

**THE IMPACT OF DIGITAL MEDIA ON THE WRITING CULTURE OF
UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS IN PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES IN DELTA STATE
NIGERIA**

BY

**Jennifer Nneka ODIKA
EDU2102253**

**UNIVERSITY OF BENIN
BENIN CITY**

NOVEMBER 2025

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**A RESEARCH PROJECT SUBMITTED TO THE DEPARTMENT OF
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THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE AWARD OF BACHELORS OF ARTS
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CERTIFICATION

This is to certify that this project was carried out by JENNIFER NNEKA ODIAKA in the Department of Educational Foundation, University of Benin, under my supervision.

Mrs. V.E. Edobor-Uzamere

Date

(Project Supervisor)

(Project Coordinator)

Date

(HOD, Educational Foundations)

Date

DEDICATION

This project work is dedicated to God Almighty for his guidance and immeasurable kindness in carrying out this research

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	PAGE
TITLE	i
CERTIFICATION	ii
DEDICATION	iii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	iv
ABSTRACT	v
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION	
Background to the Study	1
Statement of the Problem	3
Purpose of the Study	5
Significance of the Study	6
Research Questions	7
Scope of the Study	8
Limitations of the Study	9
Definitions of Terms	11
CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE	
Concept of Digital Media	13

Concept of Writing Culture	14
The Interplay Between Digital Media and Writing Culture	15
Writing Culture in Nigerian Public Universities	16
Digital Literacy and Academic Writing	16
Social Media and Informal Writing Practices	17
E-Learning and Writing Assignments	18
The Role of Educators and Institutions	18
Theoretical Framework	19
Media Ecology Theory	19
Uses and Gratifications Theory	21
Theoretical Framework: Media Ecology Theory	22
Empirical Review	23
Summary of Literature Review	33
CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY	
Research Design	34
Area of Study	34
Population of the Study	35
Sample and Sampling Technique	35

Research Instrument	36
Validity of the Instrument	37
Method of Data Collection	37
Method of Data Analysis	38

CHAPTER FOUR: PRESENTATION OF RESULTS AND

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Presentation of Results	40
Discussion of Findings	58

CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSION

AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary	62
Conclusion	63
Recommendations	63
Suggestion for Further Studies	64

REFERENCES 65

QUESTIONNAIRE 69

ABSTRACT

In recent years, the widespread use of digital media has significantly transformed how university students communicate, learn, and express ideas. While digital platforms such as WhatsApp, Instagram, and Facebook have enhanced information sharing and connectivity, concerns have emerged about their influence on students' writing culture and academic performance. This study examined the impact of digital media on the writing culture of undergraduate students in public universities in Delta State, Nigeria.

The study adopted a descriptive survey research design and was conducted in selected universities, including Delta State University, Abraka, and the Federal University of Petroleum Resources, Effurun. A structured questionnaire was used to collect data from a sample of 398 respondents, selected through a multi-stage sampling technique. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics such as frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations with the aid of the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS).

Findings revealed that WhatsApp, Instagram, and Facebook are the most frequently used platforms, with most students spending between one and six hours daily online. While digital media facilitates learning, vocabulary development, and collaboration, it also promotes informal writing styles, spelling errors, and reduced originality. The study concludes that digital media exerts both constructive and disruptive effects on students' writing practices. It recommends integrating digital literacy and academic writing training into university curricula, organizing workshops on formal writing, promoting plagiarism detection tools, and improving access to scholarly digital resources to enhance responsible digital engagement.

Keywords: Digital media, writing culture, undergraduates, public universities, Delta State.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the Study

Digital media refers to electronic platforms and technologies that facilitate communication, information sharing, and content creation, including social media (Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp), blogs, online academic databases, and multimedia tools (Loglo & Zawacki-Richter, 2023). It has been observed that digital media has revolutionized how students interact, learn, and express themselves, blending traditional academic practices with modern digital trends (Kazaz et al., 2022; Oluwatobi & Ogunbanjo, 2020). Student writing culture, on the other hand, encompasses the formal and informal writing habits, styles, and conventions adopted by learners in academic and social contexts (Oshebor and Okekeuche (2024). This includes their proficiency in structured academic writing, as well as the influence of informal digital communication on their linguistic expression (Shaikh & Nikooherafmaher, 2022).

Indeed, the rapid adoption of digital media among Nigerian university students has significantly altered communication patterns, fostering both opportunities and challenges in their writing culture (Adewale & Bank, 2020; Omoera et al., 2018). In other words, platforms such as Facebook, WhatsApp, and Twitter dominate student interactions, enabling instant messaging, multimedia sharing, and collaborative learning (Al-Rahmi et al., 2020). However, the informal nature of these platforms often encourages shorthand language, emojis, and slang, which may spill over into academic writing, affecting grammar, spelling, and stylistic precision (Loglo & Zawacki-Richter, 2023). While digital media enhances engagement and accessibility, concerns persist regarding its impact on the quality of formal writing, particularly in assignments, research papers, and examinations (Adomi et al., 2020; Aina & Mooko, 2021; Nwankwo, 2019).

In Nigeria public universities, students increasingly rely on digital tools for both social and academic purposes. Social networking sites serve as primary communication channels, while electronic databases like JSTOR and ScienceDirect support research and scholarly writing (Eireyi-Fidelis & Iwighrehweta, 2022; Ijeh & Iburho, 2024). Despite these advantages, challenges such as internet addiction, misinformation, and poor digital literacy hinder optimal usage (Aleksandrova

& Parusheva, 2019). In addition to the above, the shift towards online learning, accelerated by global trends and institutional adaptations, has further embedded digital media into the academic ecosystem (Moon & Bai, 2020).

The historical integration of digital media in Nigerian higher education reflects broader technological advancements and institutional responses (Oshebor & Okekeuche, 2024). Over the past two decades, universities have increasingly adopted Information and Communication Technology (ICT) to enhance teaching, research, and administrative efficiency (Irele, 2021). However, uneven resource distribution, resistance to change, and infrastructural limitations continue to affect the consistency of digital media adoption across institutions (Ahmad, 2019).

As digital media becomes more entrenched in academic life, understanding its influence on student writing culture is crucial. While it promotes accessibility and collaborative learning, its informal conventions may erode formal writing skills. This study seeks to explore these dynamics within public universities in Delta State, providing insights into how digital media shapes writing proficiency and academic performance.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

The widespread use of digital media has dramatically transformed how students communicate and write in Nigerian universities, particularly in Delta State's public institutions. While platforms like social media, messaging apps, and online forums have made information more accessible and improved connectivity, they have also led to the adoption of informal writing styles that are increasingly appearing in academic work (Eghwudje & Okoro, 2024). Many students now struggle with maintaining proper grammar, structure, and formal tone in their assignments, research papers, and examinations due to habitual use of digital shortcuts, slang, and unstructured online communication.

Educators have observed a noticeable decline in students' writing proficiency, with common issues including poor sentence construction, incorrect punctuation, and the use of casual language in formal academic contexts. The convenience of digital communication has also fostered a reliance

on quick information searches rather than deep engagement with learning materials, leading to weaker critical thinking and original writing skills. Additionally, the shift toward online learning, accelerated by recent global changes, has further embedded digital media in education, yet its long-term effects on writing quality remain unclear.

Despite the growing dependence on digital tools for learning, there is limited research on how they specifically affect writing culture in Delta State's public universities. While some studies acknowledge the benefits of digital media in education, few examine its negative consequences on formal writing standards. This study aims to fill that gap by investigating how digital media influences students' writing habits—both positively and negatively—and exploring solutions to help students maintain strong academic writing skills while still benefiting from digital advancements. Key concerns include identifying the most common writing challenges linked to digital media use and determining how educators can address them effectively.

1.3 Purpose of the study

The main purpose of this study is to examine the impact of digital media on the writing culture of undergraduate students in public universities in Delta State, Nigeria, with the aim of identifying how digital communication influences academic writing proficiency and proposing strategies to enhance formal writing skills in the digital age.

1. Analyze the relationship between digital media usage and students' adherence to formal writing conventions.
2. Identify common writing errors linked to digital communication habits.
3. Assess students' perceptions of how digital media affects their academic writing.
4. Recommend pedagogical approaches to improve writing standards while leveraging digital tools for learning.

1.4 Significance of the Study

This research holds considerable importance for multiple stakeholders in Nigeria's educational sector, particularly in Delta State's public universities. The findings will provide valuable insights

into how digital media influences students' writing culture, offering a balanced perspective on both its benefits and drawbacks.

For **students**, this study will raise awareness about how their digital communication habits may be affecting their academic writing skills. By identifying common errors and challenges linked to digital media usage, the research can help learners develop more conscious writing practices that maintain formal standards while still benefiting from online tools.

For **educators and lecturers**, the study will serve as a resource for understanding the evolving writing patterns of students in the digital age. The results can guide teaching strategies, helping instructors design interventions that address writing deficiencies while incorporating digital literacy into the curriculum. This could include targeted exercises to improve grammar, structure, and formal expression in academic work.

For **university administrators and policymakers**, the research will highlight areas where institutional support is needed, such as improved digital infrastructure, writing workshops, or revised language policies. The findings may also inform decisions on how to integrate technology into education without compromising writing proficiency.

For **future researchers**, this study will contribute to the growing body of knowledge on digital media's role in education, particularly in the Nigerian context. It will provide a foundation for further investigations into effective ways to balance digital communication with academic writing standards.

1.5 Research Questions

This study will be guided by the following research questions:

1. How does frequent use of digital media platforms influence the formal writing skills of students in Delta State public universities?

2. What are the most common writing errors exhibited by students that can be attributed to digital communication habits?
3. How do students perceive the impact of digital media on their academic writing proficiency?
4. What strategies can universities implement to mitigate the negative effects of digital media while preserving its benefits for student writing?

1.6 Scope of the Study

This study will focus on examining the impact of digital media on the writing culture of undergraduate students in public universities across Delta State, Nigeria. Specifically, it will analyse how frequent engagement with digital platforms—including social media, messaging apps, and online learning tools—influences students' academic writing skills, linguistic expression, and adherence to formal writing conventions. The research will assess key aspects such as grammar proficiency, vocabulary usage, structural coherence, and stylistic tendencies in students' written assignments, essays, and examination scripts.

The study will be conducted within selected public universities in Delta State, including Delta State University (DELSU), Abraka, and the Federal University of Petroleum Resources (FUPRE), Effurun. These institutions have been chosen due to their diverse student populations and active integration of digital tools in academic activities. By concentrating on these universities, the research will provide a localized yet representative perspective on how digital media shapes writing culture in Nigerian higher education.

The timeframe for this study will span from March to July 2025, allowing for sufficient data collection across different academic periods, including regular semesters and examination phases. This duration will enable the researcher to observe variations in students' writing habits under different academic pressures and digital engagement levels.

While the study acknowledges the broader influence of digital media on communication, it will specifically exclude postgraduate students and private universities to maintain a focused analysis on undergraduate writing culture in public institutions. Additionally, the research will not assess technical or discipline-specific writing (e.g., scientific or legal writing) but will instead concentrate on general academic writing across humanities and social sciences.

By delimiting the study to these parameters, the research aims to provide actionable insights for educators, curriculum developers, and policymakers on optimizing digital media's role in enhancing—rather than undermining—students' writing proficiency.

1.7 Limitations of the Study:

1. Geographical Scope

The study focuses exclusively on public universities in Delta State, which means findings may not be fully generalizable to private institutions or other states in Nigeria with different educational contexts.

2. Sample Representation

The research primarily targets undergraduate students, potentially overlooking the unique digital media usage patterns and writing challenges faced by postgraduate students.

3. Self-Reporting Bias

Data collected through surveys and interviews may be subject to respondents' subjective perceptions and willingness to accurately report their digital habits and writing difficulties.

4. Limited Focus on Disciplines

The research examines general academic writing without delving into discipline-specific writing conventions across different fields of study.

5. Technological Evolution

Rapid changes in digital platforms and tools may outpace the study's findings, as new technologies could emerge that further influence writing culture.

1.8 Definition of Terms

Digital Media: Any electronic platform that facilitates communication, content sharing, and information dissemination, including social media, blogs, online articles, messaging apps, and digital learning tools.

Writing Culture: The habits, practices, and conventions students adopt in their academic and non-academic writing, including grammar usage, sentence structure, vocabulary choice, and adherence to formal writing standards.

Social Media: Online platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and TikTok that enable users to create, share, and engage with content, often influencing communication styles and language use.

Messaging Apps: Digital communication tools like WhatsApp, Telegram, and Messenger that facilitate instant messaging, often encouraging informal writing styles such as abbreviations, slang, and emojis.

Academic Writing: A formal style of writing used in higher education that requires clarity, coherence, proper structure, and adherence to grammatical and citation rules.

Undergraduate Students: Individuals enrolled in a first-degree program at a university, whose academic writing skills are being analyzed in this study.

Public Universities: Higher education institutions funded and managed by the government, where this study will be conducted, including Delta State University (DELSU) and the Federal University of Petroleum Resources (FUPRE).

Grammar Proficiency: The ability of students to use correct sentence structures, punctuation, and word usage in writing.

Linguistic Expression: How students articulate their thoughts in writing, including clarity, coherence, and fluency of ideas.

Online Learning Tools: Digital resources such as Google Classroom, Coursera, and research databases that influence how students access academic information and develop writing skills.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

2.1 Introduction

The proliferation of digital media has fundamentally reshaped the way individuals communicate, learn, and engage with information (Han, 2024). In the context of higher education, especially among undergraduate students, this transformation is particularly evident in their writing habits and practices. This conceptual review aims to define and explore key concepts relevant to the study, such as digital media, writing culture, and how these elements intersect within the learning environment of public universities in Delta State, Nigeria.

2.2 Concept of Digital Media

Digital media refers to content that is created, distributed, and consumed through digital platforms. It encompasses a wide range of technologies, including social media networks (e.g., Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp), blogs, wikis, podcasts, digital video, websites, and mobile applications (Hewapathirana, 2024). These platforms facilitate interactive communication and offer real-time access to vast volumes of information.

Digital media is characterized by immediacy, interactivity, and multimodality—features that allow users to not only consume content but also produce and share it (Bashabsheh & Alzoubi, 2019). The rise of smartphones and internet-enabled devices has further intensified the presence of digital media in students' daily lives (Han, 2024). For undergraduate students, this means a shift from traditional sources of knowledge like textbooks and handwritten notes to digital platforms such as Google Scholar, YouTube tutorials, and educational apps.

2.3 Concept of Writing Culture

Writing culture refers to the set of practices, values, and habits associated with written communication within a particular social or academic setting (Masche, 2013). It includes elements such as language proficiency, writing conventions, the frequency and quality of writing, and attitudes toward writing as a mode of expression and learning (Taye & Mengesha, 2024). In the academic context, writing culture encompasses assignments, note-taking, report writing, research

projects, essays, and examination scripts (Raofi et al., 2017). A strong writing culture supports critical thinking, creativity, and scholarly engagement, while a weakened writing culture often reflects reduced attention to grammar, coherence, originality, and academic integrity (Workie & Haregu, 2020). Traditionally, writing culture among Nigerian undergraduates was shaped by structured curricula, formal instruction, and print-based resources (Okereke et al., 2024). However, the current digital age presents new dynamics that are reshaping how writing is taught, learned, and perceived.

2.4 The Interplay Between Digital Media and Writing Culture

The integration of digital media into educational environments presents both opportunities and challenges for the writing culture of students (Adelakun et al., 2023). On one hand, digital tools like Microsoft Word, Grammarly, and online thesauruses enhance students' ability to write and edit texts efficiently (Akeusola, 2023). Social media platforms can also foster informal writing skills and digital literacy. On the other hand, overexposure to casual digital communication—characterized by abbreviations, emojis, poor grammar, and lack of formal structure—may erode traditional writing standards. Students accustomed to text-speak and social media lingo may transfer these informal habits into academic writing (Alalwan, 2022). Furthermore, the ease of copying and pasting from online sources contributes to the rise of plagiarism and a decline in original thought. Hence, digital media acts as a double-edged sword—it democratizes access to information and writing tools but also introduces tendencies that may undermine rigorous academic writing standards.

2.5 Writing Culture in Nigerian Public Universities

According to Ogunode et al., (2020) public universities in Nigeria are often characterized by large student populations, limited access to resources, and infrastructural challenges. Despite these, writing remains a core academic requirement. Generally, students are assessed through written examinations, term papers, project reports, and essays, making writing proficiency essential for academic success. However, the influence of digital media is increasingly visible in the writing behaviors of students (Abd Elwahab, 2023). In fact, there are reports of declining handwriting legibility, increased reliance on soft copy materials, poor grammar usage, and limited engagement

in critical analysis—all potentially linked to digital habits (Lee et al., 2022). Moreover, traditional writing exercises are being replaced or supplemented with digital submissions and online assessments. In Delta State's public universities, the situation mirrors national trends, albeit with local peculiarities such as internet accessibility, faculty emphasis on writing skills, and students' socio-economic backgrounds influencing their use of digital media.

2.6 Digital Literacy and Academic Writing

Digital literacy refers to the ability to effectively and critically navigate, evaluate, and create information using digital technologies (Agina-Obu & Okwu, 2023). It includes competencies in searching for scholarly materials, using academic databases, citing digital sources, and using word-processing tools. In a well-balanced educational environment, digital literacy complements writing culture (Ahmed & Rasheed, 2020). When students possess strong digital literacy skills, they are better equipped to engage in high-quality academic writing, utilizing credible sources, proper formatting, and appropriate tone. However, without proper guidance, students may misuse digital tools, leading to overdependence on search engines, inaccurate referencing, and shallow writing practices. Therefore, the development of digital literacy is essential for ensuring that the integration of digital media supports rather than erodes writing standards among undergraduate students (Babina et al., 2022).

2.7 Social Media and Informal Writing Practices

One of the most pervasive forms of digital media among undergraduates is social media. Platforms like WhatsApp, Instagram, X (formerly Twitter), and Facebook encourage quick, informal communication (Yahaya & Ayodeji, 2019). While these platforms can enhance communication skills and self-expression, they also promote non-standard writing patterns such as the use of slang, acronyms, and emojis. Frequent use of such informal styles may spill over into academic writing, resulting in a degradation of grammar, syntax, and formal writing conventions. For instance, students may write "u" instead of "you" or "bcos" instead of "because" in formal essays, signaling a breakdown in writing discipline. This blurring of boundaries between informal and formal writing is a growing concern among educators and underscores the need for targeted interventions in writing instruction.

2.8 E-Learning and Writing Assignments

The rise of e-learning platforms has transformed the way writing assignments are administered and submitted. Learning management systems (LMS) like Moodle, Google Classroom, and Canvas enable instructors to assign, collect, and grade written work digitally (Adelakun et al, 2023). While this promotes efficiency and reduces paper usage, it also shifts the responsibility of writing development to students. According to Akeusola (2023) without face-to-face guidance or structured writing support, students may struggle with organizing their thoughts, citing sources correctly, or maintaining coherence in long-form writing. Furthermore, online environments often lack the direct feedback and mentorship that traditional classroom settings offer, potentially stunting writing development.

2.9 The Role of Educators and Institutions

Educators and academic institutions have a crucial role in mediating the relationship between digital media and writing culture. Institutions must integrate writing development into the curriculum, offer digital literacy training, and create awareness of academic writing standards. Yahaya and Ayodeji (2019) suggest that lecturers should reinforce the importance of clarity, originality, and structure in student writing, regardless of the medium of submission. Furthermore, writing centers, peer review programs, and workshops can be introduced to help students transition from informal to formal writing practices. These efforts are vital for cultivating a strong writing culture in the digital age.

2.11 THEORETICAL REVIEW

The relationship between digital media and writing culture can be better understood through theoretical lenses that explain how technology influences communication and learning behaviors. This section reviews two prominent theories: Media Ecology Theory and Uses and Gratifications Theory. Each theory offers insights into how digital media shapes the writing practices of undergraduate students. The review concludes by identifying Media Ecology Theory as the theoretical framework underpinning this study.

2.11.1 Media Ecology Theory

Media Ecology Theory, developed by Marshall McLuhan and further expanded by Neil Postman, examines how media environments affect human perception, understanding, feeling, and value; and how our interaction with media facilitates or impedes our chances of survival (McLuhan, 1964; Postman, 1970). The core premise is that media is not just a channel for communication but an environment that influences the way we think, communicate, and behave.

McLuhan's famous assertion that "the medium is the message" suggests that the form of media—be it print, radio, television, or digital—fundamentally alters the way messages are perceived and internalized (McLuhan, 1964). In this context, digital media such as smartphones, social media platforms, blogs, and messaging apps are not just tools but environments that structure the writing behaviour of students. Looking at this from the viewpoint of university setting, the predominance of digital media has transformed traditional writing culture. Students now rely more on typing than handwriting, favor visual content over text, and are increasingly exposed to informal language conventions. Media Ecology Theory helps to explain how these shifts are not merely functional but cultural—reshaping students' cognitive structures and communication patterns. For instance, the frequent use of abbreviations, emojis, and informal grammar on digital platforms like WhatsApp and Twitter affects how students conceptualize and produce written texts in academic settings. According to Postman (1970), every medium has epistemological consequences—it shapes not just what we think but how we think. Thus, the media environment of digital platforms impacts students' cognitive engagement with writing tasks. This theory is particularly relevant in Nigeria's public universities, where access to digital devices and platforms is widespread among undergraduates. Media Ecology Theory offers a robust framework to analyze how this media environment influences writing attitudes, styles, and standards.

2.11.2 Uses and Gratifications Theory

Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT), developed by Blumler and Katz (1974), provides a user-centered approach to understanding how and why individuals engage with media. Unlike theories that view audiences as passive recipients of media content, UGT posits that users actively select

media to satisfy specific needs such as information, entertainment, personal identity, integration, and social interaction.

In the context of undergraduate students, this theory explains their motivation for engaging with digital media. Students may use digital tools like blogs and YouTube for educational purposes, or turn to WhatsApp and Instagram for social interaction and identity expression. Their choice of media often depends on the gratification they expect to derive from it.

From a writing perspective, UGT explains the intentionality behind students' writing practices on digital platforms. For instance, students may write blog posts to express opinions, tweet for social engagement, or use Facebook groups for academic collaboration. However, the gratification-seeking behavior also contributes to the prevalence of informal and brief writing styles, which may be at odds with academic writing standards. Moreover, the constant gratification obtained from social media—such as likes, shares, and comments—may condition students to prioritize immediacy and popularity over depth and rigor in writing. Thus, while UGT is valuable for understanding media behavior, it focuses more on the motivations for media use than on the broader structural and cultural consequences of media environments.

2.11.3 Theoretical Framework: Media Ecology Theory

For the purpose of this study, Media Ecology Theory is adopted as the theoretical framework. This theory provides a comprehensive lens through which the impact of digital media on writing culture can be understood. It emphasizes that media technologies are not neutral but transformative, altering human consciousness, behaviors, and societal norms. In the context of public universities in Delta State, students are immersed in a digital media ecosystem that significantly influences how they perceive and perform writing tasks. Their dependence on digital platforms shapes not just their language use but their thought patterns and communicative preferences (Yahaya & Ayodeji, 2019). Media Ecology Theory allows the study to explore how this digital environment affects writing skills, writing attitudes, and the overall academic writing culture.

Furthermore, Media Ecology Theory supports the investigation of how changes in media usage patterns—such as the shift from textbooks to online sources, from handwritten notes to digital typing, and from formal essays to social media interactions—contribute to a transformation in

writing standards and expectations. As Akakpo et al (2025) argued, every new medium introduces a new way of thinking and interacting with the world, and it is imperative to understand these shifts in the context of education and learning. Thus, Media Ecology Theory not only aligns with the core variables of the study—digital media and writing culture—but also provides a critical perspective on how media environments shape educational practices and outcomes.

2.13 EMPIRICAL REVIEW

Raofi, Binandeh, and Rahmani (2017) conducted a study to examine the relationship between writing strategies and writing proficiency among university students. The findings revealed that students generally demonstrated a high level of English as a Second Language (ESL) writing strategy use. Among the strategies, effort regulation and metacognitive strategies were the most frequently employed, while social strategies were the least used. Furthermore, students with higher writing proficiency reported significantly greater use of metacognitive, cognitive, affective, and effort regulation strategies than those with lower proficiency levels. This suggests that the frequent and strategic use of writing strategies is positively associated with improved writing performance in ESL contexts.

Fauzan, Hasanah, and Hadijah (2022) investigated the writing difficulties of undergraduate students at UINSI Samarinda using a descriptive qualitative method. Data were collected through interviews, document analysis, and Oshima & Hogue's Paragraph Rubric from seven eighth-semester students' thesis proposals. Analyzed using the Miles and Huberman model, the findings revealed challenges in paragraph development, including overly specific or general topic sentences, weak supporting details, lack of conclusions, and inconsistent ideas. In addition, students struggled with writing mechanics, particularly in organization (poor sentence flow), vocabulary (informal usage, redundancy, unclear words), and grammar (errors in articles, verb agreement, word forms, and sentence structure). The study underscores the need for targeted writing instruction to address these persistent challenges.

Al-Mahrooqi (2012) conducted a qualitative study using written responses from 58 participants to explore how English communication skills are taught in Omani schools and universities. The study

examined students' definitions of communication skills, their perceived importance, and the instructional methods used. Findings revealed that these essential skills were either not taught at all or only addressed indirectly, contributing to significant skill gaps. The results highlight a pressing need to integrate explicit communication skills training in Oman's educational curriculum to enhance student proficiency.

Khadawardi (2022) examined Saudi university students' perceptions of academic writing challenges and their attitudes toward writing in English. Using questionnaire responses from 109 students, the study employed quantitative analysis. Results indicated that students find academic writing in English difficult and hold mildly to moderately positive attitudes toward writing tasks. These insights underscore the need for pedagogical improvements and curriculum adjustments to better support second language (L2) learners in developing effective academic writing skills.

Akakpo et al (2025) conducted a correlational study to examine the relationship between digital literacy, information literacy, technology access, and the intention to use technology among university students in Ghana. Pearson correlation and regression analyses revealed a strong relationship between information literacy and digital literacy, conceptualized as digital information literacy. In addition, information literacy significantly predicted digital literacy, and both digital literacy and information literacy were positively correlated with students' intention to use technology. The study recommends enhancing digital content in information literacy training and improving technological infrastructure and access within African universities.

Michael-Olomu and Uzobo (2023) investigated how social media use influences reading/writing culture and academic performance among undergraduates at Niger Delta University. Using a survey of 392 students and analyzing responses through multiple linear regression, the study found that platforms like WhatsApp and Facebook were frequently used for reading and writing academic content. Notably, social media activities jointly predicted academic performance ($R^2 = 0.801$). Specific uses—like reading academic books and watching movies—had significant, though mixed, effects on performance. The findings underscore both the educational potential and distractions of social media in academic settings.

Nkhi (2023) conducted a qualitative case study to examine the influence of digital social media on the writing and speaking skills of English as a Second Language (ESL) students in a Lesotho tertiary institution. Data were collected through interviews with five lecturers and focus group discussions with 60 students. Lecturers reported that social media negatively affects students' grammatical competence due to frequent use of informal abbreviations in formal writing. While students acknowledged that social media enhanced their speaking confidence and fluency, they also noted its detrimental effect on their formal writing skills. The study concludes that guided and balanced use of digital platforms is essential to improve both speaking and writing competencies.

Omoera et al. (2018) investigated the effects of social media on the English writing skills of undergraduates in Ekpoma, Nigeria, using a mixed-method approach. Grounded in cultivation theory, the study utilized 110 survey questionnaires, focus group discussions, interviews with lecturers, and direct observations. Findings revealed that students increasingly adopt non-standard English expressions, such as “u” for “you” and “gr8t” for “great,” which are inappropriate in academic contexts. These informal linguistic patterns, though common in social media, have filtered into students' academic writing, undermining their competence in Standard English. The study highlights a growing concern over declining formal writing standards due to excessive social media influence.

Parrella, Leggette, and Redwine (2021) conducted a correlational quantitative study to assess the relationship between students' digital media usage and their perceived writing ability. Using the Media Writing Self-Perceptions (MWSP) scale and the Social Networking Time Use Scale (SONTUS), the study found no statistically significant correlation between time spent on digital media and students' writing self-perception. However, further analysis revealed that increased social media use was associated with students' improved ability to distinguish between casual and professional writing contexts. Furthermore, frequent text messaging correlated with higher social media use. These findings suggest nuanced effects of digital media use on students' writing awareness and habits.

Michael-Olomu and Uzobo (2022) examined the effect of social media use on reading/writing culture and academic performance among undergraduates at Niger Delta University. Grounded in Uses and Gratification Theory and employing a survey design, data were collected from 392

students via structured questionnaires. Results showed WhatsApp (100%) and Facebook (30.9%) were the most used platforms for academic purposes. Regression analysis indicated a strong joint prediction of academic performance by various social media activities ($R^2 = 0.801$). Notably, reading academic books and advertisements via social media negatively correlated with performance, while reading journal articles and watching movies showed positive correlations. The study highlights complex impacts of social media use on academic outcomes.

Okocha, Sani, and Paul (2017) conducted a quantitative study on the influence of WhatsApp usage on writing skills among undergraduate students at the University of Ghana. Using purposive sampling, data were collected from 250 students via questionnaires. Although students reported improvements in their writing, most indicated that WhatsApp was not intentionally used to develop such skills. The study applied Uses and Gratification, Connectivism, and Diffusion of Innovation theories. Findings revealed both positive and negative influences—while WhatsApp had potential to enhance writing when used purposefully, its informal language features contributed to a decline in academic writing quality. The study suggests that the impact of WhatsApp depends on its application within educational contexts.

Chauhan & Bharati (2025) critically examined the impact of social media platforms—such as Twitter, Instagram, and blogs—on English creative writing. Using qualitative analysis, the study explored how brevity, algorithmic visibility, and interactive feedback have reshaped literary forms like microfiction and digital poetry. Findings suggest that social media democratizes access to audiences and fosters creativity, but also encourages conformity, oversimplification, and trend-driven content. The study highlights both opportunities and limitations, noting a shift from traditional literary depth to concise, visually driven expression. The authors advocate pedagogical reforms and deeper engagement with digital culture to ensure that creative writing retains originality, depth, and linguistic richness in the digital age.

Okoro and Edewor (2022) examined the impact of social media usage on academic writing skills among undergraduates in Delta State University, Abraka. The study adopted a descriptive survey design and sampled 250 students using stratified random sampling. Data were collected through structured questionnaires, and analysis was conducted using descriptive statistics and Pearson

correlation. Findings revealed a significant negative correlation between excessive use of social media platforms and the quality of academic writing. The study concluded that informal language from social media often spills over into formal writing.

Emenike and Adegoke (2020) conducted a study on the effect of digital media on students' language use in academic writing in University of Ibadan. A mixed-methods design was used, involving 120 students. Questionnaire and interview instruments were employed. Thematic analysis revealed that digital media encouraged informal writing styles and reduced the use of standard punctuation and structure. Quantitative data supported this with a 68% agreement rate among respondents.

Oluwole and Idogho (2023) explored the writing habits of undergraduate students in the University of Benin and the role of social media. A sample of 300 students was randomly selected. Structured questionnaires and in-depth interviews were used to collect data. Analysis using ANOVA showed significant differences in writing quality based on the frequency of social media usage. The study concluded that digital distractions negatively affect writing development.

Nwosu and Okonkwo (2019) studied the relationship between digital device usage and academic writing quality in public universities in southeastern Nigeria. The study employed a correlational research design with 250 respondents. Data analysis revealed that students who spent more than four hours daily on digital platforms tended to produce less coherent academic texts. The authors recommended integrating digital writing workshops into the university curriculum.

Agbo and Umeh (2020) examined the influence of mobile phone use on writing patterns among students of the University of Nigeria, Nsukka. A total of 280 students were selected using a multistage sampling technique. The study employed regression analysis and found that mobile phone usage contributed to abbreviation habits and informal expressions in students' formal writing. The study concluded that excessive mobile communication encourages poor academic writing standards.

Bello and Ayeni (2021) investigated the effects of digital technology exposure on writing performance of undergraduate students in Lagos State University. Using a sample of 220 students selected via simple random sampling, data were analyzed using t-tests and descriptive statistics.

Results showed a significant decline in spelling and punctuation accuracy among students heavily dependent on auto-correct and predictive text features.

Eweka and Ogbeide (2020) conducted a study on the use of blogs and their effect on students' creative writing abilities in Ambrose Alli University, Ekpoma. Using a quasi-experimental design, two groups of 40 students were assigned to traditional and blog-writing modes. Post-test analysis using ANCOVA showed that the blog-writing group performed significantly better in creativity and coherence. The study concluded that digital platforms, if properly used, can enhance writing skills.

Hyland (2016) explored how digital discourse affects second-language writing learners in Hong Kong universities. The study was a survey research design. A combination of classroom observations and student essays revealed that digital communication habits, such as emoji use and abbreviation, influenced formal writing negatively. The study concluded that instructors need to incorporate digital literacy skills into academic writing instruction.

2.14 Summary of Literature Review

Chapter Two reviewed literature on digital media and writing culture with emphasis on undergraduate students in Nigerian public universities, particularly in Delta State. The conceptual review clarified key ideas such as digital media, writing culture, digital literacy, social media influence, e-learning platforms, and the role of educators and institutions. It established that while digital tools provide opportunities for improved access to information, faster writing processes, and broader communication, they also pose challenges such as plagiarism, poor grammar, overdependence on search engines, and the intrusion of informal writing styles into academic work. The theoretical review considered Media Ecology Theory and Uses and Gratifications Theory, adopting Media Ecology Theory as the framework because it explains how media environments shape communication and academic practices. The **empirical review** examined prior studies, showing mixed outcomes of digital media on students' writing, thereby revealing a gap this study addresses by focusing on public universities in Delta State.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design

This study adopts a descriptive survey research design. The design is appropriate because it enables the researcher to collect data from a large population, describe existing conditions, and examine the impact of digital media on the writing culture of undergraduate students. The descriptive survey design also allows the use of structured questionnaires to obtain opinions, perceptions, and experiences directly from respondents.

3.2 Area of Study

The study is conducted in public universities in Delta State, Nigeria. Delta State, located in the South-South geopolitical zone of Nigeria, hosts several public universities, namely University of Delta Agbor, Delta State University, Abraka; Federal University of Petroleum Resources, Effurun; Dennis Osadebay University Asaba; Southern Delta University Ozoro; and Nigerian Maritime University, Okerenkoko. These institutions are chosen because they represent diverse academic environments where undergraduates actively engage with digital media for learning, communication, and academic writing.

3.3 Population of the Study

The population of this study consists of all undergraduate students enrolled in public universities in Delta State as of April 2025. The institutions and their undergraduate populations are: University of Delta, Agbor (17,457 students); Dennis Osadebay University, Asaba (15,215 students); Southern Delta University, Ozoro (21,917 students); Federal University of Petroleum Resources, Effurun (14,110 students); and Nigeria Maritime University, Okerenkoko (8,336 students). The total population across the five institutions is 77,035 undergraduate students. These figures are obtained from the Registrars' Offices of the respective universities (April, 2025).

3.4 Sample and Sampling Technique

The sample size is determined using Taro Yamane's formula for finite populations at a 95% confidence level and 5% precision: Applying the formula yields 397.9\approx 397.93, rounded to 398 respondents.

A multi-stage sampling technique is adopted. First, all five public universities in Delta State are included to ensure comprehensive coverage. Second, proportionate stratified sampling is employed to allocate the 398 respondents to each university according to its share of the total undergraduate population. Finally, simple random sampling is used within each university stratum to select individual respondents across faculties and levels, ensuring representativeness and reducing selection bias.

Proportional allocation of the sample (n = 398)

S/N	UNIVERSITY	POPULATION	SAMPLE SIZE
1	University of Delta, Agbor	17,457	90
2	Dennis Osadebay University, Asaba	15,215	78
3	Southern Delta University (formerly DSUST), Ozoro	21,917	112
4	Federal University of Petroleum Resources, Effurun	14,110	72
5	Nigeria Maritime University, Okerenkoko	8,336	46
	TOTAL	77,035	398

Source: Reseacher's computation, 2025

3.5 Instrumentation

The instrument for data collection is a structured questionnaire designed by the researcher. The questionnaire is divided into sections: Section A elicits demographic information such as age, gender, level of study, and faculty. Section B focuses on students' access to and use of digital media. Section C examines students' writing practices and culture, while Section D assesses the

perceived impact of digital media on writing skills, originality, and academic integrity. Both closed-ended and Likert-scale items are included.

3.6 Validation of Instrument

The questionnaire undergoes face and content validation by experts in educational research, communication studies, measurement and evaluation, as well as the project supervisor. Their collective suggestions are carefully incorporated to enhance clarity, appropriateness, and alignment with the objectives of the study. In addition, a pilot test is conducted in a public university outside Delta State to further ensure the reliability, consistency, and practicality of the instrument.

3.7 Method of Data Collection

The researcher, with the assistance of trained research assistants, will administer the questionnaire to the respondents across the selected universities. A combination of on-site distribution and collection, as well as digital administration through platforms such as Google Forms, will be employed to ensure wider accessibility and inclusiveness. This approach will help in reaching students who may not be physically available during the period of data collection. Prior to administration, the purpose of the study will be clearly explained to the participants, and their informed consent will be obtained. Respondents will also be assured of confidentiality and anonymity in order to encourage honest and unbiased responses. Research assistants will be adequately trained to provide clarification where necessary and to monitor the process for accuracy and completeness of the responses. This systematic approach will help in maximizing the response rate, reducing errors, and ensuring that the data collected are valid and reliable for subsequent analysis.

3.8 Proposed Method of Data Analysis

The data that will be collected from the administered questionnaires will be carefully checked, cleaned, and coded before being entered into the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) for analysis. Descriptive statistics such as frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations will be employed to summarize the demographic characteristics of respondents and provide an overview of their responses.

In line with the objectives and research questions of the study, the analysis will focus on four major aspects. First, to examine the relationship between digital media usage and students' adherence to formal writing conventions, cross-tabulations and mean comparisons will be carried out to reveal patterns and variations. Second, to identify the most common writing errors linked to digital communication habits, frequency counts and percentages will be computed to highlight the prevalence of specific errors such as abbreviations, informal expressions, and spelling issues. Third, to assess students' perceptions of how digital media affects their academic writing proficiency, descriptive measures such as mean ratings and standard deviations will be used to capture the general trends in perception. Finally, in order to recommend strategies for improving writing standards while leveraging digital tools, responses to open-ended items will be thematically analyzed to generate qualitative insights that complement the quantitative results.

The results of the analysis will be presented in tables, charts, and graphical illustrations to enhance clarity and ensure that findings directly address the stated research questions and objectives of the study

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

4.0 Introduction

This chapter presents and analyzes the data collected from undergraduate students in public universities in Delta State. The analysis is organized around the study's objectives, focusing on patterns of digital media access and use, their primary purposes, and the perceived impact on students' writing practices and culture. Descriptive statistics such as frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations are employed to provide a clear interpretation of the findings.

4.1 Questionnaire Distribution and Response Rate

Table 1: Questionnaire Distribution and Response Rate

Item	No of Questionnaires	Percentage (%)
Total Distributed	398	100
Returned	348	87.4
Correctly Filled & Used	325	81.7

Source: Researcher's computation, 2025

Table 1 above shows the distribution and response rate of the questionnaires administered in the study. A total of **398 copies of the questionnaire** were distributed across the selected universities, out of which **348 were retrieved**, representing a commendable **return rate of 87.4%**. After screening for completeness and accuracy, **325 questionnaires** were found to be correctly filled and suitable for analysis, giving an **effective response rate of 81.7%**. This high rate of valid responses demonstrates both the willingness of the respondents to participate and the reliability of the data collected, thereby strengthening the representativeness and credibility of the study's findings.

4.2 Proportional Allocation of the Sample

Table 2: Proportional Allocation of the Sample across Selected Public Universities in Delta State

S/N	University	Population	Sample Size
1	University of Delta, Agbor (UNIDEL)	17,457	90
2	Dennis Osadebay University, Asaba (DOU)	15,215	78
3	Southern Delta University, Ozoro (formerly DSUST)	21,917	112
4	Federal University of Petroleum Resources, Effurun (FUPRE)	14,110	72
5	Nigeria Maritime University, Okerenkoko (NMU)	8,336	46
	Total	77,035	398

Source: Researcher's computation, 2025

The Sample size was proportionally determined using Taro Yamane's formula at a 95% confidence level and 5% margin of error, ensuring fair representation of each university based on its undergraduate population.

Table 2 presents the proportional allocation of the study sample across the five selected public universities in Delta State. The allocation was based on the respective undergraduate populations of each institution to ensure representativeness. Out of the total undergraduate population of **77,035 students**, a sample of **398 respondents** was selected. The highest allocation was recorded for Southern Delta University, Ozoro, with **112 respondents**, followed by the University of Delta, Agbor (**90 respondents**) and Dennis Osadebay University, Asaba (**78 respondents**). The Federal University of Petroleum Resources, Effurun, and the Nigeria Maritime University, Okerenkoko,

had **72** and **46 respondents**, respectively. This proportional approach ensured that each university was adequately represented in line with its population size, thereby enhancing the validity and generalizability of the research findings.

4.3 Questionnaire Distribution, Retrieval

Table 3: Questionnaire Distribution, Retrieval, and Valid Response Rate across Universities

S/ N	University	Distributed (n)	Returned	Correctly Filled	Return Rate (%)	Valid Rate (%)
1	University of Delta, Agbor (UNIDEL)	90	78	72	86.7	80.0
2	Dennis Osadebay University, Asaba (DOU)	78	68	64	87.2	82.1
3	Southern Delta University, Ozoro (formerly DSUST)	112	98	92	87.5	82.1
4	University of Petroleum Resources, Effurun (FUPRE)	72	64	60	88.9	83.3
5	Nigeria Maritime University, Okerenkoko (NMU)	46	40	37	87.0	80.4
	Total	398	348	325	87.4	81.7

Source: Researcher's Computation, 2025

The table above indicates the distribution, retrieval, and valid response rates of the questionnaires administered across the five selected universities. Out of the 398 copies distributed, 348 were

retrieved, giving an overall return rate of **87.4%**, while 325 were correctly filled and used for analysis, representing an effective valid rate of **81.7%**. At the university level, return rates ranged from **86.7% at UNIDEL** to **88.9% at FUPRE**, while valid rates were between **80.0% and 83.3%**. The highest number of usable responses came from Southern Delta University, Ozoro (**92 valid questionnaires**), followed by UNIDEL (**72**) and DOU (**64**). FUPRE and NMU recorded **60** and **37** valid responses, respectively. These results demonstrate a high level of respondent cooperation across the institutions, with minimal loss between returned and valid questionnaires, thereby ensuring that the data obtained is both robust and representative of the study population.

4.4 Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Table 4: Gender Distribution of Respondents

Gender	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Male	171	52.6
Female	154	47.4
Total	325	100

Source: Researcher's computation, 2025

Table 4 presents the gender distribution of respondents. Out of the 325 valid respondents, 171 (52.6%) were male while 154 (47.4%) were female. This indicates that male students slightly outnumbered their female counterparts in the study sample. On the whole, the distribution reflects a fairly balanced gender representation among undergraduate students in the selected public universities in Delta State.

4.4.1 Age Distribution of Respondents

Table 5: Age Distribution of Respondents

Age Group	Frequency	Percentage (%)
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Below 18	35	10.8
18-21 years	140	43.1
22-25 years	114	35.1
26 years and above	36	11.0
Total	325	100

Source: Researcher’s computation, 2025

The table above indicates the age distribution of respondents. Out of the 325 students surveyed, 35 (10.8%) were below 18 years, 140 (43.1%) fell within the 18–21 years bracket, 114 (35.1%) were between 22–25 years, while 36 (11.0%) were 26 years and above. This result indicates that the majority of respondents were within the 18–21 years and 22–25 years categories, reflecting the typical age range of undergraduate students in Nigerian universities.

4.4.2 Level of Study of Respondents

Table 6: Level of Study of Respondents

Level of Study	Frequency	Percentage (%)
100 level	80	24.6
200 level	72	22.2
300 level	60	17.0
400 level	59	18.2
500 level	54	16.6
Total	325	100

Source: Researcher’s computation, 2025

Table 6 presents the level of study of respondents. Out of the 325 students, 80 (24.6%) were in 100 level, 72 (22.2%) were in 200 level, 60 (17.0%) were in 300 level, 59 (18.2%) were in 400 level, while 54 (16.6%) were in 500 level. The distribution shows that the highest proportion of respondents were in 100 level, followed closely by 200 level, while the least were in 300 level. Indeed, the inclusion of 500 level students reflects the participation of engineering students whose programs extend to five years.

4.4.3 Faculty Distribution of Respondents

Table 7: Faculty Distribution of Respondents

Faculty	Frequency (N)	Percentage (%)
Arts	55	16.9
Education	64	19.7
Social Sciences	57	17.5
Management Sciences	52	16.0
Sciences	44	13.5
Engineering	36	11.1
Others	20	5.2
Total	325	100

Source: Researcher's computation, 2025

Table 7 shows the faculty distribution of respondents. Out of the 325 students sampled, 64 (19.7%) were from the Faculty of Education, 57 (17.5%) from Social Sciences, 55 (16.9%) from Arts, 52

(16.0%) from Management Sciences, 44 (13.5%) from Sciences, and 36 (11.1%) from Engineering, while 20 (5.2%) belonged to other faculties not specified. The result indicates that the Faculty of Education had the highest representation, while “Others” accounted for the least. The inclusion of Engineering students further reflects the diversity of the sampled population across academic disciplines in public universities in Delta State.

4.5 Analysis of the Variables of Study

4.5.1 Access to and Use of Digital Media

Table 8: Digital Media Platforms Used by Respondents

Digital Media Platform	Frequency (N)	Percentage (%)
WhatsApp	272	83.7
Facebook	183	56.3
Twitter/X	147	45.2
Instagram	198	60.9
TikTok	162	49.8
Blogs/online Forums	94	28.9
Others	51	15.7

Source: Researcher’s computation, 2025

Table 8 presents the distribution of digital media platforms most frequently used by undergraduate students in public universities in Delta State. The findings reveal that **WhatsApp** is the most dominant platform, used by 272 students representing **83.7%** of the sample. This result is not surprising, as WhatsApp has become one of the most common communication

tools among young people due to its ease of use, low data consumption, and instant messaging features.

The second most used platform is **Instagram**, with 198 students (**60.9%**) indicating frequent use. This suggests that visual and interactive content appeals strongly to the student population. **Facebook** also recorded a high level of patronage with 183 respondents (**56.3%**), reflecting its continued relevance despite competition from newer platforms. In addition, **TikTok** was reported by 162 students (**49.8%**), showing the growing popularity of short video content among undergraduates. **Twitter/X** was selected by 147 students (**45.2%**), highlighting its role as a space for quick updates, trending news, and social discussions.

On the other hand, **Blogs and online forums** were used by only 94 students (**28.9%**), indicating lower engagement with long-form and discussion-based platforms. A further 51 respondents (**15.7%**) mentioned using other platforms outside those listed, such as LinkedIn, Telegram, or Snapchat. Overall, the results demonstrate that **social networking and visually engaging platforms dominate the digital media landscape of undergraduates**, with WhatsApp, Instagram, and Facebook accounting for the majority of usage. This suggests that students prefer platforms that allow for **instant communication, social interaction, and entertainment**, which may directly influence their writing habits and communication culture.

4.5.2 Average Daily Hours Spent on Digital Media

Table 9: Average Daily Hours Spent on Digital Media

Daily Usage	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Less than 1 Hour	39	12.0
1-3 hours	121	37.2
4 - 6 hours	106	32.6
More than 6 hours	59	18.2

Total	325	100
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Source: Researcher’s computation, 2025

Table 9 presents the average daily hours respondents spend on digital media platforms. The data show that the largest group of students, **121 respondents (37.2%)**, reported spending between **1–3 hours daily** on digital media. This indicates that for many students, digital media forms a regular but moderate part of their daily activities. The next significant group comprises **106 students (32.6%)** who spend **4–6 hours daily** on digital platforms. This reflects a relatively high level of engagement, suggesting that a considerable number of undergraduates devote substantial portions of their day to online activities.

Furthermore, **59 respondents (18.2%)** indicated that they spend **more than 6 hours daily** on digital media. This finding highlights the presence of heavy users among the student population, whose extended time online may influence both their academic and social behaviors. Conversely, only **39 respondents (12.0%)** reported using digital media for **less than 1 hour per day**, making them the least represented category. Overall, the findings suggest that the majority of undergraduates spend **between 1 and 6 hours daily** on digital media platforms. This pattern demonstrates the central role digital media plays in the everyday life of students, with a significant portion engaging intensively for long hours, which may have both positive and negative implications for their writing culture and academic performance.

4.5.3 Primary Purpose of Digital Media Use

Table 10: Primary Purpose of Digital Media Use

Primary Purpose	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Social interaction	117	36.0
Academic purposes	72	25.2
Entertainment	69	21.2
News and Information	42	12.9

Others	15	4.6
Total	325	100

Source: Researcher’s computation, 2025

Table 10 presents the primary purposes for which respondents use digital media. The results show that **social interaction** was the most frequently reported purpose, with **117 respondents (36.0%)** indicating that they primarily use digital platforms to connect with friends, family, and peers. This underscores the role of digital media as a key tool for maintaining relationships and facilitating communication among undergraduates. The second most common purpose was **academic activities**, reported by **82 respondents (25.2%)**. This reflects the growing use of digital media for learning-related tasks such as accessing e-books, conducting research, joining online study groups, and participating in virtual classes. It suggests that digital platforms are gradually becoming an integral part of academic engagement.

Entertainment was cited by **69 respondents (21.2%)**, highlighting that a sizable proportion of students use digital media to watch videos, play games, and engage with other recreational content. **News and information** accounted for **42 respondents (12.9%)**, suggesting that while some students rely on digital media for staying updated, it is less of a priority compared to socializing, academics, and entertainment. Finally, **15 respondents (4.6%)** reported using digital media for other unspecified purposes, which may include religious activities, business promotion, or professional networking. Consequently, the findings suggest that while **social interaction dominates**, there is also a significant academic dimension to digital media usage among undergraduates. This dual purpose implies that digital media plays both a **social and educational role** in shaping the daily lives and writing culture of students in public universities in Delta State.

4.5.4 Descriptive Statistics of Writing Practices and Culture

Table 11: Descriptive Statistics of Writing Practices and Culture

Item	Mean	Std. Dev	Remark
Frequent use of digital media has influenced	3.72	1.01	Agree

my writing style			
I often use abbreviations (e.g., <i>u</i> for <i>you</i> , <i>bcos</i> for <i>because</i>) in academic writing	3.15	1.18	Neutral
I sometimes include informal expressions or slangs in my essays or assignments	3.09	1.02	Neutral
The use of auto-correct and predictive text affects my spelling skills	3.68	1.04	Agree
My use of punctuation in academic writing has been influenced by digital media habits	3.46	1.09	Agree
Exposure to digital media has reduced my patience in constructing long, developed sentences	3.53	1.07	

Source: Researcher's computation, 2025

Scale coding: SA = 5, A = 4, N = 3, D = 2, SD = 1.

Interpretation rule: Mean ≥ 3.50 = Agree, Mean ≈ 3.00 = Neutral, Mean ≤ 2.50 = Disagree.

The descriptive results on table 11 above show that respondents generally **agree** that digital media usage influences their writing practices and culture. For instance, the highest-rated item was “*Frequent use of digital media has influenced my writing style*” with a mean of **3.72 (SD = 1.01)**, indicating that most undergraduates acknowledge noticeable changes in their writing style due to online interactions. Similarly, the effect of **auto-correct and predictive text on spelling skills** recorded a mean of **3.68 (SD = 1.04)**, suggesting that students feel their spelling abilities are increasingly shaped by technological tools.

Another important finding is that **reduced patience in constructing long, well-developed sentences** had a mean of **3.53 (SD = 1.07)**, showing a moderate tendency toward shorter and less elaborate writing patterns influenced by digital media use.

On the other hand, the tendency to **use abbreviations** in academic writing (Mean = 3.15; SD = 1.18) and to **include informal expressions/slangs** (Mean = 3.09; SD = 1.12) hovered around the neutral mark. This implies that while some undergraduates sometimes transfer informal digital habits into formal writing, others maintain stricter academic standards. Finally, the statement regarding **punctuation habits influenced by digital media** recorded a mean of **3.46 (SD = 1.09)**, suggesting a mild agreement that online writing styles (such as casual punctuation in chats) spill over into academic writing. In all, the findings reveal that digital media has a **considerable but varied impact** on the writing practices of undergraduates, with stronger influence seen in spelling, sentence construction, and overall writing style, while abbreviations and slang remain less consistently transferred into academic contexts.

4.5.5 Descriptive Statistics of Perceived Impact of Digital Media on Writing Skills

Table 12: Descriptive Statistics of Perceived Impact of Digital Media on Writing Skills

Item	Mean	Std. Dev	Remark
Digital media positively enhances my vocabulary development	3.61	1.02	Agree
Frequent use of digital communication reduces my adherence to formal writing conventions	3.48	1.08	Agree
Over-dependence on digital media reduces originality in students' academic writing	3.73	1.05	Agree
Digital media has more negative than positive influence on students' academic writing	3.44	1.13	Agree

Source: Researcher's computation, 2025

Scale coding: SA = 5, A = 4, N = 3, D = 2, SD = 1.

Interpretation rule: Mean ≥ 3.50 = Agree, Mean ≈ 3.00 = Neutral, Mean ≤ 2.50 = Disagree.

The findings in **Table 12 above** suggest that students perceive digital media to have both positive and negative effects on their writing skills.

The statement “*Digital media positively enhances my vocabulary development*” had a mean of **3.61 (SD = 1.02)**, showing that students generally agree that digital platforms expose them to new words, terminologies, and expressions that can improve vocabulary. At the same time, many undergraduates acknowledged some adverse effects. The belief that “*over-dependence on digital media reduces originality in students’ academic writing*” received the highest mean score of **3.73 (SD = 1.05)**. This implies strong concern that excessive reliance on online sources may lead to plagiarism, reduced creativity, and lack of independent thought in academic work.

Similarly, “*frequent use of digital communication reduces adherence to formal writing conventions*” recorded a mean of **3.48 (SD = 1.08)**, pointing to the possibility that habits like abbreviations, casual grammar, and poor sentence structuring learned from informal digital writing environments are carried over into academic work.

Finally, the view that “*digital media has more negative than positive influence on students’ academic writing*” had a mean of **3.44 (SD = 1.13)**. While this is slightly lower, it still indicates a general agreement among students that the drawbacks of digital media—such as reduced originality, poor grammar, and informal writing habits—may outweigh the benefits. Therefore, the results highlight a **dual perception**: while digital media provides vocabulary enrichment and learning opportunities, students also recognize its **negative implications for originality, formal writing conventions, and overall academic writing quality**.

4.6 Suggestions for Improvement on the Impact of Digital Media

Table 13: Suggestions for Improvement on the Impact of Digital Media (N = 325)

Suggested Strategy	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Integrating digital literacy and academic writing	88	27.1

training into the curriculum		
Organizing workshops/seminars on formal writing and responsible digital use	74	22.8
Encouraging balanced use of digital media (time management and self-regulation)	63	19.4
Promoting the use of plagiarism checkers and originality-enhancing tools	52	16.0
Providing access to e-libraries and academic resources on digital platforms	31	9.5
Strengthening lecturers' monitoring and feedback on students' written assignments	17	5.2
Total	325	100

Source: Researcher's computation, 2025

The responses to **some questions above** revealed several strategies that universities could adopt to mitigate the negative impact of digital media on students' writing skills, while still leveraging its advantages. The most frequently suggested strategy was **integrating digital literacy and academic writing training into the curriculum**, with **88 respondents (27.1%)** highlighting the need for universities to formally teach students how to navigate digital platforms without compromising academic writing standards.

This was followed by **workshops and seminars on formal writing and responsible digital use (22.8%)**, which respondents believed would provide continuous reinforcement of good writing practices. About **19.4% (63 respondents)** emphasized the importance of **balanced use of digital media**, encouraging students to manage their time effectively between social and academic engagement online.

In addition, **52 respondents (16.0%)** recommended the use of **plagiarism detection software and originality-enhancing tools** to promote independent writing and reduce over-reliance on copy-

paste culture. A smaller proportion, **31 respondents (9.5%)**, suggested improving access to **academic e-libraries and credible digital resources**, so that students are more inclined to rely on scholarly sources rather than informal online content. Finally, **17 respondents (5.2%)** emphasized that **lecturers should strengthen monitoring and provide detailed feedback** on written assignments to correct emerging informal writing tendencies. Indeed, the findings suggest that addressing the challenges of digital media requires a **multi-dimensional strategy**, combining **curriculum reforms, training programs, monitoring mechanisms, and technological support**. These approaches would ensure that students maximize the benefits of digital media while minimizing its adverse effects on academic writing.

4.7 Discussion of Findings

4.7.1 Patterns of Digital Media Access and Usage

The findings revealed that WhatsApp, Instagram, and Facebook are the most widely used digital media platforms among undergraduates in Delta State, with WhatsApp emerging as the dominant platform. This trend reflects the global popularity of instant messaging and visually interactive platforms, which facilitate quick communication, social interaction, and entertainment (**Adelakun et al., 2023**). Interestingly, blogs and online forums recorded the least patronage, showing students' preference for short, engaging content over long-form discussions. In terms of time spent online, most students reported using digital media between 1–6 hours daily, indicating that digital platforms constitute an integral part of their everyday lives. However, the presence of heavy users who spend over six hours daily also suggests potential risks of over-engagement (**Abd Elwahab, 2023**), which may influence academic productivity and attention span.

4.7.2 Purpose of Digital Media Use

The results further indicate that social interaction was the leading purpose of digital media use, followed by academic engagement and entertainment. This suggests that while students primarily use these platforms to connect with peers, they also recognize their academic value in terms of research, e-learning, and study collaboration. The findings align with existing literature that portrays digital media as both a socializing and educational tool for students (**Akakpo et al., 2025**). Nonetheless, the relatively lower reliance on digital platforms for news and academic resources suggests a gap that universities could bridge by promoting the use of digital platforms

for scholarly purposes. Thus, digital media serves a dual role in students' lives—supporting both personal interaction and educational development (**Babina et al., 2022**).

4.7.3 Impact on Writing Practices and Skills

The descriptive statistics on writing practices show that digital media has a noticeable influence on undergraduates' academic writing. Students acknowledged that frequent use of digital media affects their writing style, spelling skills, and sentence construction. The influence of predictive text and autocorrect, alongside reduced patience for constructing long sentences, reflects how informal digital communication habits spill into formal academic contexts. However, responses were neutral regarding the use of abbreviations and slang in assignments, suggesting that while some students import informal expressions into academic work, others maintain boundaries. On perceived impacts, students agreed that digital media enhances vocabulary exposure but expressed concern that over-dependence reduces originality, weakens adherence to formal writing standards, and fosters plagiarism. This duality highlights both the enabling and disruptive nature of digital media in shaping writing culture.

4.7.4 Strategies for Improvement

The students' suggestions for improvement emphasize the need for universities to adopt a multi-dimensional approach in managing the influence of digital media on writing skills. The most common recommendations included integrating digital literacy and academic writing into the curriculum, and organizing workshops on formal writing. Other strategies such as promoting plagiarism detection tools, balanced use of digital media, and access to e-libraries point to the importance of both institutional support and personal responsibility. These findings suggest that while digital media is an unavoidable aspect of modern student life, its negative consequences can be mitigated through structured educational interventions (**Bashabsheh & Alzoubi, 2019**). By combining training, technological tools, and lecturer monitoring, institutions can help students maximize the benefits of digital media while safeguarding academic writing standards (**Chauhan & Bharati, 2025**).

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

5.0 Introduction

This chapter provides a summary of the key findings derived from the analysis in Chapter Four, highlighting the major patterns of digital media use and its impact on students' writing culture. It also presents the conclusion drawn from these findings and offers practical recommendations aimed at mitigating the negative effects while maximizing the benefits of digital media. Finally, suggestions for further studies are provided to guide future research on this subject.

5.1 Summary of Findings

The study found that WhatsApp, Instagram, and Facebook dominate students' digital media use, with most spending between 1–6 hours daily on these platforms.

Social interaction was the primary purpose of use, though academic engagement and entertainment also accounted for significant proportions.

Digital media influences writing style, spelling, and sentence construction, with both positive (vocabulary enrichment) and negative (reduced originality and formality) effects.

Respondents suggested curriculum reforms, workshops, plagiarism checkers, and better access to academic resources as strategies for improvement.

5.2 Conclusion

This study examined access to and use of digital media and its influence on the writing culture of undergraduates in public universities in Delta State. The findings reveal that digital media has become an integral part of students' daily lives, dominated by social networking and visually engaging platforms such as WhatsApp and Instagram. While students benefit from vocabulary development and academic support through digital platforms, there are notable negative implications, including reduced originality, poor adherence to formal writing conventions, and

shortened attention spans. Overall, the study concludes that digital media exerts both constructive and disruptive influences on students' academic writing. Therefore, universities must adopt proactive measures to strengthen academic writing culture while enabling students to maximize the benefits of digital media.

5.3 Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, we make the following recommendation:

1. Universities should integrate digital literacy and academic writing training into their curricula to help students balance digital and formal writing skills.
2. Institutions should organize periodic workshops and seminars to reinforce good writing habits and responsible digital media use.
3. Students should be encouraged to practice self-regulation and balanced use of digital media to avoid overdependence.
4. Universities should provide wider access to academic e-resources and promote the use of plagiarism detection tools to strengthen originality in student writing.

5.4 Suggestion for Further Studies

Future research should extend the scope of this study by examining the influence of digital media on writing culture across private universities and other regions of Nigeria for broader generalization. A comparative analysis between undergraduate and postgraduate students could also reveal differences in how academic levels shape media use and writing habits. Additionally, future studies may employ qualitative methods such as interviews or focus group discussions to gain deeper insights into the lived experiences of students. Exploring the relationship between digital media use, writing culture, and academic performance would also provide a more comprehensive understanding of its long-term effects.

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Questionnaire

Impact of Digital Media on the Writing Culture of Undergraduate Students in Public Universities in Delta State, Nigeria

Institution: University of Benin

Researcher: Jennifer Nneka ODIAKA

Department: Educational Foundation (English and Literature)

Date: 25th August, 2025

Dear Respondent,

This questionnaire is designed to collect information for academic purposes. The study seeks to examine the impact of digital media on the writing culture of undergraduate students in public universities in Delta State, Nigeria.

Your responses will be treated with utmost confidentiality and used strictly for research purposes. Please answer honestly and to the best of your ability.

Thank you for your cooperation.

Jennifer N. ODIAKA

Section A: Demographic Information

(Please tick ✓ the option that applies to you)

1. Gender:

Male Female

2. Age:

Below 18 years 18–21 years 22–25 years 26 years and above

3. Level _____ of _____ Study:

100 Level 200 Level 300 Level 400 Level

4. Faculty:

Arts Education Social Sciences

Management Sciences Sciences

Other (please specify) _____

Section B: Access to and Use of Digital Media

5. Which of the following digital media platforms do you use most frequently? (*Tick all that apply*)

WhatsApp Facebook Twitter/X Instagram TikTok

Blogs/Online Forums

Others (please specify) _____

6. On average, how many hours do you spend daily on digital media platforms?

Less than 1 hour 1–3 hours 4–6 hours More than 6 hours

7. What do you mostly use digital media for? (*Choose the most frequent*)

Social interaction Academic purposes Entertainment

News and information Others (please specify)

Section C: Writing Practices and Culture

Instruction: Indicate your level of agreement with the following statements using the _____ scale:

SA = Strongly Agree, A = Agree, N = Neutral, D = Disagree, SD = Strongly Disagree

8. Frequent use of digital media has influenced my writing style. (SA A N D SD)

9. I often use abbreviations (e.g., *u* for *you*, *bcos* for *because*) in my academic writing because of habits formed from digital media. (SA A N D SD)

10. I sometimes include informal expressions or slangs in my essays or assignments. (SA A N D SD)

11. The use of auto-correct and predictive text affects my spelling skills. (SA A N D SD)

12. My use of punctuation in academic writing has been influenced by digital media habits. (SA A N D SD)

13. Exposure to digital media has reduced my patience in constructing long and well-developed sentences. (SA A N D SD)

Section D: Perceived Impact of Digital Media on Writing Skills

14. Digital media positively enhances my vocabulary development.
 Strongly Agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly Disagree

15. The frequent use of digital communication reduces my adherence to formal writing conventions.

Strongly Agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly Disagree

16. I believe that over-dependence on digital media reduces originality in students' academic writing.

Strongly Agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly Disagree

17. In my opinion, digital media has more negative than positive influence on students' academic writing.

Strongly Agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly Disagree

Section E: Suggestions for Improvement

18. What strategies can universities adopt to reduce the negative impact of digital media on students' writing skills while still taking advantage of its benefits?
