

## "THE PRICE OF THE POST: HOW SOCIAL MEDIA IS FUELING THE DECLINE IN READING AND WRITING PROFICIENCY"

*by:*

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Social media, the collection of interactive online tools that make it easier for people to create, curate, and share user-generated content, whether they do so individually or collaboratively. They are becoming a more and more pervasive part of every individual's daily routine. One may consider social media to be an essential component of a complex social environment rather than something distinct from the real world (Davis, 2016). In the face of the modernized and culturized Filipino youth, social media plays a major role in their personal, psychological, emotional, societal and even educational aspects of their lives.

However, teenagers are increasingly opting not to read for pleasure, and according to a startling 89% of educators, social media is negatively influencing kids' reading habits. 350 educators from Australia, the Middle East, Europe, and Africa participated in the Reluctant Readers study. Teachers who participated in the study said that social media's growing distraction is the primary cause of reading reluctance, with 84% stating that social media negatively affects students' willingness to read for pleasure and 90% stating that it has a negative effect on children's reading habits. Seventy-five percent think that pupils who are unable to read at a level that is required of them would not be able to meet the curriculum objectives in the succeeding years (Henebery, 2023).

According to an article written by Iyer (2024), with so many people glued to their screens, the internet has taken over as the primary source of entertainment. Social media sites like YouTube and TikTok, as well as streaming services like Netflix, offer 24/7 amusement and instant diversion. Social media ruins concentration and focus, whereas

reading demands it. Young children find it more and more difficult to master the critical skill of reading as a result of short, easily digestible films that shorten attention spans. Instead of spending time reading books and articles on particular subjects, it appears to have been simpler over time to search for information using short-form videos.

In a more specific sense, social media is found to have the following major detrimental effects in students:

Distraction and reduced productivity. Social media use in the classroom has the major drawback of potentially diverting students' attention from their academic work. Facebook and other social networking sites have the potential to divert students' focus from classroom activities, which has an impact on the learning process. As stated by Collegenp.Com (2022) students who are distracted by social media may find it difficult to concentrate and finish their schoolwork, which will lower their productivity. Social media platforms are made to be interesting and to entice users to return for more. Because of this, students could find themselves constantly checking their social media accounts, which can become distracting. Due to this fact, the quality of students' output progressively declines together with their level of interest to study.

Decreased Attention Span. Instead of spending time reading books and articles on particular subjects, it appears to be simpler to hunt up information using short-form videos (Iyer, 2024). Moreover, according to Connolly (2011) students may incur substantial hidden cognitive costs when using social networking sites. At the same time, Facebook, Google, and other websites capture and divide our focus. They have the ability to undermine higher-order reasoning processes, such as the kind of concentration, focus, and perseverance required for intellectual growth and critical thinking. According to several studies, excessive Internet use is associated with increased impulsivity, decreased patience, decreased tenacity, and weakened critical thinking abilities. The requirement to quickly switch between online objects can impair students' attentional control. Long-term Internet use exposes students to interactive, repeated, and addicting stimuli that alter the

structure and function of their brains permanently. The more one uses social media and the Internet, the more adept the brain becomes at scanning and skimming. However, studies indicate that these benefits impair focus, reasoning, and introspection – indeed, the precise kind of critical thinking and evidence-based reasoning required to fairly assess the entire costs of social media use.

**Unreliable Content Depot.** The dissemination of false information thrives on social media. Pupils could be exposed to inaccurate or biased material, which could cause confusion and have an impact on how well they grasp particular subjects. Therefore, it is crucial to promote critical thinking and train students to double-check material before taking it at face value (British School of Barcelona, 2024). As reiterated from an article of CollegenP.com, (2022) false or misleading information that is disseminated purposefully or accidentally is known as misinformation, whereas purposefully created material that is portrayed as authentic is known as fake news. Because misinformation and fake news have the power to affect public opinion, policy, and decision-making, they can also have detrimental effects. Additionally, they have the potential to erode the credibility of trustworthy information sources and foster misunderstanding and mistrust. In order to reduce the dangers of false information and fake news on social media, students should learn to be critical information consumers and to confirm the veracity and correctness of the sources they come across. This could entail consulting several sources, searching for proof or corroborating information, and evaluating the reliability and objectivity of the source. Students should also refrain from sharing or commenting on content that they have not thoroughly examined and validated, and be conscious of their own part in disseminating false information or fake news. Additionally, they ought to notify the proper authorities or platforms of any content that seems questionable or unlawful.

**Academic Dishonesty and Plagiarism.** Academic dishonesty occurs when students use resources or third parties to finish their assignments since they are no longer learning the content themselves. Importantly, when students decide to have someone or

something do their schoolwork for them, it is the students who are at fault, not the technology (Eaton, 2023). Another point based on the research conducted by Desiron & Petko (2022), over 50% of the students used some form of digitally assisted homework avoidance strategy at least once or twice every week. Male students who did not work hard on their schoolwork and were enrolled in non-higher education-oriented school programs were more likely to exploit internet tools to engage in dishonest acts. Furthermore, when taking into account factors related to information and communication technology, they discovered that avoiding homework with the help of digital tools was a major negative predictor of test performance. As a result, the study not only adds to their understanding of the factors that predict academic dishonesty with digital resources, but it also validates the detrimental effects of such activities on learning.

Negative impact on over-all academic performance and cognitive functions. Social media access in the classroom may be abused by students, who may utilize it for social connections rather than academic pursuits. Therefore, jeopardizing the educational learning that should take place inside the classroom. While, act of addiction may be considered, specially upon excessive and undisciplined utilization of such tool, this can directly affect one's cognitive function as to multiple factors which can alter the natural sequence of the mind to receive, process, comprehend and activate prior knowledge, in a certain way to respond to a stimulus. Knowing that social media is an active and attractive article which keeps a person on the hook, youth in particular get easily swayed and pre-occupied, resulting to poor academic performance. According to Dylan (2024), it is possible for students to lose track of time due to their addiction to online chat rooms and post scrolling. This behavior can have a detrimental effect on their study habits, attentiveness, and mental health. Social media's constant distractions are a big factor in poorer academic performance and grades. In addition, it is scientifically proven in the research conducted by Kumar (2021), that academically underperforming students used social media far more than their high-achieving learners.

The integration of social media into the classroom prompts a critical examination of its potential benefits and drawbacks. As educators and students adapt to this new reality, it raises an important question: "Should social media be allowed in schools?" This issue needs careful consideration, balancing the opportunities for enhanced learning and communication with concerns over distraction, privacy, and the impact on student well-being. The decision ultimately hinges on how social media is used and managed within educational settings.

Although there are legitimate concerns regarding the potential drawbacks of social media in education, many educators are actively seeking creative ways to harness its benefits while maintaining a secure and effective learning environment. The ongoing debate focuses on the role of social media as a valuable educational tool, exploring how it can enhance learning experiences, foster collaboration, and engage students, while also addressing the risks such as distractions, privacy issues, and the need for responsible usage within academic settings.

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