

Analysis of Language Used in Social Media and its Impact on Students' Writing: A Case Study of Seventh Day Adventist College of Education, Asokore-Koforidua, Ghana

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ABSTRACT

The issue about the impact of social media language on the formal academic writings of students of Colleges of Education in Ghana seems unending. While some researchers report a positive impact of social media language on students' academic performance, other researchers report otherwise. Therefore, the objectives of this study are to examine the most prevalent type of social media English found in teacher-trainees' formal writing and its effect on academic performances of teacher-trainees at SDA College of Education, Asokore-Koforidua, Ghana. The study used the mixed methods research design. The researchers sampled 313 teacher-trainees from the SDA College of Education, Asokore-Koforidua using the stratified random sampling approach. The researchers used a close-ended questionnaire, semi-structured interview guide, and observation checklist to gather data for the study. The data gathered were analysed using descriptive statistics and inferential statistics. Based on the findings of the study, it was concluded that teacher-trainees at SDA College of Education, Asokore Koforidua, Ghana are addicted to social media and their academic writings are full of unconventional abbreviations, punctuation and spelling errors. Also, the study concluded that social media English has very little effect on the academic performances of the teacher-trainees. Based on the conclusions of the study, it was recommended that lecturers who teach Communication Skills in the Department of Languages in the college need to up their game, and help teacher-trainees to appreciate the need to use formal writing styles in their academic writings.

Keywords: Social media, teacher-trainee, academic writing, spelling, punctuation, academic performance, social network, Higher Education Institution

INTRODUCTION

Background to the Study

Technology's role in language instruction and its effects on language learning, assessment, and sociolinguistics have become more and more apparent (Barrot, 2022; Abdelrady & Akram, 2022). Recent technology developments have had a significant impact on the field of education, especially language instruction and learning (Akram et al., 2021). The advent of social media platforms has greatly expedited the application and development of linguistic skills. The advent of social media has resulted in a notable shift in the way technology is applied, shifting from a primarily individualistic perspective to one that is more socially conscious and emphasises sustainability in educational communities. In addition to facilitating interactive communication among online communities, these technologies aim to improve the process of producing and sharing user-generated content (Madiha et al., 2023).

Young learners use social media platforms extensively for social interaction and internet connectivity. For the purpose of distributing content and educating a broad audience, this medium is extensively used and financially lucrative (Lashari et al., 2023). The general public usually follows popular culture and well-known personalities on social media, matching their interests with a wide range of topics, including sports, fashion, music, movies, dramas, public speakers, events, and programs. Because of its adaptability, social media goes beyond traditional educational constraints to meet the varied requirements and preferences of learners (Barrot, 2022). According to Lashari et al. (2023), edutainment is a type of entertainment that is especially designed with the goal of transferring knowledge or educational content to people. The space is utilised as a platform for a variety of socially interactive educational events. This approach's central theory holds that when students are completely immersed in engaging and pleasurable activities, they perform at their best. The fact that students primarily view social media as a medium for social interaction and amusement rather than for academic pursuits is consistent with the usage of social media for edutainment goals (Abbasi et al., 2019).

According to Muhammad and Saeed (2021), the most common concerns in social media communication are pragmatics and reciprocal comprehensibility. While the use of inappropriate language and abbreviations may be understandable to younger audiences, older audiences often struggle to understand the informal and modern language. According to Namvar (2014), many people find language easier to understand because of the informal language used on social media. It is reasonable to say that the possibility of connecting profound ideas and emotions is diminished. According to Winarto (2019), in an effort to reduce typing time and character space on social media, people frequently forgo using proper grammar and spelling in favour of well-known acronyms and slangs that have been deeply ingrained in the collective consciousness of the social media community.

English is always changing and renewing itself because of its ever-changing nature. According to Hashmi et al. (2019), while knowing and using acronyms, abbreviations, and slang is helpful, when managing hurried and careless interactions on social media, it does not always follow that the entire conversation is filled to bursting with their excessive use. Social media users need to understand when and how to use slang, acronyms, and abbreviations appropriately while speaking with a broad audience. They ought to employ slang, acronyms, and abbreviations that are widely used and understood by the audience on social media. Using too many acronyms, abbreviations, or slang terms in online chats on social media is considered improper. Despite this, social media has had impact on how people write and communicate with others in the English language in both positive and negative ways (Kausar & Awan, 2019).

Social networking sites are web-based tools that enable users to create a public or semi-public profile inside a closed system, list other users they are connected to, and view and navigate both their own and other users' connections within the system (Boyd & Ellison, 2007). A few of the well-known social media sites are Google Plus, Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat Chat, WhatsApp, YouTube, and Twitter (X). The majority of users of these networks are young individuals, and they have unique communication and writing styles that are distinct from the standard English language. This is due to the fact that social media users understand English differently from how the language is structured. This is scary, because students who use these social media platforms are likely to see it in their normal work. There are no rules for syntax, grammar, or punctuation in this "new English". Sentence structure doesn't matter to users of such social media English either. They just care about the sound and that the other person understands what they mean. This kind of English uses a lot of acronyms and changes, since sound is what matters most to it. A word like "you" is written as "u," "good morning" as "gm," "okay" as "kk," "for" as "4," "please" as "pls or plz," "from" as "4rm," and "cool" as "kul" or "cul," for example. (Eokroko & Addei, 2020).

A study of, for example, how students use social media networking sites in their daily lives, how social media affects students' academic lives, and, more specifically, how social media use affects students' English language performances, can help understand how social media use affects students' academic performances (Asafo-Adjei et al., 2023). Numerous researches have been done on the relationship between students' proficiency in the English language and their use of social networking sites. For example, Kahar et al. (2022, cited in Asafo-Adjei et al., 2023) and Sazalli (2022, cited in Asafo-Adjei et al., 2023) examined how English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students felt about using social media for oral learning using an enhanced Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) that included participation, production, and the link between them. Social media usage and acceptance

did not correlate with gender, grade level, or family background. Additionally, it was discovered by Kahar et al. (2022, reported in Asafo-Adjei et al., 2023) that the students' use of social media networking sites hindered their ability to speak English.

Social media and students' English language writing performances have not been sufficiently explored in Ghanaian studies on the relationship between the two (Kolan & Dzandza, 2018; Mingle & Adams, 2015; Mingle et al., 2016; Owusu-Acheaw & Larson, 2015). For instance, Apeanti and Danso (2014) examined social media usage at the tertiary education level, Mingle et al. (2016) examined social media and academic performances in both Ghanaian private and public Senior High Schools, and Anku (cited in Asafo-Adjei et al., 2023) explored, described, and explained the linguistic features associated with social media and their communicative functions and their effects on Ghanaian university students' acquisition of academic literacy. Studies on the connection between social media use and post-secondary academic achievement already exist, but this one adds a fresh perspective because it focusses on teacher-trainees who have unrestricted access to the English language in the classroom. Thus, the researchers were interested in investigating how the English spoken on social media has permeated the official written English language of teacher-trainees at the Seventh Day Adventist (SDA) College of Education, Asokore-Koforidua in Ghana.

Statement of the Problem

The researchers' observation of SDA College of Education teacher-trainees' scripts showed that they used unconventional short forms in their notes and write-ups. Besides they make use of social media a lot for communication, as other young people do. This may have impact on their performance in English language as a subject and any other subject that demands the use of formal writing in the area of academic work. Pasek et al. (2006) discovered that Facebook users had higher grades rather than a positive correlation with poorer student grades. According to Mingle and Adams (2015), using social media networks has many advantages, including fostering knowledge exchange and the development of reading comprehension. In contrast, the findings of several studies show that students were spending less time for studying, because they were using social media, and they were getting lower grades, leading to their poor academic performances (Banquil et al., 2009; Kirschner and Karpinski, 2010; Ndaku, 2013). Researchers have seen that over the past few years, learners' use of lexis, syntax, punctuation, tenses, and other fundamental writing mechanics have become increasingly problematic. Researches on the effect of students' usage of social media network English on their academic performances have produced conflicting findings. The conflicting results of researches in relation to students' usage of social media network triggers this research at college level, in order to find out how social media usage impacts the teacher-trainees' academic performance.

Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the study are to

1. examine the most prevalent type of social media English found in teacher-trainees formal writing at SDA College of Education, Asokore-Koforidua.
2. explore the effect of social media English on the academic performance of teacher-trainees at SDA College of Education, Asokore-Koforidua.

Research Questions

The study was guided by the following research questions.

1. What is the most prevalent type of social media English found in teacher-trainees formal writing at SDA College of Education, Asokore-Koforidua?
2. What is the effect of social media English on the academic performance of teacher-trainees at SDA College of Education, Asokore-Koforidua?

Hypotheses

In order to statistically test the second objective, the following null hypotheses have been developed.

- H₀1: There is no statistically significant difference between the sex of teacher-trainees and the effect of social media English on their academic performances at SDA College of Education, Asokore-Koforidua.
- H₁1: There is statistically significant difference between the sex of teacher-trainees and the effect of social media English on their academic performances at SDA College of Education, Asokore-Koforidua.
- H₀2: There is no statistically significant difference between the age of teacher-trainees and the effect of social media English on their academic performances at SDA College of Education, Asokore-Koforidua.
- H₁2: There is statistically significant difference between the age of teacher-trainees and the effect of social media English on their academic performances at SDA College of Education, Asokore-Koforidua.

LITERATURE REVIEW

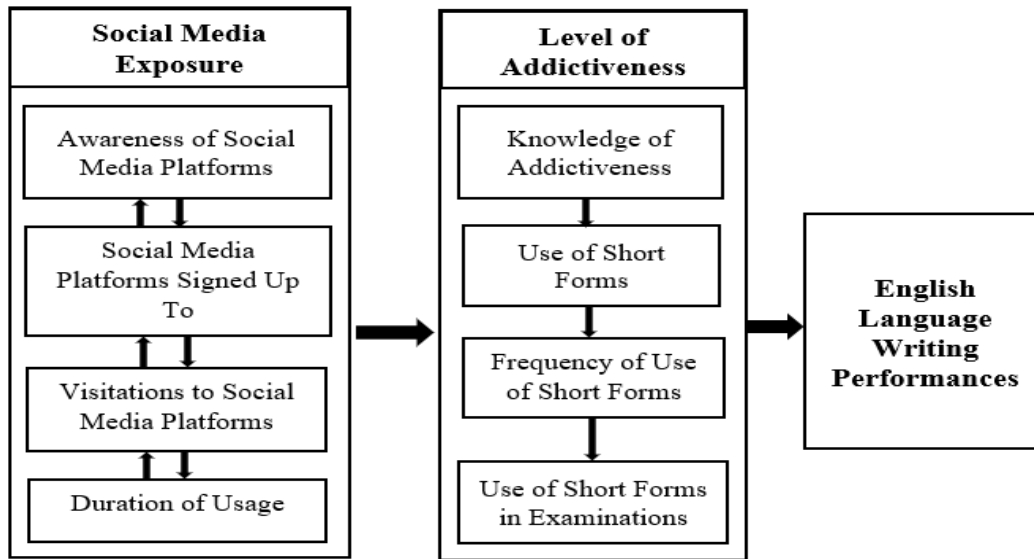
Theoretical Framework

According to Vygotsky (1978, cited in Asafo-Adjei et al., 2023), the socio-cultural theory explores the ways in which engagement in social interactions and culturally structured activities affect psychological development. Vygotsky argued that both historically and practically, the social aspect of consciousness is the most important. Individual awareness is secondary and derived (Asafo-Adjei et al., 2023, citing Vygotsky, 1979). In other words, a person's mental functioning comes from his or her relationships with other people rather than merely from social contact. Regarding certain principles, every aspect of a child's cultural development manifests itself twice, or on two levels: the social and psychic. First, as an intra-mental category within the child, and subsequently as an inter-mental category between persons (Vygotsky, 1997). In other words, learners pick up new information as they participate in activities with others. On the second tenet, Wertsch (cited in Asafo-Adjei, 2023) emphasised that semiotics (that is, language, different counting systems, mnemonic devices, algebraic symbol systems, works of art, writing, schemes, diagrams, maps, and mechanical drawings as well as conventional signs of all kinds, computers, and calculators) all facilitate human behaviour, both socially and individually (Vygotsky, 1981). When this is applied to the current study, it is assumed that students internalise (intra-mental) behaviours such as English language writing through their use of social networking sites (semiotic) and their interactions with others on social media (inter-mental). The nature of the scholarly articles they generate then reflects the outcomes.

Conceptual Framework

The researchers' framework, which they created based on the empirical and theoretical literature reviewed for this study (Akram & Kumar, 2017; McGillivray, 2014; Mingle & Musah, 2015; Owusu & Agatha, 2015), demonstrates some constructs related to students' comprehension of their exposure to social media and their degree of addiction to it (learning via social interaction with the help of social media networking sites, or semiotics). They also explore how these two constructs affect students' performances in English language writing assignments. To improve understanding of students' exposure to social media, it is important to consider factors such as students' awareness of the platforms they use, which ones they are signed up for, how often they visit these platforms, and how long they use them for. Figure 1, illustrates this in relation to students' social media exposure. When it comes to determining how addicted students are to social media, factors such as their awareness of their addiction, how frequently they use short forms, how often they use them, and how they incorporate these forms into formal academic communication (like exams, which can negatively impact students' academic performance) are thought to be critically important. It is thought that knowledge of students' social media exposure contributes to knowledge of their degree of social media addiction. This is thought to help people grasp the connection between students' use of social media and their proficiency in English language writing.

Fig. 1: Social Interactions Through Semiotics



Source: Adapted from Vygotsky (1978, cited in Asafo-Adjei et al., 2023)

Social Media

According to several studies (Bermudez et al., 2016; Faizi et al., 2014; Malisuwan et al., 2015; Raths, 2013; Wohn et al., 2013), research on social media and its use is not new. Scholars have proposed many definitions of social media in this direction (Kandpal et al., 2023; McGillivray, 2015). According to McGillivray, social media is a type of communication in which users create, share, interact with, and comment on their own content across several networks. Furthermore, social media is defined by Kandpal et al. (2023) as virtual communication through networks. According to Kahar et al. (cited in Asafo-Adjei et al., 2023), social media refers to collaborative virtual communication platforms. According to these criteria, the primary means by which social media interactions might materialise is ‘virtualness.’ It is implied that using social media on a regular basis entail being fully immersed in this virtual environment. FitzGerald (2012) states that blogs, voice-over, email, instant messaging, sharing of images and music, crowdsourcing, and instant messaging are examples of social media technologies.

The term ‘social media’ describes a range of technological tools that allow people to share information and ideas with one another. Over five billion individuals, or approximately 62% of the global population, utilise social media, including Facebook, Instagram, X (previously Twitter), and YouTube. Early in 2024, 94.7% of users used websites and chat applications for messaging, with social media platforms coming in second with 94.3% of users (Dollarhide, 2024). Social networking, social bookmarking, social news, media sharing, microblogging, and online forums are the six categories into which social media platforms are commonly separated. These varied platforms cater for a wide range of user interests and objectives. Some are more appealing to hobbyists than to professionals. They are used by people to locate people worldwide, who hold similar political or other opinions. Social media connects politicians with voters, entertainers with fans, and charities with donors. During emergencies, governments frequently use social media to disseminate important information (Dollarhide, 2024).

People who use social media are more likely to have more friends and a more diversified personal network, especially in emerging economies, according to a 2019 Pew Research Centre survey. Additionally, 80% of teenagers in a 2022 Pew Research Centre survey of thirteen to seventeen-year-olds in the United States stated that social media makes them feel closer to their classmates. In general, one in three respondents stated that social media primarily had beneficial effects on them, while 59% stated that there had been neither positive nor bad effects. However, the excessive use of social media by many teenagers has sparked concerns about how it may affect their physical and mental well-being, by diverting their attention, interfering with their sleep, and exposing them to peer pressure, bullying, rumours, and false impressions of other people's lives (Dollarhide, 2024).

According to Data Reportal (2024), the most widely used social media providers as of January 2023 are: Facebook (2.96 billion users); YouTube (2.51 billion users); WhatsApp (2 billion users); Instagram (2 billion users); WeChat (1.31 billion users); TikTok (1.05 billion users); Facebook Messenger (931 million users); Douyin (715 million users); Telegram (700 million users); and Snapchat (635 million users). According to Data Reportal (2023), Facebook has about three billion members worldwide, making it the most popular social networking platform. As of late 2022, online users aged sixteen to sixty-four around the globe averaged two hours and thirty-one minutes each day on social media. Furthermore, social media represents the largest portion of all online time ever, with about four out of every ten minutes currently being attributed to social media use.

In a similar study, Kahar et al. (cited in Asafo-Adjei et al., 2023) investigated which social media platforms were most frequently used by students in higher learning cadres. They discovered that Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp, Telegram, and YouTube were the most popular social networking sites. In the Ghanaian setting, Facebook was determined to be the most popular social networking site in Owusu-Acheaw and Larson's (2015) study, evaluating students' use of social media and its effect on academic performance of Koforidua Polytechnic students. Myspace, Yahoo Messenger, Skype, WhatsApp, and Twitter came next. These conclusions from the previous discussion point to the fact that people, especially students, use a variety of social media networking sites in their daily lives.

Influence of Social Media Networks on Students' Performances

Research on social media's effects on students' academic performance, both positive and poor, has proliferated internationally (Owusu-Acheaw & Larson, 2015; Bermudez et al., 2016; Chukwuere, 2021; El-Badawy & Hashem, 2015; Oguguo et al., 2020). Positively, El-Badawy and Hashem (2015) found no evidence of a negative impact of social media on the academic performance of Egypt's younger generation because students found time to study for good grades, regardless of how much time they spent on social media. Furthermore, Oguguo et al. (2020) investigated how Nigerian senior secondary school students used social media and how this affected their academic performance. They found that students used social media to connect with classmates, make new friends, chat with friends, upload photos and videos, research assignments and other course materials, and stay up to date on news and trends. Additionally, Oguguo et al. (2020) discovered that students use these social media networking sites (particularly Facebook, WhatsApp, and YouTube) for two to four hours per day.

In a related study, Chukwuere (2021) found that using social media enhances student social interaction, creates physical distance between friends, and helps students plan meetings. The study sought to determine the impact of social media platforms on first-year students' social interaction at North-West University in South Africa. Students at GBPUAT in Pantnagar, India, mostly used social media for educational and learning reasons, according to Kandpal et al.'s (2023) investigation into students' perceptions of the usage of social media for learning. Students' wellbeing and sense of self-worth both increased as a result of using social media. According to Bermudez et al. (2016), students are realising more and more that social media may be an effective instrument for their academic growth. It facilitates feedback, assessment, and delivery. Speaking with hundreds of people online helps students to become more fluent in English in one way or another. oral, writing, and presenting skills all saw notable gains. In a more direct approach, students study a variety of topics, including English. Teachers encourage their learners to interact with others in order to aid them in their understanding of the English language. Parents need to adamantly support their children in making good use of this powerful medium, and they can implement various limitations on inappropriate use of social media in order to develop intervention techniques.

On the down side, McGillivray (2014) claims that the young generation use their easily available cell phones to access Facebook, Twitter, and other social media platforms more frequently. Many students find it impossible to go longer than two or three hours without checking and updating their profiles on these social media sites, even at the expense of other activities like study and work (McGillivray, 2014). According to the findings of Akram and Kumar (2017) and Owusu and Agatha (2015), students use social media platforms for hours every day to check, like, tweet, comment on, and take pictures of various content. But the extended hours on social media results in private content being exposed to the public (Saravanakumar et al., 2016). Gupta and Dhama (2015) contend that the use of social media platforms has also given rise to a number of privacy and security-

related issues. There could be good reasons for why students nowadays do not perform well in the classroom. While it is easy to point finger at poor speaker quality, it is common to see young people chatting on social media in formal, well-maintained spaces like lecture halls, cathedrals, and mosques. Olowu and Seri (2012) discovered that students in Nigeria spend too much time on social networking sites at the cost of their education, based on a study involving 884 students from a number of secondary schools throughout the nation. According to Olowu and Seri (2012), young people's use of these social networking sites even demonstrates obsession.

The issue with social media is the frequency and obsessive use of it by young people (Olubiyi, 2012). Students waste time engaging in meaningless conversations and engaging in unethical behaviours. Due to their heavy usage of social media, students remain online for nearly 24 hours every day. Time that may have been spent on academic study and other productive networking is thus lost. Statistics from Asafo-Adjei et al. (2023) indicate that over 90% of high school students use social networking sites. According to Davidson (cited in Asafo-Adjei et al., 2023) students lose interest in reading as they grow increasingly engrossed in social media and their online social life, which leaves them without the vocabulary needed for speaking and writing. One in three high school graduates, it is thought, lack the language proficiency and knowledge needed to go to the next level of the academic ladder, such as college of education or university (Rapacki, 2007). According to Osharie (cited in Asafo-Adjei et al., 2023) students also spend more time and attention on social media than they do on their studies, which makes it difficult for them to learn, leading to examination failure. Furthermore, Maya (2015) asserts that using social media causes poor academic performance and a decrease in interest in activities related to school.

The use of these websites has an impact on students' grammar and English usage in terms of their English language performances, according to Obi et al (2012). According to Oguguo et al. (2020), secondary school students use their mobile devices more frequently; they are interested in keeping up with current events, and even utilise jargon when speaking to peers and adults in a professional setting. This highlights the issue of students using inappropriate abbreviations in academic writing. Since they are accustomed to utilising brief sentences in chat rooms, they struggle to resist from doing so in formal settings like classrooms. They employ odd characters and idioms, like "4" for "for," "U" for "you," "D" for "the," etc., which might have an impact on their grade in class. Social networking sites provide chances for academic and professional networking that few students are aware of, despite the fact that students spend a lot of time engaging in these activities. Students' attention is drawn to social networking sites, but according to Kandpal et al. (2023), it is directed towards improper and non-educational activities, such pointless chitchat. According to Mingle and Musah (2015), majority of Ghanaian students face detrimental outcomes such as bad spelling and grammar, insufficient study time, and subpar academic achievements.

Belal (2014, cited in Asafo-Adjei et al., 2023) investigated the impact of social media on tertiary level students' writing and speaking abilities at eight private and public universities in Bangladesh. The main finding of the study was that social media utilisation has both positive and negative influence. Positively, educators may schedule brainstorming sessions with students using social media. The students' formal writing and speaking were negatively impacted by the usage of short forms of vocabulary, improper syntax, and erroneous sentence structures. These actions of solecism tend to impact their English language performances in the academic discourse community. Al-Jarrah et al. (2019) investigated the ease, utility, and attitude of social media as perceived by students and if these aspects were associated. According to Al-Jarrah et al., social media can help students write more effectively by boosting their interest in writing. In a related study, Shahzadi and Kausar (2020) investigated the potential of social media to improve undergraduate students' proficiency in English writing. They discovered that the students' writing improved as a result of being encouraged to use Facebook in a less stressful manner. Overall, Facebook usage had a beneficial impact on their writing. Also, there was an improvement in student-teacher relationship. In a study conducted by Lakhali (2021), English as a Foreign Language students at a Moroccan university were asked to rate their use of social media and investigate the relationship between social media and writing. The results showed that students who used social media were more likely to use writing solecisms. It's interesting to note that Lakhali (2021) also discovered that social media could improve students' writing skills when used properly. It is clear from the above that social media has two sides. Students' use of it determines whether or not it will negatively impact their academic endeavours or positively impact their advancements in the use of the English language in the academic discourse community.

Findings from the studies reviewed so far on the influence of social media networks on students' academic performances show conflicting results. Whereas Asafo-Adjei et al. (2023), Maya (2015); Mingle & Musah (2015) reported negative effect of social media networks usage on the academic performance of students, Al-Jarrah et al. (2019), Shahzadi and Kauser (2020); Lakhali (2021) on the other hand, reported positive influence of social media networks usage on the academic performance of students. The inconsistencies in literature on the effect of social media English on students' academic performances creates a gap that this current study seeks to fill. Again, due to the different methodologies employed for conducting the studies and the different settings within which the studies were conducted, their findings may not be the same as that of this current study; hence, this research.

METHODOLOGY

The study used the Convergent Parallel Mixed Methods Design. Convergent Parallel Mixed Methods is one of the three basic designs in mixed methods research. With this approach, Creswell (2014) notes that a researcher collects both quantitative and qualitative data, analyzes them separately, and then compares the results to see if the findings confirm or disconfirm each other. The key assumption of this approach is that both qualitative and quantitative data provide different types of information (often detailed views of participants qualitatively and scores on instruments quantitatively) and together they yield results that should be the same. The researchers were interested in investigating how the English spoken on social media has permeated the official written English language of teacher-trainees at the Seventh Day Adventist (SDA) College of Education, Asokore-Koforidua in Ghana. Hence, the mixed methods research design was seen as appropriate. The researchers sampled 313 respondents from the SDA College of Education, Asokore-Koforidua using the stratified random sampling approach. Stratified sampling entails segmenting the population into several homogeneous groups or strata (Amedahe & Asamoah-Gyimah, 2016). Subjects in each stratum are compared based on one or more characteristics such as sex, age, or profession (in this case students and teachers). Then, a sample is taken from each category. The final sample for the study is made up of the sub samples. A random selection of students from each stratum (the four levels of study) was made in order to obtain a sample that was representative of the entire student population. The sample for students was drawn from students in Level 100, Level 200, Level 300, and Level 400. In addition, three Senior Tutors from the college were randomly sampled for interview. A close-ended questionnaire was created and distributed to gather quantitative data from the students sampled for the study. The processing and analysis of the data gathered were guided by the research questions and hypotheses. The quantitative data gathered were entered into the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) Version 22 using data code sheets made from the questionnaire. Descriptive statistics (frequencies, percentages, mean scores, and standard deviation) and inferential statistics (t-test and One-way ANOVA) were used to analyse the quantitative data. In addition, the qualitative data were analysed thematically.

Data Analysis: Descriptive

Table 1: Sex of Respondents

| Sex | Frequency | Percentage |
|--------|-----------|------------|
| Male | 156 | 48 |
| Female | 169 | 52 |
| Total | 325 | 100 |

Source: Field data (2024)

From Table 1, one hundred and fifty-six, representing forty-eight percent of the respondents were males and the remaining one hundred and sixty-nine, representing fifty-two percent of the respondents were females. Thus, from Table 1, the views of both male respondents and female respondents were taken into consideration when drawing the conclusions of the study.

Table 2: Age of Respondents

| Age | Frequency | Percentage |
|----------------|-----------|------------|
| Above 19 years | 186 | 58 |
| 17-19 years | 81 | 25 |
| 14-16 years | 58 | 17 |
| Total | 325 | 100 |

Source: Field data (2024)

From Table 2, fifty-eight, representing seventeen percent of the respondents were between fourteen years and sixteen years old; eighty-one, representing twenty-five percent of the respondents were between seventeen years and nineteen years old; and the remaining one hundred and eighty-six, representing fifty-eight percent of the respondents were above nineteen years old. Thus, from Table 2, the majority (58%) of the respondents were above nineteen years old indicating they are matured enough to understand and respond appropriately to the items on the questionnaire.

Table 3: Current Year of Study

| Year | Frequency | Percentage |
|------------|-----------|------------|
| Year Four | 130 | 40 |
| Year Three | 108 | 33 |
| Year Two | 45 | 14 |
| Year One | 42 | 13 |
| Total | 325 | 100 |

Source: Field data (2024)

From Table 3, forty-two, representing thirteen percent of the respondents were in their first year of study; forty-five, representing fourteen percent of the respondents were in their second year of study; one hundred and eight, representing thirty-three percent of the respondents were in their third year of study; and the remaining one hundred and thirty, representing forty percent of the respondents were in their final year of study. Thus, from Table 3, the views of students across all levels of study were gathered in order to draw useful conclusions for the study.

Table 4: Most Prevalent Type of Social Media English Found in Teacher-Trainees' Formal Writing

| Social media English | S.A n (%) | A n (%) | D n (%) | S.D n (%) | Mean | St. D |
|--|-----------|----------|---------|-----------|-------|-------|
| Teacher-trainees are fond of using unconventional short forms in their writings. | 85 (26) | 162 (50) | 68 (21) | 10 (3) | 2.991 | .7718 |
| Teacher-trainees are fond of making incomplete sentences. | 58 (18) | 167 (51) | 77 (24) | 23 (7) | 2.800 | .8127 |
| Teacher-trainees' academic writings are | 98 (30) | 154 (47) | 56 (17) | 17 (5) | 3.025 | .8273 |

| | | | | | | |
|--|----------|----------|---------|--------|-------|-------|
| full of spelling errors. | | | | | | |
| Teacher-trainees' academic writings are full of punctuation errors. | 108 (33) | 163 (50) | 41(13) | 13 (4) | 3.126 | .7774 |
| Teacher-trainees' have challenges with the construction of sentences using correct word order. | 76 (23) | 188 (58) | 48 (15) | 13 (4) | 3.006 | .7370 |
| Teacher-trainees use too many acronyms or slang terms in their writings. | 83 (26) | 169 (52) | 60 (19) | 13 (4) | 2.991 | .7757 |

Source: Field data (2024)

S.A = Strongly Agree; **A** = Agree; **D** = Disagree; **S.D** = Strongly Disagree; **St. D** = Standard Deviation

From Table 4, eighty-five, representing twenty-six percent of the respondents strongly agreed and one hundred and sixty-two, representing fifty percent of the respondents agreed that teacher-trainees are found of using unconventional short forms in their writings; however, sixty-eight, representing twenty-one percent of the respondents disagreed and the remaining ten, representing three percent of the respondents strongly disagreed that teacher-trainees are found of using unconventional short forms in their writings. Also, from Table 4, fifty-eight, representing eighteen percent of the respondents strongly agreed and one hundred and sixty-seven, representing fifty-one percent of the respondents agreed that teacher-trainees are fond of making incomplete sentences; on the other hand, seventy-seven, representing twenty-four percent of the respondents disagreed and the remaining twenty-three, representing seven percent of the respondents strongly disagreed that teacher-trainees are fond of making incomplete sentences.

Again, from Table 4, ninety-eight, representing thirty percent of the respondents strongly agreed and one hundred and fifty-four, representing forty-seven percent of the respondents agreed that teacher-trainees' academic writings are full of spelling errors; but fifty-six, representing seventeen percent of the respondents disagreed and the remaining seventeen, representing five percent of the respondents strongly disagreed that teacher-trainees' academic writings are full of spelling errors. Also, from Table 4, one hundred and eight, representing thirty-three percent of the respondents strongly agreed and one hundred and three, representing fifty percent of the respondents agreed that teacher-trainees' academic writings are full of punctuation errors; however, forty-one, representing thirteen percent of the respondents disagreed and the remaining thirteen, representing four percent of the respondents strongly disagreed that teacher-trainees' academic writings are full of punctuation errors.

In addition, seventy-six, representing twenty-three percent of the respondents strongly agreed and one hundred and eighty-eight, representing fifty-eight percent of the respondents agreed that teacher-trainees have challenges with the construction of sentences using correct word order; conversely, forty-eight, representing fifteen percent of the respondents disagreed and the remaining thirteen, representing four percent of the respondents strongly disagreed that teacher-trainees have challenges with the construction of sentences using correct word order. Not all, from Table 4, eighty-three, representing twenty-six percent of the respondents strongly agreed and one hundred and sixty-nine, representing fifty-two percent of the respondents agreed that teacher-trainees use too many acronyms or slang terms in their writings; yet, sixty, representing nineteen percent of the respondents disagreed and the remaining thirteen, representing four percent of the respondents strongly disagreed that teacher-trainees use too many acronyms or slang terms in their writings.

From Table 4, the statement *Teacher-trainees' academic writings are full of punctuation errors* had the highest mean score (Mean = 3.126, standard deviation = 0.7774).

Interviewee 1: Yeah, I mean it's interesting. Teacher-trainees have serious problem with punctuation. It looks as if punctuation is no longer taught in school.

Interviewee 2: Thank you. But I am of the view that teachers do not pay particular attention to the punctuation errors in learners' exercises. Hence, they find it very difficult to provide appropriate

punctuation for their write-ups.

Interviewee 3: I see it as a problem created by the use of computers. Some of us rely on the computer to automatically correct any punctuation error, hence, we do not pay much attention to punctuation when we write.

The data gathered using questionnaire showed that teacher-trainees' academic writings are full of punctuation errors. Again, the interviewees were all of the view that teacher-trainees have challenges with punctuations. The researchers conducted a thorough investigation of teacher-trainees' answers to class assignments and observed that almost every script had a good number of punctuation errors. The finding supports the conclusion of Oguguo et al. (2020) that students use their mobile devices more frequently and even utilise jargon when speaking to peers and adults in professional setting. This highlights the issue of students' inappropriate use of punctuation in their academic writings.

Also, from Table 4, the statement *Teacher-trainees' academic writings are full of spelling errors* had the second highest mean score (Mean = 3.025, standard deviation = 0.8273).

Interviewee 1: You surely cannot imagine the kind of horrible spellings found in teacher-trainees' assignment and examination scripts.

Interviewee 2: I think our educational system needs to be looked at again. Do we actually teach spellings? So why won't students' writings be full of spelling errors.

Interviewee 3: Yes, I agree. Students don't need to worry themselves in this new age since whatever they write the computer will correct the wrong spellings and other issues. This situation has made students to pay less attention to their spellings knowing very well that every mistake will be corrected by the machine.

The data gathered using questionnaire reported that teacher-trainees' academic writings are full of spelling errors. Also, the interviewees were of the opinion that teacher-trainees demonstrate poor spelling ability. The researchers observed the lesson notes of all the respondents sampled for the study and observed that every single teacher-trainee had at least a word wrongly spelt in their lesson notes. This finding is in line with the assertion by Winarto (2019) that in an effort to reduce typing time and character space on social media, people frequently forgo using proper grammar and spelling in favour of well-known acronyms and slangs that have been deeply ingrained in the collective consciousness of the social media community

Again, from Table 4, the statement *Teacher-trainees have challenges with the construction of sentences using correct word order* had the third highest mean score (Mean = 3.006, standard deviation = 0.7370).

Interviewee 1: That's true. Some of the teacher-trainees can hardly construct a complete sentence without a grammatical error.

Interviewee 2: Hahaaaa, when your students can not punctuate their writings appropriately and spell simple words wrongly, what do you expect. I'm not even sure they know the difference between a phrase and a sentence.

Interviewee 3: I will agree with you on this. But you see, our students do not speak the English language always on campus so they find it difficult to construct complete sentences.

The data gathered using questionnaire showed that teacher-trainees have challenges with the construction of sentences using correct word order. The interviewees were of the view that teacher-trainees had difficulties constructing complete sentences. The researchers went through teacher-trainees Students' Reflective Journals (SRJ) for all levels of study and observed that majority of the teacher-trainees had difficulties constructing complete sentences in relation to correct word order. The finding confirms the view of Eokroko and Addei (2020) that there are no rules for syntax, grammar, or punctuation in social media English. Sentence structure doesn't

matter to users of such social media English either. They just care about the content, and that the other person understands what they mean.

Table 5: Effect of Social Media English on The Academic Performance of Teacher-Trainees

| Effect of social media English | S.A n (%) | A n (%) | D n (%) | S.D n (%) | Mean | St. D |
|--|-----------|----------|---------|-----------|-------|-------|
| Teacher-trainees spend more time on social media at the expense of their books. | 148 (46) | 142 (44) | 29 (9) | 6 (2) | 3.329 | .7153 |
| Teacher-trainees become addicted to social media. | 140 (43) | 158 (49) | 27 (8) | 0 (0) | 3.348 | .6278 |
| Teacher-trainees answer formal examination questions using social media English. | 73 (23) | 156 (48) | 79 (24) | 17 (5) | 2.877 | .8148 |
| Teacher-trainees pay less attention in the classroom during lessons. | 71 (22) | 159 (49) | 65 (20) | 30 (9) | 2.834 | .8732 |
| Teacher-trainees score below average marks in class exercises and examinations. | 56 (17) | 163 (50) | 81 (25) | 25 (8) | 2.769 | .8235 |
| Teacher-trainees score average marks in class exercises and examinations. | 30 (9) | 244 (75) | 45 (14) | 6 (2) | 2.917 | .5465 |
| Teacher-trainees score above average marks in class exercises and examinations. | 54 (17) | 179 (55) | 80 (25) | 12 (4) | 2.846 | .7335 |

Source: Field data (2024)

S.A = Strongly Agree; **A** = Agree; **D** = Disagree; **S.D** = Strongly Disagree; **St. D** = Standard Deviation

From Table 5, one hundred and forty-eight, representing forty-six percent of the respondents strongly agreed and one hundred and forty-two, representing forty-four percent of the respondents agreed that teacher-trainees spend more time on social media at the expense of their books; but twenty-nine, representing nine percent of the respondents disagreed and the remaining six, representing two percent of the respondents strongly disagreed that teacher-trainees spend more time on social media at the expense of their books. Also, Table 5 reports that one hundred and forty, representing forty-three percent of the respondents strongly agreed and one hundred and fifty-eight, representing forty-nine percent of the respondents agreed that teacher-trainees become addicted to social media; but the remaining twenty-seven, representing eight percent of the respondents disagreed that teacher-trainees become addicted to social media.

In addition, Table 5 reports that seventy-three, representing twenty-three percent of the respondents strongly agreed and one hundred and fifty-six, representing forty-eight percent of the respondents agreed that teacher-trainees answer formal examination questions using social media English; yet, seventy-nine, representing twenty-four percent of the respondents disagreed and the remaining seventeen, representing five percent of the respondents strongly disagreed that teacher-trainees answer formal examination questions using social media English. Also, from Table 5, seventy-one, representing twenty-two percent of the respondents strongly agreed and one hundred and fifty-nine, representing forty-nine percent of the respondents agreed that teacher-trainees pay less attention in the classroom during lessons; however, sixty-five, representing twenty percent of the respondents disagreed and the remaining thirty, representing nine percent of the respondents strongly disagreed that teacher-trainees pay less attention in the classroom during lessons.

Again, from Table 5, fifty-six, representing seventeen percent of the respondents strongly agreed and one

hundred and sixty-three, representing fifty percent of the respondents agreed that teacher-trainees score below average marks in class exercises and examination; but eighty-one, representing twenty-five percent of the respondents disagreed and the remaining twenty-five, representing eight percent of the respondents strongly disagreed that teacher-trainees score below average marks in class exercises and examination. Not all, Table 5 reports that thirty, representing nine percent of the respondents strongly agreed and two hundred and forty-four, representing seventy-five percent of the respondents agreed that teacher-trainees score average marks in class exercises and examinations; conversely, forty-five, representing fourteen percent of the respondents disagreed and the remaining six, representing two percent of the respondents strongly disagreed that teacher-trainees score average marks in class exercises and examinations. Also, from Table 5, fifty-four, representing seventeen percent of the respondents strongly agreed and one hundred and seventy-nine, representing fifty-five percent of the respondents agreed that teacher-trainees score above average marks in class exercises and examinations; however, eighty, representing twenty-five percent of the respondents disagreed and the remaining twelve, representing four percent of the respondents strongly disagreed that teacher-trainees score above average marks in class exercises and examinations.

From Table 5, the statement *Teacher-trainees become addicted to social media* had the highest mean score (Mean = 3.348, standard deviation = 0.6278).

Interviewee 1: I mean there is no doubt that the youth of today are addicted to social media and its content which can have dire consequences on their academic performance.

Interviewee 2: Yes, yes, yes. Students are really addicted to social media for a number of reasons best known to them. This may or may not affect their academic performances depending on what they do there.

Interviewee 3: I will not call it addiction because they use it to learn. I think what they need is counselling to help them make good use of the time available to them.

The data gathered using questionnaire showed that teacher-trainees have become addicted to social media and the interviewees were not of a different opinion that teacher-trainees have become addicted to social media network. The researchers observed a number of teacher-trainees over a period of one semester and realized they are so much addicted to their cell phones to the extent that some of them find it comfortable to be chatting their colleagues elsewhere while classes are in session. The finding is in line with the view of Asafo-Adjei et al. (2023) that social media utilisation has both positive and negative influence on learners' academic performances. Also, the finding supports the conclusion of Shahzadi and Kausar (2020) that the students' writing improved as a result of being encouraged to use Facebook in a less stressful manner.

Also, from Table 5, the statement *Teacher-trainees spend more time on social media at the expense of their books* had the second highest mean score (Mean = 3.329, standard deviation = 0.7153).

Interviewee 1: That's true teacher-trainees spend more time on social media but I can assume that sometimes it is for academic purposes.

Interviewee 2: Eeeei, they are always online. Sometimes I ask myself whether they have enough time to sleep. You know that data for browsing is cheaper from midnight so they don't sleep.

Interviewee 3: I am of the opinion that this is their time. Now internet is everywhere and it makes things happens. Some of the social media handles provide very educative materials which can help students to learn effective but whether they are learning or misusing their time, for that I don't know.

The data gathered using questionnaire showed that teacher-trainees spend more time on social media at the expense of their books. However, the interviewees were of the view that teacher-trainees spend more time on social media network assessing materials related to education. The researchers observed that students have a particular time they stay very glued to social media. During that period their concentration becomes so intense that absolutely nothing obstructs their attention. The finding agrees with the opinion of Bermudez et al. (2016)

that students are realising more and more that social media may be an effective instrument for their academic growth. This is because it facilitates feedback, assessment, and delivery. Speaking with hundreds of people online helps students to become more fluent in English in one way or another.

Again, from Table 5, the statement *Teacher-trainees score average marks in class exercises and examinations* had the third highest mean score (Mean = 2.917, standard deviation = 0.5465).

Interviewee 1: It's sad to say that students seem to be content with average performances without striving for academic excellence.

Interviewee 2: You see, when the teacher understands the acronym or slang used, the teacher-trainee may be marked up. Contrary, the acronyms and slangs they use are mostly understood by their peers (the young generation) but not the teacher hence they score low marks in exercises.

Interviewee 3: I see a positive correlation between the number of hours spent reading academic materials and the final grade. A student who spends more time on social media without reading academic materials is likely to score average marks.

The data gathered using questionnaire showed that teacher-trainees score average marks in class exercises and examinations. The interviewees were of the opinion that because teacher-trainees use unconventional acronyms and slangs which are not understood by their teachers, they (teacher-trainees) tend to score average marks in class exercises. The researchers' interactions with some teacher-trainees revealed that they do not read any academic material when they visit a social media site instead they are more interested in entertainment activities and materials. The finding agrees with the conclusion by Mingle and Musah (2015) that the majority of Ghanaian students face detrimental outcomes such as bad spelling and grammar, insufficient study time, and subpar academic achievement due to their unregulated use of social media.

Data Analysis: Inferential

Table 6: Group Statistics

| Sex of Respondents | N | Mean | Standard deviation | Standard Error Mean |
|---------------------------|-----|-------|--------------------|---------------------|
| Academic performance Male | 156 | 2.935 | 0.4415 | 0.0354 |
| Female | 169 | 3.038 | 0.4161 | 0.0320 |

Table 7: Independent Samples Test

| | Levene's test for equality of variance | | t-test for Equality of Means | | | | | | |
|----------------------------------|--|------|------------------------------|---------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------------|---|--------|
| | F | Sig. | T | df | Sig. (2-tailed) | Mean Difference | Std. Error Difference | 95% Confidence Interval of the Difference | |
| | | | | | | | | Lower | Upper |
| Academic Equal variances assumed | 1.558 | .213 | -2.166 | 323 | .031 | -0.1031 | .0476 | -.1967 | -.0095 |
| Equal variances not assumed | | | -2.161 | 316.836 | .031 | -0.1031 | .0477 | -.1969 | -.0092 |

An independent sample t-test was conducted to compare the effect of social media English on the academic performances of teacher-trainees at S.D.A. College of Education, Asokore-Koforidua in terms of sex. There was a significant difference in the mean scores for male teacher-trainees (Mean = 2.935, Standard deviation = 0.442) and female teacher-trainees (Mean = 3.038, Standard deviation = 0.416); $-2.166(323)$; $p = 0.031$. The magnitude of the difference in the means was small (eta squared = 0.01).

Table 8: Descriptive Statistics

| Academic performance | N | Mean | Std. Deviation | Std. Error | 95% Confidence Interval for Mean | | Minimum | Maximum |
|----------------------|-----|-------|----------------|------------|----------------------------------|-------------|---------|---------|
| | | | | | Lower Bound | Upper Bound | | |
| 14-16 years | 58 | 3.039 | .37824 | .04967 | 2.9400 | 3.1389 | 1.71 | 3.71 |
| 17-19 years | 81 | 2.938 | .44489 | .04943 | 2.8399 | 3.0366 | 1,71 | 3.86 |
| Above 19 years | 186 | 2.995 | .43997 | .03226 | 2.9310 | 3.0583 | 1.71 | 3.86 |
| Total | 325 | 2.989 | .43091 | .02390 | 2.9415 | 3.0356 | 1.71 | 3.86 |

Table 9: Test of Homogeneity of Variances

| Levene Statistic | Df1 | Df2 | Sig. |
|------------------|-----|-----|------|
| 2.273 | 2 | 322 | .105 |

Table 10: ANOVA

| Academic performance | Sum of Squares | df | Mean Square | F | Sig. |
|----------------------|----------------|-----|-------------|------|------|
| Between Groups | .362 | 2 | .181 | .974 | .379 |
| Within Groups | 59.800 | 322 | .186 | | |
| Total | 60.162 | 324 | | | |

Table 11: Robust Tests of Equality of Means

| Academic performance | Statistic ^a | df1 | df2 | Sig. |
|----------------------|------------------------|-----|---------|------|
| Welch | 1.045 | 2 | 140.449 | .355 |

a. Asymptotically F distributed.

Table 12: Multiple Comparison Post Hoc Tukey HSD

| (I) | (J) | Mean Difference (I-J) | Std. Error | Sig. | 95% Confidence Interval | |
|--------------------|----------------|-----------------------|------------|------|-------------------------|-------------|
| | | | | | Lower Bound | Upper Bound |
| Age of Respondents | 14-16 years | 0.10114 | 0.07413 | 0.36 | -0.0734 | 0.2757 |
| | Above 19 years | 0.04479 | 0.06481 | 0.77 | -0.1078 | 0.1974 |
| 17-19 years | 14-16 years | -0.10114 | 0.07413 | 0.36 | -0.2757 | 0.0734 |

| | | | | | | |
|----------------|----------------|----------|---------|------|---------|--------|
| | Above 19 years | -0.05635 | 0.05737 | 0.59 | -0.1914 | 0.0787 |
| Above 19 years | 14-16 years | -0.04479 | 0.06481 | 0.77 | -0.1974 | 0.1078 |
| | 17-19 years | 0.05635 | 0.05737 | 0.59 | -0.0787 | 0.1914 |

A one-way between-groups analysis of variance was conducted to explore the effect of social media English on the academic performances of teacher-trainees. Subjects were divided into three groups according to their age (Group 1: 16 years or less; Group 2: 14 -16 years; Group 3: 19 years and above). There was no statistically significant difference at the $p < .05$ level in the academic performances of teacher-trainees for the three age groups [$F(2, 322) = 0.974, p = 0.379$]. Post-hoc comparisons using the Tukey HSD test indicated that the mean score for Group 1 (Mean = 3.039, Standard deviation = .3782) was significantly different from Group 3 (Mean = 2.995, Standard deviation = .4400) and Group 2 (Mean = 2.938, Standard deviation = .4449). Group 2 (Mean = 2.938, Standard deviation = .4449) did not differ significantly from either Group 1 (Mean = 3.039, Standard deviation = .3782) or Group 3 (Mean = 2.995, Standard deviation = .4400).

There was a significant difference between the sex of teacher-trainees and the effect of social media network usage on the academic performance of teacher-trainees at SDA College of Education, Asokore-Koforidua. However, the effect was small. This means there was a small difference in the effect of social media network usage on the academic performances of male and female teacher-trainees.

There was no significant effect of social media English on the academic performances of teacher-trainees in terms of age. However, the mean score of teacher-trainees within fourteen and sixteen-year brackets was high. This means that there is no effect of social media network usage on the academic performances of teacher-trainees in terms of age.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of the study, the following conclusions are drawn.

1. The academic writings (lesson plan, Student Reflective Journal, essays, and projects) of teacher-trainees at SDA College of Education, Asokore Koforidua in Ghana are full of punctuation and spelling errors.
2. The teacher-trainees demonstrate that they have challenges with the construction of sentences using correct word order.
3. The teacher-trainees have become addicted to social media and spend more time on social media at the expense of their books. As a result, some of them score average marks in class exercises and examinations.
4. It appears that social media English has very little effect on the academic performances of teacher-trainees. This could partly be as a result of teachers/examiners compromising standards because they seem to understand the acronyms and slangs used by teacher-trainees, and they do not pay much attention to such errors.

Based on the conclusions of the study, the following recommendations are made:

1. Lecturers at SDA College of Education, Asokore Koforidua, Ghana need to pay attention to the punctuation and spelling errors in teacher-trainees' academic writings. Lecturers should deliberately look out for these errors and look for proactive ways to help teacher-trainees out of these predicaments.
2. Lecturers who teach Communicative Skills in the Department of English in the college need to up their game, and help teacher-trainees to appreciate the need to use formal writing styles in their academic writings.
3. The Guidance and Counselling Director with her team of counsellors need to schedule periodic engagements with teacher-trainees on the need to avoid spending too much time on social media.

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