that they were engaged in learning English through WhatsApp and Facebook and that it was enjoyable, fun and interesting (Barrot, 2021).

The findings from the reviewed studies also confirm the potential of these tools by indicating that they boost learners' diverse English language skills such as writing, reading, listening and overall comprehension of English language. Anyhow, the most commonly investigated language skill was found to be writing which is concrete evidence of the potential of WhatsApp and Facebook, as additional instructional resources. Nonetheless, this shift from traditional to technology-integrated teaching does not fully transcend to other skills of language teaching. Thus, in this case the study has approved to say helpful feedback is one of the best solutions to such problems. Therefore, future research on other different language skills may provide a valuable insight into

the effectiveness of social media. Such positive learning outcomes coincide with (Dehghanzadeh et al., (2019) who reported the systematic study of gamification to support learning English as a second language.

4.6.2 Encourage students to read a lot of books and less on social media

The study found that students read a lot of work from social media other than books. This leads to the adoption of social media language. In order to improve on students writing skills, they must be encouraged to get attracted to and develop a reading habit.

In continuation, respondents confessed their mistakes by saying that they are lazy and that reading is no longer their hobby.

I am just too lazy, I can't read my academic books but Whatsapp and FB messages. That is why am used to following the informal pattern of writing in my compositions. This however, does not make me hate my work. (S9 Interview, 2022).

This student believes that through reading, he can get acquainted with good writing skills. For example, he may be able to follow the rules of grammar like punctuation, spellings, subject verb agreement etc.

The study concludes to say that teachers really need to make their students understand the importance of reading and its relationship with writing. The fact remains that social media creates laziness in students' way of thinking. One respondent was quoted saying:

It's my plea that my teacher should not get tired of us but still enlighten us on how best we can write irrespective of our engagement and copying bad writing trends on social media. (S2, Interview, 2022).

To still concur with the theme, through wide and frequent reading, students develop strong vocabulary. This can be the strong defense against the exploitation caused by social media. It can also deepen their ability to express subtler shades of meaning in their writing.

As pointed out by Loving and Ochoa (2010), social media has proven to be generally addictive for secondary school students who devote substantial amounts of their limited study time to chat, maintain social connections and make new acquaintances during their years of study. This, in effect decrease the number of time students need to read their books and other study materials (Ofuani & Gberedio, 2009). The problem most secondary school students have that contributes to their poor performance academically is the use of social media that affects their reading culture. Currently, as mentioned earlier, due to the influence of social media, secondary school students read much less their books.

4.7 Chapter summary

This study has revealed that the majority of respondents are aware of the educational use of Facebook and WhatsApp. This implies that the majority of secondary school students are aware of the various ways through which they can make use of their Facebook and WhatsApp for learning purposes. Being easy to operate, WhatsApp is extremely popular among the learners.

This study has clearly shown that the writing skills of students are directly affected by the use of WhatsApp messaging. As WhatsApp messaging app is used for texting with friends in an

informal setup, therefore, the students unconsciously replicate the same informal style of writing in areas where formal writing is required. In the view of Blumenstock and Eagle (2010), mobile phones serve as a means of interaction among people by making it possible for them to create, share, exchange information and ideals in virtual communities and networks while Agüero (2009) posits mobile phones as one of the ICT tools with the potential for improving access to information for learning and teaching based on positive contributions achieved through the use in other sectors of the economy. Since social media has become a vital component of the daily life of secondary school students, the study, accordingly, concludes that social media should be used prudently, not only to stay in touch with family and friends, but must be used reasonably as a vital information source and conducting academic activities. Time spent on the social media must also be reduced to enable students to improve their reading culture since it will consequently enhance their general academic performance.

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

5.1 Chapter Overview

The study investigated the effects of WhatsApp and Facebook on students' academic writing skills in secondary school. The students' conception is that WhatsApp and Facebook have helped them to improve their writing skills. Following the discussions, this Chapter, concludes by presenting a summary of the findings of the study, stating implications of the findings and give recommendations for future action.

5.2 Summary of Key Findings

The findings of the study based on their specific objectives can be summarised as follows:

5.2.1 Students perception towards the use of Facebook and WhatsApp

The findings show that a majority of secondary school students use Facebook and WhatsApp as their favourite social media platforms. The findings also show that students use social media platforms for both academic and non-academic purposes. Secondary school students are connected with their friends and teachers in the social media platforms and they can formulate group discussions where they can exchange ideas, thoughts, can share course related materials, information and the teacher can give assignments, so that it is easy for all the students to know.

5.2.2 Influence of Facebook and WhatsApp on students writing skills

There are some drawbacks that Facebook and WhatsApp has on students writing skills. The students write in short form on Facebook and WhatsApp when they chat with their friends, when they give any status or comments, and it reflects in their formal writing and speaking, like in

English compositions. However, digital social media motivates the secondary school students to improve their English as the findings show that students are very conscious when they give any status.

They try to write in proper grammar structure, correct spelling and appropriate sentence structure and therefore, it motivates them to improve their English language as well. The findings also highlight that social media helps students to improve their writing and reading as they are able to learn new words/ idioms /phrases from their friends on social media platforms and later they use those in their formal writing (English composition) and reading which enhance their writing and speaking. Their responses indicate that digital Facebook and WhatsApp have influence on secondary school students writing skills.

Furthermore, according the findings of this study, teachers have concluded that social media platforms have both negative and positive influence on secondary school students' academic performance. The findings show that according to teachers, Facebook and WhatsApp influence students writing skills.

5.2.3 How to improve students writing skills in view of the use of Facebook and WhatsApp

According to the teacher, Facebook and WhatsApp provide scope to improve English language but it is the students who have to motivate themselves to learn new things from there, as students can learn new words, can improve their writing style and can be fluent in speaking. But there are also some drawbacks as sometimes they use short form in their formal writing as they are used to use simple sentences which is an effect of Facebook and WhatsApp. According to teachers, it is

monotonous to read their writings. Considering the findings of this study, teachers think besides some negative influence in students writing and speaking, there are also positive influences.

5.3 Implications of the study

Based on the results of the study, the following are the implications of the study:

- i. Ministry of education should organise trainings and workshops for discussing the influence of using social media on improving students' writing skills. They should also train teachers on how to teach English writing perfectly.
- ii. Reading is considered an important key for good writing. So, students should read more and cooperate with each other so that they get the benefits from other students mistakes or good writings enthusiastically.
- iii. Teachers should always be responsible for their students' mistakes. They should cooperate with other English teachers from other institutions to create groups of students from different schools with different background and experiences.
- iv. Teachers should clearly explain to their students the criteria to be used for assessing their writing. This will make students aware of their boundaries when writing irrespective of being involved in social media.
- v. Parents should motivate their children to widen their thoughts and ideas by reading other students' writings.

5.4 Contribution of the study to the education field

Below are the contributions of the study to the education sector:

- i. The study has contributed knowledge about the need for teachers and all stake holders to closely monitor students' use of Facebook and WhatsApp. This will help them to make

thorough preparations when teaching writing skills. As a result, good results will be achieved.

- ii. The study has also been an eye opener to teachers on the need to vary teaching and learning strategies as well as resources. This will in one way or the other reduce students' dependence on foreign resources and ways of learning. Hence, meeting the target of producing good skills of writing in students.
- iii. The study has also contributed to the need for all concerned stakeholders to closely monitor students on how they use social media for proper guidance and counselling. This will help the government to produce good and reliable academic writers.

5.5 Recommendations

Based on the findings from the study, the following recommendations are hereby proposed to assist all stakeholders in improving of academic writing skills through the use of WhatsApp and Facebook social media platforms in secondary schools.

- i. The teacher should not encourage and appreciate students who use social media language in their writings. In fact, they must take an immediate action to stop and tell them that it is not the correct language to use. Through this, the students will be aware, and it will prevent them from using this non-standard language.
- ii. Secondary schools as well as school management should organise seminars to educate learners more on the effects of Facebook and WhatsApp and how they can profitably balance its usage with their academic work.

- iii. Students should be encouraged to use mobile phone dictionary while writing on social media so that they can easily communicate with each other through the correct spellings.
- iv. Parents, teachers and elderly should give awareness of using the proper and correct language to students while communicating with each other. They should be told the differences between standard and non- standard language so they can avoid using social media language in formal writings such as quizzes and assignments.
- v. Teachers/guardians should ensure that students use online platforms as a tool to improve their academic performance.
- vi. Teachers need to vary their teaching strategies in order to accommodate and enhance students' interests in writing.

5.6 Limitations of the study

The study focused on the influence of Whatsapp and Facebook on students' academic writing. This made the results not to be generalised to other skills and levels of students such as tertiary, primary and colleges. Field work was challenging. Some students refused to participate. Some left while the interviews were in progress saying, they had some personal businesses. However, the researcher proceeded with the work up until the end of the study.

5.7 Suggested areas for further studies

This study serves as the basis for further research study on the effects of WhatsApp and Facebook on students' academic writing skills in secondary schools. Similar studies should be conducted in universities and higher institutions in order to validate these findings. Structured interviews should be designed in subsequent studies to further investigate head teachers' perceptions on the students' usage of the platforms and its impact on teaching delivery.

5.8 Conclusion

This study concludes that students adopt different trends of writing on social media platforms, especially WhatsApp and Facebook. These trends are a clear departure from the conventional spellings in English language. This study also concludes that the use of Facebook and WhatsApp language has both negative and positive impact on the writings of students.

Social Media has become an integral and fundamental part of the life of almost every individual having a smartphone (Mirza, Nasir & Abdullah, 2022). WhatsApp and Facebook are the most popular mobile applications commonly used by almost all students. The present study investigated the effects of Facebook and WhatsApp on the writing skills of students in secondary schools. Based on the findings of the study, it can be concluded that learners in secondary schools use Facebook and WhatsApp mainly for chatting and also accessing academic information. The study identified several writing errors committed by learners in formal writing that point towards the writing habits developed by the frequent use of Facebook and WhatsApp. From the analysis of the data, it was concluded that Facebook and WhatsApp texting negatively affects writing skills of students. Due to the constant use of Facebook and WhatsApp texting, learners often develop unconsciously the use of contractions, incorrect spellings, and grammatical mistakes in their formal writing. The use of Facebook and WhatsApp by secondary school students within the school environment has influenced students writing skills.

According to Mirza et al. (2022), Facebook and WhatsApp have their own sets of advantages which cannot be neglected, but it also comes with its own package of harms as well. In order to avoid the negative implications of Facebook and WhatsApp on the writing skills of students, their use should be minimised. Moreover, the students need to learn about the correct use of

autocorrect in their Facebook and WhatsApp applications to develop their writing skills through Facebook and WhatsApp messaging instead, of harming it.

Considering the increasing importance of the role that social media play in the daily lives of secondary school students in the digital era, it becomes necessary to pay attention to the different ways teachers can use Facebook and WhatsApp to enhance their traditional classrooms and include a bit of technology in them. The study concludes that students adopt different trends of writing on Facebook and WhatsApp and these trends are a clear departure from the conventional spelling in English language. This research work concludes that the use of social media language has both negative and positive impacts on the writings of students.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Interview Guide for Students

Name:

Class:

Sex:

QUESTIONS

- How many times do you use Facebook or WhatsApp in the course of the day?
- Why do you like using WhatsApp and Facebook? Explain your answer.
- Using WhatsApp and Facebook seems to be time consuming and disturbing. How do you manage it with your school program?
- What are the challenges you face due to your engagement with WhatsApp and Facebook in as far as your writing capability is concerned? Explain your answers
- Can you briefly explain the benefits you find in using WhatsApp and Facebook?
- Make a general comment on the coming in of WhatsApp and Facebook relating it to your present performance in English composition writing.

Appendix 2: Interview Guide for Teachers

Name:

Sex:

Age:

Qualification (s):

Teaching Subjects:

QUESTIONS:

- For how long have you been in teaching service?
- What are your experiences in the teaching profession with the coming in of technology? (Facebook and WhatsApp in particular).
- Do you find it beneficial seeing your English students in contact with Facebook and WhatsApp?
- On the other hand, what are the challenges you face as you interact with students who use Facebook and WhatsApp?
 - Can you provide your general comment on how your students feel with the coming in of Facebook and WhatsApp, how it has positively or negatively impacted their performance and the impacts should be addressed.

Appendix 3: Consent Form for Audio Recording Interviews

I am a post graduate student at Mzuzu University. I invite you to participate in an interview on the topic: **“Investigating the influence of WhatsApp and Facebook on secondary school students writing skills”**. I would like to audio record what transpires in this interview. I therefore request for your permission to audio record our discussions in the interview. Please, sign below if you have accepted to be audio recorded. I give consent to the following:

- Being interviewed in the study
- Being audio recorded during the interview

Name of a student.....

Signature..... Date.....

Name of researcher..... Date.....

Appendix 4: Request Letter to Research Ethics Committee

MDF Marine Secondary School

Post Office Box 20

Monkey-Bay, Mangochi

30th January, 2022

Cell no: 0994430432/ 0886514310

nyirendanancy41@gmail.com

The Chairperson

Mzuzu University Research Ethics Committee

Private Bag 201

Luwinga 2

Dear Sir,

REQUEST FOR RESEARCH ETHICS CLEARANCE

I write to request for clearance so that I conduct a research study in partial fulfilment of a Master of Education (Teacher Education) degree at Mzuzu University.

I am Nancy O. Nyirenda (MEDTE 2620). I have proposed a study on investigating the influence of WhatsApp and Facebook on students English writing skills: The case of three selected secondary schools in Mangochi district.

As one of the requirements for ethical consideration, I hereby commit myself to protect the image of all participants by keeping the information which will be obtained as confidential.

Appendix 5: Submission Form



Faculty of Education

Department of Education and Teaching Studies

RESEARCH PROPOSAL SUBMISSION FORM

NAME OF STUDENT: __NANCY O. NYIRENDA

STUDENT REGISTRATION NUMBER: MEDTE 2620

YEAR OF FIRST REGISTRATION: 2021

STUDENT CONTACT DETAILS: Phone: 0994430432/0886514310 Email:
nyirendanancy41@gmail.com

TITLE OF THESIS: INVESTIGATING THE INFLUENCE OF WHATSAPP AND
FACEBOOK ON SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS ENGLISH WRITING SKILLS.

NAME OF SUPERVISOR: DR AGNESS CHIMANGENI CHALIWA HARA

TITLE: DOCTOR

SUPERVISORS CONTACTS: Phone: 0993081247 E-mail hara.a@mzuni.ac.mw

SUPERVISORS RECOMMENDATIONS:

Having gone through the proposal development process with the student:

I recommend the student to proceed with data collection.

I note that the proposal does adhere to the ethical principles of human science research.

If either of the two conditions are not met, the student cannot proceed with submission for ethical clearance

Supervisors signature:



Date: 30th JANUARY, 2022

ENDORESEMENT BY COORDINATOR

Signature of Coordinator: _____ Date: _____

Appendix 6: Letter of Introduction

Mzuzu University

12TH APRIL 2022

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

Dear Sir/Madam,

LETTER OF INTRODUCTION: MS NANCY NYIRENDA

Ms Nancy Nyirenda is a registered Master of Education (Teacher Education) Program student at Mzuzu University. She has been cleared by the Mzuzu University Research Ethics Committee (MZUNIREC) to collect data for the research study she is conducting as a requirement for the program.

Kindly assist her accordingly.

Yours faithfully,



Dr Margaret M. Mdolo

Program Coordinator