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THE IMPACT OF WHATSAPP ON ACADEMIC ENGLISH WRITING SKILLS OF UNDERGRADUATE LEVEL STUDENTS AT KOHAT UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

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ABSTRACT

This research investigates the impact of WhatsApp on the academic English writing skills of undergraduate students at Kohat University of Science and Technology (KUST). With the increasing prevalence of WhatsApp as a communication tool, this study aims to understand its influence on formal writing proficiency among students. The research employs a sequential mixed-method approach, integrating both qualitative and quantitative analyses, to assess the perceptions and writing behaviors of 200 undergraduate students. Only 170 responses have been received. Quantitative findings, analyzed using IBM SPSS Statistics through descriptive analysis, reveal that a significant portion of students acknowledge the negative impact of WhatsApp on their academic writing. By examining the specific impact of WhatsApp on writing skills, this study offers valuable insights for educators, curriculum developers, and language researchers, advocating for a balanced approach to integrating technology in educational settings.

Keywords: WhatsApp, Academic Writing, English Language, Undergraduate Students, Writing Skills, Mixed-Method Research

1. Introduction

WhatsApp, founded in 2009 by Brian Acton and Jan Koum, allows users to communicate and share multimedia messages for free via internet connectivity. Users can easily connect with friends and family by syncing their phone contacts. In the 21st

century, social media, including WhatsApp, has become a key communication tool (Indrajith & Varghese, 2018). Among university students, WhatsApp is the most popular messaging app (Jadhav et al., 2013), helping them stay connected globally, share notes, and send documents up to 100 MB. However, it also consumes a lot of time, leading to addiction. This study focuses on the impact of WhatsApp on the academic English writing skills of undergraduate students at KUST.

Research highlights that key challenges in student writing include formality, sentence coherence, paragraph structure, spelling, and grammar. Social media writing, particularly WhatsApp, exacerbates these issues as students often use abbreviations and internet slang, compromising the formality needed in academic writing. This study aims to assess whether WhatsApp texting positively or negatively impacts the academic English writing skills of undergraduate students. With the rise of technology, mobile phones and text messaging have transformed communication, promoting linguistic flexibility but also creating informal language habits. In Pakistan, English holds a significant social status and is essential in academia, facilitating global communication and cross-cultural exchanges.

Crystal (2004) argues that the focus on formal language is shifting, with non-standard variations now recognized as a reflection of diverse societies. He also highlights the internet's role in empowering individuals to use language creatively, leading to the emergence of "textese," a blend of letters, numbers, and abbreviations (Crystal, 2001). The rapid advancements in technology and science have revolutionized communication, making life more demanding while reducing opportunities for meaningful conversations. Text messaging, particularly through WhatsApp, has become a solution for staying connected with others globally. WhatsApp offers numerous benefits, including time efficiency, cost-effective communication, sharing media (images, videos, PDFs), voice messages, and supporting group discussions, learning, and business activities. The app's concise communication and integration of emojis have made it a popular and effective tool in the digital age.

To conclude, social media has revolutionized communication, sparking debates among researchers and educators about its influence on academic writing. It's crucial to note that writing on academic social platforms differs significantly from the standards of academic writing.

1.1. Linguistic and Lexical Aspects of WhatsApp Communication

Allagui (2014) places WhatsApp communications into informative and coherent categories leading to modifications in both linguistic patterns and composition styles. These message types develop through the combination of abbreviations together with emotional tone choices and the way messages are constructed. Users have combined orthographic and typographic elements to build a distinct vocabulary base which

brings value to sociolinguistic research. Visual symbols along with specific language features appear in WhatsApp messages.

1.1.2. Utilization of Pictograms and Logograms in WhatsApp Texting

Pictograms along with logograms have established themselves as standard communication tools within the WhatsApp messaging community. Sentence methods in simplified messaging use symbolic representations to shorthand words either as equivalents of distinct terms or phonetic transcriptions that match word segments (Ayan, 2020). People commonly turn 'good night' into 'gud ni8' and 'great' into 'gr8'.

1.1.3. Adoption of Abbreviated Expressions

Short Terminology serves as a compact language system of WhatsApp messaging (Yus 2017) that uses "otw" for "On the way" and "luwamh" instead of "Love you with all my heart" (Songxaba & Sincuba 2019). Omotoyinbo (2021) examined how social media writing norms modify academic writing among students. The author Asare (2019) observed that learner writing adopts variations in casual speech patterns which include abbreviations like "plz" for "please" and "l8" for "late." Research outcomes illuminate a potential problem when students accidentally infuse WhatsApp linguistic elements into their schoolwork.

1.1.4. Application of Numeric and Alphabetic Homophones

Salem (2013) highlights the use of letter-number homophones to improve writing efficiency in English, creating concise expressions by substituting letters with numeric homophones. The following examples highlight this extension:

BRB..... Be right back

IKR..... I know, right

LMK.....Let me know

LOL.....Laughing out loudly

NVM..... never mind

OFC..... Of course

AFAIK.....As far as I know

OTW..... On the way

TCO..... Take care of

1.2. Statement of the Problem

Students use different digital mobile apps for daily communication with each other as well as with teachers, where WhatsApp is the most common social communication application. It is mostly used by students for communication and sharing documents. The researcher, a university scholar, found that excessive usage of social media influences students' academic writing skills. Therefore, there is a need to study whether WhatsApp has a positive or negative impact on the academic English writing skills of students.

1.3. Objectives of the Research

- To determine the perception of Undergraduate students on their uses and impact of WhatsApp on Academic English Writing Skills of the Department of English at Kohat University of Science and Technology.
- To find out the reasons that make the Undergraduate students of the Department of English, KUST to use the language of social media instead of formal English language in their Academic writing skills.

1.2. Research Questions

- What is the perception of Undergraduate students on their uses and impact of WhatsApp on Academic English Writing Skills of the Department of English at Kohat University of Science and Technology?
- What are the reasons that make the Undergraduate students of the Department of English at Kohat University of Science and Technology to use the language of social media instead of formal English language in their Academic English writing skills?

1.3. Significance of the Study

The main goal of the current study is to investigate how WhatsApp messaging impacts the academic English writing skills of undergraduate students in the Department of English at KUST in District Kohat. The outcomes of this study will help students understand how using WhatsApp affects their academic English writing skills. This study can be used comparatively with another study that tries to find the impact of WhatsApp on the Academic English writing skills of undergraduate students of any other department or any other region.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

WhatsApp is a popular mobile application providing instant messaging services on smartphones. It uses Internet services to enable instant communication through texts and multimedia messages. As of February 2016, WhatsApp had a user base of one billion. The effect of WhatsApp on our lives, culture, and society continues to grow. It has also become a popular tool for marketing in businesses and for publicity in politics. This growth has drawn the attention of researchers seeking to understand the implications and effects of WhatsApp on its users' social and personal lives.

Various studies and analyses have explored the usage and impact of WhatsApp. Some of these studies focus on its effects on students, while others investigate its influence on the local population. However, in our literature review, we did not find any extensive survey analysis at the university level in Kohat, Pakistan. Here, we discuss details from some of the papers reviewed.

Several studies have explored the impact of WhatsApp on students' academic writing and behavior. Bhatt and Arshad (2016) highlighted both positive and negative effects

of WhatsApp, noting its addictive nature and its impact on education and social behavior. WhatsApp's growing use in Pakistan, especially among students, has been well-documented (Hussain et al., 2017). While some studies, like those by Crystal (2008) and Russell (2010), argue that WhatsApp's informal language does not harm English writing skills, others, such as Yeboah and Ewur (2014) and Appiah (2016), report negative effects, including spelling errors and sentence construction problems. Studies in Ghana (Yeboah & Ewur, 2014) and Nigeria (Oluga & Babolola, 2013) also point to WhatsApp's detrimental influence on academic writing. Diverse research conducted by Sahajwani (2016) and Sarker (2015) indicates students maintain academic achievement rates even after using WhatsApp. Studies led by Maheswari (2014) together with Kumar and Sharma (2016) demonstrate how WhatsApp creates positive social outcomes for friendship ties. The communications benefits from WhatsApp interact with academic writing skill influence in a mixed manner that depends on user patterns and specific settings.

3. Research Methodology

The researcher conducted a combined methodological examination to assess how WhatsApp influences the academic English writing competence of Kohat University of Science and Technology (KUST) undergraduates. A total of 200 students participated in this study while analysis focused on the completed surveys and essays from 10 participants for writing deviations. WhatsApp messages from 20 students were also analyzed. Data were collected via a 20-item questionnaire (adapted from previous studies) and analyzed using IBM SPSS Statistics for quantitative data, while qualitative data was gathered through content analysis of essays and WhatsApp messages. The study aimed to explore how WhatsApp affects students' academic writing skills.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1. Quantitative Part

4.1.1 Analysis of Questionnaire responses

The first section of the questionnaire, Part A, involves three questions: the gender distribution of participants, the frequency with which students engage in text messaging, and the application most favored by students. These details are depicted in the figures provided below.

Among the 200 distributed questionnaires, only 170 were collected back. From the collected questionnaires, the analysis revealed the following set of answers.

Table 1 High hours spent on WhatsApp by Students.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	strongly disagree	10	5.1	5.9	5.9
	Disagree	9	4.5	5.3	11.2
	Neutral	24	12.1	14.1	25.3
	Agree	87	43.9	51.2	76.5
	strongly agree	40	20.2	23.5	100.0
	Total	170	85.9	100.0	

Table 1 shows the result when participants were asked about Students normally spend many hours on WhatsApp, the output illuminates that 87% were agree, 40% strongly agreed while 9% disagreed, 10% strongly disagreed and 24% were remain neutral. The results revealed that students spend more time on using WhatsApp and paying less attention to their academic work like assignment, quiz, exams etc.

Table 2 WhatsApp's Impact on Student Academic Writing Skills.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	strongly disagree	18	9.1	10.6	10.6
	Disagree	27	13.6	15.9	26.5
	Neutral	32	16.2	18.8	45.3
	Agree	61	30.8	35.9	81.2
	strongly agree	32	16.2	18.8	100.0
	Total	170	85.9	100.0	

The table 2 shows the findings pertaining to the query on whether text messaging enhances students' Standard English and academic writing indicate that 32% of students strongly concurred, and 61% agreed with the statement. Additionally, 27 students disagreed and 18% students strongly disagreed while 32% students were confuse about that statement. The findings show that when students use the correct vocabulary and full form of words, then WhatsApp messaging progresses the student's Standard English and Academic writing.

Table 3 Impact of Lexical Shortening on Academic Writing Skills.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	strongly disagree	9	4.5	5.3	5.3
	Disagree	7	3.5	4.1	9.4
	Neutral	23	11.6	13.5	22.9
	Agree	74	37.4	43.5	66.5
	strongly agree	57	28.8	33.5	100.0
	Total	170	85.9	100.0	

Table 3 shows the results that 57% of Undergraduate students strongly agreed and 74% of them agreed that shortening of lexical items in various ways force them to make mistakes in their academic papers. 23% of them remained neutral while 7% of students disagreed and 9% of them strongly disagreed.

Table 4 Problems face in Assignments and Exams Due to WhatsApp Messaging

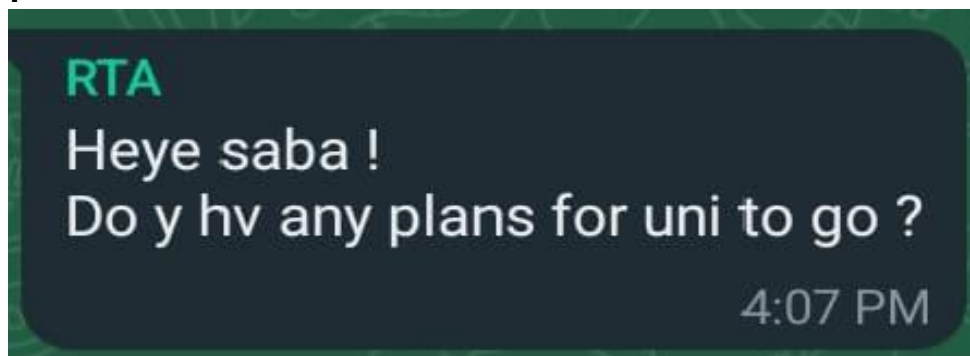
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	strongly disagree	16	8.1	9.4	9.4
	Disagree	21	10.6	12.4	21.8
	Neutral	20	10.1	11.8	33.5
	Agree	72	36.4	42.4	75.9
	strongly agree	41	20.7	24.1	100.0
	Total	170	85.9	100.0	

Table 4 shows the findings are associated with how students perceive the challenges arising from WhatsApp text messaging in their assignments and exams. Notably, 41% of students strongly agreed, while a majority of 72% agreed. Conversely, 21% disagreed, and 16% strongly disagreed, while 20% of students were neutral or confused about the statement.

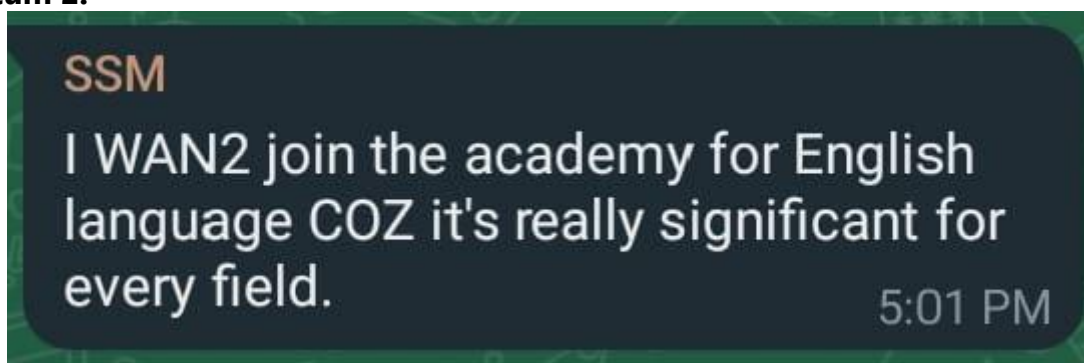
3.2. Qualitative Part

3.2.2. Analysis of WhatsApp Text Messages

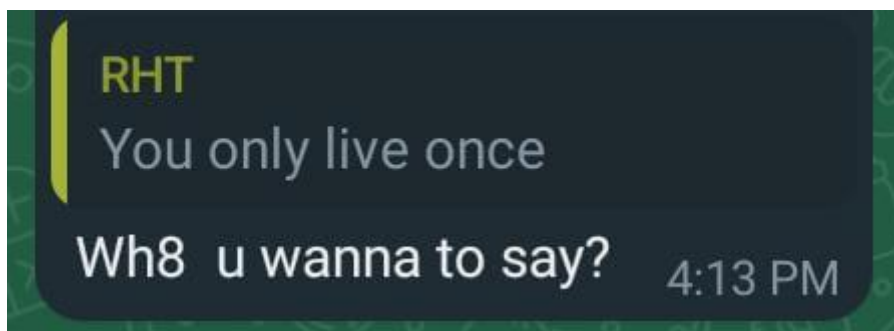
Datum 1



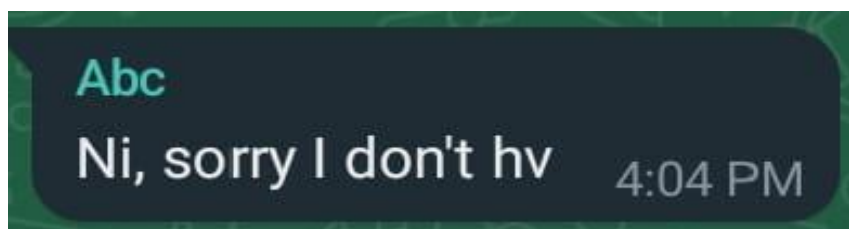
The sentence "Heye Saba! 'Do y hv any plans for uni to go?'" contains errors that affect clarity. "Do y hv" should be "Do you have" for correct grammar, and "uni" is informal for "university," which is unsuitable for formal writing. The phrase "to go" is unnecessary and should be removed. A clearer version is: "Heye Saba! Do you have any plans for university?" This maintains the casual tone while improving grammar and clarity.

Datum 2:

The sentence "I WAN2 join the academy for English language COZ it's really significant for every field" contains informal language and abbreviations. To correct this, replace "WAN2" with "want to" and "COZ" with "because." A clearer version would be: "I want to enroll in the English language academy because proficiency in this subject is essential across all fields." This revision improves formality and clarity.

Datum 3:

The sentence "Wh8 u wanna to say?" has several grammatical errors: "Wh8" is an informal abbreviation for "what," "u" is a casual abbreviation for "you," and "wanna to" should be corrected to "want to." Additionally, it lacks proper punctuation, such as a question mark to indicate it is a question. A revised version could be: "What do you want to say?"

Datum 4

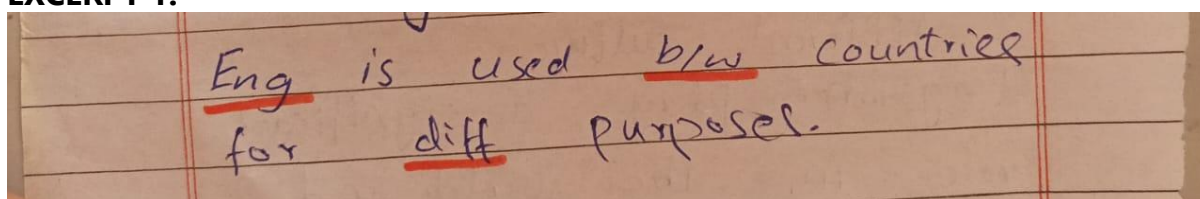
The sentence "Ni, sorry I don't hv" contains several grammatical errors and informalities. "Ni" appears unclear and may be a typo or incomplete. "hv" is an informal abbreviation for "have," which should be written out fully in formal English.

Additionally, if "Ni" is intended to address someone directly, a comma should follow it. A revised version could be: "No, I'm sorry, I don't have."

3.3. Analysis of Written Essays by Students

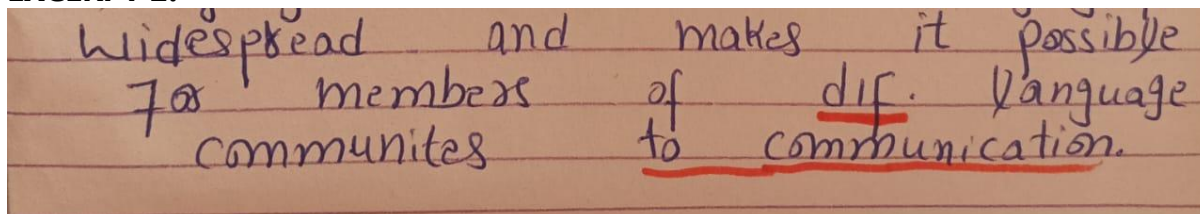
Essays were written by the undergraduate students of the Department of English at Kohat University of Science and Technology on the topic named "The importance of English language at international level. They committed many mistakes in the written essays and those mistakes were identified and analyzed through content analysis. In the essays, various grammatical errors were identified and grouped into several categories.

EXCERPT 1:



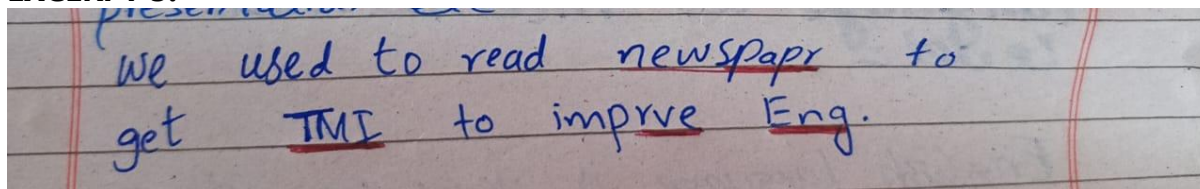
In formal writing, "b/c" should be replaced with "because" for clarity. "State" should be pluralized to "States" and preceded by "the" for accuracy. Replace "first language" with "primary language" or "official language" for better articulation. Use "are" for proper subject-verb agreement with "United States."

EXCERPT 2:



In formal writing, "dif." should be replaced with "different" for clarity. The sentence is grammatically correct but should end with a period. Using terms like "people" or "individuals" instead of "members" offers more precision. Adding context about the mode of communication (oral, written, etc.) would improve clarity.

EXCERPT 3:



The sentence contains several grammatical errors. The sentence has several errors: "use" should be "used," "newspapr" should be "newspapers," "TMI" should be expanded to "too much information," "imprve" should be "improve," and "Eng" should be "English."

Additionally, "we" should be capitalized. The corrected sentence is: Through reading newspapers we gathered excessive information to build our English skills.

Research results indicate undergraduate students demonstrate diminished academic writing abilities when we compare their WhatsApp communication to their educational essays on "The Importance of the English Language at the International Level." The content analysis approach found students frequently made mistakes regarding spelling, grammar usage together with words that lacked completion and informal abbreviations. The research shows that WhatsApp usage combined with social media platforms leads students to depart from typical English language rules and vocabulary norms. Researchers found that the same mistakes occur in both casual WhatsApp text exchanges and formal academic papers indicating shared elements between digital communication and academic writing.

4. Findings

The research into WhatsApp text messaging effects on undergraduate writing skills at Kohat University of Science and Technology (KUST) shows compound results showing both universal application usage and widespread implications for formal academic writing competence. The research combined quantitative and qualitative analysis to investigate student preferences and authentic usage patterns which produced major conclusions about the academic effects of digital communication behaviors in educational settings.

Most students displayed exceptional use of WhatsApp so extensively that they spent multiple hours each day on the platform. The application serves as a main channel for communication which students use at high frequencies between themselves and for their coursework needs. The ease of use along with this trend creates substantial effects on students' writing abilities. Students stated that their abundant WhatsApp communication practices for personal messages created poor attention to conventional writing codes in formal assignments. Analyses from the survey showed widespread patterns of abbreviation usage alongside informal language and non-standard spellings as students conduct these practices that undermine academic writing proficiency while corrupting Standard English standards in their written assignments.

Student-written documents analyzed to show how WhatsApp use damages their academic writing abilities. Various writing mistakes found in student-created essays stemmed from communication habits-established on the mobile messaging application WhatsApp. Students presented incorrect word spellings by choosing "languge" instead of "language" and "heigher" instead of "higher." They also made grammatical mistakes coupled with informal abbreviations such as "b/c" for "because" and "2day" for "today." Students show a direct carryover of informal WhatsApp

communication methods which creates problems with both clarity and quality in their academic papers.

Students' deeper experiences and attitudes emerged through open-ended questions and thematic analysis. Students revealed how WhatsApp fast-paced chatting style created problems by producing shallow focus which caused them to develop bad habits that negatively influenced their academic writing. Students found the convenience along with time-savings of WhatsApp abbreviations and short forms appealing so they used them daily but acknowledged these shortcuts frequently created confusion which resulted in errors for writing tasks. Students develop persistent WhatsApp language habits which create academic writing challenges because they struggle to eliminate them from academic context usage.

The investigation revealed male students made more writing mistakes than female students across the study population. Numerous research findings suggest demographic groups use digital platforms differently which results in various communication response patterns. Research revealed that WhatsApp shows greater influence over students' writing skills by affecting their spelling and vocabulary performance which extends beyond casual language usage to impact major language competence categories.

5. Conclusion

This investigation demonstrates in depth the transformative influence which WhatsApp messaging platforms have on college-level students' writing abilities. Students derive convenience and easy communication from these platforms yet the platforms simultaneously degrade formal writing standards according to study results. Academic work from students shows widespread occurrences of informal language together with abbreviations and spelling mistakes.

The habits formed by continuous text messaging interfere with students' formal writing skills according to this research study. The statistical analysis of data alongside frequency analysis and Likert scale responses proves that a substantial student body recognizes writing habits from texting enter their formal writing. Students have recognized that text message shortcuts together with informal speaking patterns lead to errors that lower the quality of academic writing.

Data analysis through thematic methods helps validated these results. Grammar errors and abbreviations and spelling confusion along with punctuation errors appeared frequently across the student responses. The content analysis of student-written essays demonstrated parallel findings with the feedback analysis. The documents displayed many sentence mistakes which revealed substantial departure from Standard English

conventions. Students appear to be developing written communication through text messaging behaviors that challenge formal written practices.

Educators and curriculum developers hold vital responsibility in tackling this problem according to significant study conclusions. Research points to the requirement for specific teaching methods which distinguish informal and formal texts. Professors need to show students why academic writing standards must stay high and give them multiple chances to practice formal writing skills. Teaching practices which enable students to detect their errors will increase their writing abilities according to research. Research results showed that male students made more writing errors than female students during the analyzed writing tasks. Evidence shows there could be variations between masculinity and femininity regarding student use of texting functions alongside differences in formal writing rule utilization. More research must evaluate the identified differences to create specific educational approaches that support the needs of students.

The results demonstrate significance for both scholastic exploration and wider social implications. The ongoing prevalence of text messaging demands immediate action to stop declining standards in language use. Further development of language proficiency by young people remains essential for achieving academic excellence together with future success in their professional lives. The growing business demand for proficient communicators encompasses excellent writing ability alongside correct written representation in numerous work environments. This study delivered important findings regarding the effects of WhatsApp and text messaging technologies on academic writing skills mastered by undergraduate students. The instant access through these communication platforms obviously improves ease of use but writers need to recognize how these systems affect writing quality. Educational resources supported by heightened awareness enable the reduction of text messaging-derived writing problems. When teachers teach students about sustaining appropriate language use educators establish necessary academic and professional competencies. Our research shows students need clear guidelines to handle both casual messaging together with formal written communication skills.

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