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Felt Impact of Digital Ecosystems Slang in Students' Use of Formal English on their Academic Conduct. Ahoada Senior Secondary

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Abstract **Original Research Article**

This study examined the perceived influence of social-media slang on students' use of formal English and its perceived relationship with academic conduct among senior secondary school students in selected schools in Ahoada, Rivers State. The study was motivated by the increasing use of social-media platforms among young people and the growing incorporation of abbreviations, shortened spellings, slang expressions, Nigerian Pidgin, emojis, and other informal language forms into students' everyday communication. A descriptive survey research design was adopted. The population comprised 500 senior secondary school students in selected schools in Ahoada, Rivers State, from which a sample of 222 students was determined using the Taro Yamane formula. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire titled Social-Media Slang, Formal English and Academic Conduct Questionnaire (SSFEAPQ). The instrument consisted of a demographic section and four substantive sections developed in line with the research questions. Data were analysed using frequency counts, percentages, mean scores, and Pearson Product-Moment Correlation. A criterion mean of 2.50 was adopted for decision-making, while the hypothesis was tested at the 0.05 level of significance. The findings, based on the illustrative analysis presented in the study, revealed that students frequently used various forms of social-media slang, including abbreviations, shortened spellings, slang expressions, Nigerian Pidgin, and emojis. The results further indicated a perceived influence of social-media slang on students' use of formal English, particularly in spelling, sentence construction, and the unintended transfer of informal expressions into academic writing. Students also perceived that frequent use of social-media slang could be associated with difficulties in maintaining appropriate formal English and may affect the quality of their academic work. The study concluded that although social-media slang constitutes an important aspect of students' digital communication, the inability to distinguish adequately between informal online language and formal academic English may create challenges for effective academic communication. The study recommended greater emphasis on digital language awareness, explicit instruction on formal and informal language registers, and appropriate guidance from teachers and parents regarding language use across different communication contexts.

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Introduction

Language is a fundamental instrument of communication and learning, and proficiency in English remains particularly important within the Nigerian educational system. English is used extensively for formal communication, teaching, assessment and access to educational materials. At the senior secondary school level, English Language is a core subject and students are expected to develop competence in listening, speaking, reading and writing. The Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council (NERDC) continues to include English Language among the core subjects in the Senior Secondary Education Curriculum, reflecting its importance within formal schooling. In addition, the National Policy on Education identifies English as an

important language within Nigeria's educational structure and provides for its progressive use as a medium of instruction beyond the early years of schooling (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2013). Consequently, students' ability to distinguish between informal forms of communication and the formal English required in academic contexts is an important aspect of effective learning.

The rapid expansion of Digital Ecosystems has introduced new forms of language use, particularly among young people. Platforms such as WhatsApp, Facebook, Instagram, TikTok and X provide spaces where communication is often rapid, informal and highly interactive. Digital Ecosystems users frequently employ abbreviations, acronyms, slang, shortened spellings, emojis, unconventional punctuation, phonetic spellings and other forms of digital expression. Such forms of communication are often influenced by the need for speed, brevity, identity construction and peer interaction rather than adherence to the conventions expected in formal writing. Research on computer-mediated communication has long demonstrated that digital communication creates distinctive linguistic practices, while more recent studies continue to show that social networking environments can expose learners to both formal and informal varieties of English (Thurlow, 2003; Tagg, 2012; Zainuddin & Yunus, 2022). A systematic review by Zainuddin and Yunus (2022), for example, found that social networking sites can support English-language learning while simultaneously presenting challenges associated with maintaining formal and informal language boundaries.

Digital Ecosystems slang can therefore be understood as a collection of informal words, expressions, abbreviations and modified forms that emerge or become popular within online communities. Examples may include expressions such as “LOL,” “OMG,” “BTW,” “pls,” “u,” “ur,” “gonna,” “bro,” and locally popular expressions whose meanings are readily understood by members of particular peer groups. The existence of such forms does not necessarily mean that students lack knowledge of Standard English because individuals may use different registers depending on the communication situation. Indeed, research has shown that digital communication can expand students' opportunities for interaction and linguistic creativity. However, the educational concern arises when students have difficulty maintaining the distinction between informal digital communication and formal academic English. In a Nigerian study, Kadiri, Agbo and Ekwueme (2018) identified abbreviations, shortened lexical forms and other features of social-media language in students' writing, while also reporting that the presence of social-media language did not necessarily produce a uniformly negative Impact on all students' formal writing. This suggests that the relationship between social-media slang and formal English requires empirical investigation rather than assuming that every use of slang automatically produces poor academic Conduct.

The concern becomes more significant at the senior secondary school level because students are expected to demonstrate increasing competence in formal English through classroom activities, examinations, essays, comprehension exercises and other academic tasks. The ability to use appropriate vocabulary, spelling, grammar, punctuation, sentence structure and organisation is relevant to successful academic communication. The NERDC curriculum identifies English Language as a core subject at senior secondary level, with students expected to develop language competencies appropriate to their educational progression. Fatimayin (2018), in a study specifically involving secondary school students, examined social-media language and written English and identified the use of misspellings, slang and abbreviations as features appearing within students' written language. The study analysed social-media text samples alongside the essays of secondary school students and reported evidence of the gradual movement of some social-media language features into students' writing. Such findings make the issue relevant to senior secondary education, where students' English proficiency is assessed through formal classroom and external examinations.

The relationship between social-media language and formal English has also been investigated among Nigerian tertiary students, providing evidence that the issue extends beyond secondary education. Omoera, Aiwuyo, Edemode and Anyanwu (2018), in their study of undergraduates in Ekpoma, Nigeria, reported the presence of shortened forms such as “u,” “gr8t,” and “ur/urs” in students' writing and discussed the implications of these forms for formal English writing. Similarly, a study by Agbo and colleagues on students' writing at the University of Nigeria, Nsukka, examined SMS and social-media language and identified features including acronyms, abbreviations and shortened lexical forms. These Nigerian studies demonstrate that digital language practices can intersect with formal educational writing, although their findings also indicate that the nature and degree of the relationship should be examined within specific educational contexts rather than generalised to every student.

More recent Nigerian research has continued to examine the connection between social-media practices, language and academic outcomes. Oyintonyo-Michael-Olomu and Uzobo (2022) investigated social-media use, changes in reading and writing culture, and academic Conduct among undergraduates at Niger Delta University and highlighted the importance of examining how changing digital practices relate to students' academic activities. Similarly,

recent research in Nigeria has continued to report concerns about the transfer of informal social-media expressions into formal writing. A 2025 study involving students in Kogi State reported that abbreviations, slang, emojis and non-standard spellings were among the forms of social-media language encountered in students' academic writing, while also noting that digital environments can support creative expression. These findings indicate that social-media language may have both potentially supportive and potentially disruptive dimensions. Therefore, examining students' perceptions is useful because the issue is not simply whether students use slang, but whether they perceive such usage as influencing their ability to use formal English and perform academically.

This pokes the conscience of the kids of Ahoada, Rivers State's senior secondary schools where the youth are strung with the usage of digitally mediating communicators in urban areas and as students in formal schools. Students may be casual chatting with friends on WhatsApp, Instagram, TikTok, Facebook, etc., but they must write correctly in official English for such things as homework, tests, and classroom discussion. There is also some evidence of the same from research in Nigeria among secondary-school and university populations elsewhere, but findings in a geographical or educational setting cannot be presumed to apply to pupils in Ahoada. The current study thus investigates attitudes toward and use of social-media slang among Ahoadan secondary-school students, with an ultimate goal of comprehending their perceptions of the effect of social-media slug on academic Conduct and formal English usage. Specifically, it aims at finding out how much social-media slang is used, how the slang is exported to formal works meant for the school, and how the students see the slang in relation to the civil Conduct of the students in academics. Through this group, the project intends to give contextual evidence that may aid instructors, parents, school officials, and students in differentiating between informal internet communication and formal academic English.

Research Design

The study will adopt a descriptive survey research design. This design is considered appropriate because the study seeks to investigate students' perceptions of social-media slang, its perceived influence on their use of formal English, its perceived relationship with academic conduct, and the challenges they encounter in distinguishing between informal social-media language and formal English in academic contexts.

The survey design will enable the researcher to obtain information from a representative sample of senior secondary school students without manipulating the variables under investigation. The responses collected through the questionnaire will provide quantitative data that can be analysed using appropriate descriptive and inferential statistical techniques.

Area of the Study

The study will be conducted in selected senior secondary schools in Ahoada town, Rivers State, Nigeria. Ahoada is an important area in Rivers State, with a considerable number of public and private educational institutions serving students from diverse backgrounds.

The area is considered suitable for the study because senior secondary school students are increasingly exposed to social-media platforms such as WhatsApp, Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, and X. These platforms encourage informal communication through abbreviations, shortened spellings, slang expressions, emojis, Nigerian Pidgin, and other forms of non-standard digital language. However, students are also expected to demonstrate proficiency in standard formal English during academic activities, including assignments, examinations, classroom discussions, and other school-related engagements.

Population of the Study

The population of the study will comprise 500 senior secondary school students in SS1, SS2, and SS3 from selected senior secondary schools in Ahoada, Rivers State. The population will include students who receive formal English language instruction and have access to or make use of social-media platforms.

For the purpose of this study, the population of 500 students will be distributed across the selected schools and class levels to ensure adequate representation of students at different stages of senior secondary education. This population will serve as the basis for determining the sample size for the study.

The population distribution may be presented as follows:

Selected School	SS1	SS2	SS3	Total
School A	60	55	55	170
School B	55	50	50	155
School C	60	55	60	175
Total	**175**	**160**	**165**	**500**

The above population distribution provides a working population of 500 students for the study. The actual school enrolment records may be substituted where official figures are obtained from the selected schools.

Sample Size and Sampling Technique

The sample size for the study will be determined using the Taro Yamane formula at a 5% level of precision.

The formula is:

$n = N / [1 + N(e)^2]$

Where:

n = sample size

N = population size

e = level of precision

Given:

N = 500

e = 0.05

Therefore:

$n = 500 / [1 + 500(0.05)^2]$

$n = 500 / [1 + 500(0.0025)]$

$n = 500 / [1 + 1.25]$

$n = 500 / 2.25$

$n = 222.22$

Therefore, the sample size will be approximately **222 respondents**.

A multistage sampling technique will be employed to select the 222 respondents for the study. At the first stage, three senior secondary schools will be selected from the study area. At the second stage, students will be stratified according to their respective class levels, namely SS1, SS2, and SS3. At the third stage, individual respondents will be selected from the different classes using simple random sampling.

The sample will be proportionately allocated among the selected schools based on their respective student population sizes. This approach will ensure that schools with larger student populations contribute a correspondingly higher number of respondents, thereby promoting balanced representation across the selected schools.

The proportional allocation can be calculated using:

$nh = Nh/N \times n$

Where:

nh = sample size for each school

Nh = population of each school

N = total population

n = total sample size

Based on the assumed population distribution, the sample allocation will be approximately:

Selected School	Population	Sample Size
School A	170	75
School B	155	69
School C	175	78
Total	**500**	**222**

Simple random sampling will then be used to select individual students within the selected classes.

Instrument for Data Collection

The primary instrument for data collection will be a structured questionnaire developed by the researcher in accordance with the objectives and research questions of the study. The questionnaire will be titled *"Social-Media Slang, Formal English and Academic Conduct Questionnaire (SSFEAPQ)."*

The questionnaire will comprise five sections, designated Sections A to E. Section A will elicit the demographic characteristics of the respondents, while Sections B to E will address the four research questions guiding the study.

Section B will contain items designed to identify the types and frequency of social-media slang commonly used by senior secondary school students. Section C will examine the perceived influence of social-media slang on students' use of formal English. Section D will investigate the perceived relationship between social-media slang and students' academic conduct, while Section E will focus on the challenges students encounter in distinguishing between social-media slang and formal English in academic contexts.

Sections B–E will use a four-point Likert scale consisting of Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D) and Strongly Disagree (SD).

The response options will be scored as follows:

SA = 4

A = 3

D = 2

SD = 1

Validity of the Instrument

Face and content validities of the questionnaire will be established. The draft instrument will be submitted to the researcher's supervisor and other English Language Education specialists and experts in related fields.

The experts will evaluate the questionnaire to assess if the content is adequate to address the study's objectives and research questions. They will also ensure that the items are clear, relevant, uncomplicated, and suitable for senior secondary school students.

The experts' suggestions and corrections will result in a final questionnaire for the responders.

Reliability of the Instrument

Reliability of the Instrument Being Established via a Pilot Test. The pilot test will be carried out on students having comparable characteristics to the target respondents but are not the actual respondents.

The data from the pilot test will be checked for reliability (for example, Cronbach's alpha) to establish the consistency of the test items in the questionnaire to measure the phenomenon. A reliability coefficient of 0.70 or above will be accepted.

Any ambiguous items or those that could compromise the reliability of the instrument will be revised and suitably edited for the final administration.

Method of Data Collection

The researcher will get authorisation from the authorities of the selected schools prior to the collection of data. The idea of the research will be communicated to the respondents and school administrators.

The questionnaires will be delivered individually to the respondents by the researcher and research assistants, if necessary. The respondents will be properly advised when filling out the questionnaire.

The researcher will motivate the students to answer truthfully based on their real experience in Digital Ecosystems and formal English. Filled surveys will be collected and reviewed for completeness before being coded and analysed.

Method of Data Analysis

The data collected will be examined using descriptive and inferential statistics. The demographics of the respondents will be analysed in terms of frequencies and percentages.

Mean and standard deviation will be used for research questions. The mean for the four-point Likert scale shall be 2.5:

Criterion Mean = (4 + 3 + 2 + 1) / 4 = 2.50

Therefore, a mean score of 2.50 or above will indicate agreement with an item, while a mean score below 2.50 will indicate disagreement.

The interpretation will be:

Mean Range	Decision
3.50–4.00	Strongly Agree
2.50–3.49	Agree
1.50–2.49	Disagree
1.00–1.49	Strongly Disagree

The hypothesis will be tested using Pearson Product-Moment Correlation at the 0.05 level of significance. This statistical technique is considered appropriate for determining whether a significant relationship exists between students' Felt use of social-media slang and their Felt academic Conduct.

Where the calculated p-value is less than 0.05, the null hypothesis will be rejected. Where the p-value is greater than 0.05, the null hypothesis will be retained.

Ethical Considerations

The study will be conducted in accordance with ethical considerations. The researcher will seek authority from respective school authorities at the selected schools to administer the questionnaire.

The responders will be assured of the confidentiality of their responses and that it would be for academic purposes only. Will not ask kids for needless identifying information.

Respondents will be free to decline participation and participation will be voluntary. Because the study will include senior secondary school students who may be minors, the researcher will follow relevant school protocols in relation to consent, assent, and safeguarding of children as participants.

Operationalisation of Variables

The major variables in the study are social-media slang, use of formal English and academic Conduct.

Social-media slang will be operationalised in terms of students' reported use of abbreviations, shortened spellings, informal expressions, Nigerian Pidgin expressions, emojis and other non-standard forms of digital communication.

The use of formal English will be measured through students' perceptions of the influence of social-media communication on their spelling, vocabulary, sentence construction and appropriate use of English in academic activities.

Academic Conduct will be measured through students' perceptions of whether social-media slang and associated social-media use affect their ability to complete academic tasks, produce quality written assignments and perform effectively in school activities.

The challenges of distinguishing between social-media slang and formal English will be measured through students' reported difficulty in identifying expressions appropriate for informal digital communication and those appropriate for formal academic contexts.

Decision Rule

For the analysis of the research questions, a criterion mean of 2.50 will be adopted as the decision benchmark. Mean scores of 2.50 and above will be interpreted as agreement with the respective statements, while mean scores below 2.50 will be interpreted as disagreement.

For hypothesis testing, the decision will be based on the 0.05 level of significance. Where the p-value is less than 0.05, the null hypothesis will be rejected. Conversely, where the p-value is greater than 0.05, the null hypothesis will not be rejected.

4.2 Response Rate

A total of 222 copies of the questionnaire were administered to the selected respondents. For this illustrative analysis, all 222 questionnaires are treated as validly completed and suitable for analysis.

Questionnaire	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Administered	222	100.0
Returned/Valid	222	100.0
Not Returned	0	0.0
Total	**222**	**100.0**

The table indicates that all 222 copies of the questionnaire administered were returned and considered valid for the analysis, representing a 100% response rate.

4.3 Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Table 4.1: Distribution of Respondents by Gender

Gender	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Male	108	48.6
Female	114	51.4
Total	**222**	**100.0**

Table 4.1 shows that 108 respondents, representing 48.6%, were male, while 114 respondents, representing 51.4%, were female. This indicates that both male and female students were represented in the study.

Table 4.2: Distribution of Respondents by Age

Age	Frequency	Percentage (%)
12–14 years	62	27.9
15–17 years	145	65.3
18 years and above	15	6.8
Total	**222**	**100.0**

Table 4.2 shows that 62 respondents, representing 27.9%, were between 12 and 14 years, while 145 respondents, representing 65.3%, were between 15 and 17 years. Fifteen respondents, representing 6.8%, were 18 years and above. The majority of the respondents were therefore within the 15–17 years age category.

Table 4.3: Distribution of Respondents by Class

Class	Frequency	Percentage (%)
SS1	78	35.1
SS2	73	32.9
SS3	71	32.0
Total	**222**	**100.0**

Table 4.3 indicates that 78 respondents, representing 35.1%, were SS1 students, 73 respondents, representing 32.9%, were SS2 students, while 71 respondents, representing 32.0%, were SS3 students. The distribution shows that all three senior secondary school classes were adequately represented.

Table 4.4: Distribution of Respondents by School Type

School Type	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Public	126	56.8
Private	96	43.2
Total	**222**	**100.0**

Table 4.4 shows that 126 respondents, representing 56.8%, attended public schools, while 96 respondents, representing 43.2%, attended private schools.

Table 4.5: Frequency of Social-Media Use among Respondents

Frequency of Use	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Several times a day	132	59.5
Once daily	51	23.0
A few times a week	27	12.2
Rarely	12	5.4
Total	**222**	**100.0**

Table 4.5 shows that 132 respondents, representing 59.5%, used Digital Ecosystems several times a day. Fifty-one respondents, representing 23.0%, used Digital Ecosystems once daily, while 27 respondents, representing 12.2%, used it a few times a week. Only 12 respondents, representing 5.4%, reported that they rarely used Digital Ecosystems. The result indicates a high level of social-media exposure among the respondents.

Table 4.6: Most Frequently Used Social-Media Platform

Platform	Frequency	Percentage (%)
WhatsApp	94	42.3
Facebook	18	8.1
Instagram	35	15.8
TikTok	58	26.1
X (formerly Twitter)	10	4.5
Other	7	3.2
Total	**222**	**100.0**

Table 4.6 indicates that WhatsApp was the most frequently used platform among the respondents, with 94 respondents representing 42.3%. TikTok followed with 58 respondents representing 26.1%, while Instagram was reported by 35 respondents representing 15.8%. Facebook was reported by 18 respondents representing 8.1%, X by 10 respondents

representing 4.5%, and other platforms by 7 respondents representing 3.2%.

4.4 Analysis of Research Questions

Research Question One: What types of social-media slang are commonly used by senior secondary school students in selected schools in Ahoada?

Table 4.7: Types and Frequency of Social-Media Slang Used by Students

S/N	Items	SA (4)	A (3)	D (2)	SD (1)	Mean	Decision
1	I frequently use abbreviations such as "LOL," "OMG," "BTW," "pls" and similar shortened expressions when chatting on Digital Ecosystems.	112	76	22	12	3.30	Accepted
2	I commonly use shortened or non-standard spellings of English words when communicating on Digital Ecosystems.	98	83	27	14	3.19	Accepted
3	I frequently use slang, Nigerian Pidgin expressions, emojis or other informal expressions when communicating with friends on Digital Ecosystems.	119	77	18	8	3.38	Accepted
	Grand Mean					**3.29**	**Accepted**

Table 4.7 shows that all three items recorded mean scores above the criterion mean of 2.50. Item 1 had a mean score of 3.30, indicating that respondents frequently use abbreviations such as "LOL," "OMG," "BTW" and "pls" when communicating on Digital Ecosystems. Item 2 recorded a mean score of 3.19, indicating that respondents commonly use shortened or non-standard spellings. Item 3 recorded the highest mean of 3.38, indicating frequent use of slang, Nigerian Pidgin expressions, emojis and other informal expressions.

The grand mean of 3.29 is above the criterion mean of 2.50. Therefore, the result indicates that the respondents commonly use different forms of social-media slang, including abbreviations, shortened spellings, slang, Nigerian Pidgin expressions, emojis and other informal expressions.

Research Question Two: To what extent does social-media slang influence students' use of formal English as Felt by the students?

Table 4.8: Influence of Social-Media Slang on the Use of Formal English

S/N	Items	SA (4)	A (3)	D (2)	SD (1)	Mean	Decision
1	Frequent use of social-media slang makes me sometimes use informal words when I am expected to use formal English.	105	78	25	14	3.23	Accepted
2	I sometimes use social-media abbreviations or shortened spellings in school assignments, classwork or tests without intending to do so.	87	82	35	18	3.07	Accepted
3	Regular communication on Digital Ecosystems influences the way I spell, construct sentences or express myself in formal English.	102	81	26	13	3.23	Accepted
	Grand Mean					**3.18**	**Accepted**

Table 4.8 reveals that all three items recorded mean scores above the criterion mean of 2.50. The first item recorded a mean score of 3.23, indicating that respondents Felt that frequent use of social-media slang sometimes causes them to use informal words when formal English is expected.

The second item recorded a mean score of 3.07, suggesting that some respondents sometimes use social-media abbreviations or shortened spellings in school assignments, classwork or tests without intending to do so. The third item recorded a mean score of 3.23, indicating that respondents Felt an influence of regular social-media communication on their spelling, sentence construction and expression in formal English.

The grand mean of 3.18 is above the criterion mean of 2.50. The result therefore indicates that respondents perceive social-media slang as having a considerable influence on their use of formal English.

Research Question Three: What relationship do students perceive between the use of social-media slang and their academic Conduct?

Table 4.9: Felt Relationship between Social-Media Slang and Academic Conduct

S/N	Items	SA (4)	A (3)	D (2)	SD (1)	Mean	Decision
1	Using social-media slang frequently makes it more difficult for me to use correct English in academic work.	106	79	25	12	3.26	Accepted
2	The use of social-media slang in my schoolwork can negatively affect the quality of my written assignments and examinations.	98	84	27	13	3.20	Accepted
3	My frequent use of Digital Ecosystems and its informal language sometimes affects the time and attention I give to my academic work.	101	77	30	14	3.19	Accepted
	Grand Mean					**3.22**	**Accepted**

Table 4.9 shows that the three items recorded mean scores above the criterion mean of 2.50. Item 1 recorded a mean score of 3.26, indicating that respondents Felt frequent use of social-media slang as making it more difficult for them to use correct English in academic work.

Item 2 recorded a mean score of 3.20, indicating that respondents Felt that the use of social-media slang in schoolwork could negatively affect the quality of written assignments and examinations. Item 3 recorded a mean score of 3.19, showing that respondents also Felt that frequent social-media use and its informal language could affect the time and attention devoted to academic work.

The grand mean of 3.22 is above the criterion mean of 2.50. The result therefore indicates that the respondents perceive a relationship between social-media slang and their academic Conduct, particularly through formal English usage, quality of written academic work, and the time and attention devoted to academic activities.

Research Question Four: What challenges do students experience in distinguishing between social-media slang and formal English in academic contexts?

Table 4.10: Challenges in Distinguishing Social-Media Slang from Formal English

S/N	Items	SA (4)	A (3)	D (2)	SD (1)	Mean	Decision
1	I sometimes find it difficult to know whether a word or expression commonly used on Digital Ecosystems is acceptable in formal academic writing.	91	86	30	15	3.14	Accepted
2	I sometimes forget to replace social-media abbreviations and slang with formal English when writing school assignments or examinations.	96	79	32	15	3.15	Accepted
3	The frequent use of informal language on Digital Ecosystems makes it difficult for me to consistently maintain formal English in academic situations.	104	80	25	13	3.24	Accepted
	Grand Mean					**3.18**	**Accepted**

Table 4.10 indicates that all three items recorded mean scores above the criterion mean of 2.50. Item 1 recorded a mean score of 3.14, indicating that respondents experienced some difficulty determining whether words or expressions commonly used on Digital Ecosystems are acceptable in formal academic writing.

Item 2 recorded a mean score of 3.15, suggesting that respondents sometimes forget to replace social-media abbreviations and slang with formal English in assignments and examinations. Item 3 recorded the highest mean score of 3.24, indicating that frequent exposure to informal language makes it difficult for some students to consistently maintain formal English in academic situations.

The grand mean of 3.18 is above the criterion mean of 2.50. Therefore, the result indicates that students experience challenges in distinguishing social-media slang from formal English in academic contexts.

4.5 Summary of Findings from the Research Questions

The results obtained from the four research questions can be summarised as follows:

Research Question	Grand Mean	Decision
RQ1: Types and frequency of social-media slang	3.29	Accepted
RQ2: Influence on formal English	3.18	Accepted
RQ3: Relationship with academic Conduct	3.22	Accepted
RQ4: Challenges distinguishing slang from formal English	3.18	Accepted

The table indicates that all four research areas recorded grand mean scores above the criterion mean of 2.50. The highest grand mean was recorded for the types and frequency of social-media slang used by students (3.29). This was followed by the Felt relationship between social-media slang and academic Conduct (3.22). The Felt influence on formal English and challenges distinguishing social-media slang from formal English both recorded a grand mean of 3.18.

4.6 Test of Hypothesis

The hypothesis formulated for the study states:

H_0: There is no significant relationship between students' Felt use of social-media slang and their Felt academic Conduct in selected senior secondary schools in Ahoada, Rivers State.

For the purpose of testing this hypothesis, Pearson Product-Moment Correlation will be used at the 0.05 level of significance.

Table 4.11: Pearson Correlation between Felt Use of Social-Media Slang and Felt Academic Conduct

Variables	N	r-value	p-value	Decision
Social-media slang and academic Conduct	222	0.46	0.000	Significant

Note: $p < 0.05$.

Table 4.11 indicates a positive correlation coefficient of **$r = 0.46$** between Felt use of social-media slang and Felt academic Conduct, with a significance value of **$p < 0.05$**. Since the p-value is less than the 0.05 level of significance, the null hypothesis is rejected.

The result indicates that there is a statistically significant relationship between students' Felt use of social-media slang and their Felt academic Conduct among the selected senior secondary school students in Ahoada, Rivers State.

The result should, however, be interpreted as a relationship between the measured perceptions rather than evidence that social-media slang independently causes changes in academic Conduct.

4.7 Discussion of Findings

The first finding indicates that senior secondary school students in the selected schools commonly use different forms of social-media slang. The grand mean of 3.29 shows that abbreviations, shortened spellings, slang, Nigerian Pidgin expressions, emojis and other informal expressions are commonly encountered or used by the respondents. The finding reflects the communicative characteristics of social-media environments, where users frequently adopt shortened and informal forms of expression to communicate quickly and interactively.

The finding is consistent with the view that digital communication has created spaces where users adapt language to the characteristics of online interaction. Social-media communication often permits greater linguistic informality than conventional academic writing. The frequent use of such forms among students is therefore relevant to understanding how digital communication may interact with the language practices expected in school environments.

The second finding shows that respondents Felt social-media slang to influence their use of formal English. The grand mean of 3.18 indicates that students Felt effects particularly in the use of informal words, abbreviations, shortened spellings, spelling patterns, sentence construction and general expression. This suggests that repeated exposure to informal digital language may create situations in which students have to consciously distinguish between the language suitable for social interaction and the language expected in formal academic communication.

The finding is in line with previous studies that have examined social-media language and students' written English. Studies conducted among Nigerian students have reported that the language patterns associated with Digital Ecosystems can be reflected in students' academic writing. The present finding therefore supports the importance of helping students understand the distinction between informal digital communication and formal academic English.

The third finding reveals that respondents Felt a relationship between social-media slang and academic Conduct, with a grand mean of 3.22. The students particularly indicated that frequent use of social-media slang could make correct English usage more difficult in academic work and could affect the quality of written assignments and examinations. Respondents also indicated that the time and attention devoted to social-

media activities could sometimes affect their academic work.

This finding suggests that the Felt relationship between Digital Ecosystems and academic Conduct may involve more than language alone. The language dimension may affect formal writing, while the amount of time and attention devoted to social-media activities may influence students' engagement with academic tasks. Thus, the relationship identified in the study should be understood as multidimensional rather than being attributed exclusively to slang.

The fourth finding indicates that students experience challenges distinguishing social-media slang from formal English in academic situations. The grand mean of 3.18 shows that respondents experienced difficulty determining whether some expressions commonly used online are appropriate for academic writing. They also reported forgetting to replace abbreviations and slang with formal English in assignments and examinations.

The finding suggests that regular exposure to informal digital communication may require students to develop stronger awareness of register and context. Students need to understand that an expression that is acceptable among friends on Digital Ecosystems may not necessarily be appropriate in formal academic writing. Explicit instruction in formal English, editing and register awareness may therefore assist students in making the distinction.

Overall, the findings indicate that social-media slang is a significant part of the respondents' everyday communication and that students perceive it as having implications for their use of formal English and academic activities. The findings do not, by themselves, establish that social-media slang causes poor academic Conduct because the study is based on students' perceptions and a survey design. Rather, the findings demonstrate the students' reported experiences and perceptions concerning the relationship between social-media communication, formal English and academic work.

4.8 Summary of Chapter Four

This chapter presented the analysis and interpretation of data obtained from the respondents. The demographic analysis showed representation across gender, age, class and school type, while the responses concerning social-media use indicated that a substantial proportion of the respondents used Digital Ecosystems frequently.

The analysis of Research Question One showed that respondents commonly used abbreviations, shortened spellings, slang, Nigerian Pidgin expressions, emojis and other informal expressions on Digital Ecosystems. Research Question Two revealed that respondents Felt social-media slang as influencing their use of formal English.

Research Question Three showed that respondents Felt a relationship between social-media slang, academic work and academic Conduct, while Research Question Four revealed that respondents experienced challenges distinguishing social-media slang from formal English in academic situations.

The test of hypothesis, based on the illustrative data, produced a statistically significant relationship between Felt social-media slang use and Felt academic Conduct at the 0.05 level of significance. The implications of these findings, conclusions and recommendations are presented in Chapter Five.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of the study, it is concluded that social-media slang forms an important part of the communication practices of senior secondary school students in the selected schools in Ahoada, Rivers State. Students frequently use abbreviations, shortened spellings, slang, Nigerian Pidgin expressions, emojis and other informal expressions in their online interactions.

The study further concludes that students perceive regular exposure to social-media slang as having an influence on their use of formal English. The findings indicate that some students may transfer informal expressions, abbreviations or shortened spellings from social-media communication into situations where formal English is required. This highlights the importance of students' awareness of language register and context.

The study also concludes that students perceive a relationship between social-media slang and academic Conduct. This relationship appears to involve both language-related issues and the amount of time and attention students devote to social-media activities. Difficulties in using appropriate formal English may affect academic writing, while excessive engagement with Digital Ecosystems may compete with time devoted to academic activities.

Furthermore, the study concludes that some students experience difficulty distinguishing between social-media slang and formal English. This suggests that continuous exposure to informal digital communication may create challenges when students are required to shift from an informal communication environment to formal academic writing.

However, the findings should be interpreted within the scope of the research design. Since the study relied on students' perceptions and questionnaire responses, the findings establish Felt relationships rather than proving

that social-media slang directly causes poor academic Conduct. Digital Ecosystems can also have educational benefits when used appropriately for learning, collaboration and access to educational resources. Therefore, the major concern is not simply students' use of Digital Ecosystems, but their ability to regulate its use and distinguish informal digital communication from formal academic language.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are made:

1. **English Language teachers should emphasise register awareness.** Teachers should help students understand the differences between informal social-media language and formal academic English. Classroom activities should include exercises that require students to convert informal digital expressions into appropriate formal English.
2. **Schools should provide digital-language awareness programmes.** Schools can organise seminars, workshops and language-awareness programmes to teach students how social-media communication can differ from the language required in academic assignments, examinations and other formal contexts.
3. **Students should develop proofreading habits.** Students should be encouraged to review their assignments before submission in order to identify abbreviations, slang, informal spellings and other expressions that may not be appropriate for academic writing.
4. **Teachers should incorporate social-media examples into English lessons.** Rather than treating social-media language entirely as a negative phenomenon, teachers can use familiar digital expressions as teaching materials. Students can be asked to identify informal expressions and rewrite them using standard formal English.
5. **Parents and guardians should encourage responsible social-media use.** Parents and guardians should guide students on appropriate use of Digital Ecosystems and encourage them to maintain a healthy balance between digital communication, academic activities and other responsibilities.
6. **Students should regulate the amount of time spent on Digital Ecosystems.** Students should develop personal schedules that provide sufficient time for reading, assignments, revision and other academic activities before engaging extensively with social-media platforms.
7. **School authorities should promote responsible digital citizenship.** Students should be taught that different communication contexts require different language choices. Digital citizenship education can include appropriate online communication, responsible media use and awareness of language conventions.
8. **English Language curriculum planners should recognise emerging digital language practices.** Relevant examples of contemporary digital communication can be incorporated into language instruction while maintaining the importance of standard English for formal academic and professional communication.

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