

# Impact of social media in enhancing vocabulary and English Language Acquisition – A Study

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**Abstract:** Social media is a commonly employed method of communication that is pervasive among individuals across many age cohorts. Educational institutions have included social media platforms into their instructional practices to not only facilitate communication, but also to distribute new knowledge and promote active interaction with students. The growing utilization of social media in recent times has prompted a controversial discourse regarding its effectiveness as a pedagogical instrument. The objective of this study is to examine the influence of social media on the acquisition of English vocabulary among student populations. The main aim of this research is to examine the influence of social media on individuals' inclination towards developing competency in language acquisition. Furthermore, this study investigates the influence of these platforms on the process of language acquisition, encompassing both positive and negative consequences. The data and replies for this study were obtained by the presentation of a questionnaire. The questionnaire data was subjected to quantitative analysis. The findings of the research suggest that social media platforms have a significant role in stimulating interest in the acquisition of language among persons engaged in the study of English.

**Keywords:** Social Media, English Language Acquisition, Vocabulary, Questionnaire, Teaching and Learning

## 1. Introduction

In recent times, social media platforms have emerged as the primary means of daily communication and engagement. Various social media among others, fulfil distinct roles in facilitating communication. The utilization of these communication platforms has indirectly facilitated the acquisition of English language skills among learners, owing to the extensive prevalence of English usage within the realm of social media. Furthermore, social media platforms are employed as educational tools. Social media platforms serve as a forum for students to exchange and engage in discourse pertaining to their academic resources. According to a study conducted by Derakshan and Hasanabbasi (2015), Facebook has had a significant influence on the process of acquiring a second language.

Social media sites are commonly regarded as efficacious instruments in the realm of language acquisition. The findings indicated that learning through social media was more efficacious in comparison to conventional learning methods. Social media platforms provide learners with exposure to the latest trends in linguistic usage. Furthermore, social media platforms offer pupils the opportunity to engage with language in an actual real-life context. The utilisation of social media platforms also yields beneficial outcomes, such as enhanced pronunciation skills and expanded vocabulary, as observed in the study conducted by Abbasova (2016).

Undoubtedly, social media has become an integral aspect of contemporary life, prompting diverse perspectives on the efficacy of its role in enhancing and broadening English language proficiency. A study needs to be conducted in order to ascertain the impact of social media on the development of English vocabulary.

This study seeks to address the following essential research questions:

- 1) What is the impact of social media on the growth of English vocabulary among university students?
- 2) What is the impact of social media on the development of language acquisition skills?
- 3) What are the effects of social media on language acquisition?

## 2. Literature Review

Social media refers to an Internet-based technological platform that is widely utilised by users to engage in interactive communication through various electronic devices. Social networking platforms possess significant potential in facilitating the educational journey of students by providing avenues for gathering and accessing

information, hence fostering the growth, enhancement, and dissemination of knowledge. Social media platforms have increasingly emerged as significant channels for both pleasure and education.

### 3. Language in Social Media

English language is often regarded as a global lingua franca, and it undergoes continuous evolution to adapt to advancements in technology. Social networking platforms, including Facebook and similar platforms, have a significant impact on the process of acquiring English as a second language. There are several advantages of social media for learners, including the enhancement of motivation and the development of social skills. The enhancement of language abilities among learners has been facilitated by the numerous opportunities provided by social media, in their respective studies. Furthermore, according to Belal (2014), social media offers learners the opportunity to engage in a meaningful and ongoing dialogue on various social networking platforms. The author asserts that the use of social media not only alleviates anxiety but also enhances language creation. Networking sites are well recognised among students due to their ability to enhance motivation and foster increased involvement. Rahmat (2019) suggests that creating a favourable learning environment that promotes active engagement is an effective strategy for motivating language learners. This can be achieved by leveraging social media platforms. According to Rouis, Limayem, and Salehi (2011), students can effectively utilise social media platforms like Facebook as a tool for English language learning. By doing so, they not only acquire language skills but also engage in global collaborations with individuals from diverse backgrounds. Moreover, social media enables students to fulfil language functions without the need for face-to-face interactions with native speakers. Social media, meanwhile, possesses the propensity to exert a negative influence on pupils' English proficiency. The utilisation of abbreviations and unfamiliar language in written communication on social media platforms has emerged as a contemporary phenomenon that poses a potential threat to the literacy proficiency and aptitude of pupils (Craig, 2003).

The advent of social media platforms has facilitated global connectivity through virtual interactions. This form of interactivity provides learners with the opportunity to engage in meaning-making activities using authentic content and interacting with native speakers. Learners are exposed to a diverse array of discourse functions, hence enhancing their language proficiency. According to Kasuma (2017), this intervention facilitated the stimulation of imaginative dissemination of linguistic expression, while simultaneously promoting the development of analytical literacy skills.

While Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube have been acknowledged as viable educational tools, it is important to acknowledge the negative consequences associated with their usage. Facebook is an internet platform that provides users with the opportunity to engage in written communication. Individuals have the ability to freely express themselves and have access to a wide range of written content. However, as Derakshan and Hasanabbasi (2015) argue, a significant portion of these posts are informal in nature and do not align with the standards of academic writing typically employed in language learning environments.

### 4. Learning English Vocabulary:

The acquisition of vocabulary is a significant challenge in the process of language acquisition. Language is an essential component of communication. Proficiency in vocabulary acquisition not only facilitates enhanced comprehension of communications for second language learners, but also enables them to generate meaningful and coherent utterances. The development of vocabulary is also influenced by the prior experiences and background knowledge of the learner. In the context of second language acquisition (SLA), the acquisition and mastery of vocabulary significantly impact the development of the four fundamental language skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. The significance of language education is a subject of considerable discourse, owing to the following factors. According to a study conducted by Hasannejad, Bahador, and Kazemi in 2015.

According to a comprehensive review conducted by Hairrell, Rupley, and Simmons (2011), the acquisition of focused vocabulary has been found to result in a significant enhancement of word knowledge. The research conducted revealed that there are three prevalent techniques employed in the process of expanding one's vocabulary: repeated exposure, contextual analysis, and semantic tactics.

Incidental learning is commonly linked to the process of acquiring vocabulary through online platforms. Incidental learning is characterised by the outcomes derived from various academic or non-academic pursuits,

which occur through processes such as interaction, problem-solving, repetition, observation, and unintended and unplanned occurrences. Learners may also encounter and acquire erroneous linguistic forms within a given language. Educators should exercise caution on the potential effects that may impact learners' aptitude and acquisition of knowledge.

### 5. Challenges in vocabulary learning

English is often recognised as a significant language due to its global prevalence. The significance of teaching English, particularly at the university level, is widely recognised for various reasons. The acquisition of vocabulary holds significant importance as individuals who possess little vocabulary knowledge often demonstrate deficiencies in several language abilities. English language learners often have feelings of insecurity due to their limited vocabulary range, which might hinder their ability to use English in their daily lives. In addition to experiencing feelings of insecurity, ESL and EFL learners encounter other challenges in the acquisition of English language skills. The presence of insufficient motivation has been identified as a hindrance to the acquisition of language skills. The attitude of learners is considered a crucial factor in determining their language achievement (Khan, 2016). The relationship between motivation and attitude in language learning is closely intertwined, since both factors play a crucial role in facilitating a successful language acquisition process. Motivation, both intrinsic and extrinsic, significantly influences the English language acquisition process.

The work by Susanto and Halim (2016) encompassed multiple facets of research and theory, wherein the authors divided vocabulary acquisition processes into two primary categories. There exist various ways for comprehending meaning and gaining vocabulary. Various strategies can be employed to derive meaning from a given text. These strategies include making educated guesses based on the scenario or context, consulting a dictionary for clarification, drawing inferences from the word's form, and establishing connections with cognates. The acquisition of vocabulary can be facilitated through several strategies, including the utilisation of repetition and rote learning techniques, the organisation of words within one's cognitive framework, and the establishment of connections with pre-existing knowledge. Incidental vocabulary acquisition occurs when one's attention is directed towards tasks unrelated to vocabulary learning, such as comprehending a text or engaging in communicative activities. The facilitation of incidental learning through exposure to texts would be significantly enhanced when language learners employ vocabulary learning methodologies. Susanto and Halim (2016) have presented approximately four ways for vocabulary acquisition. These strategies include inferring meaning from context, employing mnemonic devices or the keyword approach, utilising vocabulary notebooks, and employing various other learner tactics. In order to enhance language acquisition, several strategies can be employed. These include assessing the presence of a cognate in one's first language, engaging in collaborative learning within peer groups, establishing connections between new words and personal experiences or prior knowledge, vocalising unfamiliar terms during study sessions, employing both verbal and written repetition, and participating in extended rehearsal activities. It is a well-established truth that the majority of words have not been explicitly taught to language learners. In the future, the acquisition of vocabulary is expected to predominantly occur through implicit or incidental means. According to Limacher (2015) and Gibbins & Greenhow (2016), learning strategies should serve the dual purpose of facilitating the comprehension of unfamiliar words and reinforcing the understanding of words that have already been encountered. Therefore, it is recommended that individuals who are learning a language adopt a method of autonomous vocabulary acquisition that include both substantial reading and self-study techniques.

One crucial element in the process of acquiring language is to enhance one's exposure. In order to enhance one's exposure to both familiar and novel vocabulary, it is imperative for a student to engage in extensive listening and reading activities. Furthermore, an additional determinant of language acquisition is the level of cognitive processing or engagement. The concept of depth of processing refers to the level of cognitive effort exerted by a student in the process of acquiring new words. It has been observed that when learners invest greater effort in the acquisition of new words, there is an increased likelihood of remembering these words. In terms of the depth of engagement, the process of learning is likely to occur more effortlessly when a higher level of involvement is dedicated. The elements encompassed within engagement, as discussed by Smith (2018), include the necessity for learners to engage in the study of a term, their active pursuit of its meaning, and their subsequent appraisal of the obtained outcome. The acquisition and utilisation of vocabulary play a crucial role in facilitating

the effective and proficient use of a second language. The reason for this is that individuals who lack a diverse vocabulary are unable to effectively utilise the functions and structures they have acquired for the purpose of communication.

The present study employed a quantitative research design. Quantitative research relies on the systematic gathering and examination of numerical data in order to elucidate, forecast, depict, or manipulate variables of significance. In this study, a quantitative methodology was employed to address the research inquiries. The utilisation of a research survey was employed due to its capacity to facilitate the collecting of data from a substantial number of individuals, hence enabling the potential for generalising the obtained results to larger populations. Furthermore, it exhibits versatility in terms of the range of inquiries that can be explored (Mertler, 2018). The study's population comprised students enrolled in both public and private universities in Malaysia, spanning from semester 1 to 8, and representing diverse educational backgrounds. The present investigation employed a basic random sampling technique. Each member of the population was selected by a random process.

To accomplish the aims of this study, a questionnaire was employed using Google Forms as the data collection tool. The questionnaire was designed to evaluate students' thoughts and opinions regarding the use of social media for enhancing English vocabulary acquisition. A questionnaire is a research instrument used to gather primary data by posing a series of structured questions to a selected group of participants, with the aim of obtaining dependable and valid responses. The reliability statistics indicated that the instrument had a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of .811 (see Table 1). The questionnaire was partitioned into two primary pieces. This study examines the relationship between personal background and social media usage, with a specific focus on vocabulary skill, language learning interest, and the positive and negative impacts of social media. The research conducted by Khan, Ayaz, and Faheem (2016) is utilised to explore the effects of social media on vocabulary skill and language learning interest. Additionally, the positive influence of social media, as discussed by Tantarang (2016), and the negative impact, as discussed by Strickland (2014), are also considered. Each segment will consist of a combined total of 27 questions. The rating for each question will be assessed using a 5-point Likert scale, which spans from 1 (indicating strong disagreement) to 5 (indicating strong agreement). To evaluate the validity of the established hypothesis, a questionnaire was employed as a method for gathering dependable data in a predominantly deductive manner. Quantitative analysis was conducted on the questionnaire data using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software, resulting in the determination of mean scores.

#### Reliability statistics:

| Sl.No. | Cronbach's Alpha | No. of Items |
|--------|------------------|--------------|
| 1.     | .811             | 23           |

## 6. Findings

The following part presents the conclusions of the study by addressing the research questions.

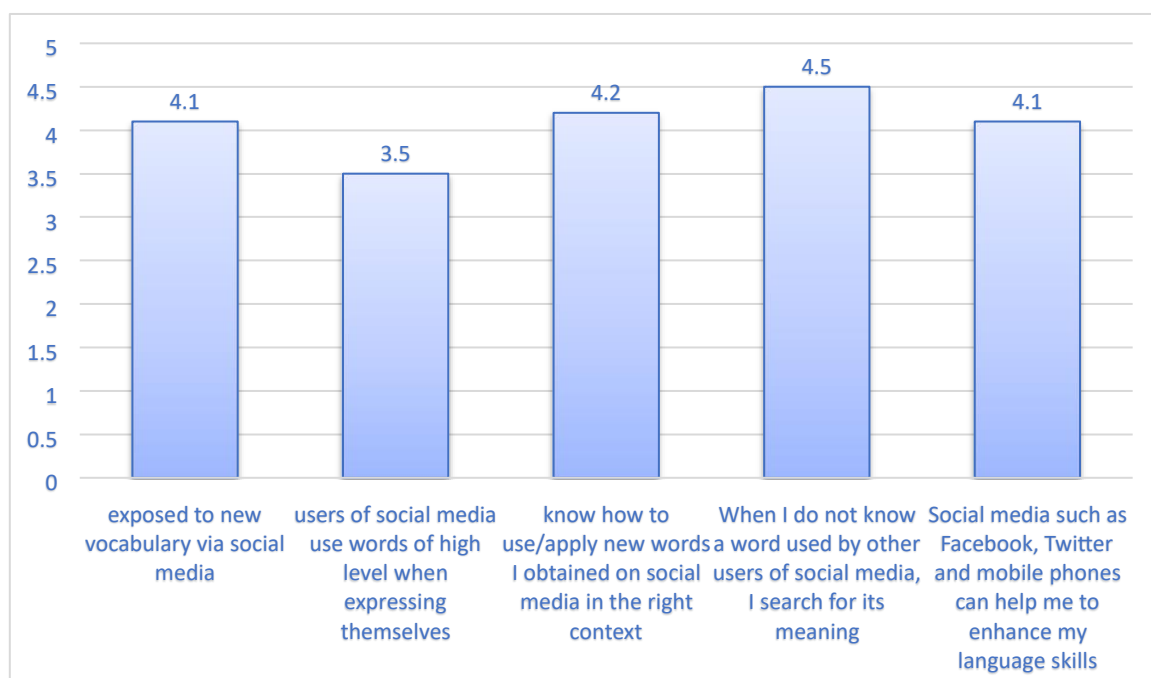
1) The study aims to investigate the impact of social media on the development of English vocabulary among university students.

2) What is the impact of social media on the development of language acquisition skills?

3) What are the effects of social media on language acquisition learning, both positive and negative?

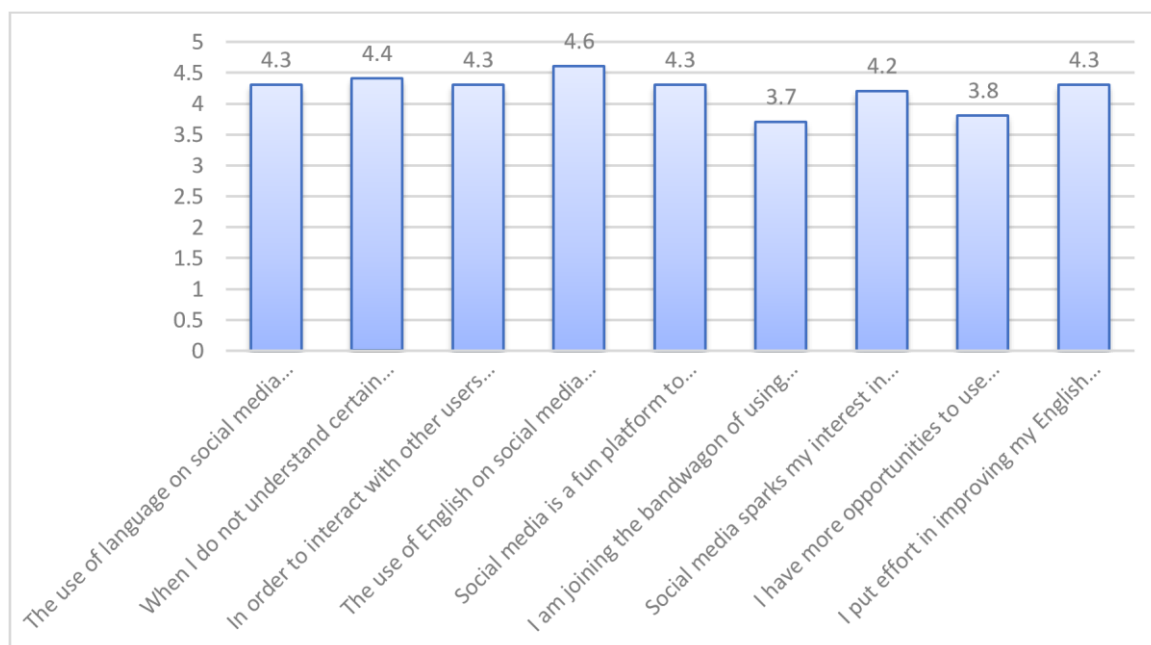
In the study conducted by Khan, Ayaz, and Faheem (2016), it was identified that there are two primary components of vocabulary proficiency, namely the acquisition of novel lexemes and the comprehension of word functions. Frequently, individuals engaged in the process of learning may require assistance in the exploration and acquisition of unfamiliar vocabulary. A comprehensive understanding of word functions is crucial for language learners, since it facilitates the establishment of connections between the diverse functions that words serve within various contexts.

Based on the data presented in Figure 1, it can be observed that the learners have a tendency to engage in the act of searching for the meaning of unfamiliar words on social media platforms, as indicated by the highest mean score of 4.5. Furthermore, the students expressed consensus regarding their ability to effectively utilise and incorporate newly acquired vocabulary from social media platforms (4.2). Furthermore, it was observed that students perceived social media as a valuable tool for improving their language proficiency (4.2).



**Fig 1:** Mean score – Vocabulary

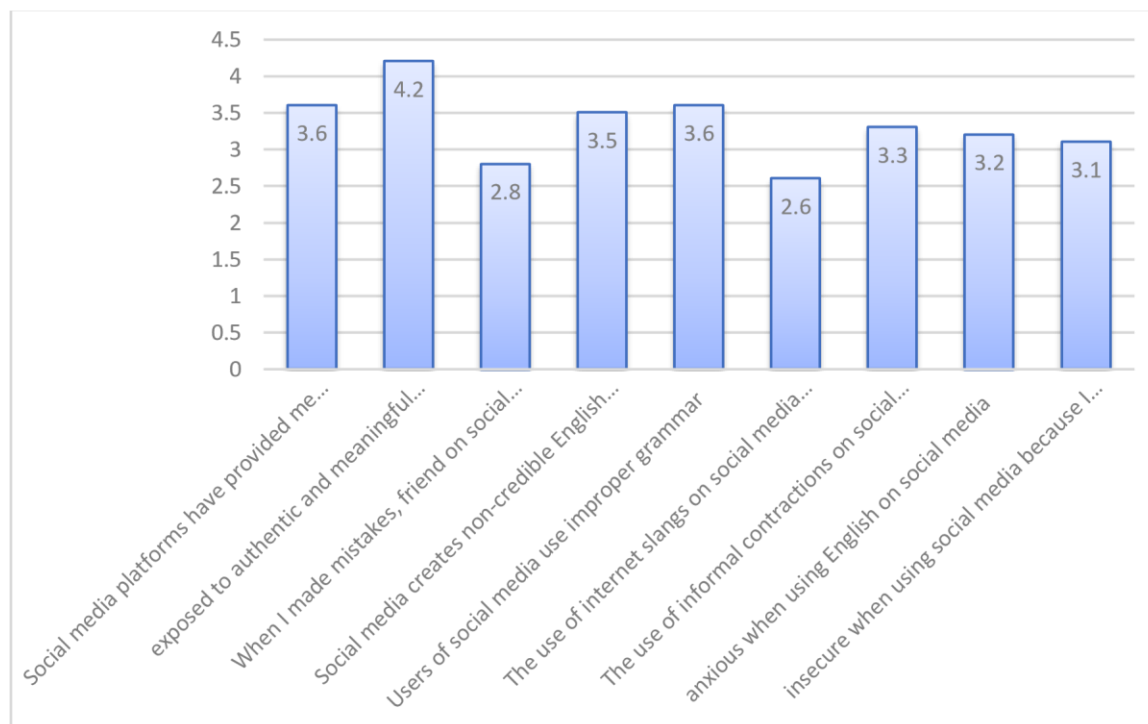
According to Khan, Ayaz, and Faheem (2016), the presence of learner interest in language acquisition has the potential to generate further interest in language usage. This may also elicit the necessity to comprehend the entirety of the message, rather than only grasping it partially. Consequently, this would engender a heightened level of motivation among learners to employ the language in extracurricular contexts.



**Fig 2:** Mean Score - Language Learning Interest

Tantarang (2016) asserts that social media platforms have a significant influence on language usage, particularly in promoting the adoption of authentic English. Social media platforms also serve as a medium via which users can motivate and promote the utilisation of the English language among one another. Nevertheless,

the overutilization of abbreviated forms serves as an illustrative instance of an adverse consequence stemming from the use of the English language inside the realm of social media. Furthermore, Strickland (2014) has documented that the use of the English language on social media platforms has engendered feelings of worry among its users.



**Fig 3: Mean Score – Impact**

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## 7. Conclusion

According to the findings of the study, participants acquired unfamiliar terminology through their engagement with social media platforms. It is widely acknowledged that individuals are frequently exposed to unfamiliar terminology through their engagement with social media platforms. Abbasova (2016) asserts that the utilisation of social media platforms facilitates the enhancement of learners' vocabulary and literacy skills by providing ample possibilities for language engagement. The participants expressed consensus over their ability to appropriately utilise newly acquired vocabulary from social media platforms within appropriate linguistic contexts. According to Khan, Ayaz, Khan, and Khan (2016), their study also found that the appropriate utilisation of social media platforms can improve the comprehension of English language learners. The majority of participants indicated their inclination to conduct a search for the definition of unfamiliar terms encountered in social media discourse. Furthermore, it was widely acknowledged by a significant number of individuals that the utilisation of social media platforms can serve as a valuable tool in augmenting their proficiency in language acquisition. Dhanya (2016) did a study which suggests that the various platforms offered by social media have provided learners with opportunities to improve their language proficiency. In summary, the aforementioned data indicate a favourable impact of social media on the development of learners' vocabulary proficiency.



The results of the language learning interest section indicate that participants expressed agreement with the positive impact of utilising language on social media platforms on their English writing proficiency. Furthermore, a significant number of individuals also concurred that the utilisation of the English language on social media platforms serves as a catalyst for their increased frequency of English usage. There is a consensus among certain individuals that their adoption of the English language is influenced by the prevailing trend of English usage among social media users. Kabilan et al. (2010) reported that learners have said that their use of Facebook has increased their motivation to utilise English more frequently, as a significant portion of the content, such as writings and posts, is presented in English. The assertion that social media serves as an enjoyable platform for English language practise is widely supported by numerous respondents, who also concur that social media has ignited their enthusiasm for enhancing their English vocabulary. A minority of individuals expressed dissent on their commitment to enhancing their English language skills for the purpose of effective communication and self-expression on social media platforms. These platforms provide learners the opportunity to enhance their self-expression skills and engage in language practise within a supportive and stimulating setting. There is a consensus among individuals that they have a greater number of opportunities to utilise the English language on social media platforms as opposed to inside the confines of a traditional classroom setting.

#### **8. Future Research:**

The primary aim of this study was to examine the impact, advantages, and disadvantages of utilising social media on the language vocabulary proficiency of English learners. The results of this study indicate that there is a correlation between social media usage and the stimulation of students' interest in language acquisition. The potential integration of collaborative learning through social media platforms is a matter that institutions' administration may contemplate. Incorporating social media platforms into the language learning process can enhance learner engagement and enthusiasm, as lecturers have the ability to integrate these technologies. A significant number of participants reported adverse effects associated with the use of social media. It is advisable for learners to exercise discernment while selecting reading materials, with the aim of enhancing the credibility of social media as a platform for English language acquisition.

Future research should aim to enhance the comprehensiveness of data collection methods. For instance, it is recommended to expand the sample size by incorporating a larger number of respondents from diverse academic disciplines and incorporating a broader range of universities. Future research may potentially develop more precise methodologies for data collection, hence enhancing the validity of research findings. An additional avenue for future investigation would involve the collection of replies from high school students, who possess a considerable level of exposure to the Internet and social media platforms. Subsequent investigations may be conducted to examine each individual area encompassed within this study in isolation.