

IMPACT OF ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATION ON STUDENTS' PERCEIVED ABILITY TO WRITE

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INTRODUCTION

There is debate on whether or not students' quality of writing is influenced by the frequency in which they use social media and text messaging. Previous research shows inconclusive results. The purpose of this pilot study was to develop a valid and reliable metric for investigating the potential relationship between students' digital media use and their perceived writing ability.



CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

We used Lingwall and Kuehn's (2013) media writing self-perception (MWSP) scale to measure students' perceptions of their media writing ability, and Olufadi's (2016) social networking time use scale (SONTUS) to measure the time students spend using digital media (social media and text messaging).

MWSP CONSTRUCTS:

ELABORATIVE/SURFACE
REFLECTIVE/REVISIONIST
WRITING/Self-EFFICACY
WRITING APPREHENSION
SOCIAL MEDIA/PROFESSIONAL



SONTUS CONSTRUCTS:

RELAXATION AND FREE PERIODS
ACADEMIC-RELATED PERIODS
PUBLIC-PLACE-RELATED USE
STRESS-RELATED PERIODS
MOTIVES FOR USE

METHOD

Using the MWSP and SONTUS scales, we developed a questionnaire using Qualtrics. We distributed the questionnaire to students enrolled in an agricultural college at a land-grant institution located in the Northwestern United States via email. We achieved a 7.14% response rate with 32 usable responses because of missing data. We used Cronbach's alpha coefficients to ensure reliability of each scale. Although the data presented herein is not generalizable, it does indicate further investigation is warranted and suggests the instrument we developed is capable of empirically testing for relationships between the time students spend using social media and text messaging and their perceived writing ability.

RESULTS

- The MWSP scale was reliable with a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of .71.
- The SONTUS scales for social media and text messaging were reliable with Cronbach alpha coefficients of .91 and .93.
- Correlational analyses revealed a moderate negative relationship ($r = -.31, p < .05$) between respondents' MWSP self-efficacy scores and SONTUS scores for social media.
- We found a moderate positive correlation between respondents' MWSP total scores and SONTUS scores ($r = .43, p < .5$).
- Respondents primarily used social media during stress related periods (e.g., to reduce mental stress; $M = 7.03, SD = 2.80$; to reduce the pressure of daily routines; $M = 6.22, SD = 2.87$).
- Respondents primarily used text messaging to communicate with family and friends ($M = 6.60; SD = 2.65$) and to maintain contact with existing friends ($M = 5.78; SD = 2.87$).



CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Pilot study results suggest the time students spend using digital media does not influence their perceived writing ability. However, it is possible that students' use of incorrect spelling, punctuation, and grammar in their social media writing negatively impacts their perceived ability to perform these skills in their professional writing correctly. Results also indicate that the more students text the more they use social media, and vice versa.

Future research should implement the instrument developed among a larger student sample to further investigate the strengths of relationships between students' perceived writing ability and use of digital media. Additionally, students in the pilot study sample typically used social media as an outlet to reduce stress. Future research should investigate students' motives for using social media and text messaging and investigate the effectiveness of social media as a stress-reducer among college students.