Social networking sites in cultivating the reading habits of secondary school learners in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe

Sifundo Nkomo[1]
nkomos@unisa.ac.za ORCID: 0000-0002-0624-8678

Technological developments, especially social networks, have brought about changes in social and educational conditions. These technological developments also apply to the reading habits of secondary school learners. The general purpose of this study is to examine the adoption of social networking sites in cultivating the reading habits of secondary school learners in Bulawayo Metropolitan province in Zimbabwe. The study employed a multiple-case study with 14 focus groups, consisting of 210 learners. Data was collected through interviews with eight school librarians and analysed thematically. The key findings revealed that learners are using different types of social networks, including WhatsApp, Facebook, Watt pad, Pinterest, and YouTube to connect with friends and family and keep abreast with the latest events. The study further revealed the positive effects of using social networking sites, such as the availability of up-to-date reading materials that can be easily shared amongst learners. However, these sites were not fully used by learners for reading. The findings also showed that some learners spend approximately five hours on social media for entertainment purposes and this has a negative effect on their reading habits. The study then concluded that learners are using social networks, but mainly for social engagement purposes. If guided, they could use social networking sites to cultivate and enhance their reading habits.

Keywords: social networking sites; reading habits; reading; learners; social media; secondary schools

1 Introduction

A healthy reading habit influences an individual's personal development, and by extension, society in general. Aina, Ogungbeni, Adigun, and Ogundipe (2011) describe reading as a process that requires the use of complex thought processes to interpret printed symbols as meaningful units, as well as to comprehend them as thought units to understand printed messages. Developing a good reading habit is highly essential to learners because it will enable reading with ease and provide an opportunity to have great accomplishments in any task. Aina et al (2011) affirm that through reading, humans have the tools to transmit knowledge to each succeeding generation, as it allows individuals to listen to the wisdom and people of all ages. Reading as a habit is a deliberate effort toward understanding and acquiring knowledge. Reading habits are behaviours that are easily manifested without conscious exertion on the part of the reader (Oloyede 2005). It is not attractive when compared with interactive activities that individuals can engage in on the internet (Liu 2005). Technology has brought about overall changes in family, social and economic conditions. Nowadays, reading is no longer confined to print. The emergence of augmented technologies has brought about extraordinary changes in the reading habits of most people including learners. The technological environment is ever-changing, and this has transformed the traditional role of learners' reading habits (Lukasiewicz 2007). With the rapid growth of digital information and entertainment, there has been a change in the way learners view reading and how printed materials are used to facilitate reading (Liu 2005). Ngugi and Mbeira (2014) state that the scope of reading sources has changed drastically in the internet revolution to include new technologies, websites, e-books, e-journals, and e-papers. Currently, the potential reader can access and browse online information from the web, while using his/her device at home. According to IGI-Global (2020), social networking sites refer to communication and information technologies, hosted by web-based interfaces, which allow users to contribute, share, and collaborate with others via the internet.

Learners use social networking for various reasons some use it to exchange ideas, feelings, personal information, pictures, and videos (Loving & Ochoa 2010). Some learners use social media to connect with friends and family (regardless of location) or to keep up with the latest events and gossip. Lusk (2010) specifies that going online can affect learners' academic support. According to Ismail (2020), the COVID-19 lockdown had offered the learners an opportunity to read online as much as they wanted. A survey by Parikh, Vyas, and Parikh (2020) shows the reading habits of various library

users during the COVID-19 lockdown. The findings show that more than half of the respondents read more e-resources and their most preferred type of material they read is a book. Moreover, it was shown that reading was a major activity for most of the respondents. Social media provides easy access to virtual space, which secondary school learners can explore with friends with similar academic needs. Secondary school learners who may be reluctant to express their feelings in class, find blogs and other interactive media to be rewarding (Brydolf 2007).

The increased use of social networking sites among learners has no doubt affected learners' reading habits negatively (Anyira 2020). Twenge, Martin, and Spitsbergen (2018) found that in 2016, 1 in 3 U.S. high school learners did not read for pleasure. In the same period, 82% of 12th graders visited sites such as Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram daily for entertainment purposes. Consequently, the impacts of social media extend to include cutbacks in reading as a habit, studying, and attainment of knowledge because learners spend most of their time chitchatting and gaming. Voices from various media, academic and political authorities in Zimbabwe unanimously speak about the lack of reading habits among Zimbabweans in general, and learners in secondary education specifically, which impacts not only educational standards but also the entire nation's welfare (Mabasa 2014; Zimunya 2014). The Daily News (2015) reported that learners in Zimbabwe lack reading habits, as most of them spend more time on WhatsApp, Facebook, and other social media platforms for purposes other than reading. Considering the importance of reading and the poor reading habits among secondary school learners, it becomes a cause for concern, hence the need for this research.

Given the aforementioned factors, it may be concluded that there is an urgent need to harness new technologies to enable and encourage learners to improve their reading habits. Hence, this study examines the adoption of social networking sites in cultivating the reading habits of secondary school learners in the Bulawayo Metropolitan Province in Zimbabwe.

2 Theoretical framework

This study adopted the Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology (UTAUT) model as it focuses on user acceptance of technologies that are newly introduced to capture the user's first perception and how that perception changes with increased experience of using the technology. The UTAUT model postulates that four core constructs are direct determinants of Information system (IS)/Information technology (IT) and behavioural intentions (Venkatesh, Morris, Davis & Davis 2003). These include performance expectancy (the degree to which an individual believes that using the system will help him or her to attain gains in job performance), effort expectancy (the degree of ease associated with the use of the system), social influence (the degree to which an individual perceives that important others believe that he or she should use the new system) and facilitating conditions (the degree to which an individual believes that an organisational and technical infrastructure exists to support the use of the system). The aforementioned constructs from the ATAUT were used to phrase the objectives of the study.

The UTAUT model was used to evaluate the success of social networking sites. Since the use of social networking sites by Zimbabwean learners, especially those in the Bulawayo Metropolitan Province is relatively new, this model is applicable to understand the factors influencing the use of these technologies to determine whether they can be adopted to promote the reading habits of learners. Moreover, the model has shown robustness and validity concerning new information and technology (IT) innovations. This study adopted the UTAUT model as it focuses on user acceptance of technologies that are newly introduced, to capture the user's first perception and how that perception changes with increased experience of using the technology. This study examined social networking sites that were introduced to the learners to improve their reading habits and UTAUT, as a model guiding this study, was critical to map the way forward.

3 Statement of the problem

The internet (social networking sites) seems to have reduced the interest in reading printed materials, vocabulary development, and general knowledge and broadmindedness individuals get from having good reading habits (Shehu & Shehu 2014). Secondary school learners in Zimbabwe are not adopting social networking sites to cultivate their reading habits. When the Zimbabwean Minister of Primary and Secondary Education was releasing the 2020 results of the Ordinary Level candidates (secondary examinations) he noted that English recorded the highest decline in performance in that year's examinations when compared to the previous years. Even the results of English Language and English Literature in 2019 in Zimbabwe showed a diminishing performance by the secondary school learners (Chronicle Newspaper 2020). This decline has been attributed to the increased and consistent use of electronic communication devices such as mobile phones and computers that have done away with the need to know how to construct sentences and spell words correctly due to "spell checking" and "predictive text" capabilities as well as the low reading habits (Daily News 2020).

4 Purpose and objectives of the study

The purpose of the study was to examine the adoption of social networking sites in cultivating the reading habits of secondary school learners in Bulawayo Metropolitan province in Zimbabwe. The specific objectives were to find out the different types of social networking sites used by secondary school learners, explore their reading habits and patterns, and assess the influence of social networking sites on their reading habits.

5 Literature review

The effort expectancy construct, together with the construct of facilitating conditions, influenced the different types of social networking sites used by secondary school learners. A potential user can only use a technology that has been introduced to him or her (McGivern 2018). According to Okello-Obura and Ssekitto (2015), over the last three decades, rapid growth and development have occurred in the field of Information and Communication Technology (ICT). Social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Google+, and Ren are important disruptive technologies for building cutting-edge models of management education (Okello-Obura & Ssekitto 2015). In a study by Capo and Orellana (2011) it was found that students were using Web 2.0 technologies to support learning, but not in a sophisticated manner. There was a total of 30 different social networking sites identified by the students, which included social networking sites. The most popular sites were MSN (88%), Bebo (67%), and Facebook (59%).

The UTAUT constructs of performance expectancy and the resultant user intentions and behavior also guided the first objective. A study done by Abidin and Pour-Mohammed (2011) showed that Malaysian students were reluctant to read for information or pleasure. Instead, students preferred to read e-mails and comic strips or jokes, as well as movie reviews (Abidin & Pour-Mohammed 2011).

In a study that was done by Akanda, Hoq and Hasan (2013) students read anything on the web, be it newspapers, blogs, or online articles. The Web has become a major source of information and entertainment. The authors noted that the highest number of respondents believed that a lack of reading materials that arouse their interest is the single largest factor that leads to poor reading habits among students. Some respondents mentioned excessive homework assignments given by teachers, television watching, and addiction to games as negative factors contributing to poor reading habits. The results of the study of Akanda et al (2013) show differences in interest by gender, which are congruent with many of society's stereotypes. The females reported a stronger interest in romance, friendship, animal stories, adventure, and historical fiction, while the males reported stronger preferences for the categories of sports and science. Although this finding is not supported by reliable statistics, it could be inferred that because of the prevalence of digital technologies and various means of entertainment, young people feel less enthusiastic about library visits (Akabuike 2000).

The third objective of the study deals with the UTAUT construct of social influence, facilitating conditions, and the resultant user intentions and behaviour. The moderating conditions from the adopted UTAUT model were gender, age, experiences, and voluntariness. Literature suggests that several factors, particularly technological changes, are likely to influence the reading habits of children (Chettri & Rout 2013). According to Shehu and Shehu (2014), the increased use of social networking sites among students has without a doubt affected students' reading habits negatively. The internet and television appear to be the two most popular alternatives to reading books, especially among younger people (Shehu & Shehu (2014).

According to Agwu and Kalu (2011), the overuse of new technologies contributes to students' poor reading habits. The authors opine that in this era of ICT, the general orientation of young people has unconsciously changed from reading and the love of books to interacting with new technologies. Agwu and Kalu (2011) report that in this age where internet browsing and playing with funky handsets seem to be the trend among Nigerian youths, reading a good book in a quiet corner of the school library or at home has become an archaic idea. González, Leidner, Riemenschneider, and Koch (2011) note that lately, nearly everyone belongs to social networking sites where they spend several hours per day, posting their locations on Facebook and tweeting about their personal daily lives. Marsh (2012) relents that social networking is time-consuming and that students are gradually becoming addicted to it. Students skip the time to engage in meaningful activities such as reading and utilising the school library, to engage in social networking activities such as chatting, posting pictures, and watching YouTube videos (Mbachu 2011). Mbachu (2011) adds that since the advent of the internet, libraries have experienced a decline in patronage.

According to Akanda et al (2013), the internet could be a good place to read books, newspapers, and magazines. Young people continue to be attracted to the internet in larger numbers. The internet can therefore play a supplementary role in increasing the reading habit of learners, rather than diminishing it. For this to happen, learners need to be guided by their teachers and guardians to use the internet and its services constructively, rather than spend long hours playing games or other non-productive activities (Akanda et al 2013).

6 Research methodology

The researcher settled for a qualitative research approach within an interpretive paradigm for the adoption of social networking sites in cultivating the reading habits of secondary school learners, guided by the UTAUT model. A multiple case study research design using different Bulawayo Metropolitan Province secondary schools as cases, was adopted. The use of a multiple case study design was considered critical to this study, as it allowed a broader perspective to be applied across the Bulawayo Metropolitan Province's secondary schools. The schools in the Bulawayo Metropolitan Province are relatively heterogeneous, with considerable diversity amongst the range of private and public schools. By ultimately selecting secondary schools from across the private and public spectrum, the data provided a more robust representation of the scope and extent of the problem. A multiple case study allowed the researcher to achieve a level of saturation that ultimately revealed common issues and themes on the adoption of social networking sites. According to Yin (1994), a multiple case study yields more robust results than a single case study; it builds up a general explanation model that fits each of the cases in the study and provides a means of comparison. The other advantage of this design was that the researcher managed to use the results to compare and come up with relevant conclusions. Vannoni (2014) states that the multiple case study design enables one to compare the results from each case and provides the literature with an important influence from contrast and similarities supported. The design enabled the researcher to be viable and realistic. Hence, this design was appropriate and viable for this research study because it dealt with the real problem that some secondary school learners are not reading.

The population of the study included secondary school learners and school librarians from the 54 secondary schools in the Bulawayo Metropolitan Province. The Bulawayo Metropolitan Province comprises five districts for secondary schools, and these are Bulawayo Central, Imbizo, Khami, Mzilikazi, and Reigate (Nkomo 2020). School librarians were included in the study, as most learners read in school libraries, especially in Zimbabwe, where the cost of living is too high, and parents cannot afford to purchase reading materials. This was supported by Zimbabwe reads (2014) who states that Zimbabweans live from hand to mouth, hence parents can no longer afford to buy books for their children. To find those cases or units, the researcher used quota sampling in two stages, firstly, to draw secondary schools included in the study and, secondly, to draw secondary school learners. Quota sampling was categorised according to the district, public school, or private school, and, lastly, according to the availability of school libraries. Quota sampling is not dependent on the presence of the sampling frames. Quota sampling became applicable in this study because it allowed the researchers to sample the subgroup that was of great interest to the study. From the population, data were collected only from eight secondary schools in BMP, and these included both private and public schools, eight school librarians were interviewed. In total, there were 14 focus groups and 210 learners who participated in the study.

Focus group interviews were used with secondary school learners whilst semi-structured interviews were used with school librarians. A focus group discussion is an interaction between one or more experts and more than one individual to gather data (Morgan 1998: 5). Before the actual interview, the researcher explained to the participants the purpose of the interview. The participants were informed that participation was voluntary and that they had a right to discontinue or stop the engagement at any point they felt uncomfortable during the interview. The participants were further ensured that they would remain anonymous, and that confidentiality would always be kept. Focus group interviews with secondary school learners lasted between an hour and two hours. The age range of secondary school learners was between fifteen (15) and twenty (20) years. The subjects studied by secondary school learners differ. In both private and public schools, the following subjects are offered: Mathematics, Statistics, Biology, Chemistry, Physics, Agriculture, Geography, Ndebele, English Literature, History, Divinity, Accounting, Business Studies, and Economics. The minimum subjects done by these Lower sixes (6s) are three (3) subjects, but others are doing four to a maximum of five (5) subjects. The learners 'enrolment was such that there were more girls than boys interviewed. Semi-structured interviews were used to elicit information from the selected school librarians. Semi-structured interviews were useful in that they allowed the researcher to frame appropriate questions and most importantly, to rely on the participants to provide information on what they knew about research support. There were only two (2) male and six (6) female school librarians interviewed, and their age range was between thirty-one (31) and sixty (60) years. Only three (3) school librarians were trained as professional librarians. One (1) had a postgraduate Diploma in Library and Information Science and a Diploma in Teaching as she is an English teacher. She did her library duties part-time as she is a full-time teacher. The second qualified Librarian had a degree in Library and Information Science, and she is currently studying towards a Master's in Library and Information Science. The third qualified Librarian had a Master's degree in Library and Information Science and was currently studying for his Doctorate in Information Science. The other five librarians were not trained and had migrated from school administrative duties to working in the library.

The University of South Africa approved the ethical clearance: 2016_IS57431663_043. Participation in the study was done voluntarily and anonymously with both the learners' and librarians' consent. Before the participants were involved in the study, they were requested to sign consent forms after carefully reading them. The informed consent letter made it clear that the participation in the study was voluntary and as such the participants were free to refuse or withdraw from the study

at any stage and for any reason without any form of disadvantage. The researcher also attained permission to do the study from the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education which allowed her to collect data from the schools in the Bulawayo Metropolitan Province in Zimbabwe.

7 Results

The qualitative data was organised and analysed according to the themes of the study generated from the research objectives. Data collected was manually analysed.

7.1 Types of social networking sites

The UTAUT model postulates that for technology to be adopted and used, there should be "facilitating conditions". These are conditions that make it easier for the intended user to adopt and use a given technology (Mensah, 2019). This was an important step to understand which social networking sites the participants use. The learners knew what social networking sites were, although some of the learners used the term social media.

Table 1: Types and frequency of social networking sites used by participants

Type of Social Networking Site	Frequently used	Hours spent per day
WhatsApp	Everyday	24/7 2hours/day
Facebook	Everyday	24/7 2hours/ day
YouTube	Sometimes	2-4hours/day
Instagram	Everyday	24/7 3hours/day
Twitter	Sometimes	1 hour/day
Snap chat	Rarely	30 minutes
Skype	Rarely	30 minutes
LinkedIn	Sometimes	1 hour/day
Pinterest	Rarely	24/7
Watt Pad	Sometimes	2 hours/ day

The effort expectancy construct of the UTAUT model, together with another construct, facilitating conditions, influenced the different types of social networking sites used by secondary school learners. Learners mentioned that they were familiar with social networking sites as shown in Table 1. These include WhatsApp, Facebook, YouTube, Instagram, Twitter, Snap chat, Skype, LinkedIn, Pinterest, and Watt Pad. This is in line with surveys by the Networking for Consortium School (2017) and the Interactive Technology and Smart Education (2018) that Web 2.0 tools such as Facebook, Myspace, wikis, and blogs are part of nearly every student's home life. Several learners mentioned that they normally use WhatsApp, Facebook, and Instagram. One learner said:

> *"I use Facebook, YouTube, Instagram, and Twitter, I have never used Pinterest. I am just hearing about it for the first time from my classmates."*

Learners mentioned that data bundles for WhatsApp and Facebook were cheaper, as some schools do not allow learners to access their social media platforms by using the school Wi-Fi or had to bring their own devices. When the school librarians were asked which social networking sites, they were familiar with, they mentioned Facebook and WhatsApp. One female librarian said she only knows about WhatsApp, but she only uses it for chatting with her family and friends.

The participants were asked how frequently they used these social networking sites. Table 1 shows the participants' responses. For example, one participant indicated*:*

> *"I use WhatsApp all the time. I sleep, dream, and eat WhatsApp. The only time I am not using WhatsApp is when I am writing a test because even when it's during lesson time, I usually check my cell phone for any updates".*

During the focus group interviews some participants indicated that: 'As long as there is data and our cellphones' batteries have power, we will be using social media all the time'. Various librarians mentioned that they use WhatsApp, and a few of them have WhatsApp groups with their learners. Some librarians who were techno-savvy pointed out that they also use Facebook, LinkedIn, wikis, podcast, tagging, Skype, and Twitter for their personal use. Only librarians from private schools mentioned that they were in the process of opening Facebook pages for their libraries. One librarian said: "I only know of WhatsApp. The other types of social media I have heard about them, but I have never used them."

Learners were asked where they access Web 2.0 technologies, and their responses were: school premises, at home, in public transport, and internet cafes. Learners accessed the internet using various devices which included cellphones, tablets, desktop computers, and laptops. In this regard, access involved the ability of individuals and organisations to connect to the Internet by using computer terminals, computers, and other devices; and to access services such as email and the World Wide Web.

During the interviews with librarians from public schools, a number of them mentioned that access to Web 2.0 technologies was prohibited in their schools, although some learners accessed them without permission. One librarian from a public school mentioned that the library had received a donation of four tablets from a donor organisation, but that these were not enough for the whole school. During the focus groups, the participants mentioned that they use social networking sites for different purposes as shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Purpose of using social networking sites

Type of Social networking site	Purpose for using
WhatsApp	Communicating with friends, discussions with teachers, librarians, accessing school notes and accessing novels.
Facebook	Communication, updates on what is happening around the globe, reading novels, reading local and international newspapers
YouTube	Downloading movies, watching, and streaming movies, Entertainment,
Instagram	For uploading pictures, viewing our friends' pictures
Twitter	Microblogging, sending messages, reading what is happening in different spheres
Snap chat	For chatting with friends
Skype	For communicating with our friends
LinkedIn	For sharing information, networking
Pinterest	For downloading novels, fashion and sharing ideas
Watt Pad	For uploading and downloading novels

From the focus groups, one participant said:

"We want to relate to our friends, so we will be on WhatsApp all the time. If our friends send us messages the communication does not stop; even when we are sleeping our cellphones will be under our pillows as we want to continue chatting to our friends."

Another one said:

"We love reading novels so we joined Pinterest and Watt Pad so that we could download novels. We used to read novels from Facebook as we had joined a writers group called 'Ndebele and English Novels', but the novels were only written in Ndebele and the authors would just post chapters haphazardly and not post the rest as they wanted us to buy their books. It was just a marketing strategy."

According to the Networking Consortium for School (2017), current discussions among technology advocates suggest that Web 2.0 technologies have a tremendous potential to expand students' learning. This is in line with what Kabweza (2014) reported in 2014 that the Minister of Primary and Secondary Education proclaimed that Zimbabwean pupils should be allowed to use smartphones in schools to enable them to do their research. To capitalise on social networking sites, educators need to first understand the types of the sites that are available and their various features, to best, use them for specific purposes (Redecker et al 2009).

7.2 Reading habits

Learners have different preferences when it comes to the types of books they prefer to read. The researchers were guided by the voluntariness moderator in the UTAUT model. This is the voluntariness of the materials that students prefer reading. During the focus group interviews, learners mentioned that the reading materials they preferred included novels, newspapers, and magazines. Some learners, especially boys, said they do not read for leisure at all. One participant said he hated reading he loves listening to music and watching movies. If only those books and newspapers were turned into songs and movies, he was going to watch the whole day, but he had no time to sit and grab a book to read. During focus group interviews a group of girls expressed their love for reading romance novels. One of the girls said:

"If I start reading a romantic novel, I become so addicted to such an extent that I don't want to do anything, I will want to finish the book the same day, it would be so interesting. The problem is we do not have many such novels

as we cannot get them in our school library, and we do not have money to buy them. Even when we go to our municipal library, we do not get good novels. At least these days we have Watt Pad and Pinterest we can download some of those novels. One of our friends also introduced us to a WhatsApp group where novels are posted every day; the problem is that some of them are poorly scanned and are not readable."

This was elucidated by one librarian who said that she had been a librarian in her school for ten (10) years and that they had not bought a single novel for the library, as she is often told that the library has no funding. Learners read for various reasons, and these include: to know current affairs, to gain more knowledge, to keep abreast with what is happening in the world, for entertainment, to know what tabloids say, to improve their English and vocabulary, for writing speeches and poems, for curiosity and to please parents. Many girls said they read newspapers, especially B-Metro, which is a tabloid newspaper, to know the latest gossip.

Learners were asked about the hours they spend reading for leisure. A selected number of girls said they read every day as they are addicted to their novels. Others read for 30 minutes to three hours a day. On the other hand, a selected number of boys said circumstances force them to read for leisure, so they do not spend more than two hours per day reading. One participant said:

"We just peruse the newspaper for ten minutes, especially when our football team has lost. If we read the newspaper even if when our team has won, we do not spend too much time reading about it as we will also watch the news informing us about the game and we will be seeing what transpired. We don't have that energy of reading everything it is just not in our bloodstreams."

This was echoed by one school librarian who said:

"Girls frequent the library more than boys. In several cases when boys come to the library, it's either they want to borrow some textbooks, or they want to chat and make noise in the library."

The reading habits and patterns of secondary school learners were also ascertained by asking learners about how they normally access these reading materials. Access to reading materials was vital to this study, as it indicated where the learners get the books and that would determine their reading habits. The responses included school and municipal library, friends, WhatsApp, Facebook, Watt Pad, Pinterest, and buying.

Taylor (2004) suggests that each child is unique. Therefore, librarians and teachers must have a keen sensitivity to the interests of the learners in the classroom. However, the results of the study indicated that some libraries did not have library funding to purchase books and as mentioned before, one librarian stated that she had not bought a single novel in the ten years she had been working in her school library. Another librarian said:

"I rely on donations from organisations like Book Aid International and Higher Life International, but the books I usually receive are irrelevant to the Zimbabwean learners as they are from abroad."

Some public-school libraries sometimes purchase books, and these included the following titles: Hard times never kill, Tunzi the faithful shadow, Ghetto diary, No more plastic balls, Uncertainty of hope, She no-longer weeps, Before the next song, Alex cross, Broken hearts, Umzilikazi kamatshobana, Imigcele yothando, Hawu ndlalifa, Izwi nesithunzi, Ngeke kulunge, Umbiko kamadlenya, Giya Mthwakazi, Amaqhawe, Ukuthunjwa kukansukuzukuduma, Umhlaba lo! The researcher discovered that these book titles were specifically for the learners doing advanced-level English literature. This meant that some of these libraries were still not purchasing reading materials for leisure, but only for academic purposes. In the current findings, the researchers discovered that some learners preferred to read soft copies rather than hard copies. For learners to access reading materials in soft copy formats could be a relief to underfunded libraries. One librarian from a private school indicated that before he purchases any books, he enquires about his learners' preferences. In a study done by Haslindu et al (2012) in Malaysia, results showed that 60% of the respondents preferred reading printed materials, while 40% of the respondents preferred their reading materials to be in the electronic form. One of the reasons why the majority of participants prefer printed materials could be that the availability of printed materials is higher compared to electronic ones, especially when compared to the availability of devices like computers to access electronic materials (Haslindu et al 2012). The current findings showed that some learners do share what they read with their teachers, librarians, parents, and amongst themselves. During the focus group interviews, a group of girls said:

"In our school, they have introduced a writer's club, so we are now part of that club. We love writing but to be good writers we need to read and understand what other creative writers have written about. This is the reason why we love reading novels and short stories."

7.3 Influence of social networking sites used on the reading habits of secondary school learners.

Since learners had identified the types of social networking sites they use, the researcher wanted to know the positive and negative impacts that these social networking sites have on their reading habits through the UTAUT constructs of social influence, facilitating conditions, and the resultant user intentions and behavior. The moderating conditions from the adopted UTAUT model were gender, age, experiences, and voluntariness. The positive impacts include downloading and uploading novels on WhatsApp, Facebook, Pinterest, and Watt Pad, and easy and cheap access to reading materials on Web 2.0 applications, anywhere and anytime. During the focus group interviews, some learners mentioned that social media had influenced them to read. One learner said:

"I used to hate reading and my friends used to brag about the novels they have read on their WhatsApp group, which motivated me to read so that I would also share with others."

A group of female learners said:

"One of our friends informed us about Watt Pad where we could download some romantic novels which we love to read. From that day we have continued downloading novels and sharing what we have read through WhatsApp."

Ngugi and Mbeira (2014) recommend that because of these new technologies, schools should now incorporate social networking sites to stimulate the reading habits of youths. In the focus groups, some learners stated that social media was destructive as they spent most of their time on WhatsApp and Facebook with their friends chatting and this had a negative impact on the reading habits of some learners. During focus group interviews a group of learners said:

"We spend seventy percent of our time on social media updating statuses, photographs and chatting amongst ourselves, then thirty percent reading for exams so we don't have time for using social media to read."

Another male learner said:

"When it comes to social media, we don't have discipline, we have different accounts, and we want to check them every time. We can be on Facebook and WhatsApp at the same time and be downloading music and movies on YouTube especially when we are using our school Wi-Fi."

One librarian mentioned that learners were using social media for all the wrong reasons. Some learners used social media for entertainment as some learners indicated that they use YouTube for downloading and streaming movies. One learner boastfully revealed: "Social media is for entertainment; it is tiresome to read so social media eases the pressure."

The current findings also reveal that there is now a necessity to incorporate social media into the lives of the learners so that their reading habits would be improved. Selected male learners from a public school said they need resources on social media.

"We are not living in the 1990s where hard copies were the only formats for readings. We have moved to a new decade of social media which is fun and explorable. We hate reading we love entertainment so if reading resources are found on social media we might be motivated to read."

Other female learners said,

"The authors, librarians, and everyone who uploads reading materials on social media should know our needs and then post interesting materials."

One learner said:

"Authors should make a connection between real-life and social media life, then document all novels into movies and documentaries and upload them on YouTube; it will motivate us to read."

8 Discussion

From this study, one can deduce that learners have mixed views on whether social networking sites can be adopted to cultivate the reading habits of learners. The discussion revealed that learners are using different types of social networking sites, ranging from WhatsApp, Facebook, Pinterest, YouTube, Watt Pad, and Twitter. Although some learners knew how best to use these technologies, especially girls, as they were already downloading and reading materials from these sites, more still needs to be done to adopt social networking sites to cultivate the reading habits of learners. It was also indicated that some learners were already reading and sharing materials from these social networking sites. It was also argued that these learners read for leisure, although it was difficult for them to get current and relevant reading materials from their school libraries, as some of these libraries had outdated materials. It was shown in the findings that learners read novels, newspapers, poems, and short stories. The findings indicated that girls preferred romantic novels whilst boys focused more on sports materials.

As indicated by the findings, not all participants enjoyed reading for leisure, some indicated that they read to please their parents and teachers, which means that if they are not forced to read, they would not read at all. According to Makotsi (2005), the reading habits of learners in Zimbabwe continue to decline. So, it might help teachers and parents to find ways of talking to the learners so that they improve their reading habits. These findings correlate with those of Owusu-Acheaw and Larson (2014), that revealed that out of a total of 1000 respondents, 75% were of the view that they only read to pass examinations and when quizzed on why they engaged in reading, 5% indicated that they read to gain knowledge, 15% believed reading helps to improve spoken and written English, while 5% indicated they read for pleasure and fun. In the current findings, the researcher discovered that some learners mentioned that they did not read for leisure, but only read to pass their examinations. The inference was that most of the participants primarily engaged in reading to pass their exams.

The current findings indicated that some learners relied on the library to obtain their reading materials as they cannot afford them. This is true as, currently in Zimbabwe, most people are living under the poverty line. People cannot even afford to buy a loaf of bread because of the instability of the economy. This means that something needs to be done to improve the library funding in secondary schools in Zimbabwe. This means that parents and guardians cannot afford to buy books for their children. The findings of the current study showed that libraries from some private schools bought books for their learners. Shen (2006) identifies reading habits, as to how often, how much, and what students read. The current findings reveal that the frequency (how often) varied among individuals. Those who enjoyed reading and were not forced by either their parents or teachers, read more than those who were forced. The findings indicated that reading preferences determined the frequency of readers. For example, girls read more romantic novels, so they read every time they were free, while boys read more sports news, which means they would spend less time reading. Over the past decade, researchers have devoted their efforts to examining learners' reading habits and they discovered that reading habits are associated with students' gender, age, educational background, academic performance, and professional growth (Akabuike 2000).

From the findings, it was discovered that social networking sites were influencing learners to improve their reading habits. This is so because some learners are already using social networking sites so it will be easier for them to adopt these technologies to cultivate their reading habits. What is needed was training and awareness on how best to adopt these technologies to improve learners' reading habits. It was also argued that some learners had negative attitudes and perceptions about adopting social networking sites to improve their reading habits, as some learners mentioned that they have been using social networking sites for entertainment only, so it will take time for them to adopt these technologies for reading purposes. The programme of incorporating social networking sites into the lives of learners will benefit them in improving their reading habits. The researcher also discovered that some schools already had Wi-Fi, and that meant it was easier to incorporate social networking sites to improve the reading habits of their learners. Also, incorporating reading materials through the adoption of social networking sites will ease the burden on library budgets, as learners will be able to share their reading materials and read current and relevant materials.

9 Conclusion

The study concludes that social networking sites can be adopted to cultivate the reading habits of secondary school learners. Some learners are already using social networking sites for downloading novels, especially girls, and some boys are reading newspapers; although other learners are not disciplined when it comes to the use of social networking sites, as they spend more time using them for entertainment. The study recommends the training of learners in using social networking sites to cultivate their reading habits. The study also suggests training for school librarians, so that they will be

knowledgeable about the best types of social networking sites to recommend to their learners so that they could improve their reading habits.

References

Abidin, M.J. and Pour-Mohammed, M. 2011. A survey of online reading habits of rural secondary school students in Malaysia. *International Journal of Linguistics*, 3(1): 10-13.

Agwu, G.O. and Kalu, A.U. 2009. *Impact of social media on the students' academic performance*. Ibadan: Nigerian library association.

Aina, A.J,Ogungbeni, j, Adigun, J and Ogungdipe, T.C. 2011. Poor reading habits among Nigerians: The role of libraries. *Library Philosophy and Practice*. [Online]. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/267846785_poor_reading_habits_among_nigerians_the_role_of_libraries (05 May 2018).

Akabuike, G. 2002. The power of reading: insight into the reading culture among Nigerians. *Ansu Journal of Language and Literary Studies*, 1(2): 1-5.

Akanda, A.K.M, Hoq, K.M.G. and Hasan, N. 2013. Reading habits of students in social sciences and arts: A case study of Rajshahi University. Chinese Librarianship: *An International Electronic Journal*, 35 2(1): 13-15.

Anyira, E.I. 2020. Effect of social media addiction on reading culture: a study of Nigerian students. *Library Philosophy and Practice*. [Online]. https://digitalcommons.unl.edu/libphilprac/4170/ (13 March 2020).

Brydolf. C. 2007. Minding my space: balancing the benefits and risks of students' online social networks. *Education Digest*, 73(2): 4-6.

Capo, B. and Orellana, A. 2011. Web 2.0 technologies for classroom instruction: High school teachers' perceptions and adoption factors. *The Quarterly Review of Distance Education*, 2(4): 235-253.

Chettri, K. and Rout, S.K. 2013. Reading habits – an overview. *IOSR Journal of Humanities and Social Science,* 4(6): 13-17.

Chronicle newspaper. 2020. Analysis of ordinary level results. Bulawayo: Zim-papers

Daily News. 2015. *ZIBF bemoans woeful reading culture*. Harare: Associated newspaper group.

González B, Leidner, D. E, Riemenschneider, C and Koch, H. 2011. *Social media influence*. Santiago: Ecosphere.

Haslindu et al. 2012. Academic achievement and study habits of higher secondary students. *International Referred Research Journal*, 3(27): 12-16.

IGI-Global. 2020. What is Web 2.0 Technologies? [Online] https://www.igi-global.com/dictionary/web-2-0-technologies/32199 (03 October 2020).

Ismail, O. A. 2020. Influence of Covid-19 Lockdown on reading habit of Nigerians: a case study of Lagos State inhabitants. *Reading & Writing Quarterly*, DOI: 10.1080/10573569.2020.1857891.

[ITSE] Interactive Technology and Smart Education. 2018. Interactive technology and smart education. *Emerald Insight* 15(2). [Online]. https://www.emeraldinsight.com/loi/itse# (20 November 2020).

Kabweza, L. 2014. Zimbabwe Internet statistics: 5.2 million subscriptions. 40% penetration. Broadband in Zimbabwe: The liquid telecom fibre network map. [Online]. http://www.techzim.co.zw/2013/07/broadband-in-zimbabwe-the-liquid-telecom-fibre-map-july-201 (25 March 2019).

Liu, Z. 2005. Reading behavior in the digital environment: Changes in reading behaviour over the past 10 years. *Journal of Documentation*, 61(6): 700-12.

Loving, M. and Ochoa. 2010. Facebook as a Classroom Solution. *New Library World*, 5(2): 121-130.

Lukasiewicz, A. 2007. Exploring the role of digital academic libraries: changing student needs demand innovative service approach. *Library Review,* 56 (8): 821-827.

Lusk, B. 2010. Digital natives and social media behaviours: an overview. *The Prevention Research*, 17: 3–6.

Mabasa, I. 2014. Reading culture and technology. [Online]. http://www.herald.co.zw/mabasa-on-reading-culture-technology (03 August 2019).

Makotsi, R. 2005. *Expanding the book trade across Africa*. London: ADEA, Working Group on Books and Learning Materials.

Marsh, J. 2012. The micropolitics of implementing a school-based bonus policy. *Sage Journals*. [Online] https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.3102/0162373711428354 (15 August 2020).

Mbachu, J. 2011. Key constraints and improvement measures. UTS ePRESS. [Online] https://epress.lib.uts.edu.au/journals/index.php/AJCEB/article/view/2120/2501 (23 June 2019).

McGivern, R. 2018. Media and technology. [Online] https://opentextbc.ca/introductiontosociology2ndedition/chapter/chapter-8-media-and-technology/ (28 October 2020).

Mensah, I.K. 2019. Factors influencing the intention of university students to adopt and use e-government services: An empirical evidence in China. https://doi.org/10.1177/2158244019855823

Morgan, D. 1998. *The focus group guidebook*. London: Sage.

Ngugi, M.N. and Mbeira, H. 2014. The influence of the internet surfing on the reading culture of secondary school teachers: A case study of newspaper readership in Kigumo sub county. *International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences*, 4(11): 16-17.

Nkomo, S. 2020. Adoption of Web 2.0 Technologies in Driving Reading Habits of Secondary School Learners in Bulawayo Metropolitan Province, Zimbabwe. *Mousaion: South African Journal of Information Studies*, 38(3). doi: 10.25159/2663-659X/7837.

Okello-Obura & Ssekitto. 2015. Web 2.0 technologies application in teaching and learning by Makerere university academic staff.*Library, Philosophy and Philosophy and Practice,* ;[Online]. https://digitalcommons.unl.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=3326&context=libphilprac (2 February 2020).

Oloyede F. A. 2005. Reading habits of adolescence. *An International Journal of Psychology in Africa,* 13(2): 56-58.

Owusu-Acheaw, M. and Larson, A. 2014. Reading habits among students and its effect on academic performance: A study of students of Koforidua Polytechnic. *Library Philosophy and Practice*, [Online]. http://digitalcommons.unl.edu/libphilprac/1130. (23 July 2019).

Parikh, K, Vyas, P and Parikh, S. 2020. A survey of reading habit of library users during COVID-19 lockdown. *Library Philosophy and Practice*, [Online]. https://digitalcommons.unl.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=7874&context=libphilprac (22 December 2020).

Redecker, C, Aja-Muka, K, Bacigalupo, M. and Punie, Y. 2009. Learningb2.0: the impact of Web 2.0 innovations on education and training in Europe. Final report. [Online]. http://publications.jrc.ec.europa.eu/repository/bitstream/JRC55629/jrc55629.pdf (28 July 2018).

Shen, L. 2006. Computer technology and college students' reading habits. *Chia-nan Annual Bulletin*, 3(2): 559-572.

Shehu, N. and Shehu, A. 2014. Challenges of social networking students' reading habit. *Research on Humanities and Social Sciences Journal*, 4(19): 16-19.

Taylor, P.J. 2004. Regionality in the world city network. *Wiley Online Publications*, 56(181). [Online]. https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1111/j.0020-8701.2004.00499.x (Accessed 20 December 2020).

Twenge, J. M., Martin, G. N. and Spitzberg, B. H. 2018. Trends in U.S. adolescents media use in 1976–2016: the rise of digital media, the decline of TV, and the (near) demise of print. *Psychology of Popular Media Culture*, 8 (4): 329 – 345.

Vannoni, M. 2014. *What are case studies good for? Nesting comparative case study: research into the research program. Cross-Cultural Research*. London: University College London Press.

Venkatesh, V., Morris, M., Davis, G. and Davis, F. 2003. User acceptance of information technology: towards a unified view. *MIS Quarterly*, 27(3): 425-478.

Yin, R. 2009. *Case study research: design and methods*. Thousand Oak: Sage.

Zimbabwereads. 2014. Is Zimbabwe reading? [Online]. http://zimbabwereads.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/03/Is-Zimbabwe-Reading-2011.pdf (15 August 2019).

Zimunya, M. 2014. Literacy rate must reflect reading culture. [Online]. http://www.dailynews.co.zw/articles/2014/09/01/literacy-rate-must-reflect-reading-culture-zimunya (3 August 2019).