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**AN INVESTIGATION INTO THE ROLE OF SOCIAL MEDIA IN SHAPING GENDER
IDENTITY IN EDUCATION.**

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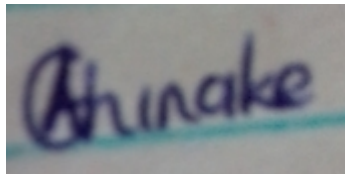
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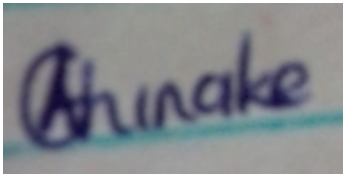
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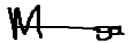
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DECLARATION FORM

I, CHINAKE ALICE, do hereby declare to Bindura University of Science Education that this dissertation is my original work and all materials and academic sources of information have been duly acknowledged. This work has not been submitted to any other academic institution for the purposes of an academic merit.

Signed 

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I wish to acknowledge the assistance received from the following people who made it possible for this documented research to be put together.

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DEDICATION

This research is dedicated to the Almighty God and my loving mother
Mrs D. Tandari.

ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

COVID 19: Corona virus disease of 2019

GMMP: Global media monitoring project

LGBTQ+: Lesbian, gay, bisexual, Trans, queer and other

MMORPG: Massively multiplayer online role-playing games

Wow: World of War craft

ABSTRACT

Children learn better when they interact with items, tools and people in their environment. Provision of creative fun-filled environment boosts children's learning. The main goal of this study was to assess the role of social media in shaping gender identity in education. The study was guided by empirical evidence. The study adopted the case study research design. The target population comprised of 50 head teachers, 150 teachers, 100 parents or guardians. The study applied the sample size of 30 head teachers, 85 teachers and 50 parents or guardians. Convenience and judgmental sampling were applied to select the respondents who participated in the study. The main research instrument was the questionnaire. According to the majority of the respondents social media is a set of web applications that rely on the participation of mass groups of users. Also the majority of the respondents' gender identity is a personal conception of oneself as male or female. In addition the majority of the respondents revealed that they believed that there was common gender. The study established that majority of children are exposed to social media at home. The study found out that at home, most children spend most of their time on social media. The majority of respondents revealed that WhatsApp was the most used social media platform in Zimbabwe. Thus the majority of respondents revealed that gender identities are constructed through social media because it provides possibility for people to present and identify themselves as males or females. Thus the majority of the respondents revealed that parents must exercise control on the choice of social media for their children are exposed to. The study recommends that Parents must also control the volume of social media content accessed by their children this could be by limiting the time spent on social media. The parents need to vouch the content of social media that their children are exposed to ensure that they avoid negative effects of mass media

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.0 Introduction

This chapter of the research provided an overview of the study, background of the study, statement of the problem. Also under discussion in the section were the research objectives, research questions, significance of the study, assumptions, delimitations, limitations and definition of terms.

1.1 Background of the Study

Social media has become a major social influencer. From the first years of childhood, the current generation of children is exposed to worrying volumes of audio-visual messages. The statistics point to an average of two hours, twenty minutes daily dedicated to social media by the current young people and children (Anckle, 2015). Exposure to social media is bound to impact on the children in either way (Anderson, 2015). Social media is one of the main agents of socialization that affect the youth most. There is also electronic media such as computers, smart phones and iPads. Studies in developed countries have noted that social media has great influence on children's behaviour (Baferani, 2015; Crisogen, 2015; Castro, 2017).

Esteve (2018) argued that social media has become an important agent of socialisation of children, youth and adults. Mass media has a significant effect on children's development of communication and social skills among diverse populations worldwide. Rivière (2015) argued that advanced communication skills can be used for the explicit purpose of provoking learning which would facilitate socialisation and advancement of learners' attitudes.

The role of social media as an influence of behavior enables educators to develop educational broadcasts such as educational web pages. However, socialization promoted by social media is indirect and takes a short time for adjusted behaviour to be manifested. Esteve (2018) further observed that the social media assists in shaping behaviour through making propositions to people. These propositions assist in development of mental models that can be imposed with greater force and persuasion. The propositions are presented in a dramatic or emotional context that helps to inhibit the judgment critical. The study supported the findings in Pusateri and Liccardi (2015) that expressed most emphatically that social media, no longer report facts or, if they do, this is a secondary objective. The study noted social media was primary used for entertainment and thus most social media companies have opted to reduce educative programs.

The current media has a primary role of entertaining the viewers; this makes the other roles such as education and information dissemination to be secondary goals. This is evident due to the organisation and volume of entertainment programs offered by social media companies. Analysis of the volume of time social media allocated to news and informative programmes have reduced significantly. Social media belong to a group of opinion shapers with a significant role in shaping children's behaviour such as the family, the church or peers (Pusateri and Liccardi, 2015). Therefore, social media and its powerful network of influences are major socialisation agents and thus have a greater effect on children. This means that social media can complement, counter, enhance or nullify behaviour. Social media as a socialisation agent fulfils a very important socializing function. In the first place, social media provides information to people. This information is applied by people to construct the image to base their reality on. This reality created assist individuals to model and exhibit behaviour needed and thus form part of the information with which people construct the image of reality according to which people deploy their behaviours. Secondly, social media provide values, norms, models and symbols which people use in personal and social cohesion. Finally, it is through social media that personal identity is developed and built.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

The researcher was motivated to carry out the research because of the increasing use of social media by adolescence learners through which gender identities have been shaped. The researcher was motivated by the lack of education on gender identities in the school curriculum which the researcher aims to rectify the anomaly through in-depth investigation into the current reality being experienced by school going children. The researcher was influenced by the role of celebrities on social media in contributing to shaping gender identities in the society particularly in schools. The current generation of children is exposed to various forms of social media. The amount of time children spend on social media compared to any other socialisation agents is a matter of concern to educationists. This exposure mostly is not under the control of adults since in most urban areas, children have access to internet connected smart phones, tablets, play station and other forms of video games. These social media according to psychologists have an impact on the socio-psychological aspects of children. Cases of learners stabbing and maiming one another as well as high level indiscipline and defiance of unprecedented scales have been cited in many

educational institutions.

1.3 Research Objectives

The research will be guided by the following objectives

- 1) To find out the types of gender identities on Social Media
- 2) To investigate the types of social media platforms that has played an important role in shaping gender identities.
- 3) To understand how gender identities are constructed through Social Media.
- 4) To provide recommendations to policymakers on how social media could play an important role in shaping gender identity.

1.4 Research Questions

- 1) What types of gender identities are on Social Media?
- 2) What are the types of social media platforms that have played an important role in shaping gender identities?
- 3) How are gender identities constructed through Social Media?
- 4) What are the recommendations to policymakers on the role of Social Media in shaping gender identity?

1.4 Significance of the Study

The study may prove to be significant to the researcher in the following ways such as it provides the researcher with an opportunity to improve his or her interpersonal skills through interacting with respondents during the data collection exercise, the researcher will benefit the researcher through broadening his or her critical thinking skills about gender identities being shaped through social media the research will benefit the institution which the researcher is a student through contributing to the institutional repository of the institution, hence will be used by other students for reference in their academic work during their duration of their studies. The study will benefit policymakers in order to incorporating gender identities into the School curriculum, in order to improving self-esteem for learners, the research will help to debunk gender stereotypes around gender identities in the society.

1.5 Assumptions

The following assumptions were made:

- It will be assumed that all the participants in the study offered their opinions, observations and feedback honestly, independently and as accurately as possible.
- The economic factors, the legal factors and the political environment remained the same during the period the study was undertaken.
- Information obtained from the analysis about the role of social media in shaping gender identity in education was reliable.

1.6 Limitations of the Study

- **Time constraints**

The time available for the research was not adequate to fully exhaust the various aspects of the research under normal hours. Thus the researcher had to work after hours.

- **Financial constraints**

Stationery and transport costs contributed much to the constraint. Some information from the internet was not accessible for it needed subscriptions. Therefore the researcher had to forgo some of his needs and channelled the funds towards the research expenses.

- **Confidentiality**

Some respondents were not eager to give confidential, important information for the sake of preserving the organisation's image. However this was not a major problem since the writer was part of the organization's staff and used minutes and circulars to circumvent this limitation.

The study was faced with the following limitations such as Self-Reported Data, Absence of Key Respondents and Point of Saturation. To commence with, the first limitation that there was restriction as the researcher during the research is Self-Reported Data whereby the researcher was not be able to check and validate the true information that the respondents were releasing through interviews or through questionnaires which affected the data analysis process. Another limitation was that the research there was the absence of key respondents through work commitments or some withdrawing at the last minute due to personal reasons whose information would have been vital for the research to be a success. The absence of key

respondents reduced the depth of information which made the research wholesome. The third and final limitation that the researcher had to deal with reaching the point of Saturation which results same answers from the research participants hence limiting the results of data collection conducted by the researcher.

1.7 Delimitation of the Study

The research focused on investigating the role of social media in shaping gender identity in education. The study was delimited in Kadoma- peri urban, the study also focused on schools mainly on teachers and students who are influenced by social media and key officials such as Clinical Psychologists from the Ministry of Health. The research covered the period between the year 2019 to 2021.

1.8 Overview of dissertation sections

Chapter 1 of this research set the scene of the research study by offering general introduction as well as the background. Aspects such as the research objectives and research questions are stated. Limitations as well as delimitations are identified in this Chapter.

Chapter 2 of this research will be the literature review of this research study. Equally, the theoretical frameworks used for the dissertation will be discussed noting the justifications for using them.

Chapter 3 of this research will critically explain the methodology used to conduct the study. Aspects of ethical considerations as well as data collection methods will be found in this Chapter.

Chapter 4 of the research will present data gathered as well as the analysis of the data obtained from the methodological approaches of Chapter Three.

Chapter 5 of this research will constitute evaluation of findings and recommendations.

1.8 Definition of Terms

Gender Identity - Refers to the personal sense of an individual's own gender, how they identify internally and how they express externally.

Social Media – Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, online games, Whatsapp

Behavior – The way in which one acts or conducts oneself, especially towards others.

1.11 Summary

This chapter provided background information to the study, statement of the problem and did

spell out the objectives to the study, research questions, assumptions, delimitations, limitations and definition of terms.

The next chapter presented the literature review.

CHAPTER TWO

2.0 INTRODUCTION

This chapter is literature review. It comprises of empirical evidence; gap analysis being guided by the research objectives. The role of social media in shaping gender identity in education. Social Media has managed to impact people's lives in different ways including them realizing and exploring their different identities. People no longer have to live in denial about who they are with the help of social media. The focus stretches from the social media platforms used to help with gender identity crisis to the link between gender identity and social media then the recommendations to policymakers to ensure that they help shape gender identities in education

2.1 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1.1 GENDER IDENTITIES ON SOCIAL MEDIA

Lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, queer, and other sexual gender identities (LGBTQ+) youth identify significant benefits from engagement with social media, as well as other Internet-enabled technologies (Craig,2015). While research comparing their use to their non-LGBTQ+ peers is limited, research has suggested LGBTQ youth may spend significantly more time online (Steinke, 2017). Fox and Ralston (2016) suggest that social media serves as informal learning environments for LGBTQ+ youth during their identity developmental processes. As LGBTQ+ identities remain highly stigmatized, social media sites provide youth with critical opportunities to explore, label, and practice disclosing their emerging LGBTQ+ identities; control and rehearse their social interactions; as well as access identity-specific resources (Craig & McInroy,(2015). Even engaging more passively with social media (such as watching LGBTQ+ YouTube content) enables individuals to learn about identity-specific issues and be inspired in their coming out process, increasing identity confidence (Fox & Ralston, 2016). Social media facilitates identity construction and communication by allowing LGBTQ+ youth to create their online presence in a context characterized by relative safety (i.e., users can block or accept whomever they choose) and control over anonymity (Downing, 2015). The comparative anonymity available online facilitates opportunities for youth to develop and explore their LGBTQ+ identities in ways not feasible in offline communities (Craig &

MacInroy, 2015). Anonymous social media activities ensure that participants' emerging LGBTQ+ identities are protected from premature disclosure and from socially significant individuals (e.g., friends, family) who may not be accepting. Other researchers have found out that LGBTQ+ youth are able to engage in self-expression by creating their profiles and navigating unwanted comments and advances, which they are unable to do to the same extent in their offline lives. The interactive nature of social media enables a closer investigation of the ways that LGBTQ+ identities and experiences are constructed and communicated using technology (Bond & Figueroa-Caballero, 2016).

For LGBTQ+ youth, online community engagement enhances well-being. Participation in online communities may allow LGBTQ+ youth to access role models who share their experiences, as well as seek emotional and social support (Gomillion & Giuliano, 2015). As individuals become more comfortable with their identity, they may engage in sharing LGBTQ+ content and participate in educating and supporting other LGBTQ+ people within their online networks (McInroy, 2015). Fox and Ralston's (2016) research found that youth were able to use social media as a bridge to access resources within their offline communities while minimizing potential risks, making local LGBTQ+ populations more visible to young people particularly in rural communities. The Internet is perceived by LGBTQ+ youth as an efficient way to address gaps in identity-specific information (e.g., to access sexual health resources), as well as an effective means of learning about offline services and events (DeHaan, 2015). Another study found that LGBTQ+ Twitter users leveraged "social creativity" in their response to the Pulse shooting by countering threats to their identities by supporting unity in the presence of threat (Jenkins, 2019). In particular, the collective LGBTQ+ response on Twitter contributed to "creative identity (re)construction, creative community building, and creative resistance". Overall, social media allows LGBTQ+ youth to explore their identities and social relationships, access resources, and create their own mode of self-expression while controlling their degree of self-disclosure. Current instruments that assess youth social media focus on problematic use such as addiction (Al-Menayes, 2015) and the debilitating impacts of social media on sleep quality and mental health (e.g., anxiety, depression) in the general youth population (Woods & Scott, 2016). Existing measures assessing youth well-being utilize items regarding social support, perception of self, interactions with others, and one's sense of safety. These scales focus on offline environments and are primarily constructed as self-report. Youth well-being online including social connectedness and personality development has started to be explored, with a direction for future research being a measure of how youth populations may enhance well-being through online engagement, including via social media (James, 2017). Scales that

assess well-being that is positive effects from social media in young adults tend to focus on outcomes such as political engagement (Gil de Zúñiga, 2015). For LGBTQ, scales have been developed in studies of social media, such as a scale to assess attitudes from non-LGBTQ+ people toward LGBTQ (Hefner, 2015). Research indicates that social media provides a breadth of important opportunities and positive impacts for many LGBTQ and youth (Hanckel, 2019). In recent years, most institutions offer some online courses, (Allen & Seaman, 2008) whereas others offer only online lessons. The use of social technologies, particularly Web 2.0 tools, is a relatively new phenomenon (Shaohua & Peilin, 2008). Web 2.0 has been gaining popularity and has a noticeable effect on higher education (Armstrong & Franklin 2008).

Demographically most of Web 2.0 users are youngsters categorized as the Digital Natives (boyd & Ellison, 2007; Prensky, 2001) or known as net generation Junco & Cole-Avent, 2008). Since face-to-face communication (Tiryakioglu & Erzurum, 2011) in interpersonal relationships have been gradually been replaced with communications through technological devices, new types of relationships have been established and online SNSs have become part of these virtual communication forms (Murray, 2008).

One of the most famous and well-known social network that has surged globally is Facebook (Toprak, 2009); having surpassed 1.35 billion users in 2014 (Facebook, 2014). SNSs can be easily, inexpensively and successfully integrated in education without the need for substantial support from universities. Additionally, educators may gain benefits that possibly derive from the use of SN as an educational tool (Balci, 2010) and come across these benefits in order to utilize them during the teaching and learning process. Based on a certain study, it is indicated that a significant number of students spend non-negligible time in such sites (Jones, Blackey, Fitzgibbon & Chew, 2010). A study conducted by ECAR (EDUCAUSE Center for Applied Research) pointed out that undergraduate students use of social media services increased from 2007 to 2010 (Dabbagh & Kitsantas, 2012). Students are using the Twitter platform to stimulate their engagement in classroom (Rankin, 2009).

Designed for social uses, SNSs appeared to be in the process of transitioning to other arenas of teen life, including education. A study by Karlin in 2007 showed that nearly 60% of students who use SN talk about education online whereas, over 50% talk about specific school work (Karlin, 2007). In light of this, it is not surprising that high schools are beginning to experiment with SNSs. A research conducted in 2007 described the Saugus Union School District use, as an educational equivalent of MySpace and Facebook (O'Hanlon, 2007). Gender issues in technology use have been noticed and emphasized in computer and

education research in the last two decades (Tsai & Tsai, 2010). Before the computer technology seemed incompatible with women because the language and ways of thinking associated with it had reflected a culture of masculine domination (Turkle, 1997). The computer appeared to be an unwelcomed environment for women in computing until the mid because of the advent of the World Wide Web (Turkle, 1997; Tsai & Tsai, 2010; Nisiforou & Laghos, 2014).

Therefore, more studies began to highlight gender issues concerning the Internet use (Wu & Tsai, 2006). The era of Web 2.0 technologies has harnessed social networking (O'Reilly, 2005) and has become an essential tool of daily life as well as a crucial part of students personal knowledge toolbox (Lee, Miller & Newnham, 2008). The appearance of such powerful tools enhances communication, fosters critical thinking and encourages collaborative learning. This new trend of utilizing social networking technologies for educational intentions, known as educational networking, will increase students' engagement in their education, contribute to a greater sense of cooperation in the classroom as well as develop better communication skills.

2.1.2 SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS PLAYING THE ROLE OF SHAPING GENDER IDENTITY

Social media can be broadly defined as a communication format wherein individuals set up profiles, generate content, and/or interact and maintain connections with other users via online platforms or other digital mediums (Carr & Hayes, 2015). Participants may use social media to interact with people they already know, and as a means to meet new people. It is also used as a mechanism to consume media content and engage in a range of other activities that vary based on the specific site (Byron, 2019). Prevalent examples of social media sites include Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Snapchat, and YouTube. Nearly all youth use at least one social media platform (Anderson & Jiang, 2018). In 2018, 85% of adolescents (age 13–17) in the United States used YouTube. Large majorities also used Instagram (72%), Snapchat (69%), and Facebook (51%; Anderson & Jiang, 2018). Youth that is adolescents and young adults are especially prevalent users of social media and use such sites to aid in their identity development including their gender identity and sexual orientation.

For youth and young adults, increased social media use has been found to have a positive impact on life satisfaction (Wheatley & Buglass, 2019), and Instagram in particular has been identified as benefiting overall well-being. Conversely, Kross (2015) found that Facebook use

predicted a decline in life satisfaction and affect in young adults. A recent study of Chinese adolescents identified that social media use had a positive effect on well-being, although this effect was suppressed by social overload and moderated by participants “fear of missing out” on what they saw happening on social media, suggesting that the indirect and direct effects of social media have an important impact on well-being (Chai , 2019).

Regardless of employment position or professional status, a person can freely identify, express interests, construct and share a professional self in social media and networking sites, widely used for publicizing personal texts such as on Facebook, WhatsApp, or professional sharing on LinkedIn and Twitter (Jameson, 2015). Although a person is often engaged in virtual activities by seeking to express personal identities, in virtual group’s professional and personal identities overlap in different ways. In modern society, social media communication plays an important role in professional life. Social and mobile media communication takes place in various media channels. People operate and live virtual lives in social networks and online communities. Virtual communication goes beyond geographic boundaries and includes a wide range of physically unrecognized and unrelated user. Professional identity construction in management is researched as virtual communication between people who do not know each other live, but befriend in a virtual professional group (Quinton & Wilson, 2016); the virtual behaviour of formal and non-formal leaders of the social media group.

Gender and Blogs

Because identity arises from “publicly validated performances,” users can enact gender identity through blogging (García-Gómez, 2009, p. 613). Bloggers present their performative gendered identities through both visual and discursive means (van Doorn, van Zoonen, & Wyatt, 2007) as they create and write their blogs. Via such performances, bloggers can enact a wide range of gendered performances from traditional sexroles, such as expected behaviors in the “cult of femininity” on teen-agers’ blogs (Gomez, 2010, p. 135) or push the boundaries of permitted gendered behavior in repressive regimes (Riegert & Ramsey, 2013). From 2000 to 2005, the number of blogs grew from 100,000 to more than 4 million (Woods, 2005). Riley (2005) reported about half a million blogs in Australia and 2.5 million blogs in the U. K. In 2009, more than 12 million adults in the U. S. maintained a blog (Schechter, 2009).

From the beginning, scholars have characterized blogs as a powerful medium of communication (Kline & Burstein, 2005; Rodzvilla, 2002; Rosenberg, 2009; Woods, 2005),

as blogs provide an individual mass media outlet for every blogger. Because blog participants directly engage in knowledge production, and because blogs typically limit content to specific and narrow foci, blogs lend themselves to community formation. Blogs form online communities around a specific theme, idea, or industry activity (Droge et al., 2010; Vickery, 2010), where a “sense of community is developed through interactions with like-minded people” (Kaye, 2005, p. 76), such as bloggers writing on feminist business practices.

Bloggers perform gender for their audience of readers via their writing; readers can become familiar and friendly with bloggers after reading their posts regularly and respond with their own performances of gender. Through blogging, authors invite audience members (typically fellow bloggers who write on the same or similar subject matter) to discuss, share, and support one another (Lopez, 2009). Thus, blogs have the potential to become sites of enlightenment and liberation.

• **Gendered Use of Blogs:**

Twelve million Americans report blogging (Lehart & Fox, 2006); men and women blog approximately equally (Haferkamp & Krämer, 2008). In displaying online identities, almost all bloggers reveal their gender on their blogs (Kleeman, 2007). In addition to explicitly stating gender, blog creators employ various forms of nonverbal behaviors (e.g., colors, backgrounds, fonts, and pictures) that perform gendered identity. For example, a self-proclaimed “girly girl” could select a pink background for her blog. Gender is performed quite distinctively in the context of blogs. Males are more likely to write filter blogs (Karlsson, 2007; Wei, 2009), containing primarily information external to the author such as news and political events; the blog content is “filtered in that certain items are discussed and others are excluded. Political blogs, for example, often link to the websites of traditional media sources, such as newspapers. Filter blogs typically are written by men (Herring, Kouper, Scheidt, & Wright, 2004). Therefore, when traditional media outlets quote political filter blogs, as they often do (Tucker, 2009), the media outlets are usually repeating male voices (Herring et al., 2004). Similarly, more published academic research examines male blogs than female blogs (Lopez, 2009). Gender can be performed via linguistic practices (Motschenbacher, 2009) and multiple studies document such practices by males:

- Herring and Paolillo (2006) found that filter blogs favored by men had more “male” stylistic features, such as statements and restatements of facts.
- Van Doorn et al. (2007) found that male authors carefully avoided being too “emotional,”

focusing their blogs on information and ideas.

- In a study of British bloggers, Pedersen and Macafee (2007) report that men's blog content focuses on sharing information, providing opinions, and highlighting links. This finding paints a gendered picture for how males share information through blogging—a picture consistent with typical ways males communicate in offline interactions. Tannen (1990) argues men engage in report talk, giving information and opinions as a means of gaining or sustaining status.

- Men evoke gender identities using facts and emotionless language versus women who employ expressive and inclusive language. Amir, Abidin, Darus, and Ismail (2012) reported finding such “differences in language use among teenage bloggers” (p. 105). Medical blogs serve as a prime example of how men perform masculinity on blogs. Kovic, Lulic, and Brumini surveyed medical blogs, defined as “a blog whose main topic was related to 646 health or medicine” (2008, p. 2), and discovered that 59% of medical bloggers were male; 74% of the bloggers reported being motivated to post on medical blogs to share knowledge and skills, and 56% by the desire of gaining insights from others. (Respondents could choose more than one motivation; therefore the percent total exceeds 100%). Two-thirds of medical bloggers received attention from the news media about their blogs. It could be argued that males were more likely to participate in these medical blogs because the nature of these blogs aligns with a masculine communication style, allowing the authors to perform their gender through their blogs. Because men are more likely to write filter blogs (Pedersen & Macafee, 2007; van Doorn et al., 2007), they also are more likely to be seen as credible bloggers (Armstrong & McAdams, 2009). In short, male bloggers are seen as information transmitters and form blogging relationships based on sharing of information and the credibility of that information. Women, on the other hand, are more likely to write journal blogs, or diary blogs (Attwood, 2009; Karlsson, 2007; Wei, 2009). Such blogs describe personal life; their content primarily originates with the blogger rather than external sources. However, unlike traditional diaries, journal blogs do not have the connotation of privacy and instead seek an online, mass audience. Women are more likely to blog to document their lives, for selfexpression, and to pass time (Li, 2007) than to provide information. For example, female bloggers write about their experiences with infertility (e.g., Turner Channel, 2010) and empty-nest syndrome (e.g., The Pioneer Woman, 2010).

Diary blogs are personal and emotion-laden, creating “readerly attachment” (Karlsson, 2007, p. 139). Journal bloggers invite their readers to identify with and relate to the author through

comments (Webb & Lee, 2011). Readers who habitually read these blogs are more likely to be female (Karlsson, 2007), and the creation of support networks on such blogs is consistent with the communal, relational communication characteristic of women.

Female communication style allows women to share, create, and maintain relationships, bring others into the conversation, and respond to ideas (Wood, 2009). Through journal blogging, reading blogs regularly, and leaving feedback, women engage in rapport-talk, described by Tannen as “negotiations for closeness in which people try to seek and give confirmation and support, and to reach consensus” (1990, p. 25). Blogs can provide a shared emotional connection (Stavrositu & Sundar, 2008), where members of the blog community share life experiences and events. One blog feature that aids relationship building (van Doorn et al., 2007) is the ‘blogroll’ (a list of links that allows the user to add others’ blogs to their blogroll, creating a network of blogs sometimes called the “blogosphere”). The use of blogrolls “fosters a reciprocal relationship” where people add each other’s blogs to their blogrolls (p. 146).

The language of women’s blogs plays a central role in the performance of their gendered identities as the “features of ‘women’s language’ are powerful resources to linguistically index female identities” (Motschenbacher, 2009, p. 19). Teen girls’ diary blogs provide an obvious example of feminine gender performance via statements such as “I am a woman, not a girl!” and “Since I was a little girl” (García-Gómez, 2009, p. 615). Also, women’s language is more inclusive and expressive, passive, cooperative, and accommodating (Herring & Paolillo, 2006) than the language used by male bloggers. Women bloggers construct their gendered identities using sexualized imagery and words, often while talking about domesticity and taking care of the home (van Doorn et al., 2007). This juxtaposed mix creates a unique female gender identity combining traditional views of women such as the mother and sex object (Wood, 2009).

• **Female Empowerment via Blogging:** Women can experience liberation and validation through blogging (Hans, Lee, Tinker, & Webb, 2011), as “blogging’s ultimate product is empowerment” (Kline & Burstein, 2005, p. 248). Walters (2011) described blogs as “a site for everyday activism” (p. 363). Although women may feel marginalized and underrepresented in the offline public sphere, blogs can empower women by emphasizing knowledge important to women and organizing groups of like-minded women in the cyber publicsphere (Stavrositu & Sundar, 2008). For example mommy blogs (i.e., blogs

predominantly about family life written by women) serve as one venue for such organizing. Thousands of mothers embrace blogging as a form of communication, documentation, and socialization as well as a means of producing income (Neff, 2008); they blog to communicate about their families, to document their rites of passage as mothers, and to provide and receive advice on difficult challenges in private life.

Thus, mothers are experiencing empowerment in the blogosphere and their efforts are enjoying increased scholarly attention (Camahort, 2006; Friedman & Calixte, 2009; Hammond, 2010; Kline & Burstein, 2005; Lee & Webb, 2012, 2014; Lopez, 2009; Moravec, 2011; Thompson, 2007; Webb & Lee, 2011). Lee and Webb (2014) argue that mommy bloggers are redefining motherhood in the 21st century. In mainstream U. S. culture, motherhood is typically viewed as a private and domestic matter (Lopez, 2009). However, by chronicling maternal events in the public realm via blogs, bloggers redefine the meaning of motherhood. As mommy bloggers display their own online maternal identity, they typically present a very different picture from motherhood as presented in mainstream media. “Instead of the loving mother, we see women who are frazzled by the demands of their newborn baby, who have no clue what to do when their child gets sick, who suffer from postpartum depression and whose hormones rage uncontrollably” (Lopez, p. 732). Readers see bloggers’ “work in progress” identities as the authentic voices of maternity in the 21st century (Moravec, 2011)—voices that paint realistic pictures of child-rearing while “having a life” (Lopez, 2009).

• **Women’s Movements on Blogs:** Given that the traditional media misrepresented and underrepresented women, blogs provide a meaningful, alternative public platform for women’s voices (Stavrositu & Sundar, 2008). Indeed, female sexual liberation can be enacted via blogging. Attwood (2009) studied women’s sex blogs, and sex “blooks” (blogs turned into books). Attwood describes “blooks” as “the world’s fastest growing new kind of book” (p. 5). Through these blogs and blooks, female authors emphasize sexual openness, empowerment, and pleasure. In these venues, women authors redefine their sexuality and femininity by writing publically about what many people would consider the most intimate and personal form of social life.

Blogs provide a vital venue for gendered self-expression, especially in countries that limit freedom of expression (Monteiro, 2008). Some women in Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and Jordan blog to enact their liberated identities and to publically critique repressive gender roles

(Riegert & Ramsey, 2013). Some of these blogs provide forums for political activism, while others are centers of expression, featuring short stories and prose.

These female bloggers find refuge, identity, and comfort in their blogs. When the blog quoted above was blocked by the Saudi Arabian government, its author began emailing new posts from her cell phone. Readers wanted to stay connected to the author, so they desired to read her posts however posted. Thus, blogging can give repressed women power and voice.

- **Video Blogs or Vlogs:** Vlogs, or video logs, allow users to post in video form (Molyneaux, O'Donnell, & Gibson, 2009) accompanied by text-based comments (Kendall, 2008). Most vlogs focus on personal content. In a study on Youtube vlogs, men posted vlogs more than women (Molyneaux et al., 2009). However, female vloggers were more likely to interact with other bloggers by asking questions and responding.

The quality of vlogs also differs along sex lines. Vlogs created by men had better sound quality; women created more interactive vlogs with better image quality. Men vlog about public and technology-related topics; women vlog about personal matters. Despite gender differences in the content and creation of vlogs, both men and women reported feeling a part of the Youtube community. Blogs and vlogs offer a gender performance platform that is open to the public, whereas other social media, such as Facebook allows users to carefully select the “friends” who will witness their gendered identity performances. With thousands of blogs competing for readership, users may prefer posting on Facebook, a social utility with wider reach than any individual blog, and a documented faithful following.

Gender and Facebook

One of the most important social media trends of the past decade was the rise of the social media website, Facebook. Facebook, one of the fastest growing and most ubiquitous websites in the world, provides a variety of ways for users to display identity (e.g., Boupfa, Grisso, Morris, Webb, & Zakeri, 2013), network (e.g., Webb, Wilson, Hodges, Smith, & Zakeri, 2012), and maintain relationships (e.g., Ledbetter & Mazer, 2014). A pure social media outlet, the site provides multiple ways to discover and locate known individuals, groups, and organizations; after finding these entities, users can interact or maintain privacy and simply follow their updates. “Checking Facebook” can become “deeply integrated in users’ daily lives through specific routines and rituals” (Debatin, Lovejoy, Horn, & Hughes, 2009, p. 83). According to one survey of college students, 81% of Facebook users log

on to the site on any given day (Sheldon, 2009) and they spend an average of 49 minutes per day on the website. Additionally, the site is synced with other social networking sites such as Twitter and Instagram so that users can post content simultaneously to multiple sites.

Unlike many social networking sites, Facebook provides a template to assist new users in the creation of their personal homepages, or their “profile pages,” as they are called in Facebook’s vernacular. Users are prompted to answer questions about demographic information (name, birth date, sex, job, where they went to school), popular culture interests (favorite TV shows, movies, quotes) and social information (relational status). However, the new user is never asked information about nationality, ethnicity, or race. Users can elect to provide as much or as little of this information as they prefer, and can select privacy settings that determine who sees what information within and outside of their created Facebook network. However, the site prompts users for information that they did not provide initially, implying that a complete profile is ideal to the Facebook organization. Personalizing profile pages allows users to display identity and users can modify the content of their homepages at any time. Men and women also may differ in how they design and interpret profiles. In an analysis of profiles of 13 to 30 years old users, males and females were equally likely to provide basic profile information such as name, e-mail address, hometown and a profile picture (Taraszow, Aristodemou, Shitta, Laouris, & Arsoy, 2010). Perhaps for safety reasons, women were less likely to reveal locator information such as a home address and mobile telephone number (Taraszow et al., 2010).

• **Building Facebook Networks:** Users can send a “friend request” to any other Facebook user, and if accepted, the two users are listed as friends on Facebook. Female users are less likely than male users to accept friendship requests from strangers (Ongun & Demirag, 2014). Currently, Facebook reports that the average user has 130 friends (Facebook, 2011), but networks can vary greatly from one to five thousand friends. Kee et al.’s research (2013) documents the most users’ “networks” are actually comprised of tightly bound groups (e.g., immediate family or a close circle of friends) within large, diverse social aggregations (e.g., extended family or everyone-you-know-at-work).

While Facebook friendships can form entirely online, it is more often the case that a Facebook relationship supports a pre-existing offline relationship (Ellison, Steinfield, & Lampe, 2007; Haythornthwaite, 2005; Lampe, Ellison, & Steinfield, 2006). Facebook friends

range from established intimate relationships to acquaintances. Users perceive that when they are Facebook friends with offline friends and family members, the relationships improve with Facebook use (Waters & Ackerman, 2011).

- Identity Presentation: Users broadcast their gendered identities on Facebook via connectivity and narrative (van Dijck, 2013). The unique affordances of Facebook software facilitates connection and narrative, in part, by encouraging photo uploads, status updates, and check-ins.

College students who engage in one of these activities such as posting pictures tend to do many more activities (Webb, et al., 2012); in short, users often go “all in” employing multiple connectivity devices. Users control the exact type and amount of information they display (Zhao, Grasmucks, & Martina, 2008), thus allowing them to craft positive presentations of identity to display to other users (Jones, Remland, & Sanford, 2007). Gender identity is displayed, in part, via pictures. Rose et al. (2012) found that the pictures uploaded to Facebook as profile pictures contain previously identified gendered traits. Specifically, males often upload pictures that make them seem active, dominant, and independent; females focus more on pictures that make them look attractive and dependent (Rose et al., 2012). Bailey et al. (2013) claim that the, “traditional ‘girl’ is well established in online spaces” (2013, p. 95), and other research points to the traditional “male” being present as well. However, Strano (2008) found that women often engage in impression management via their profile pictures more than men. Given the harsh judgment women receive for deviating from pre-existing gender expectations, this finding seems to make sense. While both men and women perform gender in social network spaces, women are under more pressure to do so and to conform to what is shown to them through the advertising and other media.

As Garcia-Gomez (2011) noted, sexuality is one aspect of identity; she reported that female teenagers discursively construct sexuality on Facebook primarily via language used when relating to other girls. Observing the identity disclosure of other users can reduce uncertainty by allowing insight into potential responses, attitudes, and behaviors in future interactions (Sheldon, 2009). Researchers describe the users’ payoff for self-disclosure in identity presentations as potential gain in “social capital” or the making of connections with potential “pay off” (Aubrey & Rill, 2013; Ellison et al., 2007; Jiang & de Bruijn, 2014). By self disclosing, users gain social capital but potentially reduce online privacy (Ellison, Steinfield, & Lampe, 2007; Steinfield, Ellison, & Lampe, 2008).

- **Privacy:** Because Facebook gathers data on its users from profiles and posting activities, the site has come under intense media scrutiny for its privacy policies and changes to those policies. An increased number of users modified their Facebook privacy settings following that media scrutiny (boyd & Hargittai, 2010). O’Brian and Torres (2012) report that over half of Facebook users they surveyed reported a high level of privacy awareness. Mohamed and Ahmad (2012) reported that female users were more likely than male users to increase privacy settings rather than rely on Facebook’s default settings that allow for maximum information sharing. Limiting visibility may allow users to feel more comfortable self-disclosing (Stritzke, Nguyen, & Durkin, 2004).

Indeed, Debatin, Lovejoy, Horn, & Hughes (2009) reported that Facebook users “claimed to understand privacy issues, yet reported uploading large amounts of personal information” (p.83). Tufekci’s (2008a) survey results revealed that users may employ a wide variety of methods to ensure privacy including the use of coded language, nick names, and adjusting post visibility via official privacy settings rather than limit the amount of information they disclose. Indeed, users employ a wide variety of methods for managing privacy such as excluding contact information in profiles and untagging themselves in pictures (Young & Quan-Hasse, 2013). In sum, multiple studies document that Facebook users perceive themselves as knowledgeable about privacy issues and as savvy users who effectively maintain their desired level of privacy through both conventional and unconventional methods.

- **Gendered Usage and Performances:**

Young adult men and women appear to use Facebook in equal numbers (Hargittai, 2008), but they may differ in how they use it. Women versus men spend more online time engaged in social networking (Acar, 2008). Female college students spend more time communicating with others on social networking sites than male college students (Acar, 2008). College women express affection on Facebook more than their male counterparts; additionally, they perceive Facebook affection as more appropriate than college men (Mansson & Myers, 2011). College women received and accepted more friendship requests than men (Acar, 2008). College men reported using Facebook to locate and initiate relationships with potential dating partners, whereas college women reported using Facebook to maintain existing relationships (Sheldon, 2009).

Among college students, both men and women were more likely to initiate Facebook friendships with opposite-sex users with attractive versus unattractive profile pictures (Wang, Moon, Kwon, Evans, & Stefanone, 2010). How do strangers interpret the comments that friends write on users' profiles? Both male and female college students viewed negative comments by friends on a user's profile about the users' moral behavior as influencing the profile owners' attractiveness (Walther, vander Heide, Kim, Westerman, & Tong, 2008). Specifically, the negative comments decreased the attractiveness of female profile owners and increased the attractiveness of male profile owners. Any user can elect to create a sex-free or gender-neutral Facebook profile. In such situations, users must choose their language carefully because their talk style could reveal their gender (Thomson, 2006; Loureiro & Ribeiro, 2014). Furthermore, stereotypical content of messages also leads to deconstructions and assignments of online gender. For example, a user discussing cooking is likely to be decoded as female, whereas a user discussing sports is likely to be decoded as male. Once manifest, gender can play a role in user relationships on Facebook. Facebook enjoys widespread acceptance among users world-wide; in contrast, a smaller number of users play online games. Nonetheless, interactive online games offer a commercial social media based on competition with a strong appeal and unique affordances for gendered performance such as the necessity to create an avatar to represent the self. In the next section we discuss these affordances and the resultant gender performances as we review the social scientific research about online gaming.

Gender and Gaming

In 2012, feminist activist Anita Sarkeesian began a project, "Tropes Versus Women In Video Games," to explore sexism in video games via multiple in depth videos. She launched a Kickstarter with the goal of raising \$6000 for her work, and instead raised 25 times that amount (Liss-Schultz, 2014). Because of her critique of the portrayal of women in online games, Sarkeesian received death threats and rape threats; she experienced attempts to collect and publically distribute her home address and phone number. In 2014, she went into hiding in response to the sheer amount of misogynist hate she received (Campbell, 2014). Sarkeesian's experience exemplifies the popular attention that the topic of gender and gaming is currently receiving. While Sarkeesian's work focuses on the sexism in games in the popular sphere, academic research focuses on how the gaming experience itself is highly gendered in three ways: (1) who is allowed to enjoy video games, (2) how players may

behave within the game, and (3) how those who play video games enact gender within the more “anonymous” digital environment.

Online gaming began as mechanized one person card games such as solitaire, evolved into one-person video games such as early Mario, jumped to player-versus-machine game such as online chess in the 1990s, and then took the social-media leap to player-versus-player games with interaction between players, allowing users to select their opponents, discuss rules and potential rule violations, congratulate winners, and across games, develop on-going relationships. With the advent of massive multi-player online role-playing games (MMORPG), the conversion from online games as diversion to online gaming as a social media was complete. Today, with real-time voice communication between players, users form teams, go on quests together, develop antagonist relationships with serial opponents and collegial relationships with fellow players from around the world. Given that many MMORPG are commercial and proprietary, other social media, such as Facebook, do not offer them as part of the possible ways for users to interact. Instead Facebook purchased and offers versions of simpler games that are far less expensive to own and operate. As the technology and the culture of gaming progresses, it becomes more and more social; for example, games often have entire communities of message boards, Facebook pages, and other arenas of online communication devoted to them. Additionally, gaming is increasingly social itself. For example, Playstation Network and Xbox Live both allow users to post images, videos, and commentary on their experiences playing the games. Other users respond to these postings, and people can develop friend lists. In this way, gaming has become a social medium. Below, the chapter discusses how, in a very real way, gender is policed within the gaming subculture, both in terms of how the genders are represented in the games as Sarkeesian noted, and how men and women play the games.

However, it is important to note that the literature reviewed below carries with it the implicit assumption that MMORPG is a more masculine space in which women are making inroads. While this be true of MMORPG, casual gaming such as Facebook games and games for smart phones have seen a very large influx of female gamers. These spaces do not see some of the misogyny directed at female gamers that is represented in many of the studies below. As such, additional research is needed to further clarify the increasing complex social media phenomenon of online gaming.

• Portrayals of Gaming Characters:

As Olgetree and Drake (2007) argue, “gender differences in participation and character portrayals potentially impact the lives of youth in a variety of ways” (p.537). Unfortunately, such representations of gender can often be stereotyped and can lead to misleading expectations of gender identity, beauty standards, sex appeal, and even gender-related violence (Beasley & Standley, 2002; Dietz, 1998). Such stereotypes extend to the websites designed to promote the commercial MMORPG. Robinson, Callister, Clark, and Phillips (2008) reported that these websites portray female characters in highly sexualized ways and male characters far outnumber female characters. Perhaps gaming companies are simply identifying their base, as more men identify as gamers than women (Shaw, 2011). From promotion to execution, games identify males as the primary audience and imply a woman’s place within the gaming world. To participate, women must fill the position outlined for them or potentially face the kind of backlash Sarkeesian faced when she spoke out against these articulated gender roles.

• Activities in Gaming Per Se:

The experience of playing the games is as gendered as the games themselves. Although women and men spend equal time playing online games (Williams et al., 2009), women largely perceive video games as gendered male (Thornham, 2008; Royse, Lee, Undrahbuyan, Hopson, & Consalvo, 2007). In an ethnographic study, Thornham (2008) found that both men and women play video games quite competently, but women ask for help and instruction as a Means of eliciting social interaction from male gamers. Such requests offer male gamers the opportunity to demonstrate expertise. Both males and females in Thornham’s study played out specific gender roles when gaming. However, as more women have entered the realm of video gaming, they have adopted a multiplicity of roles.

Yates and Littleton (2001) call upon researchers to examine how players construct the very act of gaming and how such constructions may impact and challenge their sense of self, including their own gendered identities. To answer this call, Royce et al. (2007) conducted a study about the levels of play in video games and how women approach this phenomenon in a medium that is clearly skewed towards male gamers. Their findings identified distinct attitudes towards gaming that corresponded with three different levels of play: ∞ Female gamers who identified as power gamers due to their heavy amounts of play had no problems

integrating video games and gender identity because they took far more control over the experience in the characters they created. These gamers valued choice and control, and seemed to choose characters that were feminine and sexy as well as strong. For these female gamers, digital games were not a problematic technology because they were able to embody femininity in their lives as they performed masculinity in their gaming behavior.

The performance of gender was a choice for these women—a preferred negotiation with the technology. They felt empowered, rather than at the mercy of a gendered gaming experience. By contrast, the second category of moderate gamers identified by Royce et al. (2007) exercised control as well. However, instead of control over characters within the game, these gamers controlled the types of games they played. They enacted control at the environmental level. These gamers tended to reinscribe traditional gender divisions by assigning certain genres of games like fantasy and violent games to men, while they claimed ownership over what they perceive as more feminine games such as puzzle and problem-solving games. Finally, those women who identified as non-gamers perceived the entire gaming experience as a male one, and thus displayed no interest in it. Nonetheless, it is “impossible for researchers to make ready conclusions about how digital games may operate as ‘technologies of gender,’ for they seem to operate in different ways for different women” (Royce et al., 2007, p. 560). Kerr (2003) concurs; she reported that women tend to contest and appropriate gaming technology for their own means.

• **Gendered Interactions between Gamers:**

The technology of gaming is always improving, however, and with improvements come new ways in which gender must be negotiated. Until this point, the discussion has for the most part focused on the relationship between the player and the game. Online gaming has become more and more of a reality, from MMORPG to console services that allow for many games to have a multiplayer element that can involve playing with anyone from within the nation and sometimes around the world. For example, Xbox Live, the service that allows Xbox players to connect and game with other Xbox players, recently reached 46 million subscriptions (Agnello, 2013); more than half of all Xbox owners have an Xbox Live subscription. With this service, and others like it, comes the ability to communicate orally via a headset (as opposed to textually, as has been more common with MMORPGs). Due to the general lack of a keyboard with consoles, oral communication is the preferred method of communication

among users while playing.

Such online gaming experiences have arguably moved gaming into the social media sphere. With the rise of interactive online gaming comes the question of how players will perform beyond the games themselves and how they will interact with a vast community of people playing the same game. This is a far different, more dynamic performance than the living room gamers Thornham (2008) studied. At the same time, however, voices are easily identified as male or female, and thus a level of anonymity disappears. Williams et al. (2007) reports that in real-time voice chat, other gamers respond to voice as a gendered identity cue. Kuznekoff and Rose (2012) played neutral audio responses of a man speaking and a woman speaking while playing games on the Xbox Live network; the female voice received three times more negative comments than the male voice or no voice at all. Many comments about the female voice contained specific gendered insults, such as “whore” or “slut”. Williams, Caplan, and Xiong (2009) reported that male players were more verbally aggressive in general in some online multiplayer games than female players. Perhaps voice communication technology allows male gamers to be even more active participants in gendering the gaming experience. Furthermore, Gray (2012) noted that in promotional materials for the games, female characters are sexualized; now the anonymous male voice can and does hurl negative sexualized insults at female voices. Such behavior stands in contrast to Thornham (2008)’s living room gamers, where gender was enacted as a form of expertise within gaming. The verbal insults directed at women in an environment that allows for relatively anonymous voice communication may mark MMORPG as a contested gender space; here we have male voices attempting to bully and police gender roles for female voices. Given that heavy female gamers seek to define their own gaming experience, conflict over the nature of the gendered gaming experience seems inevitable.

As Kuznekoff and Rose (2012) point out, more research is needed in this area. They claim that, “past research has not fully examined the content generated by gamers and instead has focused on that content created by game developers” (p. 553). With online gaming, gamers communally create a large portion of their own experience, and as such the virtual gaming environment becomes a socially constructed space. Based on the research cited above, gender is an important part of that social construction.

- **Gender-Bending:** While voice chat has made it more difficult for gamers to mask their

offline gender identity in online gaming spaces, it has not prevented gender bending entirely. Given that MMORPGs often rely primarily on text-based chat only, gender-bending while gaming has become quite common. Yee (2004) reported that, in massive online games, one out of every two female characters is played by a man. One reason male players cite for gender-bending is that female characters receive more assistance and free gifts while playing. Gender-bending requires a conscious, careful performance to avoid being ousted, however (Motschenbacher, 2009; Remington, 2009).

Researchers have offered numerous rationales for gender-bending in cyberspace. Motivations themselves can be gendered, as they can reflect deferential treatment of men and women in contemporary American society. Men might gender bend because they desire the attention garnered by a female identity (Danet, 1998) or because they desire the power achieved in misrepresentation or intentionally deceiving others. Women might gender-bend to be more comfortable enacting aggression or enjoy the power typically accorded males. Additionally, adopting a masculine identity allows women to avoid online sexual harassment (Danet, 1998). Furthermore, gender-bending allows individuals to experiment with gendered social norms such as differing levels of self-disclosure. Because it is considered more socially acceptable for a woman to self-disclose at a high level than for a man, a man wishing to self-disclose extensively can assume the identity of a woman to avoid questioning. Users can gender-bend to “try on” new ways of communicating in their offline as well as online, personal relationships (Hans et al., 2011). Thus, gender-bending allows users to enact relationships in ways perceived as desirable online but undesirable in offline venues. For those who adhere to traditional gender roles (i.e., biological males enact masculine behaviors, biological females enact feminine behaviors), gender bending is unfathomable and confusing because gender-benders fail to fit easily or readily into existing cognitive categories. “I log in and now I’m a woman. And I’d log off and I’m a man again” (Bruckman, 1993). Gender-benders display “improper” gender identity in a society that considers gender an important part of human interaction (Bruckman, 1993); thus, gender-bending can be viewed as a form of resistance (Rothman, 1993) that poses a threat to the social structure.

Gender benders can develop identity based on performance of unconventionally gendered representations and accordingly can be socially reprimanded and pathologized by evaluators (Plante, 2006). Ibanez (2012) suggests that when users perform online gender and race different from their offline self, such performances can provide new knowledge of other

people's gendered identities. As mentioned above, however, more research is needed in the content gamers create for themselves within the gaming environment, and this includes the performance of gender. Much of the current research centers on the female experience in the masculine environment, and perhaps with good reason. The female experience offers an insight into how gender functions within gaming.

• **Performing Gender While Gaming:**

Questions arise as to what it means to perform gender in an environment that is in every aspect gendered as masculine. Given that female gamers often perceive that they must conform to masculine expectations, even when controlling their own gaming experience. When masquerading as a woman, however, male players must conform to male expectations regarding women. This kind of performance would necessarily involve some tensions and heavy reliance on stereotypes – the very stereotypes perpetuated by the gaming medium. It is possible to resist sexual and gender norms in cyberspace, but unfortunately those very norms also can be and often are reproduced instead of challenged (Brookey & Cannon, 2009; Martey & Consalvo, 2011; Martey, Stromer-Galley, Banks, Wu, & Consalvo, 2014; Stabile, 2014). In addition, created characters tend to be disproportionately male and white, meaning that females and minorities are underrepresented (Waddell, Ivory, Conde, Long, & McDonnell, 2014). This kind of lopsided representation can lead to skewed perceptions of offline social reality (Waddell et al., 2014). There is no doubt that both men and women are playing video games. Some, such as Norris (2004), suggest that the hostile environment toward women within online video games might be a reason why more women are not playing them, but that environment does not preclude female participation entirely, or even mostly. Evidence of this diversity can be found in the recent debate over changes to the popular MMORPG World of Warcraft (WoW) that sought to eliminate sexist and gendered dialogue. Some gamers lauded the changes as a step forward, while others opposed the changes as the result of feminist killjoys (Braithwaite, 2014).

Braithwaite concluded that those opposed to the changes sought to reinforce gender power dynamics. Similarly, Eklund (2011) noted that the study of gender within spaces such as WoW must involve an examination of sexuality; although heterosexual norms and rules typically apply within that online gaming space, there are opportunities for queer performance. In other parts of the world, separate genres of MMORPGs are marketed to cater to different genders. For example, in Taiwan there are “Kawaii Online Role Playing Games”

that target females and “Simulated Online Role Playing Games” that target males (Hou, 2012). While availability of targeted games demonstrates interest on the part of females, it also exemplifies gender roles being reinforced through specific targeting. How gender is performed in increasingly multiplayer gaming environments should be of great interest to scholars concerned with this continually evolving performance context.

Gaming, Facebook, and blogs each offer unique affordances for the performance of gender and each witnesses distinct types of performance. The three exemplars offer diverse models of how affordances impact performances as well as the diversity of gendered performances. The existing findings are interesting but more research is needed.

2.1.3 GENDER IDENTITIES CONSTRUCTED THROUGH SOCIAL MEDIA

Media have inundated our lives. The Internet is the dominant source of information and social media is the main communication channel. In Europe, more than 50% of the European people used social media in 2016. In 2020, 94% of the adults in Iceland used their social networks. These numbers reveal the position of social media in the tangible world and at the same time, they highlight the differences between the genders in the digital one (Statista, 2021). However, are these two worlds that different? Are they connected or do they overlap? Brook Duffy, associate professor at Cornell University, mentioned that “the social media age is often touted as a meritocracy, wherein the ‘best’ content gets rewarded with quantifiable indexes of status: likes, follows, and favorites. But the reality is, women’s voices—be it in the realms of politics, sports, journalism, or academia—fail to register the same level of attention” (Smith, 2019). The way that perceptions and beliefs are disseminated through social media affects our way of thinking! Likewise, the tangible world, in the digital one social inequality exists and, sometimes, it is aggravated by gender bias. Various factors, such as gender representation in media, play a role in gender discrimination.

Media nurture gender roles and behavioral traits through advertisements and photos where women’s roles vary from childcare to workplace activities displaying women dependence while, on the other hand, men are portrayed as more independent and less likely to express their emotions. So, although the digital world gives us the opportunity to express ourselves through our e-identity, in reality, digital settings simply lead us to the replication of the existing norms and culture of the tangible world, related to gender (Rose, et. al., 2012).

Added to this, social media and gender prejudices affect the perception of women's body image. Mass media demonstrate specific role models and images of female beauty. The Pew Research Center conducted a national survey which found that in the US young, women adults (18-29 years of age) are more likely to have one social media account compared to men (Perloff, 2014). As an outcome, they are prone to internalize a contemporary, culturally stereotyped standard of female beauty presented online and their wellbeing would be influenced by the digital, gender display. Although progress has been made towards the promotion of plus-size women, also through hashtags like #loveyourselffirst, #plussize, the cultural stereotypes about the aesthetics of body image are still dominant. And, of course, these findings are connected to the risk of female harassment online where women receive severe criticism for their appearance and their posts which partially happens due to gender stereotypes.

Furthermore, social media opened the door to a "new economy", social media entrepreneurship. Instagram, YouTube, TikTok and other online platforms are blooming, and influencers, who are mainly women, are gaining money from video creation, sponsorships etc. Krishman (2015) claimed that "Online Marketplace Is Perfect for Women in Business" (as mentioned in Duffy, et. al., 2012, p.2). Added to this, in 2020 a survey of 1600 influencers from more than 40 countries showed that male influencers received more money per post than females (1411\$ compared with 1315\$) and they had a wider variety of sponsoring brands in comparison to women (Garlick, 2020). However, in social media female empowerment and entrepreneurship are diminished, women cannot grip media because of its' gender-coded uses. One example of gender bias is the social media advertisement, which was part of COVID-19 campaign "Stay Home. Save Lives" in the UK. This image depicted women taking care of the household and the children, while the man was sitting on the sofa with his family (Topping, 2021).

At this point, we should mention that also in the job market gender stereotyping impacts the career progression of women in managerial positions with only 29% of women in senior management positions internationally (IBR, 2020, as mentioned in Tabassum, et. al., 2021). The male-coded entrepreneurial sector in combination with the cultural conceptions of female self-presentation requires women to undertake more work and risks in order to triumph online (Duffy, et. al., 2012). Evidence from our everyday life confirms that: mothers take more work

breaks compared to men and work less hours as they are responsible for the childcare; women are more sensitive than men and they cannot handle the pressure of a managerial position. So, women “have to fit in” the male working standards in order to get accepted for these managerial positions. However, this requires a lot of time and hard work and as a result, women do not succeed in their careers, or at least not easily.

A study by Browne and Hamilton-Giachritsis (2015), noted that exposure to violence stimulated the same in children leading to other phenomena, including desensitization of children. The audience produces a habituation to violence, with the installation of a passivity and apathy in the face of violent acts. Some children and adolescents are more vulnerable and susceptible than others (Browne and Hamilton-Giachritsis, 2015). Van-Felitzen and Carlson (2009) suggested that every person may be negatively influenced by media violence but the effects are different depending on the equipment, subject and according to the child’s physical and social environment. Gender analysis on the effect of social media indicated that men were more desensitized than women after exposure to violence. Temperament is also a factor of vulnerability, and it was noted that men with high aggression were more vulnerable compared with less aggressive men. The American Academy of Paediatrics (2011) denounced exposure to violence in the media, as a significant risk factor for the health of children and adolescents. Violence experienced through the social media contributes to aggressive behaviour, desensitization acts of violence, nightmares and fear of being assaulted. The attention of paediatricians was drawn to the fact that the practice of violent games increased from 13% to 22% of violent behaviour among children. In these games, the player is the aggressor and he is rewarded if his behaviour succeeds. This phenomenon of reward then leads to the repetitive exhibition of the behaviour leading to normalisation of behaviour. The study by American Academy of Paediatrics (2011) showed that majority of programmes transmitted by the media passively or interactively were violent, and this stimulated violence and aggression among media consumers. The study showed that children and adolescents were very vulnerable, and the media targeted them in their programmes. Therefore, the adolescents were continuously exposed to unlimited images of violence and this increased aggression rates among adolescents.

Huimin (2015) observed that childhood is the basic socialisation stage of individual development which plays a foundation for the entire socialisation process. During childhood, an individual gradually forms an independent world outlook; on life, values, constructs a

personal behavioural norm and evaluation system. The individual also adapts to the self and surrounding role clusters and initially cultivates his own sociality. Among the many factors affecting the socialisation of individuals, mass media has become an important external force that affects the development of people, especially children. The media tools and the media communication content constitute the dual factors that media influence children's socialisation. In Spain, Garitaonandia, Juaristi, Oleaga and Pastor (2008), carried out a qualitative and quantitative study on the effect of mass media on children. This study was carried out among Spanish speaking households in European countries which included the Great Britain, Spain, France, Germany, Italy, Spain, Holland, Sweden, Finland, Denmark, Switzerland and Israel. In the study, the main aim was to conceptualise the effect of mass media on Spanish children in these countries. The study compared the uses, effects, attitudes and behaviour of children aged six years to sixteen years, parents of urban families who have children of those ages; and the teachers of educational centres with the corresponding training cycles. It shows that children watch television almost every day of the week (an average of 5.8 days per week). The study further showed that girls dedicate around two hours and fifteen minutes per day, while the boys had an additional 3 minutes exposure. With regard to age, it was observed that older people have high levels of daily exposure compared to young people. Specifically, the difference was 15 minutes which was marginal in this case. Thus young children were exposed to mass media almost at the same rate as adults. Perez, Rodríguez, Navas and Polyecsko (2008), also observed that children have long exposure to social media and mostly occurs without an adult supervision. Perez, Rodríguez, Navas and Polyecsko (2008), established that a significant proportion of children (34%) had access to uncontrolled media for up to five hours daily. .

Kadiri and Mohammed (2011) noted that television and other broadcast media have had a tremendous effect on young people since the discovery of television sets. The conversation of the impact of the television sets and shaping people's behaviour arose after liberalisation of the airwaves. The new players did not have stringent government control and the broadcasters had the independence to select what programmes to air to the masses. However, there have been serious concerns about the impact of mass media on pupils' behaviour since the discovery of the television set. Cable and satellite television played a key role in defining the popular culture in the 1960s and 1970s. The rate of information dissemination from one corner of the world to another was greatly enhanced. Through media explosion across continents, people across the oceans started to imitate the characters on television and

behaviour patterns were altered to fit in the television characters. One of the key components of mass media were the movies from Hollywood and Hong Kong film makers. Celebrities such as Kardashians, Tiger woods, Beckham and many others form the conversations of children and young people (Giddens, 2006).

Okafor and Malizu (2013) noted that the media may be directly utilized for education and creating positive impact on children behaviour or it can be used as a tool for indoctrination of children. This would revolve around exposing children to mass media devoid of violence and foul language. This would inculcate positive values that yield socially acceptable behaviour. Indoctrination would result in moulding negative and anti-social behaviour to children. Gbadeyan (2009) indicated that since early 1950s, in Nigeria there had been growing pressure by teachers, social scientists and parents to state governors and other elected representatives to advocate for reduction of the level of violence exposed to children through television programmes and on the video games. Kadiri and Mohammed (2011) noted that other than violent and foul language in social media, many parents worry that the quality of the messages and the volume of advertising directed at children has increased. Social media has elevated children and the youth into a pedestal where they claim them to be guiding and determining their destiny.

Social media has subjugated the role of parents to passive members of the society and elevated the children and young people as the key behavioural decision makers and thus children and young people are more likely to dictate behaviour to adults. However, in most instances, this behaviour is one depicted by social media as the norm. Adults have been assumed to be minority and this has led to skyrocketing cases of juvenile delinquency (Kadiri and Mohammed, 2011).

Prot, Anderson, Gentile, Warburton, Saleem, Groves and Brown, (2015) carried out an evaluation of mass media's influence on the lifestyle of youths in Delta State, Nigeria. The study argued that the current generation of young people's behaviour has been shaped by social media more than the earlier generations where the community had a communal responsibility to shape young people's behaviour. The study noted that mass media explosion that started in the 1950s with television has drastically increased to include digital, print and traditional media. The expansion of fibre cables has also seen an extensive coverage and access to the internet as well as smart phones. Internet access through smart phones has compounded issues since almost all regions in the world can now access the internet. The

development of entertainment software and web-based entertainment sites improved people's access to mass media across the continents. This has enhanced cultural exchanges among the people across continents. The study argued that parents must constantly enlighten themselves on the various mass media their children are exposed to if they desire to keep up with mass media revolution. Thus, the authors argue that a child growing up today is faced with diverse media that is fighting to shape their behaviour.

Social media has increased the volume of information that children access. However, the study noted that unchecked access to mass media may lead to information overload and this would alter the child's socialisation skills. Through imitation, the child is likely to adopt certain behaviour patterns depicted by social media characters. Social media has greatly influenced the way children relate to one another. The study noted that children who spent considerable time on social media are aggressive in nature. Prot, Anderson, Gentile, Warburton, Saleem, Groves and Brown (2015) further noted that when children are constantly exposed to violent media, increased their level of aggression. The study noted that most children programmes are centred on physical or verbal violence. The study by Prot et al. (2015) argued that children cartoon series are always presented with a character who was fighting some villain. Thus children get to perceive the world as a dangerous place for them and they must fight back to conquer the world. Thus, children were prone to be violent and aggressive (Prot et al., 2015).

2.1.4 RECOMMENDATIONS TO POLICY MAKERS ON SOCIAL MEDIA IN SHAPPING GENDER IDENTITY

Media play important roles in society. They report on current events, provide frameworks for interpretation, mobilize citizens with regard to various issues, reproduce predominant culture and society, and entertain (Llanos and Nina, 2015). As such, the media can be an important factor in the promotion of gender equality, both within the working environment (in terms of employment and promotion of female staff at all levels) and in the representation of women and men (in terms of fair gender portrayal and the use of neutral and non-gender specific language). Studies have found that although the number of women working in the media has been increasing globally, the top positions (producers, executives, chief editors and publishers) are still very male dominated (White, 2015). This disparity is particularly evident in Africa, where cultural impediments to women fulfilling the role of journalist remain (e.g. travelling

away from home, evening work and covering issues such as politics and sports which are considered to fall within the masculine domain) (Myers, 2015). The Global Media Monitoring Project (GMMP) reports that throughout the world, female journalists are more likely to be assigned 'soft' subjects such as family, lifestyle, fashion and arts. The 'hard' news, politics and the economy, is much less likely to be written or covered by women.

The level of participation and influence of women in the media also has implications for media content female media professionals are more likely to reflect other women's needs and perspectives than their male colleagues. It is important to acknowledge, however, that not all women working in the media will be gender aware and prone to cover women's needs and perspectives and it is not impossible for men to effectively cover gender issues. The presence of women on the radio, television and in print is more likely to provide positive role models for women and girls, to gain the confidence of women as sources and interviewees, and to attract a female audience. Participatory community media initiatives aimed at increasing the involvement of women in the media perceive women as producers and contributors of media content and not solely as 'consumers' (Pavarala, Malik, and Cheeli, 2015). Such initiatives encourage the involvement of women in technical, decision-making, and agenda-setting activities. They have the potential to develop the capacities of women as sociopolitical actors. They also have the potential to promote a balanced and non-stereotyped portrayal of women in the media and to challenge the status quo. In Fiji, women who took part in a participatory video project presented themselves as active citizens who made significant contributions to their families and communities. These recorded images improved the status of women in the minds of government bureaucrats.

Social media prompts individuals to construct their online identities, negotiate and verify identity claims and most important to enact multiple identities (Stets & Serpe, 2016). Scholars agree that social media opens new opportunities for individuals to introduce themselves and their professions, but also raises challenges. Huang-Horowitz and Freberg (2016) proposed a conceptual model of professional identity message function. Professional identity messages were named as internal and social media messages were identified as external. From the perspective of professional identity and its construction in social media, it could be hypothetically predicted how the individual represents her or his professional identity: The sending of a personal message reflects the professional activities in an organization through organizational commitment and values, monitoring and evaluating the whole professional community. Sincere and transparent personal messages of employees, their compliance with obligations, consistency, and commitments in continuous personal social media messages have

direct links with engagement in organizational activities and direct the employee's professional identity construction (Huang-Horowitz & Freberg, 2016).

In education, professional identity construction is studied for different age; gender, society groups, and environment, professional identity construction may be shaped by societal stereotypes about gender. The earlier the individuals start to comply with a provision that brilliance is a "male quality," the stronger its influence may be on their aspirations regarding the chosen profession and construction of professional identity. This stereotype is deeply rooted. Bian (2017) highlighted that artificially created differences in male and female interests are strengthened by social media, could influence learning needs of individuals in different age groups, and could constrict the range and scope of their professional identities. Research by Pinkard, Erete, Martin, and McKinney de Royston (2017) denies the gender-related stereotypes in professional identity construction. One stereotype is that many young women pursue non-STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) fields of study at university or college. Researchers justified that mentoring, motivation, interactive narratives, and online social networking could help individuals disrupt the gendered disparities in professional identity construction in STEM study fields. Pinkard et al. (2017) proved that interactive varied-form narratives in social media could motivate individuals to continue with challenging activities and contribute a sense of authentic purpose to the chosen profession and the work that are important aspects in professional identity construction. Construction of professional identity in social media among students is strongly related to individual or collective social identities through their cultural narratives, which determine their professional choices, norms, and expectations.

Mwangi and others (2019) recommended that every parent must exercise control on the choice of social media their children are exposed to; that parents must also control the volume of social media content accessed by their children this could be by limiting the time spent on social media. The parents need to vouch the content of social media that their children are exposed to ensure that they avoid negative effects of mass media; that schools should sensitise the parents on the critical role played by social media on children's behaviour. This would enlighten the parents and assist them to make best decisions regarding their children's exposure to social media. During the parents meetings, parents should be taught by behavioural experts on how social media may corrupt good morals and at the same

time develop better personalities on children depending on the content that the children are exposed to.

Mwangi and others also recommended that the government needs to exercise control on social media content that the young children are exposed to and , the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology should incorporate sensitisation programmes for parents to underscore the role of social media has on their child's behaviour. Mutisi (2021) Zimbabwe does not have a national social media policy but the government needs to create and maintain policies to guide social media use. A government social media policy should cover institutional use, professional use and employees' personal use. The policy should encourage staff to use social media responsibly and thoughtfully both inside and outside of work. A government social media policy helps ensure that social media is a useful tool for the organisation instead of a liability. There is an urgent need to work with media and communications professionals to promote balanced media coverage and public debate about children and young people's social media practices. Mainstream media commentary often inflates the prevalence and/or overstates the potential for significant harm arising from children and young people's social media practices; recent reports highlight that there is a need to 'demystify online influence' (Yasmeen 2015).

SUMMARY

This chapter gave an overview of literature review which guided the study. Literature review included an analysis of the impacts of social media to gender identity crisis in education and the community. The chapter outlined how social media is helping shape gender identities in people's lives the chapter also highlighted the role of policy makers in shaping gender identities through social media.

CHAPTER THREE RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.0 INTRODUCTION

This chapter looks at the research design or strategy developed, the target population, sample, research instrument, types of data (primary and secondary data), validity and reliability of the instruments employed by the researcher, the limitations to methodology, data presentation and validity.

3.1 CASE STUDY RESEARCH DESIGN

According to McCombes (2019) a case study is a detailed study of a specific subject, such as a person, group, place, event, organization, or phenomenon. Case studies are commonly used in social, educational, clinical, and business research. A case study research design usually involves qualitative methods, but quantitative methods are sometimes also used. Case studies are good for describing, comparing, evaluating and understanding different aspects of a research problem. According to Lohman (2021) case study research involves an in-depth investigation of a contemporary, real-life phenomenon in its context. A case study can focus on one person, a group, an organization, or an event. Case study research is used in many disciplines, including social sciences, education, health, business, law, and other disciplines. Case study research can be used to develop new theories, expand on existing theories, challenge traditional theories, and conduct pilot research. Case study research is good for understanding complex issues in their real-life settings, and it is often used to understand the perspective of participants in those settings.

Case Study Research: Advantages

According to Lohman (2021) a case study research has the following advantages:

- Ability to see a relationship between phenomena, context, and people.
- Flexibility to collect data through various means.
- Ability to capture the context and lived reality of participants.
- Flexibility to be used at various points in a research project, including pilot research.
- Ability to explore deeper causes of phenomena.
- Ease of explaining results to a non-specialist audience.

Case Study Research: Disadvantages

According to Lohman (2021) the case study research has the following disadvantages:

- Difficulty generalizing findings from one case study to other settings.

- Risk of bias, as the researcher's personal opinions and preferences may influence the research.
- Difficulty convincing readers who are accustomed to clear-cut statistical answers.
- In-depth analysis may not be suitable for the audience.

3.2 POPULATION

According to Bhandari (2022) a **population** is the entire group that you want to draw conclusions about. Momqh (2022) stated that a population is the complete set group of individuals, whether that group comprises a nation or a group of people with a common characteristic. In statistics, a population is the pool of individuals from which a statistical sample is drawn for a study. Thus, any selection of individuals grouped by a common feature can be said to be a population.

3.3 Sample design

Kabir (2016) stated that sample design refers to the plans and methods to be followed in selecting sample from the target population and the estimation technique formula for computing the sample statistics. These statistics are the estimates used to infer the population parameters.

3.3.1 Sampling techniques used were:

Convenience sampling

According to Etikan and others (2016) convenience sampling is a type of non-probability or non-random sampling where members of the target population that meet certain practical criteria, such as easy accessibility, geographical proximity, availability at a given time, or the willingness to participate are included for the purpose of the study.

Judgmental sampling

According to Etikan and others (2016) the purposive sampling technique also called judgmental sampling, is the deliberate choice of a participant due to the qualities the participant possesses. It is a non-random technique that does not need underlying theories or a set number of participants. The researcher decides what needs to be known and sets out to find people who can and are willing to provide the information by virtue of knowledge or

experience.

3.3.2 Sample Size

The researcher did not have a pre-nominated sample size as the judgmental sampling technical was used and it does not default to a set number of participants. This satisfies the requirement of the researcher to select as many participants as possible until to a point of guarantee where new information is not coming in .People with experience and willing to share information were contacted.

Table 3.1: SAMPLE SIZE

	Population	Sample size	%
Head Teachers	50	30	60
Teachers	150	85	56.7
Parents or Guardians	100	50	50
Total	300	165	55

3.4 TYPES OF DATA

3.4.1 Primary data

Primary data are data (primary sources) you directly obtained through your empirical work (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill 2015, p316). Primary data sources include surveys, observations, experiments, questionnaire, and personal interview.

Advantages of primary sources of data

- ❖ Data is more accurate and reliable as it is obtained direct from the subjects.
- ❖ The data is relevant to the problem at hand as it is modifiable to meet the requirements or objectives.
- ❖ It tends to be cheaper when the intended population is concentrated around the same place or when a sample is chosen to represent the whole population.

Disadvantages of primary sources of data

- ❖ It takes a lot of time to gather data, which is, designing the questionnaires, and administration of the actual survey.
- ❖ It tends to be expensive where the entire population is spread around the country.

3.4.2 SECONDARY DATA

Secondary data are data (primary sources) that were originally collected by someone else (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill 2015, p316). Secondary data collection sources are government publications, websites, books, journal articles, internal records. When compared to primary data, secondary data has a number of advantages which include the following:

- It is inexpensive to collect and process.
- Volumes of information may be available which gives the researcher a wider and more appropriate choice.
- The data is from reputable and authoritative sources and hence verification is ensured.
- Since the data is readily available; less time was spent compiling the information.

Disadvantage of secondary data

- Some data may not be relevant to the problem at hand.
- Data may be out-dated.
- Data may be in a different format or units than is required by the researcher.
- Secondary information pertinent to the research topic is either not available or is only available in insufficient quantities.

3.5 RESEARCH INSTRUMENTS

This shows the tools used to gather relevant data surrounding the role of social media in shaping gender identity in education. The researcher employed the administration of questionnaire for data collection tools.

3.5.1 Questionnaires

McLeod (2018) stated that a questionnaire is a research instrument consisting of a series of questions for the purpose of gathering information from respondents. Questionnaires can be thought of as a kind of written interview. They can be carried out face to face, by telephone, computer or post.

Advantages of questionnaires

- ❖ It was convenient to the top management who could not be interviewed because of their busy schedules.
- ❖ Due to anonymity that was afforded by the questionnaires, which has enabled the respondents to answer frankly as there was no fear of victimization.
- ❖ The data obtained was easy to understand, analyse and interpret as the results could be

quantified.

Disadvantages of questionnaires

- ❖ Some of the questions are not easy to understand and there is no-one close by to explain.
- ❖ The respondent's answers were limited to the researchers expected answers of yes or no and the respondents could not answer in any way different.
- ❖ Respondent had sometimes a general lack of interest thus giving false answers or giving a third party to answer who might not be the right person.

Type of questionnaire

Likert Scale

This scale as a psychometric tool includes a set of statements of research study's hypothesis. Participants in the survey are asked to state their level of agreement with those given statements from strongly agree to strongly disagree. Although the original Likert scale included five symmetrical and balanced points, during the years it has been used with different measurement range in terms of number of response options from two-points to eleven-points. (Simms and others) (2019).

Advantages of Likert scale

- Responses are gathered in a standard way.
- It is relatively quick to collect information.
- Can be collected from a large portion of a group.
- Easy to use
- Gives participants a wide range of choices which may make them feel more comfortable to respond.

Disadvantages of Likert scaling–

- Participants may not be completely honest which may be intentional or unintentional.
- Participants may base answers on feelings toward survey or subject
- Many answer according to what they feel is expected of them as participants.
- Scale requires great deal of decision-making
- Can take a long time to analyse the data

3.7 Validity and reliability of research instruments

Reliability and validity are closely related, but they mean different things. A measurement can be reliable without being valid. However, if a measurement is valid, it is usually also reliable.

Validity

According to Middleton (2019) validity refers to how accurately a method measures what it is intended to measure. If research has high validity that means it produces results that correspond to real properties, characteristics, and variations in the physical or social world.

Reliability

Middleton (2019) stated that Reliability refers to how consistently a method measures something. If the same result can be consistently achieved by using the same methods under the same circumstances, the measurement is considered reliable.

3.8 Data Presentation

Is a skill set that seeks to identify, locate, manipulate, format and present data in such a way as to optimally communicate meaning and proffer knowledge. Data Presentation weds the science of numbers, data and statistics in discovering valuable information from data and making it usable, relevant and actionable with the arts of data visualization, communications, organizational psychology and change management in order to provide Business Intelligence solutions with the data scope, delivery timing, format and visualizations that will most effectively support and drive operational, tactical and strategic behaviour toward understood business (or organizational) goals

3.9 Summary

This chapter provided a background of how the research was conducted. It outlined the

research design, the target population, sample, research instruments, and types of data, concepts of validity and reliability and limitations of the methodology used. Chapter 4 looks at data presentation and analysis.

CHAPTER 4

DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

4.0 Introduction

This chapter seeks to present data that was collected from respondents through the use of questionnaires. Presentation and analysis of data is given under this chapter. The chapter presents and analyses the findings of the research into the role of social media in shaping gender identity in education. Presentations of results are in form of tables, charts and graphs. The last paragraph is the summary, which highlights major issues raised and gives focus of the following chapter.

4.1. Response Rate

The target population of this study was head teachers, teachers and parents or guardians. Out of the 165 questionnaires distributed, a total of 154 filled questionnaires were collected by the researcher and used for analysis. This translated to a response rate of 93%. The response rate conforms to stipulations by Mugenda (1999), that a response rate of 50% is adequate for analysis and reporting; a rate of 60% is good and a response rate of 70% and above is excellent for analysis. The response rate is illustrated in table 4.1

Table 4.1: Response Rate

Response Rate	Frequency	%
Response	154	93
Non Response	11	7
Total	165	100

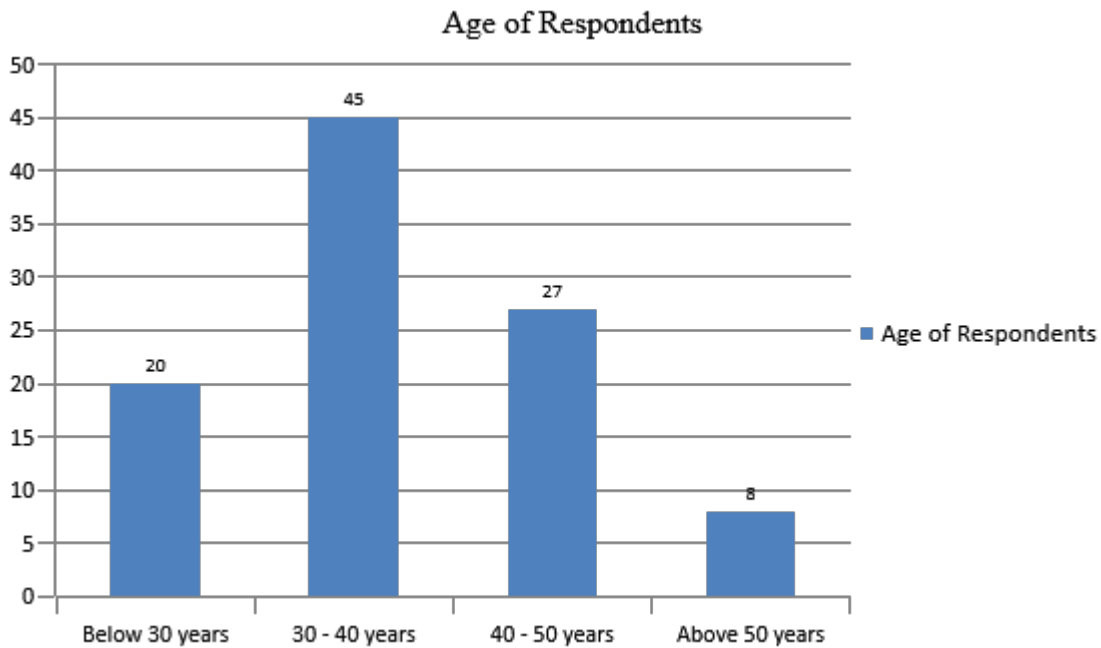
Q1. Age of respondents

The study sought to establish the age of the respondents involved in the research study. The findings of the study are as indicated in table 4.2

Table 4.2

Respondents	Frequency	%
Below 30 years	31	20
30 – 40 years	69	45
40 – 50 years	41	27
Above 50 years	13	8
Total	154	100

Figure 4.1.1 Age of Respondents



The percentages of those respondents who were 30 to 40 years were 45% and those aged between 40 to 50 years was 27%, those who were aged below 30 years was 20% and those who were aged above 50 years was 8%. This shows that it is likely that the employees are likely to furnish reliable information because they are mature people.

Q2. Sex of respondents

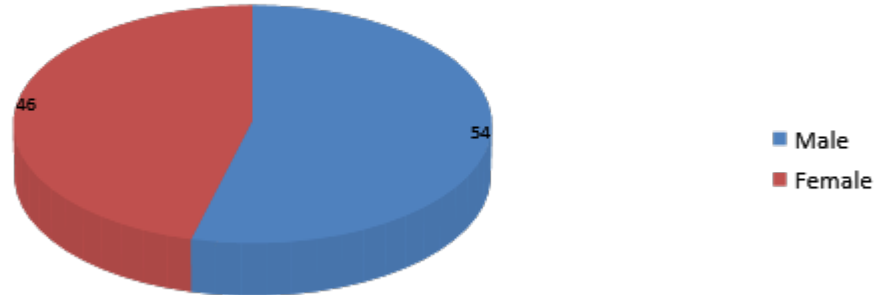
The study sought to establish the sex of the respondents. The findings of the study are as indicated in table 4.3

Table 4.3: Gender of Respondents

Gender	Frequency	%
Male	83	54
Female	71	46
Total	154	100

Figure 4.1.2 Sex of Respondents

Sex of Respondents



From table 4.2, the study found that 54% of the respondents were male and 46% were female. The finding indicates that males form the largest number of respondents in comparison to females. Therefore, measures should be put in place to attract more female participation in programs or surveys.

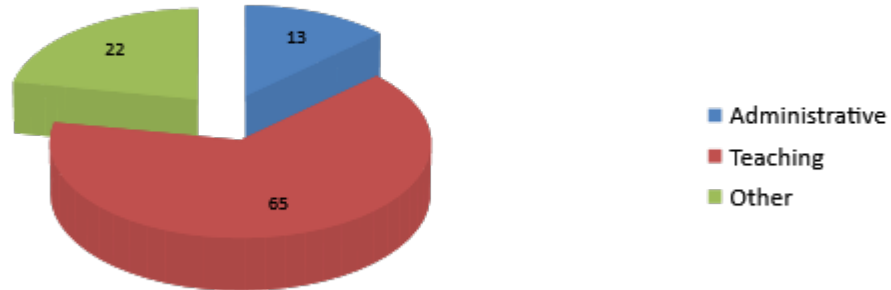
Q3. Positions held by respondents

Table 4.4 Positions Held by Respondents

Respondents	Frequency	%
Administrative	20	13
Teaching	100	65
Other	34	22
Total	154	100

Figure 4.1.3 Positions held by Respondents

Position held



From table 4.4, the study found that 65% of the respondents were held teaching positions, 22% had other positions and 13% held administrative. The finding indicates that most of the respondents are in the teaching profession.

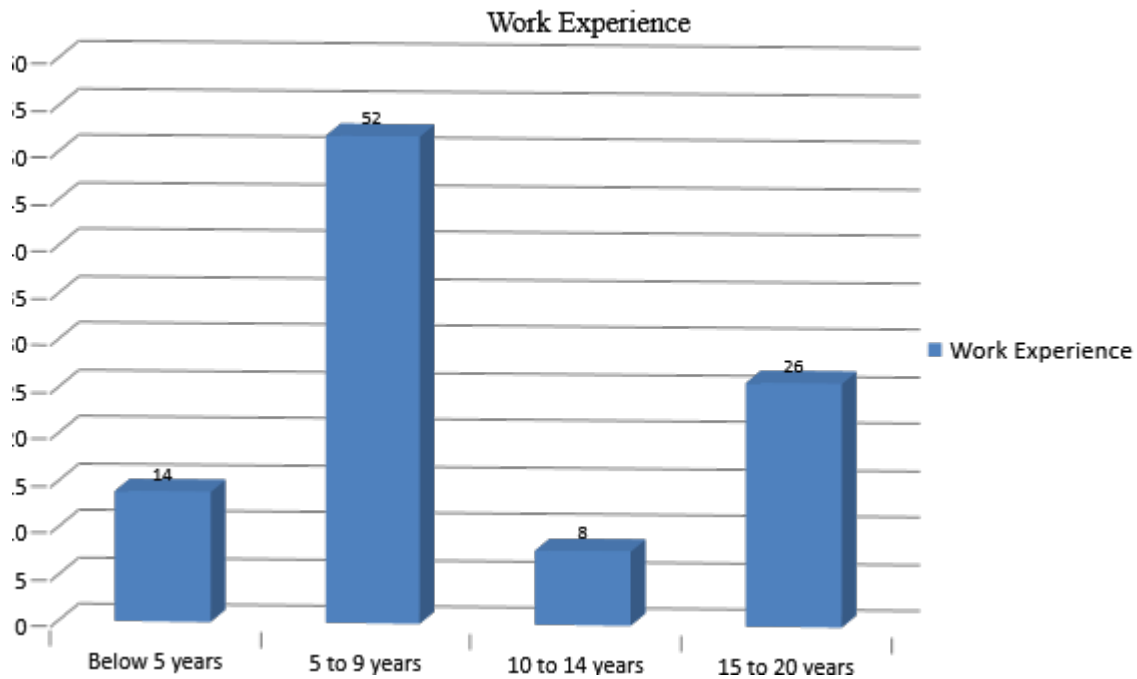
Q4. Work Experience

The table 4.5 below shows data collected regarding the work experience.

Table 4.5 Work Experience

Number of Years	Frequency	%
Below 5 years	21	14
5 to 9 years	80	52
10 to 14 years	13	8
15 to 20 years	40	26
Total	154	100

Figure 4.1.4 Work Experience



The percentages of those that has worked below five years was 14%, those who worked 5 to 9 years was 52%, those between 10 to 14 years which are 28% and those who worked between 15 to 20 years were 26% respectively shows that it is likely that the people are have a very good work experience they are likely to furnish reliable information about the role of social media in shaping gender identity in education.

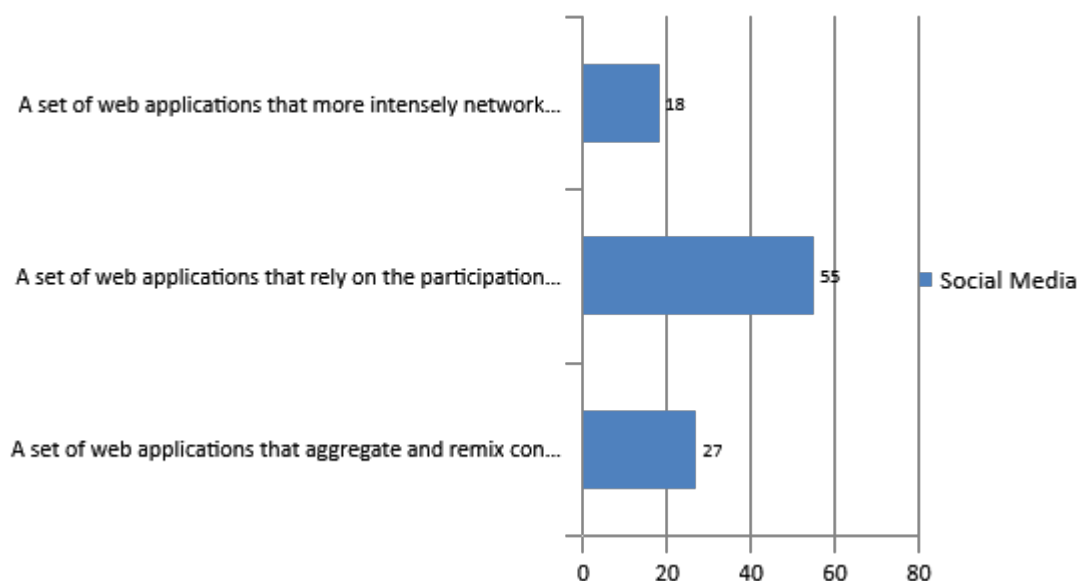
Q5. What is social media?

Table 4.6 Social Media

	Frequency	%
A set of web applications that aggregate and remix content from multiple sources	42	27
A set of web applications that rely on the participation of mass groups of users	84	55
A set of web applications that more intensely network users and content together	28	18
Total	154	100

Figure 4.1.5 Social Media

Social Media



The majority of respondents about 55% revealed that social media is a set of web applications that rely on the participation of mass groups of users, 27% of the respondents revealed that social media is a set of web applications that aggregate and remix content from multiple sources and 18% of the respondents revealed that social media is A set of web applications that more intensely network users and content together. According to O'Reilly, 2007; cited in Ahn, 2011 Social media can be defined as a set of web applications that (a) rely on the participation of mass groups of users rather than centrally controlled content providers, (b) aggregate and remix content from multiple sources, and (c) more intensely network users and content together. In this way, social media offers new expectations, interactions and activities – such as user-generated content, remixing and dissemination (Bruns, 2008). This is associated with the rise of 'participatory culture', which shapes children and young people's expectations as active agents in media practices and the world around them (Jenkins et al., 2006). Social media can thus also be understood as a 'cultural mindset' towards the diverse production, use and purposes of digital communications (boyd, 2014). This diversity can be broken down into technical, material, social and motivational dimensions. While these dimensions are interrelated, individually they illustrate specific enablers of, and constraints, on children and young people's social media practices.

Q6. What do you understand by gender identity?

Table 4.7 Gender Identity

	Frequency	%
A personal conception of oneself as male or female	85	55
The concept of gender role	44	29
The outward manifestations of personality	11	7
A person's <u>assigned sex</u>	14	9
Total	154	100

Figure 4.1.6 Gender Identity

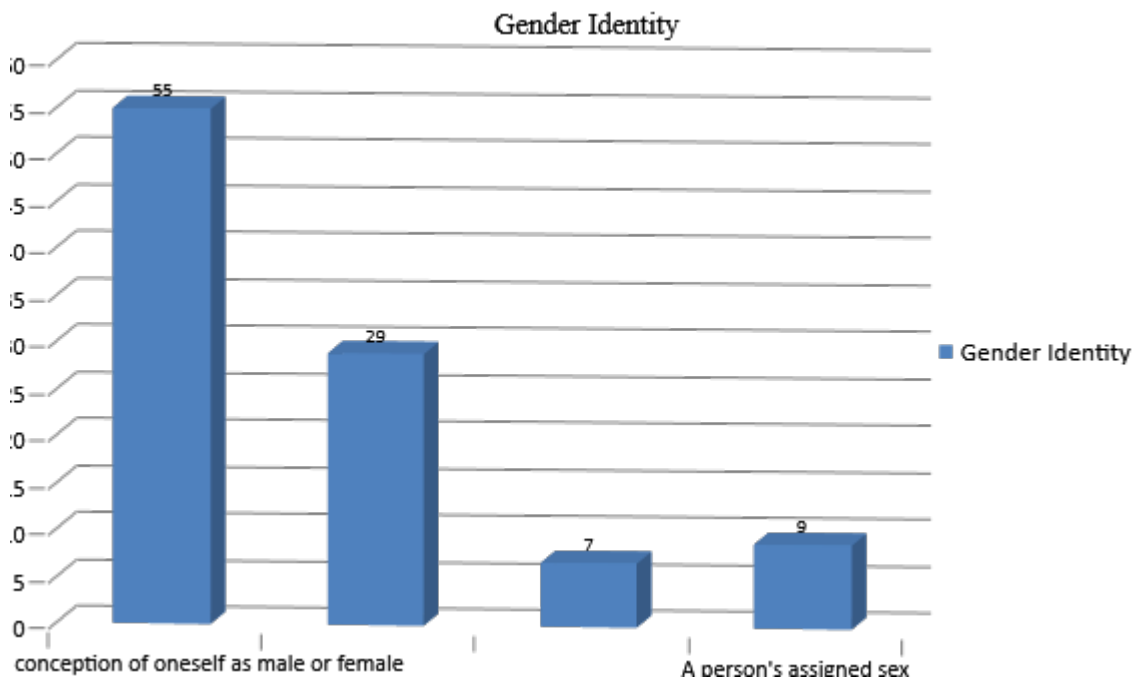


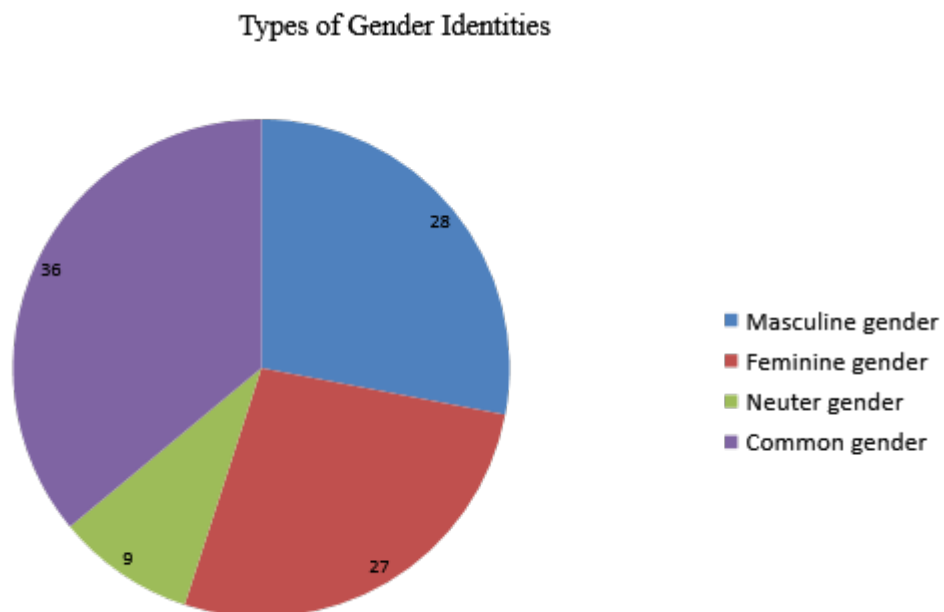
Table 4.7 shows that majority (55%) of the respondents indicated that gender identity is a personal conception of oneself as male or female, 29% revealed that it is the concept of gender role, 9% they revealed that it is a person’s assigned sex and 7% revealed that it is the outward manifestations of personality.

Q7. Which types of gender identities have been revealed by social media to you?

Table 4.8 Types of Gender Identities

	Frequency	%
Masculine gender	43	28
Feminine gender	42	27
Neuter gender	14	9
Common gender	55	36
Total	154	100

Figure 4.1.7 Types of Gender Identities



The majority of respondents about 36% revealed that common gender, 28% of the respondents revealed masculine gender, 27% of the respondents revealed feminine gender and 9% of respondents revealed neuter gender. According to Kumar (2022) there are **four different types of genders** that apply to living and non-living objects masculine, feminine, neuter and common gender.

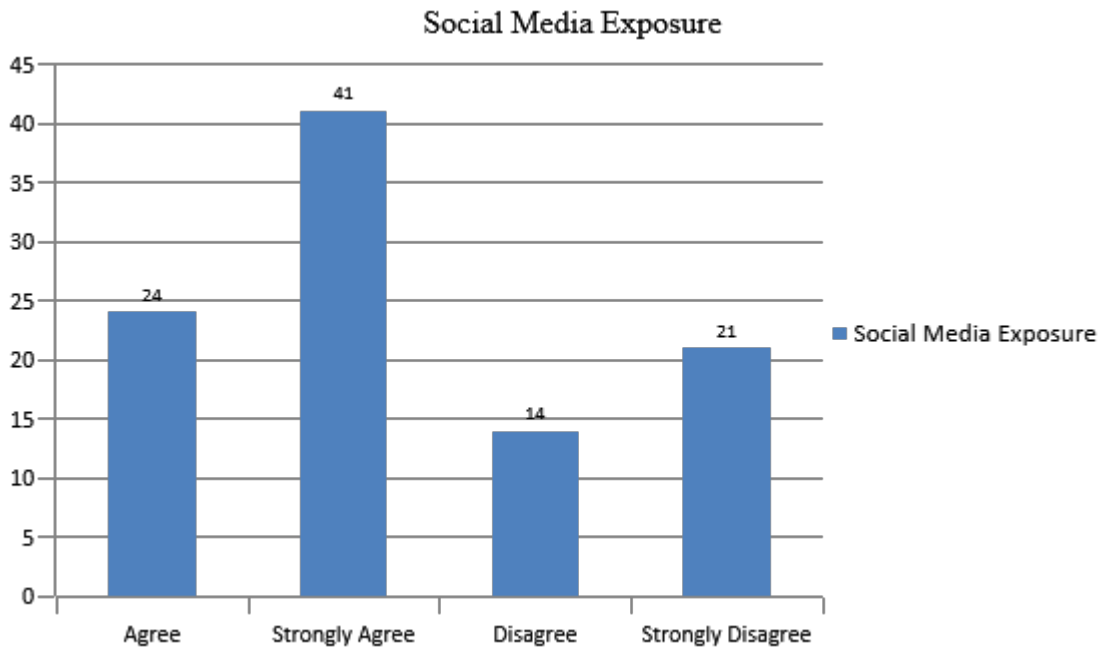
Q8. Children are exposed to social media at home

Table 4.9 Exposure to social media at home

	Frequency	%
Agree	37	24

Strongly Agree	63	41
Disagree	21	14
Strongly Disagree	33	21
Total	154	100

Figure 4.1.8 Social Media exposure at Home



Sixty-five percent of the respondents revealed that children were exposed to social media at home while thirty-five percent disagreed that children were exposed to social media at home. The study established that majority of children are exposed to social media at home. The study found out that at home, most children spend most of their time on social media. This finding concurs with Giddens (2006) who noted that children had more access and exposure to social media than any other previous generation. Giddens (2006) noted that this exposure could either be positive or negative depending on the content that the children are exposed to through social media. The study concluded that children at tender age have access to a wide range of social media such you-tube and other web-based. However, social media can be positively used to develop the children’s talent while at the same time, if unmanaged could be destructive and corrupt children’s behaviour.

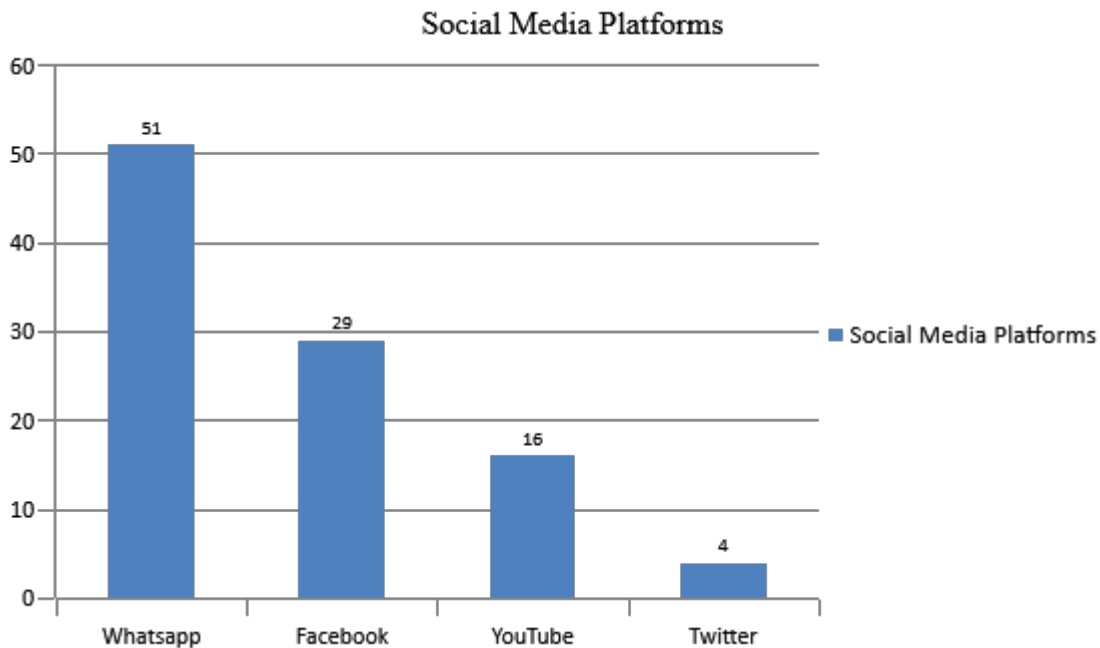
Q9. Which Social Media platform you aware of?

Table 4.10 Social Media platforms

Social Media platforms	Frequency	%
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Facebook	78	51
Whatspp	45	29
Twitter	25	16
YouTube	6	4
Total	154	100

Figure 4.1.9 Social Media Platforms



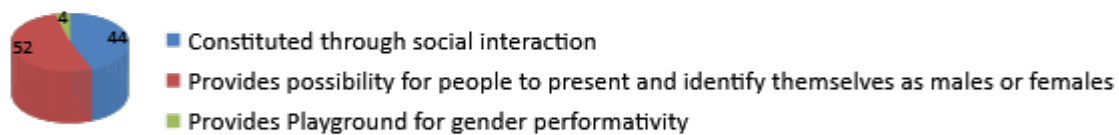
The majority of respondents about 51% revealed that whatsapp was the most used social media platform, 29% of the respondents revealed that facebook was the most used social media platform, 16% and 4% revealed that twitter is the most used social media platform. According to Mutisi (2021) in Zimbabwe, we have over five million WhatsApp users making it the most used social media platform, outranking Facebook Messenger and other platforms. Government bodies, local authorities and parastatals are now under increasing pressure to digitise their services, including their interaction with clients.

Q10. How are gender identities constructed through Social Media?

Table 4.11

	Frequency	%
Constituted through social interaction	68	44
Provides possibility for people to present and identify themselves as males or females	80	52
Provides Playground for gender performativity	6	4
Total	154	100

Figure 4.1.10 Construction of Gender Identities
Construction of Gender identities



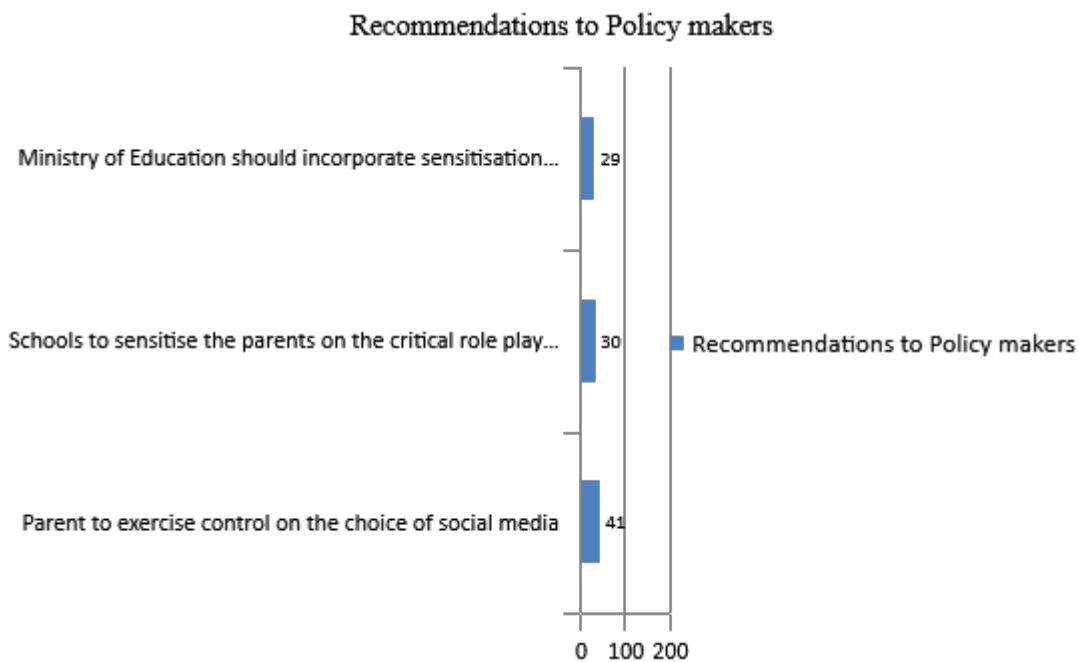
The majority of respondents about 52% revealed that gender identities are constructed through social media because it provides possibility for people to present and identify themselves as males or females, 44% of the respondents who revealed that gender identities are constituted through social interaction and 4% of the respondents revealed that gender identities are constructed through social media because it provides playground for gender performativity. Goffman (1976) argued that gender identity is constituted through social interaction - people tend to behave in ways that are predictable and acceptable in social norms and cultural rules. Not only women are more active on Facebook and impression management, in a sense, Facebook can also be seen as a “playground” for gender performativity (Paasonen, 2002). As an online social platform, Facebook provides the possibility for people to present and identify themselves as males or females. Some argued that this self-presentation of identity and control over identity are the main motivation for young adults to connect people on Facebook (e.g., Seidman, 2013; Zhao, Grasmuck, & Martin, 2008).

Q11. Which of the following recommendations to policymakers can help to improve the role of Social Media in shaping gender identity?

Table 4.12 Recommendations to Policymakers

	Frequency	%
Parent to exercise control on the choice of social media	63	41
Schools to sensitise the parents on the critical role played by social media	46	30
Ministry of Education should incorporate sensitisation programmes for parents to underscore role of social media	45	29
Total	154	100

Figure 4.1.11 Recommendations to Policymakers



The majority of the respondents forty-one percent revealed that parents must exercise control on the choice of social media for their children, thirty percent revealed that Schools to sensitize the parents on the critical role played by social media and twenty-nine percent revealed that Ministry of Education should incorporate sensitization programs for parents to underscore role of social media. This finding concurs with Mwangi and others (2019) recommended that every parent must exercise control on the choice of social media their children are exposed to; that parents must also control the volume of social media content

accessed by their children this could be by limiting the time spent on social media. The parents need to vouch the content of social media that their children are exposed to ensure that they avoid negative effects of mass media.

4.2 Summary

This chapter has looked at data presentation and analysis. The data was obtained from questionnaires. A total of 165 questionnaires were sent out and 154 were responded to. This gave a 93.33% response rate.

The next chapter looks at the summary, findings and recommendations.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARIES CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.0 Introduction

This chapter concludes the research study. It provides a summary of the previous chapters and covers findings of the study and gives recommendations based on research findings.

5.1 Summary

The purpose of the research was an investigation into the role of social media in shaping gender identity in education.

Chapter one covered the introduction of the research, the background to the study, research problem, main research question, sub research question, research objectives, significance of the study, delimitation of the study, limitations to the study, definition of terms

Chapter two it covered the literature review of this research study. Equally, the theoretical frameworks used for the dissertation were discussed noting the justifications for using them.

Chapter three covered the research design, population, sample design sources of data, research instruments and validity and reliability of research instruments. The population used were head teachers, teachers and parents or guardians who were given questionnaires to fill. The case study method was used as the research design.

Chapter four has looked at data presentation and analysis. The data was obtained from questionnaires. A total of 165 questionnaires were sent out and 154 were responded to representing 154/165(93.33%) response rate.

5.2 Major findings

- **Meaning of Social Media**

Fifty-five percent of respondents revealed that social media is a set of web applications that rely on the participation of mass groups of users, 27% of the respondents revealed that social media is a set of web applications that aggregate and remix content from multiple sources and 18% of the respondents revealed that social media is A set of web applications that more intensely network users and content together. According to the majority of the respondents

social media is a set of web applications that rely on the participation of mass groups of users.

- **Gender Identity Meaning**

Fifty-five percent of the respondents indicated that gender identity is a personal conception of oneself as male or female, 29% revealed that it is the concept of gender role, 9% they revealed that it is a person's assigned sex and 7% revealed that it is the outward manifestations of personality. According to the majority of the respondents gender identity is a personal conception of oneself as male or female.

- **Types of gender identities are on Social Media**

Thirty-six percent of the respondents revealed that common gender, 28% of the respondents revealed masculine gender, 27% of the respondents revealed feminine gender and 9% of respondents revealed neuter gender. According to the findings the majority of the respondents revealed that they believed that there was common gender.

- **Children Social Media Exposure at home**

Sixty-five percent of the respondents revealed that children were exposed to social media at home while thirty-five percent disagreed that children were exposed to social media at home. The study established that majority of children are exposed to social media at home. The findings revealed that the majority of the respondents revealed that children were exposed to social media at home. The study established that majority of children are exposed to social media at home. The study found out that at home, most children spend most of their time on social media.

- **Social Media Platforms**

Fifty-one percent of the respondents revealed that whatsapp was the most used social media platform, 29% of the respondents revealed that facebook was the most used social media platform, 16% and 4% revealed that twitter is the most used social media platform. The findings revealed that there was several types of social media platforms namely, whatsapp, facebook, YouTube and twitter. The majority of respondents revealed that whatsapp was the most used social media platform in Zimbabwe.

- **Gender identities constructed through Social Media**

Fifty-two percent of the respondents revealed that gender identities are constructed through social media because it provides possibility for people to present and identify themselves as males or females, 44% of the respondents who revealed that gender identities are constituted through social interaction and 4% of the respondents revealed that gender identities are constructed through social media because it provides playground for gender performativity. Thus the majority of respondents revealed that gender identities are constructed through social media because it provides possibility for people to present and identify themselves as males or females.

- **Recommendations to policymakers can help to improve the role of Social Media in shaping gender identity**

Forty-one percent revealed that parents must exercise control on the choice of social media for their children, thirty percent revealed that Schools to sensitize the parents on the critical role played by social media and twenty-nine percent revealed that Ministry of Education should incorporate sensitization programs for parents to underscore role of social media. Thus the majority of the respondents revealed that parents must exercise control on the choice of social media for their children are exposed to. Parents must also control the volume of social media content accessed by their children this could be by limiting the time spent on social media. The parents need to vouch the content of social media that their children are exposed to ensure that they avoid negative effects of mass media

5.3 Conclusion

This research provided a high level snapshot of the evidence of children and young people's social media use and the effects on wellbeing. It shows the effects are broadly positive, but are mediated by the social contexts and familial conditions in which children and young people live. Children and young people bring to their social media use pre-existing social, cultural, political, emotional and psychological experiences and status. It is the ways in which they interact with social media to produce identity, community and culture that provide the clearest insight into the role of social media for wellbeing. Moreover, how policy-makers, careers, professionals and service providers respond to social media in policy, service delivery and practice all contribute to the broader debates and practices by which social

media affects the wellbeing of children and young people. The benefits and risks of social media use map to broader patterns of communicative and literacy practices, as well as socio-economic and cultural disadvantage. Intervening in this cycle has the potential to generate a steep change in the wellbeing of the children and young people who stand most to benefit. Such efforts must not only be informed by research, but by the views and preferences of children and young people themselves.

5.4 Recommendations

- Parent must exercise control on the choice of social media their children are exposed to; that parents must also control the volume of social media content accessed by their children this could be by limiting the time spent on social media. The parents need to vouch the content of social media that their children are exposed to ensure that they avoid negative effects of mass media.
- Schools should sensitise the parents on the critical role played by social media on children's behaviour. This would enlighten the parents and assist them to make best decisions regarding their children's exposure to social media. During the parents meetings, parents should be taught by behavioural experts on how social media may corrupt good morals and at the same time develop better personalities on children depending on the content that the children are exposed to.
- The government through the Ministry of Education needs to exercise control on social media content that the young children are exposed to. They should incorporate sensitisation programmes for parents to underscore the role of social media has on their child's behaviour.
- Zimbabwe does not have a national social media policy but the government needs to create and maintain policies to guide social media use. A government social media policy should cover institutional use, professional use and employees' personal use. The policy should encourage staff to use social media responsibly and thoughtfully both inside and outside of work. A government social media policy helps ensure that social media is a useful tool for the organization instead of a liability.
- There is an urgent need to work with media and communications professionals to promote balanced media coverage and public debate about children and young people's social media practices. Mainstream media commentary often inflates the

prevalence and/or overstates the potential for significant harm arising from children and young people's social media practices; recent reports highlight that there is a need to 'demystify online influence' (Yasmeen 2015).

- There is need to analyze the value and purpose of social media use in approaches to student development work, and this research reinforces the need to focus on integration rather than abstinence when it comes to social networking site use. As history has proven, there are always generational divides in understanding and accepting technology and it is incumbent upon student affairs professionals to assist colleagues in the integration of social networking tools into the work we do with students.

5.5 Further areas of Research

While research on children and young people's social media practices and wellbeing is burgeoning, there is relatively little research on the practices of children under the age of twelve. While internet access for children under the age of nine has significantly increased in recent years, there are major gaps in research and evidence about their activities and skill levels, and the risks and benefits of their online practices.

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APPENDIX 1

STUDY QUESTIONNAIRE GUIDE

My name is Chinake Alice student at Bindura University of Science Education I am carrying out a research on **the role of social media in shaping gender identity in education in Zimbabwe**. I therefore kindly ask that you assist me by completing this interview guide. I also give you assurance that your responses will be treated confidentially and they will only be used for the intended purpose.

Please complete this questionnaire by ticking in the appropriate box or writing on given spaces.

Section A: Demographic Information

Q1. Age of Respondents

1	Below 30 years	
2	30 – 40 years	
3	40 – 50 years	
4	Above 50 years	

Q2. Sex of Respondents

1	Male	
2	Female	

Q3. Position Held

1	Administrative	
2	Teaching	
3	Other	

Q4. Work Experience

1	Below 5 years	
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2	5 – 9 years	
3	10 – 14 years	
4	15 – 20 years	

Section B

Q5. What is Social Media?

A set of web applications that aggregate and remix content from multiple sources	
A set of web applications that rely on the participation of mass groups of users	
A set of web applications that more intensely network users and content together	

Q6. What do you understand by gender identity?

A personal conception of oneself as male or female	
The concept of gender role	
The outward manifestations of personality	
A person's <u>assigned sex</u>	

Q7. Which types of gender identities have been revealed by social media to you?

Masculine gender	
Feminine gender	
Neuter gender	
Common gender	

Q8. Children are exposed to social media at home

Agree	
Strongly Agree	
Disagree	

Strongly disagree	
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Q9. Which Social Media platform you aware of?

Whatsapp	
Facebook	
YouTube	
Twitter	

Q10. How are gender identities constructed through Social Media?

Constituted through social interaction	
Provides possibility for people to present and identify themselves as males or females	
Provides Playground for gender performativity	

Q11. Which of the following recommendations to policymakers can help to improve the role of Social Media in shaping gender identity?

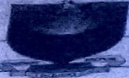
Parent to exercise control on the choice of social media	
Schools to sensitise the parents on the critical role played by social media	
Ministry of Education should incorporate sensitisation programmes for parents to underscore role of social media	

THANK YOU

APPENDIX 2

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

P Bag 1020
BINDURA
ZIMBABWE
Tel: 0271 - 7531 ext 1038
Fax: 263 - 71 - 7616

 BINDURA UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE EDUCATION

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

NAME: CHINAKE ALICE REG NUMBER: B1335318
PROGRAMME: HBScEd Physics/Maths/Chemistry/Biology PART: 2.1

This serves to confirm that the above is a bona fide student at Bindura University of Science Education in the Faculty of Science Education.

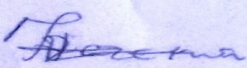
The student has to undertake research and thereafter present a Research Thesis in partial fulfillment of the Bachelor of Science Education Honours Degree programme. The research topic is:

THE ROLE OF SOCIAL MEDIA IN SHAPING GENDER IDENTITY IN EDUCATION

In this regard, the department kindly requests your permission to allow the student to carry out his/her research in your institutions.

Your co-operation and assistance is greatly appreciated.

Thank you



N Zezekwa (Dr.)
CHAIRPERSON - DEPARTMENT OF SCIENCE AND MATHEMATICS EDUCATION

BINDURA UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE EDUCATION
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATIONAL FOUNDATIONS
APR 2022
P. BAG 1020
BINDURA

THE HEAD
MINISTRY OF PRIMARY & SECONDARY EDUCATION
SECONDARY SCHOOL
KADOMA

THE HEAD
MINISTRY OF PRIMARY & SECONDARY EDUCATION
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