The Impact of Social Networking Sites on Students' Reading Habits
L'impact des sites de réseaux sociaux sur les habitudes de lecture des étudiants

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Abstract :

Despite the abundance of educationalresourcesavailable on social networking platforms, these mediums mayrepresent a danger thatthreatensstudents' readind habits, due to the multiple diversions theymayintroducesuch as videos and gaming, whichimpedestudents' concentration and makeitdifficult for them to focus on traditionaltexts. Therefore, thisresearchwork tries to investigatehow thesesocial networking sites maydistractstudents and impact theirreading habits in differentways. To conduct the study, the researcherused a surveyresearchmethod. In thissense, aquestinnairewasdelivered to 150 students to gather information about various aspects related to readingbehaviouramongstudents. Data gatheredfrom the questionnaires wereanalyzed and suggestions wereproposed to address the decline in students' reading habits.

Résumé:

Malgré l'abondance des ressources éducatives disponibles sur les plateformes de réseaux sociaux, ces supports peuvent représenter un danger pour les habitudes de lecture des étudiants , en raison des multiples distractions qu'ils peuvent introduire, telles que les vidéos et les jeux, qui entravent la concentration des étudiants et les empêchent de se concentrer sur les textes traditionnels. C'est pourquoi ce travail de recherche tente d'étudier comment ces plateformes de réseaux sociaux peuvent distraire les étudiants et avoir un impact sur leurs habitudes de lecture de différentes manières. Pour mener à bien cette étude, la chercheuse a utilisé une méthode d'enquête. En ce sens, un questionnaire a été remis à 150 étudiants afin de recueillir des informations sur divers aspects liés aux habitudes de lecture des étudiants. Les données recueillies à partir des questionnaires ont été analysées et des suggestions ont été proposées pour remédier au déclin des habitudes de lecture des étudiants.

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1. Introduction

Proclaim! This was the first word echoed in Hira cave when angel Jibreel descended from the sky to deliver the Islam message to the prophet Mohamed-peace and blessing be upon him- in Al' Alaqverse translated by Picktahll (1981): "Proclaim! (orread!) In the name of the Lord and Cherisher, who created (1) created man, out of a (mere) clot of congealed blood (2) proclaim!And the Lord is Most Bountiful (3) He Who taught (the use of) the pen (4)".

The Holy Qur'an was the first source which emphasized the importance of reading, and reading in this verse did not refer to the only deciphering of letters and words; it was a call for literacy and an urge for seeking continuous knowledge to build civilizations, prosper the world and make it full of life. Reading thus plays a pivotal role in the life of man as it helps in his development from birth to death. Reading shapes lives and helps people become more acquainted with themselves and with others. Reading adds more sight to eyes and more wisdom to minds. Adumb person can become a skillful communicator and a lame can climb mountains with reading. An ordinary person may need a passport to travel abroad, but for a 'reader', there is no need for a passport because there are no borders.

Reading provides the individual with a sense of values which enable him to 'understand' rather than to 'condemn'. It makes the individual think more critically about 'right' and 'wrong' in the society. Reading also refines the individual's way of thinking and saves him from ignorance, boredom, and loneliness.

Yet, despite its paramount importance, it is commonplace to see students diminishing their engagement with reading and seeking alternative forms of entertainment.In their free time, these latter prefer to glue to screens rather than read books.Televisions, cell phones, laptops, and the Internet with all its social networking platforms, seem to have dominated their life to the point of addiction and students are no longer attracted neither by books nor by the weighty ideas they contain.

2- The importance of reading habits

Reading habits refer to the action which reflects the individual inclination and preferences for engaging with a written material (Chettri& Rout, 2013; Tella&Akanda, 2007; Aramide, 2015; Wagner, 2002). The act of reading is thus considered as a habit when it is consistently practiced and repeated. This habit evolves gradually over time and it is measured according to the quantity

of materials read, to thefrequency of reading and to the average time devoted to the reading act.

Reading habit is a gradual process which accompanies the individual as he/she progresses in age. It is a practice that needs to be nurtured from the early years of childhood up to adulthood. In this sense, a reading habit must be cultivated at an early age in school. Deavers (2000) claims that children who do not have the chance to engage with books in their early stages of life may struggle to develop positive reading habits later as they grow.

Cultivating good reading habits are necessary for fostering healthy intellectual growth. Indeed, regular reading sparks curiosity, deepens understanding elevates tastes, stimulates imagination, and provides perspectives for personal growth. Reading habit is also a powerful and long lasting tool which helps students maximize their academic performance. Bachir&Matto (2012) argue that effective reading habits serve as a tool to succeed in life. Palani (2012) supports this notion, stating that achieving success in education correlates with the cultivation of successful reading habits.

Palani (2012) also reports that reading habit is an essential aspect for creating a literate society in the world. Therefore, developing a society that has a lifetime habit of reading becomes at the heart of forming a creative and innovative nation. Clark & Rumbold (2006) see reading habit as a fundamental means for promoting mental capacity, learning, information, and understanding. Besides, Priajane (2015) asserts that healthy reading habits are important for younger generations to compete in the global marketplace of the future.

3- Statement of the problem

The development of technology has without doubt brought about significant changes in the way students engage with the written text. While technology has numerous benefits, it has also negatively impacted reading habits in different ways. Social networking sites distract students and surfing the internet has become a kind of addiction in their daily life, leaving the habit of reading on a backseat. Therefore, this study seeks to encourage students to be mindful of their digital consumption so that digital technology enhances rather than hampers the development of good and healthy reading habits among them. The study also emphasizes the importance of nurturing good reading habits among students for intellectual, educational and societal growth.

4- Review of related literature

Technology advancements have profoundly reshaped reading habits inrecent years. Indeed, the omnipresence of digital devices such as smartphones, tablets, and laptops as well as the widespread use of social networking platforms like Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, WhatsApp, and TikTok among others had led to a decline in deep, focused reading. Students nowadays lack the skill of reading as they spend more hours on social networks, browsing the net, playing games, and sending non-stop messages to their friends.

Different studies have shown that students are less interested in reading due to technological advancement. Tariq et.al. (2012), for instance, assert that social networking has a detrimental effect on teenagers as it diverts them away from their academic tasks, particularly reading. Pivec (1998) reports that the man rival for attracting interest of teenagers towards reading books is technology, TV screens and the Internet in particular. Loving & Ochoa (2010) argue that students are increasingly drawn to social networking sites dedicating substantial time to maintaining social connections and responding to text messages at the expense of reading.

Birkerts (1994)andChartier(2004) assert thatindividuals raised in a digital environment often struggle and face challenges in reading deeply and maintaining a prolonged focus on reading materials. Besides, an investigation conducted by Wang et al., (2011) demonstrates thatacademic performance is adversely affected by social networking. The study showed thattwo thirds of the participants used social platforms while doing their assignments both in class andat home.

Johnson-Smaragdi& Jonsson (2006) opine that every medium of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) can be a threat to man's interest in reading. Furthermore, Kalpidon et al., (2011) certify thatas social media websites such as Facebook, Youtube and Twitter become more widely used, they present a growing riskby providing students with avenues for procrastinationwhen tackling homeworkand assignments.

Due to technological advancement, nearly all age ranges are less interested in reading.This is what loan (2012) explains when he states that people tend to choose screens over books. Lieu (2005) points out that the digital era has tremendously influenced the way people read. Moreover, Palani (2012) confirms that before the advent of technological devices, people found the time to read. But this behavior has gone with the wind as both the young and the old are glued to their screens. According to Elizabeth (2003), reading habits are hitting rock bottom because of the offshoots of technological development. She explains that the Internet content has eye-catching phrases, vivid colors, and blinking graphics, all of which distract individuals from reading.

Technology is thus incredibly taking a steady control over individuals' lives, and the tremendous use of social networking is killing the habit of reading among students. Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, WhatsApp and Tik Tok are filling the minds of young and old, leaving thus reading on a backseat vanishing into thin air.This worrisome phenomenon threatens the students and prevents them from excelling in their academic, social ,and evenfuture professional life.

5- Methodology

A survey research method was adopted to enable the researcher to investigate her problematic. The aim behind this was to offer detailed insights into the challenges faced by students, the impact of technology, time spent on digital devices, motivation for reading, as well as the factors lying behind the decline of reading habits among students.

Before administering the survey to the 150 respondents who participated in this study, the researcher conducted a pilot study with a small group of 10 randomly chosen students to identify and rectify any ambiguities or confusing questions, ensuring thus the survey's reliability and validity. After that, the questionnaire was delivered to the whole participants.To encourage honest responses, the participants were asked to answer the questionnaire anonymously. After the collection of copies of the questionnaire, frequency count and percentages were used to analyze data.

The participants in this survey research study were students from four different faculties. The sample size comprised 150 students drawn from different fields of specialism. The selection process utilized random sampling techniques to reduce bias. The age of the participants varied from 19 to 24 years old. Both male and female students were involved in this investigation.

6- Data analysis

The two first questions of the questionnaire referred to the participants'age and gender. Thus, according to their answers, the respondents age varied between 19 and 24 years old.As for their gender, data collected showed that 58 males and 42 females were involved in the study.

Table1: How students spend their leisure time

When you are free, what do you do?	frequency	percentage
Watch TV?	72	48%
Play games?	117	78%
Browse the net?	143	95.33%
Read a book?	9	6%

Browsing the net is the most attractive activity for students in their free time as 143 of them chose this option. Playing games comes next with 117 students opting for this choice. Watching TV is also an activity that 72 students seem to appreciate whereas reading books is an activity that only 9 students find interesting.

Table 2: frequency of browsing the net

How often do you browse the net per day?	Frequency	Percentage
Several times	142	94.66%
Few times	8	5.33%

Nearly all the respondents seem to be addicted to the net since 142students frequently used these it. Only 8 respondents, however, confessed that their access to the net was rather rare.

Table 3: reasons for browsing the net

Why do you most often browse the net?	Frequency	Percentage
For academic purposes(doing research, studying….)	37	24.6%
For non academic purposes(chatting, photo sharing,….)	69	46%
For both reasons	44	29.3%

The majority of the students seem to use the net for non-academic purposes, as 69 respondents confessed that they used it as a means of entertainment for staying in touch with friends, chatting, sharing updates, photo sharing rather than as an educational tool which can help them improve their studies.37 participants declared that they browsed the net for academic purposes, whereas 44 stated that their use of the net was for both reasons.

Table 4: The utilization of social platforms by students

Do you use social networking sites?	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	150	100%
No	0	0%

None of the respondents gave a negative answer to this question as all of them (100%) confirmed their use of social networking sites. This demonstrates the integration of these platforms in their daily life.

Table5: The number of times students use social networking sites per day

How often do you utilize social media platforms?	Frequency	Percentage
Several times in the same day	147	98%
One time per day	3	2%
Once a week	0	0%

As it is shown in the table above, approximately all students (147)seem to use social networking sites several times a day, which proves the addictive feature of such platforms. A minority of 3 students declared that they are not frequent users of these sites, as they noted that they used these sites only once a day.

Table 6: tools to connect with social networking sites

Do you connect with social networking sites via	Frequency	Percentage
Cell phone	150	100%
Personal computer	28	18.6%
Cyber cafe	0	0%

Data collected showed that all the respondents connected to social networking sites via their cell phones as all the 150 participants confirmed that.This shows how these latter are always glued to their phones.In addition to their cell phones, 28 respondents said that they also used their personal computer. None of the participants went to cyber cafes, which proves that all of the students own mobile phones.

Table 7: Preferred social networking sites

Which social media platforms from the following list are you currently using ?	Frequency	Percentage
Facebook	11	7.3%
Instagram	29	19.3%
Twitter	4	2.6%
Snapchat	43	28.6%
TikTok	63	42%

TikTok seems to prevail over all the other sites since 63 respondents (42%) ranked it as the most frequently used. The next preferred site is SnapChat as 43 respondents (28,6%) chose it. Instagram takes the third position among the choices with 19,3%of the students declaring to like it. Facebook comes next with 11 students (7,3%) opting for this response, before Twitter with only 4 respondents (2,6%)confessing to prefer it.

Table 8: time devoted to social networking platforms

How much time do you spend onusing these sites?	Frequency	Percentage
One hour	12	8%
Two hours	42	28%
More than two hours	96	64%

A large proportion of the respondents noted that they spent more than two hours on their preferred sites as 96of them (64%) chose this answer. 42 students (28%) confessed that, in average, they could spend two hours on these platforms, whereas only 12 students, which represents 8% of the participants in this study, declared that the average time for their use of these sites was one hour.

Table 9: use of social platforms in class

Do you use these sites in class?	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	105	70%
No	45	30%

More than two thirds of the respondents confessed that they used social networking sites in class while doing their assignments as 105 (70%) of them answered positively to this question, which

shows how addictive these sites may be for the students. The remaining students (30%) asserted that they did not use these sites in class.

Table10: effect of social networking sites on students' academic performance

Have these sites negatively impacted your academic performance?	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	72	48%
No	78	52%

Not all the students seem to be aware of the danger that social networking may have on their academic performance, as 72 students (48%) responded positively to this question whereas 78 (52%) of them denied the threatening side of these platforms.

Table11: students' addiction to social networking sites

To what extent are you dependent on these sites?	Frequency	Percentage
100%	141	94%
50%	9	6%
20%	0	0%

Students' addiction to social networking sites is prevailing in responses to this question. Indeed, 141 participantsconfessed that they are dependent to 100% on these sites. This proportion represents 94% of the whole respondents. Only 9 students (6%), however, said that they are dependent to 50%.

Table 12: social networking sites v.s reading books

Which activity do you find more attractive?	Frequency	Percentage
Using social networking sites	141	94%
Reading a book	9	6%

Responses to this question were really disheartening. Reading seems to be the last thing students are interested at as only 9 of them (6%) think that it is an attractive activity. The majority of the respondents find social networking sites more interesting since 141 students (94%) chose this option as it is shown in the table above.

Table13: social networking sites and reading habits

Have you changed your reading habits since you started using social media platforms?	Frequency	Percentage
Reading more	0	0%
Reading less	125	83.3%
No change	25	16.6%

More than two thirds of the respondents (83,3%) havenoticed that their reading habits have changed since they started using social networking sites. Indeed, 125 participants declared that they read less than they used to do, whereas 25 respondents (16,6%) pointed out that they have noticed no change in their habit of reading books.

Table14: The influence of social networking sites on reading

Do you think that social network can distract you from reading?	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	137	91.3%
No	13	8.6%

Almost all the respondents think that social networking sites may have anegative impact on reading as 137 students (91,3%) agreed that these sites can distract them from reading. The remaining 13 students (8,6%) responded negatively to this question.

Table 15: impact of social networking sites on students' reading frequency

Do you think that these sites reduce your time for reading?	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	136	90.6%
No	14	9.3%

Approximately all students confessed that using social network sites reduces the time of reading since 136 participants (90,6%) responded positively to this question. However, 14 students did not find that social networking sites had a negative impact on the time devoted to reading.

7- Discussion of findings and recommendations

Looking at the responses of the participants, it can be said that this study validates how social networking sites negatively affect students' reading habits. It is disheartening to notice how TikTok, Instagram,and whatsApp among other sites are filling the minds of students to the extent that nothing else matters for them even their studies. In their free time, these latter are found

glued to their cell phones, using these platforms for social communication and entertainment to respond to messages,check notifications, share updates, play games, or send photos rather than reading a book. Students are also found to use these sites even in class while doing their assignments which demonstrates the addictive side of these platforms.

Students'overuse of social networking platformsmakesthem neglect their academic tasks, which can lead to lower grades and reduced overall academic performance. Moreover, time spent on social networking sites often displaces time that could have been used for reading books or any other substantial materials, leaving thus the act of readingon a backseat vanishing into thin air.

Students' addiction to social networks becomes a worrisome phenomenon that needs urgent intervention. Therefore, it is crucial to strike the right balance between maximizing the benefits and mitigating the risks associated with the useof such sites.Therefore, to avoid addiction, students need to be mindful of their habits and limit their use of these platforms. For this to happen, these latter can set boundaries, take breaks, and find other activities to do such as visiting libraries and reading books to enrich their knowledge.Besides, as these sites have become an integral part of students' daily life, it is better to use them as a tool for educational purposes to intercept waste of time. One way to do this is to equip the students with the knowledge, skills, and attitudes that are necessary to navigate these sites responsibly and safely for academic purposes. This can be done with the help of teachers who can guide their students to find credible educational websites that can encourage them to improve their reading habits and promote learning and academic research.

8-Conclusion

Cultivating a reading habit among students in this digital age is undeniably challenging.The constant influx of digital content diverts attention away from reading and makes it difficult to compete with printed books.Students dedicate substantial amounts of their time scrolling through various platforms, liking posts, sending messages, andengaging in online conversations, and this pervasive new trend leads to a significant decline in the time spent on reading. Social networking platforms represent a double edged sword for students. While they can offerdiverse opportunities for intellectual growth, they can also pose challenges if not used in the appropriate way.

Therefore, to explore these sites in a more effective way, educators can help students leverage these platforms as powerful tools for learning, collaboration and personal growth. This could be done through integrating these sites as tools in their teaching methodologies. For instance, educators can promote reading habits through social media by initiating activities such as virtual book clubs and forums where students can discuss themes, share resources, disseminate their favorite passages and quotes, recommend books to one another,all of which will encourage peer learning,enhancecollaborative reading experiences, foster a sense of community among students and create a dynamic learning environment both inside and outside the classroom.

Educators can also highlight the potential risks associated with social media sites, emphasizing on the negative consequences due to the misuse of these platforms such as distraction, procrastination and decreased productivity in academic tasks. This could be done through

teaching their students how to navigate these platforms more effectively and responsibly by establishing boundaries to their online activities, and encouraging healthy screen time habits. By encouraging students to think critically about their online behavior and the impact it may have on their learning performance as a whole, these latter will be empowered to make informed decisions about their social media use.

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