Social Media Usage and Textism among Undergraduate Students at Rivers State University, Port Harcourt

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Sections Info	ABSTRACT
	Objective: The use of social media by youths is appearing to continue to soar in recent times globally. This study investigated social media usage and textism among undergraduate students of Rivers State University, Port Harcourt, guided by the research questions: in what ways do the undergraduate students at Rivers State University, Port Harcourt utilize social media, and why do they use textism in their daily interaction on social media. *Method:* The study adopted a descriptive survey design and proportionate sampling techniques. Data were obtained from primary and secondary sources such as questionnaires, journals, and textbooks. The uses and gratifications theory was applied to analyze how undergraduate students at Rivers State University use social media in their everyday lives. *Result:* Findings revealed that undergraduate students at Rivers State University, Port Harcourt utilize web-based media platforms to communicate with family and friends, to upload and download pictures and videos, and that students use textism in their daily interactions on social media because it makes communication easier, simpler, and faster. *Novelty:* The study recommends that undergraduate students at Rivers State University, Port Harcourt should use social media more for academic purposes and moderate the time spent on social networking sites and the use of textism to reduce the risks of addiction.

INTRODUCTION

Social media remains one of the platforms that guide social collaboration, make conceivable participation, and empower cautious conversations across partners. The use of social media has contributed colossally to achieving change among individuals in the 21st century. Individuals are living in a worldwide present reality and every day, they embrace new dialect, design, developments, data, advancements, etc. Social media are probably the best innovations developed throughout the entire existence of man. With its progressions and advancement, nearly everyone is confronted with the test of meeting up and adapting to the enormous change which innovation has brought into practically all parts of human existence. Social media such as Facebook, Facebook Messenger, Twitter, Instagram, WhatsApp, Snap visit are popular with young people, and they are impacted more by them. They think what they seek after via web-based media is the thing that is popular and if they follow those patterns, they will be seen by individuals as sharp and keen. All media exist to contribute our lives with fake discernments and subjective qualities [1]. The web-based media assume an indispensable part in activities, responses and schedules of individuals. It impacts individuals' life from multiple points of view and similarly grows our group of friends.

With the guide of advanced cells and prominence of messaging, undergraduates can associate with their relatives, companions, share everyday exercises, utilizing

highlights, for example, distributing divider posts and photograph sharing. As individuals from all features of life can meet, associate, speak with various individuals from various nations, they are learning new dialects because of their discussion in the web-based media. Numerous young people that often utilize social media channels utilize various sorts of correspondence in the realm of web-based media like slang and abuse of words. With the headway of innovation and the development of the internet and web-based media, individuals' positions, lives, discourse styles, correspondence just as instruction have changed monstrously. Text language is most current language that accompanies the appearance of advances like the internet, computerized advances. The latest type of correspondence and association among individuals is text language. Shortened forms, abbreviations and feelings are the styles of language text language have produced. Generally, it is not the same as different types of composed correspondence. Text language is notable and handily perceived by online media clients, Internet clients, just as babbles who are for the most part young people. Text language, Internet language, advanced language and textism are the various terms to portray this new dialect assortment. Individuals hold a solid conviction that texts is harming undergraduates composing abilities as texters use them in their day-by-day collaboration and correspondence via online media. Textism exists as an advancement and new inspiration for change. Textism is accommodated speed, control and security. The underlying textism was to make new ease of use credits to permit things to be simpler for the clients [2]. Inventiveness starts with the appropriation of new sensations, both scholarly and tactile [3].

The use of social media by youths is appearing to continue to soar in recent times. Hardly can there be any student of Rivers State University, Port Harcourt who do not own a sophisticated phone with accompanying social media handles. Most of the daily activities and relationships of the students are now being concentrated mostly on texting instead of the conventional voice interactions. This has made some students develop several textism for known words and the usage and meanings are known to them. This study therefore examines the usage of social media and textism among undergraduate students at Rivers State University with a view to making recommendations.

Research Questions
1. In what ways do the undergraduate students of Rivers State University, Port Harcourt utilize the social media?
2. Why do undergraduate students of Rivers State University, Port Harcourt, use textism in their daily interaction on social media?

Objective of the study

The aim of this study is to analyze social media usage and textism among undergraduates of the Rivers State University, Port Harcourt.

Significance of the Study

This study is huge from multiple points of view; it will give a judicious premise to strategy creators to determine how to use social media. This investigation will be helpful to undergraduate students as it will pay attention to how they associate with each other,

just as see how textism is the most recent structures that individuals use to convey and cooperate in web-based media and furthermore for them to know about when it is proper to utilize them in their day-by-day correspondence. Also, the recommendations from this study will profit analysts, researchers, and the scholarly community as it will add to existing literatures on web-based media, and it will be useful to the public everywhere since it will empower individuals to know the significance and utilization of online media.

Scope of the Study

The scope of this study covers social media usage and textism among undergraduates of the Rivers State University, Port Harcourt only. This is on the grounds that online media utilization is by all accounts a typical spot among students. The study is delimited to understudies (male and female) between the ages of 15 and 34 in Rivers State University, Port Harcourt on the grounds that they are the heaviest purchasers of online media substance.

Social Media

Social media will not be complete without mentioning the Internet which is one of the most prolific technologies that revolves around the 20th and 21st century. The Internet has created a huge impact all over the world. It has made communication easier and faster which has made our social lives go beyond our immediate environment. Today, the Internet has grown in popularity, dominating the trends of events in communication technology, as well as expanding in communication function.

Social media is one of the products of the Internet and it is the rave of the moment. These media have stormed the communication arena with a persuasive and intimidating posture which makes it difficult for individuals to ignore the social media. Social media are fundamentally web, PC intervened innovations and versatile based devices for making, review and sharing of data, thoughts, which means, profession interests and different types of articulation among people [4]. Online media doesn't just educate individuals yet it similarly associates with these individuals it is illuminating. It is fundamental to comprehend the expression "online media" autonomously. The word 'social' can be viewed as the sharing, making and review of important thoughts and data through correspondence and collaboration while 'media' alludes to the channels through which correspondence and connection are seen and meaning, data, emotions shared (for example WhatsApp, Twitter and Facebook).

Web-based media have surprised the world as person-to-person communication destinations like Facebook Messenger, Instagram, Twitter, WhatsApp, and Facebook, all permit dynamic clients to transfer and share photographs, talk with loved ones, make new companions just associate with individuals everywhere on the universe [5].

Web-based media upholds the democratization of information and data and change individuals from content customers to content makers [6]. Web-based media have discovered its way into the regular daily existences of numerous individuals and web-based media have the most noteworthy movement on the web. They are the components of the new media. Online media are not actually 'new', they can be traced all the way back

to the utilization of the simple phone for social correspondence and association where they began as an idea. Web-based media have continuously formed into modern innovation. They have recently become part of business world and culture. Individuals have for quite some time been utilizing computerized media for correspondence, mingling, cooperation and social affairs of data. Online media has been described as a phenomenon that has recently been dominated by the web, allowing greater accessibility and interaction among internet users, and has been fueled by contributions and feedback from individuals within various virtual communities [7].

Textism

Textism is the shortening of words utilized in text informing and furthermore via online media. Initially, textism was created to save space to fit more data inside a SMS just as to save cost of sending numerous messages. With the prevalence of agreement telephones expanding the expense of sending singular writings has diminished, yet textism use is as yet famous because of the social affordances it offers like social having a place fun from playing with language just as capacity to communicate oneself [8], [9].

Text language is the most current language that accompanies the appearance of advancements like web, computerized innovations. Textisms are accommodated speed, control and security. Textisms are typical with the expansion of terms like BRB, 2nte, Pls, B4, Haha and so forth. The language of the Internet has become more casual and more expressive as these intentional mix-ups are endured [10]. Text informing started a huge populace of youth into text-based shorthand strategies that were never utilized preceding this medium (Ling). This arrangement of language transformations can be summarized as "textism," which has been categorized into twelve (12) types—shortenings, contractions, g-clippings, other clippings, omitted punctuations, abbreviations, initialisms, symbols, letter and number homophones, incorrect spellings, non-standard spellings, and accent stylization [11] (Rosen, Chang, Erwin, Carrier, & Cheever, 2010). The variations were not categorized but were instead described as accent reenactments and semiotic features such as the use of capital letters to indicate paralinguistic nuances like volume or emphasis, stage directions to convey subtlety, reduplication for elongated sounds, as well as visual and graphical alternatives such as emojis, rebuses, and other embellishments to add meaning [12]. This sort of language play had the option to make a capacity and hindrance for commonsense purposes for the clients [13].

Textism has been molded by pragmatic requirements for practicality, size of screen, limits in messaging capacities, for example, dodging the bother of info modes, as much as perkiness [12], [13]. Textism exists through an inspiration for change and for being new and imaginative. Advancement using youngsters and their messaging techniques were clear as textism accommodated speed, protection, and control. The underlying textism was to make new ease of use ascribes to permit things to be simpler for the clients [2].

Textism have moved from instant messages into other online media arrangements, for example, Facebook, Facebook Messenger, WhatsApp and so on where it is accepted to save time and it is quicker and simpler to cooperate, convey and talk with loved ones.

Textism structures are not confined to instant messages, yet in addition show up in different types of advanced correspondence, including long range interpersonal communication and email [14]. As of not long ago, these sorts of messages were created regularly on a PC or personal computer, with a full console, huge screen and no 160-character limits. Be that as it may, as of late, it has gotten conceivable, and progressively famous, to get to a scope of computerized correspondence modalities by means of cell phone or other little convenient gadget, as opposed to a bigger PC.

As noted before, it has been an overall worry that textism has a method of simplifying legitimate English language particularly among young people. Yet, this exploration tries to discover why college understudies of Rivers State University, Port Harcourt utilize online media and textism in their everyday associations.

Social Media and Textism

Social media is one of the best technologies invented in the history of man. With its development and advancement, almost everybody is faced with the challenge of having to meet up and cope with the huge change the technology has brought into almost all aspects of human life. In this 21st century, social media is now a part of our everyday lives. All types of information are being accessed by us on a platter of gold through our smartphones, laptops, desktops and other devices. They can provide us with almost all the information we need ranging from banking to emails, weather forecast, academic purposes, news gathering, job searching, and so on. Social media is an avenue where people exchange, socialize and interact with others all over the world and this has made the world like a global village.

Social media such as WhatsApp, Facebook Messenger, Twitter, Facebook etc. has taken the whole world to a new and next level. The major group making use of social media for amusement are the youths with the purposes of sharing day to day activities, communicating and interacting with family and friends, sharing of photos, sharing and commenting on wall posts, creating groups for sharing of information and ideas, updating their status, birthday reminders, video uploading and so on. Social media are means by which people transmit their ideas, emotions, feelings and textism is the language they can freely use to accomplish this. They feel comfortable and relaxed using textisms since the people they are interacting with understand them and they get feedback instantly, unlike the language they use when studying in school which is more of grammar, rules and syntax.

Social inspiration has been one of the fundamental purposes behind connecting [15]. Clients have burned-through, took part, and created content via online media as a method for cooperating with different clients [2], [8]. They have needed to reinforce their public activities. Through a virtual local area, clients have needed to reinforce their public activities. These clients are exceptionally worried about their associations with others and endeavor to improve those connections through steady investment with their companions via online media [16]. This association assisted with "online-just companions" just as their "genuine world" connections. These people group took into account a moment foundation of a similar companion bunch that empowered the friend

arranged outlook of clients to discover companions and support their socialization abilities [10]. These clients imparted to each other to feel incorporation and love while giving them a feeling of control for their commitment [3]. In this day and age of simple access networks that can identify with any specialty point, socialization become the primary focal point of clients as data and amusement presently don't have a similar incentive with the development of web-based media [8].

Language is just characterized as an arrangement of correspondence. It is the fundamentally vital for human endurance. Language has an extraordinary impact in all that we do throughout everyday life. English language is the one that is generally communicated in among various dialects of the world and is indeed turning into the all inclusive language. As numerous dialects are constantly exposed to improvement, change and extension, same is the situation with English. The pace of progress differs from one language to another and now and again.

Text language is most up to date language that accompanies the appearance of innovations like the Internet, advanced advances. The latest type of correspondence and connection among individuals is text language. Truncations, abbreviations and feelings are the styles of language text language has created. Generally, it is unique in relation to different types of composed correspondence. Text language is notable and effectively perceived by online media clients, Internet clients, just as chats who are generally young people. Text language, Internet language, computerized language and textism are the various terms to depict this new dialect assortment. For this examination, the term textism will be utilized. Individuals hold a solid conviction that textism is harming understudies' composing abilities as texters use them in their day by day association and correspondence via online media.

Theoretical Framework
Uses and Gratifications Theory

Uses and gratifications theory was propounded by Elihu Katz, Jay Blumler and Micheal Gurevitch during the 1970s. Utilizations and gratifications theory is outfitted towards understanding why individuals utilize the media and how they effectively search out explicit media and substance to adequately fulfill their own necessities. The examination of the propounders of employments and delights hypothesis was inventive and it caused a change in outlook from how the media impact individuals to how individuals utilize the media. The utilizations (openness to the media) and delights (benefits) hypothesis explain how dynamic media clients deliberate settle on a decision of the media that will fulfill their most significant necessities and the media that they can get to without any problem. Media clients most occasions settle on a decision of media that permits a client to look for data, unwinding, socialization, amusement, status, relational learning, upgrade information, friendship and coordination for business.

Moreover, the uses and gratifications theory has been described as a theory that focuses on the reasons why certain media are used by individuals rather than on their content [17]. It expresses that things are not done to individuals by the media, yet things are finished by individuals with the media. In other words that, what individuals permit

the media to be is the reason the impact of media is restricted, accordingly, it is exclusively crowd focused.

In its least difficult structure, the utilizations and delights model proposed that crowd individuals had certain requirements or drives that were fulfilled by utilizing both non-media and media sources [18].

The utilizations and satisfactions hypothesis is identified with this examination "Online media use and textism among Undergraduate understudies of the Rivers State University, Port Harcourt" in light of the fact that the college understudies of the Rivers State University, Port Harcourt settle on a decision of the media that will adequately fulfill their own requirements which may either be mental or physical-regardless of the course of its impact on their scholastic presentation. It very well may be utilized likewise to fulfill the necessities of amusement, socialization, speaking with loved ones, improvement of information, relational learning, etc. In this way, they pick their preferred substance of the media, make importance of it and follow up on the significance they make.

RESEARCH METHOD

The population of this study is the undergraduate students at Rivers State University. The sample size is the total number of undergraduate students from all the faculties of Rivers State University which is 26,834. The research design used for this study was the descriptive survey design and proportionate sampling technique. Descriptive with the aid of a questionnaire assist the researcher in generating information as well as cover a large population during the research. Primary and secondary data were both collected to actualize the objectives of the study. The questionnaire items were used to attain the primary data on the study on social media use and textism among undergraduate students of Rivers State University.

Thirteen questionnaire items were raised from the study and 400 questionnaires were administered to Undergraduate Students of Rivers State University. The data collected from the respondents were analyzed using frequency distribution tables, simple percentage. Three hundred and eighty-five (385) copies of the questionnaire were filled and retrieved, which were used for this study. The questionnaire was divided into two sections. Section A which is the demographic data contains four items while Section B which is the psychographic data contains nine questionnaire items on the subject matter. The respondents' responses were presented and analyzed in a tabular and percentage frequency.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1. Questionnaire Distribution.

S/N	Sampled levels	Total number of questionnaires distributed	Total number of questionnaires retrieved without errors
1	Year 1	115	110
2	Year 2	105	101

3	Year 3	101	98
4	Final year	79	76
Total		**400**	**385**

Source: Field work, 2025

From Table 1 above, the study sampled respondents from different levels in the same university (Rivers State University). Each level were sampled (Year 1 – Final year) and 400 copies of questionnaires were distributed as Year 1 were administered 115 copies but 110 were retrieved, Year 2 were administered 105 copies but 101 were retrieved. Furthermore, 101 copies of questionnaires were administered to Year 3 and 98 copies were retrieved, while 79 copies were administered to Final year and 76 copies were retrieved. A total number of 385 questionnaires were retrieved and used for this study while 15 copies of the questionnaires were not retrieved and were not used for the study.

Research Question 1: In what ways do the undergraduate students of Rivers State University, Port Harcourt utilize the social media?

To answer the research question one above, data were collected from the respondents' responses on the ways they utilize the social media as shown in table 2 below.

Table 2. Respondents' response on ways they utilize social media.

Responses	Frequency	Percentage (%)
I utilize the social media in sharing of information	85	22
I utilize the social media in gathering of news	72	19
I utilize the social media in reuniting with loved ones	100	26
I utilize the social media in sharing of stories	63	16
I utilize the social media in creative demonstration and learning	65	17
Total		**385**

Source: Field work, 2025

Table 2 indicates that 100 respondents representing 26% utilize the social media in reuniting with loved ones, 85 respondents representing 22% utilize the social media in sharing of information, and 72 respondents representing 19% utilize the social media in gathering of news and so on. It was also used to identify the ways undergraduate Students of Rivers State University, Port Harcourt mostly utilize the social media. A good

number of them utilize the social media in reuniting with loved ones, while some utilize it in sharing of information; others utilize it in gathering of news and so on.

Research question 2: Why do undergraduate students of Rivers State University, Port Harcourt, use textism in their daily interaction on social media?

Table 3. Responses on why undergraduate students of Rivers State University, Port Harcourt make use of textism on social media.

Responses	Frequency	Percentage (%)
It saves time	98	25
It facilitates the process of texting	88	23
It is fashionable	74	19
It saves space	65	17
It makes communication easier, simpler and faster	60	16
Total	**385**	**100**

Source: Field work, 2025

Data presented in table 3 shows why the undergraduate students of Rivers State University use textism on social media. 98 or 25% respondents use it because it saves time, (88 or 23%) respondents use it because it facilitates the process of texting and so on. Findings on table 3 reveal that undergraduate students at Rivers State University, Port Harcourt use textism on social media because it makes communication easier, simpler and faster, it facilitates the process of texting, it saves time, it is fashionable as well as it saves space.

CONCLUSION

Fundamental Finding : The role of social media in the lives of youths cannot be overemphasized, as it has become deeply integrated into the ways people communicate, interact, and learn in a fast-changing world. The findings of this study have shown that a reasonable number of Rivers State University undergraduate students use social media and textism, confirming both their popularity and purpose among student users. Social media and textism have become an essential part of the social and academic life of undergraduate students at Rivers State University, Port Harcourt, as they facilitate the communication process. **Implication :** The study emphasizes that while social media and textism enhance communication and connectivity, their impact on students' academic pursuits depends entirely on how they are used. Therefore, students should maximize the academic potential of social media as a valuable learning tool. **Limitation :** The research is limited to undergraduate students of Rivers State University, Port Harcourt, which may not represent all university students or capture broader variations in social media use. **Future Research :** Future studies should explore comparative analyses between different universities or regions and investigate the long-term influence of social

media and textism on students' academic performance and interpersonal communication skills.

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