

# THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN MEDIA LITERACY AND ETHICAL USAGE OF SOCIAL MEDIA AMONG THE YOUTH IN GHANA

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## ABSTRACT

The surge in social media platforms has made everyone a creator of content on the online space for both the young and old. This follows the amazingly powerful tools that aid in the discovering, editing and sharing content without the checks and control mechanisms ascribed to the traditional media. Yet, alongside this development and opportunities in the technology has come a rise in inappropriate use of social media. This has become a major social and ethical concern. This paper examines the relationship between social media competence and the ethical usage of social media by the youth. Findings reveal that media literacy skills among the youth in Ghana is generally high but does not correspond to ethical social media use behaviour.

**Keywords:** Social Media, Media Literacy, Ethics, Social Media Competence, Social Skills

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## INTRODUCTION

The nature of social media both in terms of its technological and social function is clearly expressed in Kaplan and Heinlein's (2010) conceptualization that "social media is a group of internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of web 2.0., and that allow the creation and exchange of user-generated content" (p. 61). By this definition, blogs, vlogs, social and virtual networking sites, as well as other collective internet ventures, can be described as social media. Collectively, social media present unfettered ways of self-expression and acquisition of information. Specifically, social media enable people to participate in communal knowledge creation and sharing (Vanswynsberhe et al., 2013). The upsurge of social media platforms like Tik Tok and Instagram Stories emphasized the long-standing notion that, with social media, everyone is a creator. Easy to use yet amazingly powerful tools to discover, edit and share content in an instant are continuously emerging on a daily basis. The importance and ubiquitous presence of social media in the world today is evidenced by the increased usage of social media by both young and older generations as people are increasingly getting engaged in the creation and consumption of online content. Substantial research on social media has centered on young people and their social media usage including, those mapping out young people's exposure (Robert and Foehr, 2008; Ridout, 2011; Pea et al., 2012; Chen, 2012), mental wellbeing (Stochat et al., 2010) and academic work (Levine et al., 2007). Others have examined the social, psychological and physical effects of the medium and the gratification attained by young people in the use of social media (Ellison, Steinfield and Lampe, 2007).

By its evolving nature as convergent media, emerging studies on digital literacy have focused on a more critical approach to social media. Ba et al. (2002) defined digital literacy as "a set of habits through which youngsters use information technologies for learning, work and fun" (p.5). Livingstone (2004) further defined media literacy as the "ability to access, analyze, evaluate and create messages across a variety of contexts (p.18). These two definitions propose that the skills and ability to analyze and evaluate in the creation and sharing of messages are acquired through a settled regular practice in the use of social media and not necessarily learned from school. This suggests that youngsters' 'set of habits' is underpinned by their social competence in 'learning, work and play' on social media. Gresham, Sugai and Horner (2001) described social competence as "the ability of digital

natives to establish and maintain satisfactory interpersonal relationships, gain peer acceptance, establish and maintain friendships and terminate negative or pernicious interpersonal relationships” (p.331).

Considerable research on social media usage has pointed to the fact that young people are skillful, versatile and savvy in their use of social media (Hargittai, 2010). Yet, Han et al. (2015), in a study on regulating student-athletes inappropriate use of social media, observed that students have posted ‘profanity’, ‘obscene messages’, ‘compromising photographs’ while using social media. The postings of inappropriate or unsolicited messages or images have also been noted by Bi (2008), who suggests that such messages create negative publicity for those involved and those they represent as well as pose harm to the sharers themselves. The impact of wrongful usage of social media is suggested to lead to disempowerment and vulnerability of the user (Vanswynsberhhe et al., 2013). Inappropriate content can cause problems in people’s personal and professional lives long after the content has been deleted. As such, inappropriate use of social media has become a major social and ethical concern.

Examining how personality influences social media use (Golbeck et al., 2011) observation of behaviors for new literacy skills of young people (Yang, 2016), site preferences use, and gratification of social media usage by young people are some of the various studies that have attempted to relate behaviour and social media usage (Ahn, 2013). Livingstone (2014) further relates young people’s ability to interpret risky behavior on social media to the development of media literacy and competence. While these studies have provided insights into the behaviors of young people in their use of social media, they also reiterate the long-standing notion in social media research that competency is self-taught through repetitive practice. The literature, however, stays silent on the role of social competency. This study aims to fill the gap by investigating the relationship between social competence and ethical usage of social media by young people.

Online and real-time communication skills have long been an area of interest to both researchers and practitioners due to the pervasive use of computer-mediated communication by young people in particular. By examining the relationship between social competence and ethical use of social media, this study expands on existing literature on two distinct yet interrelated research areas: computer-mediated communication and interpersonal

communication. This study also highlights the relational perspective of social media usage as it examines the concept of ethics through media competence and literacy. This study adds value to existing literature by integrating these two areas and enhancing the understanding of this integration while providing information for both theoretical and practical relevance. There is a renewed interest in how young people are continuously negotiating the now complex terrain of computer-mediated communication in the face of raised social concerns over ethical communication, media literacy and social skills. This study is a contribution towards that renewed interest.

Thus, the objectives of this paper are to:

1. document the social media literacy levels of the youth in Ghana
2. Establish the relationship between social media literacy level and ethical usage of social media.
3. Establish whether the social skills of the the youth influence ethical choices when communicating.

## CONCEPTUAL AND EMPIRICAL REVIEW

### Media Literacy

In response to the evolving nature of media technology, the definition of media literacy is under constant renewal. Livingstone (2004) defined media literacy as the “ability to access, analyses, evaluate and communicate messages in a variety of forms. Several conceptualizations sprung out from this definition. Silver (2009) defined media literacy as the “ability to access the media, to understand and evaluate the contents critically, and to create communications in a variety of contexts”. This definition considered the changes and the enduring notions associated with the proliferation of mass media. Vanwynsberghe et al. (2015), recognizing the complexity its elements, defined media literacy as “the technical and cognitive competencies users need to use social media effectively and efficiently for social interactions and communication on the web”. The ‘technical competence’ refers to the knowledge and skills needed to create, navigate, organize, produce, and share social media content.

In contrast, cognitive competencies refer to analyzing and evaluating social media content to understand the context, relevance, and trustworthiness. The advent of media literacy aimed at addressing the social and technological

changes arising from the growing popularity of social media, which the traditional concept of literacy (i.e., 3R's, which are reading, 'writing (writing) and 'rithmetic (arithmetic)) was unable to fully explain the growing complexity that came with it (Gee, 2007). Literacy in the traditional sense usually refers to a person's accomplishment in their ability to demonstrate competency with reading, writing, and making sense of a given subject. Literacy is normally acquired through direct instruction from formal learning environments. However, Schreyer (2012) described it as reductive as it concentrates on autonomous skill production rather than a cultural practice. They argue that it eliminates "attention to the contexts, inter-texts, inter-contexts and other factors that are implicated in readers' efforts to become engaged in their reading" (p. 7). Hence, media literacy attempted to address this pitfall while providing greater acquisition of knowledge. The growing relevance of media literacy has been underscored in literature and by reputable international bodies. Citizens become much more aware of their democratic rights and are very patriotic in dealing with social challenges within the economy or society in which they live (Cangoz, 2008). UNESCO described media literacy as the fundamental tool required for the fostering of equitable access to information and knowledge and for building inclusive knowledge societies. A well-taught media literacy makes the youth become relevant agents of economic development and democracy, as they are better able to interpret, make informed judgments, and become skillful creators and producers of information. Following the various Livingstone's (2004) conceptualization of media literacy, various efforts to estimate media literacy have taken place. Vanwynsberghe et al. (2015) developed a conceptual framework for measuring social media use. The three key concepts are access, applications, and competencies. Emphasis is placed on subdivided competencies as objective and subjective competences. Objective competencies involve content related knowledge and skills, while subjective competencies include attitudes and self-efficacy. In a derivative way, Hallag (2016) reconceptualizes these concepts and encapsulates all the categories into five key concepts; media access, media awareness, ethical awareness, media evaluation and media production. This study adopts four concepts: media awareness, media evaluation, media production, and ethical awareness. For the purposes of this study, media awareness refers to the understanding of the media and its uses, media evaluation refers to the critical analysis of content rating its exposure using existing criteria. Media production refers to creating media content with knowledge and practical skills. Ethical awareness refers to the

keenness and aptitude to identify and act on moral situations and dilemmas, evaluating the effects of one's own attitude on the lives of others.

## **Ethics and Social Media**

The term ethics generally refers to behaviours that are considered the 'right thing to do' without necessarily, the imposition of legal or regulatory oversight. More collectively, ethics can be described as people's moral philosophy, which reflects what they consider good or bad. Ethical values are thus meant to be guiding principles for the behaviours of people and individuals. Managing ethics in traditional media has been occasioned by the provision of ethical guidelines for professional journalism and other related media practices (Kvalnes, 2020). The advent of social media has, however, brought forth a myriad of challenges of ethical concerns on social media. It is argued that social media generates ethical challenges that go beyond those addressed in traditional media (Kieran, 2002). By its nature, social media allows users to be their own creators and publishers without any gatekeeping procedures or supervised self-regulation. Moreover, according to Weiszniwski and Coyne (2002), the anonymity engendered by social media provides an environment that demands less discipline than the actual world. McKenna and Seidman (2006) argued that the anonymity affordances of the internet promote a 'reduced social cue' resulting in a deindividuating effect' which induces behaviour that is more self-centred with lesser social regulation than usual. Young people represent the largest population using social media. According to Barret-Maitland and Lynch (2019), young people are still developing their social skills and competencies with those around them and, in the process, decide the moral values they will choose to embrace later in life. Thus, ethical values that guide decision making and social interactions are considered to be usually formulated from some moral principles taught or learnt in the early formative years. This suggests that ethical behaviours are derived from social skills development.

## **Social Skills and Social Media Usage Among the Youth**

The youth period refers to a time of self-discovery with associated social independence, transformation in the thinking and behavioral orientation of a person, and not only restricted to the physical formation of the body (Cookingham and Ryan 2015). Although this phase differs from person to person, it has an early start at age nine but usually ends at age twenty-five. This period comes with social skills formation that is highly relevant for

the character formation into adulthood. Social competence or skills is thus defined as the “set of competencies that allow an individual to initiate and maintain positive social relationships, contribute to peer acceptance and to satisfactory school adjustment and allow an individual to cope effectively with the larger social environment Walker (1995). Other definitions are either highly focused on the style of behavior accepted in society (Hops, 1983) or the needed skills to be useful in a society (Dowrick, 1986). These are achieved through the sorts of training, mentorship, cultural background and the surroundings in which the persons grow up. Furthermore, the neurological conditions of the child play a critical role in the kind of social skills they develop. Three effective ways are identified: social skills can be promoted to achieve the desired results in the youth without resorting to punishment to instill certain behavioral traits in the youth (National Association of School Psychologists, 2002). First, he facilitates learning through normal activities at home or at school with teachers or parents taking advantage of incidental learning, which entails using natural happenings in teaching. Second, addressing environmental factors improve the youth's ability to learn and perform the expected social skills either at school or at home. Third, an individualistic-centred development addresses the peculiar needs and challenges of certain kinds of people with special needs. Evaluation of the social skills among the youth has focused on empathy, self-control, civility and the assertiveness (Leme et al., 2015). Others have also accessed the survival skills that deal with their ability to listen and follow directions effectively, interpersonal skills, problem-solving, and conflict resolution skills (National Association of School Psychologists, 2002).

A number of studies have emphasized the transformational ability of media literacy on the social skills of the youth (Altun, 2014; Masterman, 2001; Potter, 1998). However, very few have attempted to offer evidence empirically. Notwithstanding, collectively, they point to the fact that messages on media platforms demand critical thinking since messages are not what they seem but carry hidden content that could only be revealed through media literacy. The few studies attempting to exploring the relationship between media literacy and social skills formation in the youth are inconclusive in their findings. Akti and Gurol (2012) observed no significant relationship between media literacy and social skills formation for young school children in the city of Elazig in Turkey who were in grade eight with an average age of 14 years. The study further noted that there was no variation in media literacy across

gender but social skills formation varied by gender, with females showing higher signs. The study by Tugtekin and Koc (2020) also in Turkey, however, saw a contrary outcome as media literacy shapes social skills among the youth. With a sample size of 1047 students, the study used a structural equation modelling. It concluded that media education or literacy offers sources of information and communication that are crucial for social skills and participation. Shasavari et al. (2016) also established positive relationship between media literacy and social skills formation for the pupils of Isfahan in Iran. Using the Cochran formula on 384 persons who were selected by the stratified sampling approach, the study noted high levels of media literacy and social skills of 87.6 percent and 89.6 percent, respectively. A positive relationship of 39 percent was observed on how media literacy contributes to the formation of social skills. The study further observed key areas of media literacy to shape social skills, including critical thinking, analysis & reaction, and judgement & observations. Davidson and Silkane (2018) also studied the relationships between different aspects of media literacy on needed life skill, and practices for active citizenship in Latvia. This study also produced a similar positive outcome. Beyond the core issue of social media usage, the common element that runs through these studies is the formation of social skills in the culture-specific communication process. This is empirically supported by Chai (2020) with the assertion that the impact of the culture of ethics on information sharing behaviours on social media is different from users' cultural backgrounds. Social media use by young people is prevalent in Ghana and has received considerable attention in research. However, such studies have centered and remained on what social media is used for by the youth and its influence on academic work or other aspects of their social lives (Mingle and Adams, 2015; Markwei and Appiah, 2016; Ocansey, Ametepey and Oduro, 2016). Despite the growing research on social media usage and behaviors, a dearth of literature explores the relationship between social competence and ethical use of social media among the youth in Ghana.

## Hypothesis Testing

Extant literature strongly suggests that, when one even takes account of the cultural dynamics, social media literacy plays a major role in the social skills formation of the youth (Chai, 2020). As pointed out by Shasavari et al. (2016) media literacy inculcates special skills such as critical thinking, analysis and reaction, and judgment and observations. The paper is of the view that such special skills could also affect the ways in which social media platforms are



used. Furthermore, once the right social skills are formed through proper media literacy, it is expected to guide how ethically social media platforms are used by the youth. On the back of this, the study is guided by the following hypothesis to help better address the research objectives:

Hypothesis one – Social media literacy promotes appropriate usage of social media

Hypothesis two – Poor social skills lead to unethical usage of social media

## **METHODOLOGY**

This study used the quantitative research approach to establish the relationship existing between media literacy, social skills and ethical usage of social media among the youth. The random sampling method was adopted as the sampling technique to elicit responses from the youth. The convenience sampling method is a statistical technique that offers potential respondents within the target population an equal chance of being selected to constitute the sample size. Using the recent Ghana Population and Housing Census Data by the Ghana Statistical Service (2001), people within the age group of 15 – 19 years are estimated at 3.31 million, and those between 20 – 24 years also at 2.95 million. Assuming a normal distribution of the population dynamics within these categories, the youth age which spans between 17 – 21 years is approximately estimated at 2.58 million and this constitutes the sampling frame for the study. In ensuring fair representation, a sample size of 0.05 percentage point of the targeted population size of the youth i.e. 1,288 people were earmarked to elicit their responses.

The questionnaire was designed using Google forms and sent to social networking groups on the WhatsApp application in particular due to its easy accessibility and availability on smartphones. Other social media platforms also used in the administration of the questionnaires included Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram. This combination of social media platforms was adopted by the study as means of reaching out to the wide and dispersed nature of the targeted population and also due to the high patronage of such social media platforms by the youth. The study also finds this medium of questionnaires administration very convenient following the various forms of restrictions during the heightened period of the Covid-19 pandemic. Links to the google survey were available on the aforementioned social media platforms for 30 days and respondents were asked to share them with their

friends. A pre-testing of the questionnaire had the link shared with the youth in some selected secondary schools and tertiary institutions in the Greater Accra Region of Ghana. Links to the google survey were sent through social media group pages through key informants within these institutions.

A total of 38 responses were obtained out of which five (5) were not fully answered, thus eliminated in the analyses of the pre-testing results. Thus, reducing the power of the instrument to 86.84 percent. Feedback from the pre-testing procedure was used to restructure the main questionnaire. A set of three constructs was identified, Social Media Literacy (SML), Social Skills (SK), and Social Media Usage (SMU) as a result of commonalities found in literature authored by media literacy content experts. Constructs are the basic principles found to be common throughout the literature and throughout the strong media literacy education programs. Thus, sub-constructs were further identified under Social Media Literacy (SML): media awareness, ethical awareness, media evaluation, and media production. These constructs aided in focusing the development of questions in the instrument by clearly defining the concept of media literacy.

Research objective one was addressed using a mean analysis of the perceived level of social media literacy among the youth. This was done at the sub-constructs level and further aggregated to ascertain the level of social media literacy among the youth for the study. Thus, respondents' perceptions of the dimensions of social media literacy averaged to give a single statistic.

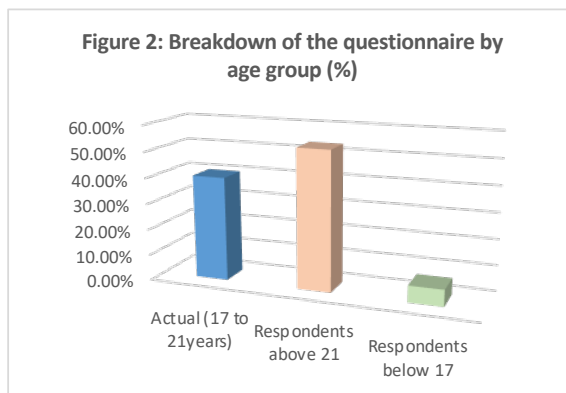
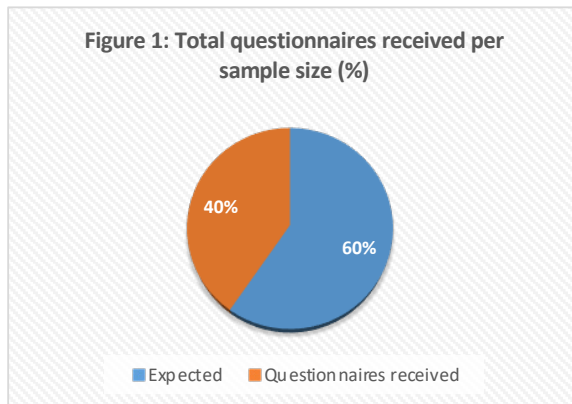
The Pearson Correlation Coefficient was used to address the second research objective of determining the relationship between social media literacy and ethical usage of social media. The

The Ordinary Least Square (OLS) method to estimate the effect of social skills on ethical usage of social media. Ethical usage of Social Media (EU) is used as the dependent variable whereas sub-constructs of Social Skills are used as the sets of independent variables expected to contribute to how ethically the youth use social media platforms.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

### Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

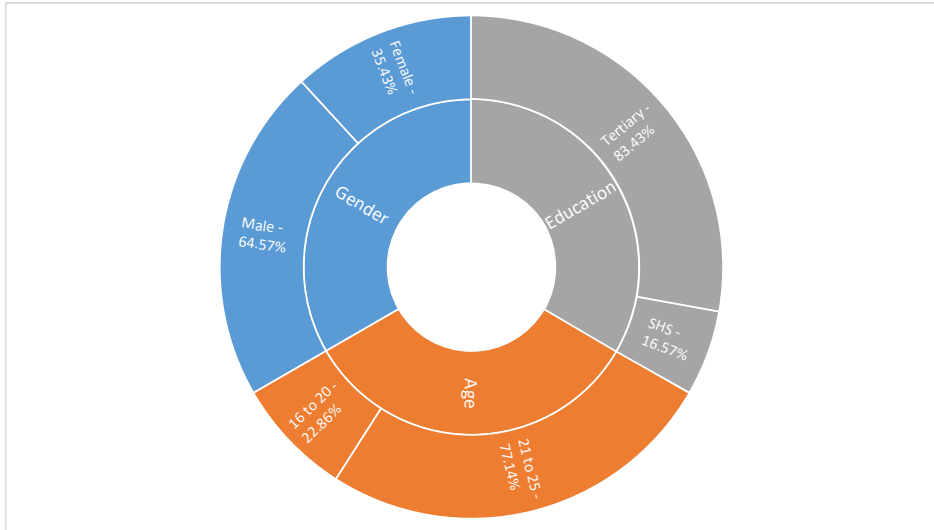
**Figure 3: Age, Gender and Educational Profile of Respondents**



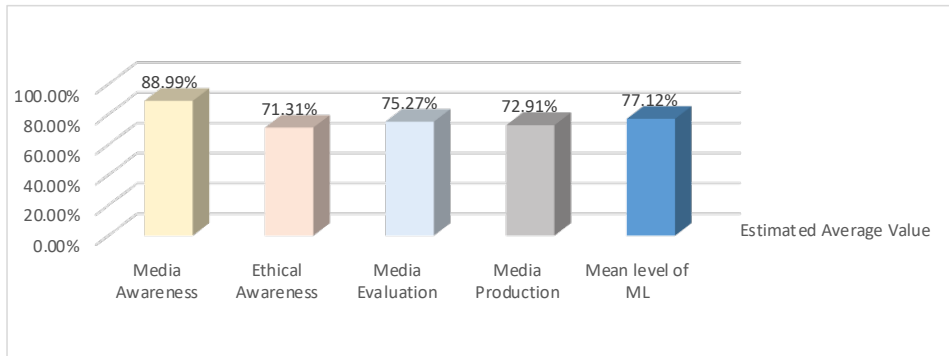
Source (Authors' Survey, 2021)

The study had a higher representation of the youth males than females. Out of the 350 responses used for the study analysis, a total of 226 were males, representing 64.57 percent. The age profile of the youth was mainly within the age bracket of 21 to 25 years (77.1%) with the majority of them being in the tertiary level (83.5%) (Figure 3).

## Social Media Competence Among the Youth



Media literacy appears encouraging among Ghanaian the youth, with an average perception score of 77.12 percent observed. However, some aspects of media literacy skills appear not to be fully developed among the youth. Ethical, Evaluation and Production skills had scores below the average media literacy (Figure 4). Whereas the average score of Awareness was estimated at 88.99 percent, the rest fell below the average media literacy score of 77.12 percent. An average score of 71.31 percent was estimated by the study. This was followed by Production skills capabilities with an average score of 72.91 percent estimated.

**Figure 4: Social Media Literacy Among the Youth in Ghana**

Source: Authors' Survey, 2021

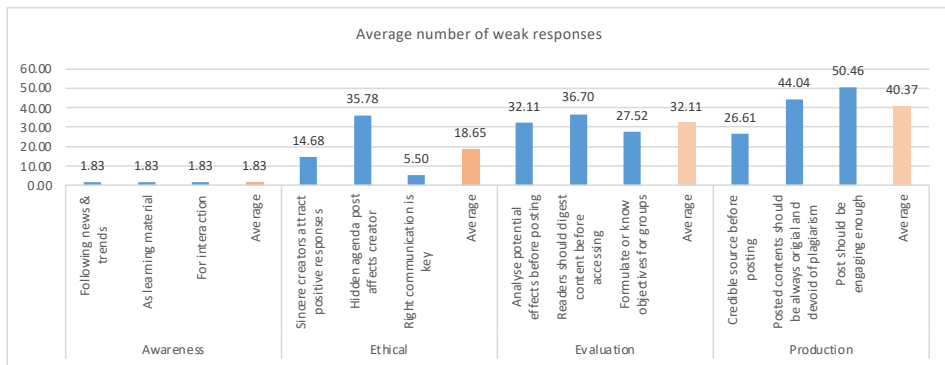
The significant high level of media awareness, as seen in Figure 4, follows the significant proportion of respondents who had strong affirmative responses on how social media could be used in following news and trends, as academic resource material and for social and business interaction. Those whose views differed from the affirmative majority were very significant, hence, accounted for the observed scores which were below the estimated average media literacy rate of 77.12 percent. On ethical skills, about 35.78 percent of the respondents were unaware of how unmindful posts or tweets could negatively affect the personality of those who post such content. This leaves them very vulnerable. Such the youth could either post anything without thinking through the effects on their lives or careers (Rehm et al., 2019; Bodily et al., 2019). Also, 15 percent of the respondents were unaware that people responded positively to inappropriate content that they deem as sincere. In other words, young people take for granted the kind of content they post without considering the long-term effect it may have on a consumer of the content. This also leaves room to question the kind of content creation they may be engaged in on social media without thinking through the ethical implications.

Media evaluation skills among the respondents are a concern for worry. From the findings, close to 30 percent of the respondents do not think that basic evaluation skills such as checking the credibility of sources before posting is highly important in media literacy. The idea that creators of content on social media should first analyze the content before posting had 32.11 percent of respondents who either rejected or could not clearly state their

opinions. On the responsibility of readers to evaluate the pros and cons of media content, 36.70 percent of respondents fell within this rejection or indifference group. Also, a total of 27.52 percent did not think that knowing the objective for joining or creating social media groups was necessary. This suggests that young people are prone to vulnerability as a caution for safety is taken for granted.

The production skills are highly underdeveloped as compared to other aspects of media literacy. This had the highest number of rejections or indifference sentiment expressions among the respondents. These observations could undermine the original and creative skills needed to be relevant on social media. Emerging from the data, as high as 50.46 percent of the respondents do not think that content creation should be creative enough for the receiving audiences. On the originality of content, a significant proportion of them (44.04%) feels it is never wrong to plagiarize content whereas 26.61 percent also think there was nothing wrong in posting content without a credible source.

**Figure 5: Number of Weak Responses to the Social Media Literacy Indicators**



Source: Authors' Survey, 2021

## Relationship Between Media Literacy and Ethical Usage of Social Media

The results from the correlation analysis are presented in Table 1 below. It shows that, despite the underdevelopment of some aspects of media literacy, there exists a significant positive relationship between media literacy and ethical usage of social media among the youth in Ghana. A correlation

coefficient of 21.2 percent was established, implying a positive but weak association between the two variables. This finding is in sync with observations by Shasavari et al., (2016) who underscored the relevance of media literacy in the formation of social skills including ethical behaviour among the youth in Isfahan in Iran. This emphasizes the need to ensure adequate media training and skills development for the youth to enhance their ethical behaviour online. According to Davidsons and Silkane (2018), such efforts not only promote the right behaviours but also ensures active citizens that are much more responsible and committed to national development.

**Table 1: Correlation Between Media Literacy and Social Skills**

Correlations			
		Media Literacy	Ethical Usage
Media Literacy	Pearson Correlation	1	.212**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	350	350
Ethical Usage	Pearson Correlation	.212**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	350	350

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Presented in table 2 below, is the correlation analysis between the various indicators of media literacy and ethical usage of social media. There are also significant and positive associations between the various indicators of media literacy and ethical usage of social media. As evidenced from Table 2, the degree of association is statistically significant at the 99 percent level. Thus, holistic media literacy should not only center on media awareness but should embed concepts of ethical, evaluation and production skills development. Per the findings in table 2 below, the evaluation skills component of media literacy has a higher degree of association with ethical usage of social media. Thus, efforts tailored at ensuring an effective media evaluation skills development will be highly instrumental in the ethical development of the individual and as such, influence how ethical they use social media. From the table, a correlation coefficient of 19.2 percent is estimated as the level of association with ethical usage of social media.

Production skills formation also emerged as another area of strong concern following the relatively higher degree of association with ethical usage of social media. Therefore, it is paramount that efforts tailored to improving the creative skills of the youth will significantly promote ethical usage of social media and users will be much more focused on promoting their skills or showcasing their talents in a much more ethically acceptable manner. With production skills, a 15.00 percent degree of association was observed. Media awareness, on the other hand, had the least degree of association with ethical usage of social media. This implies that just being exposed to media, may not necessarily yield the expected ethical characteristics, hence, a much more holistic approach may be demanded. From the analysis, an a13.8 percent degree of association was established between media awareness and ethical usage of social media.

**Table 2: Correlation Test of Media Literacy Indicators and Ethical Usage of Social Media**

Correlation Test		
Media Literacy Indicators	Ethical Usage	
	Coefficient	P-Value
Awareness	0.138**	0.010
Ethical	0.141**	0.008
Evaluation	0.192**	0.000
Production	0.150**	0.005

Source: Authors' Survey, 2021

From the Anova analysis, the null hypothesis which states that ethical usage was independent of media literacy is rejected by the data. This follows the significance of the test as the computed probability value of the Anova test (i.e.,  $p=0.000$ ) falls within the rejection region of 95 percent confidence level ( $\alpha =0.05$ ). Thus, the youth' ethical usage of social media is highly influenced by the level of media literacy acquired.



**Table 3: Hypothesis Testing Using the Analysis of Variance Test ANOVA**

Media Literacy

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	4421.538	7	631.648	4.532	.000
Within Groups	47668.088	342	139.380		
Total	52089.626	349			

Source: Authors' Survey, 2021

### **Effects of Social Skills on Ethical Usage of Social Media Among the Youth**

Regression analysis is used to address the third objective of the paper which sought to ascertain how social skills influence ethical usage of social media (Table 4). The model is statistically appropriate following the high significance of the model ( $p=0.000$ ) and the ability of the model to explain more than half of the variability in the dependent variable (i.e., ethical usage) by the independent variables (indicators of social skills) as indicated by the adjusted R-square (53.9%). From the model, with the exception of empathy which had an inverse effect on ethical usage (-0.153), the rest (i.e., assertiveness, civility, and self-control) had direct effects on how ethically the youth use social media. These are all statistically significant at 99 percent confidence interval. This implies that a civil, assertive, self-controlled and free from unwanted negative peer pressure the youth engage in ethical usage of social media without even parental or older adults' control. The model also implies a positive unit change in a person's self-control, and ethical usage of social media is highly anticipated to exist. It is estimated to up by 56.5 percent, holding all other factors constant for a change in self-control. Similarly, ethical usage will be improved by 48.5 percent and 37.3 percent respectively, when one's civility and assertiveness positively increase, also holding all other factors constant in each case.

**Table 4: Effects of Social Skills on Ethical Usage of Social Media**

<b>Regression Analysis</b>			
Model	F-Statistics 103* (0.000)		
Dependent Variable	Ethical Usage	Standardised Coefficients	
			P-Value
Independent Variables (Social Skills)	Empathy	-0.153***	0.000
	Self-Control	0.565***	0.000
	Civility	0.485***	0.000
	Assertiveness	0.373***	0.000
Adjusted R-Square		0.539	

Source: Authors' Survey, 2021

## SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

The prevalence of social media usage among the youth population in Ghana has generated a renewed interest in how young people are continuously negotiating the now complex terrain of computer-mediated communication in the face of concerns over ethical communication, media literacy and social skills. This study set the overarching objective to investigate the relationship between social competence and ethical usage of social media by the youth in Ghana. The study was guided by the following sub-objectives; to find the social media literacy level among the youth in Ghana; to establish the relationship between social media literacy level and ethical usage of social media; and to establish whether the social skills of the youth influence ethical choices when communicating. The following hypothesis one, guided the study: social media literacy promotes appropriate usage of social media and hypothesis two, that, poor social skills lead to unethical usage of social media or otherwise.

The study revealed that media literacy skills among the youth in Ghana are generally high. However, the aspects of ethical, evaluation and production of social media literacy were below the expected average. Ethical skills are the least developed and have the potential to affect the right usage of

social media. Media evaluation skills were very low among the respondents. Originality and creativity were least considered factors when respondents choose to share or post content. Moreover, mindfulness of credible sources of content was also minimal among the respondent. These findings suggest that holistic media literacy should not only center on media awareness but should embed concepts of ethical, evaluation and production skills development. It also suggests that the more they can evaluate the content, the more they can use the media ethically. Again, the findings suggest that the more creative skills the user has, the more the chances of employing ethical usage of social media. Suggestively, exposure to social media does not necessarily translate into ethical usage of the media by the user. Ethical usage is not independent of media literacy. Thus, ethical usage of social media by the youth is highly influenced by the level of media literacy acquired. Again, the higher the social skills of the user, the higher their ethical social media usage. in other words, civil, assertive, self-controlled and free from unwanted negative peer pressure the youth are expected to engage in ethical usage of social media without even parental or older adults' control.

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## Figures

Figure 1: Figure 1: Total questionnaires received per sample size (%)

Figure 2: Figure 2: Breakdown of the questionnaire by age group (%)

Figure 3: Age, Gender and Educational Profile of Respondents

Figure 4: Social Media Literacy Among The youth in Ghana

Figure 5: Number of weak responses of the Social Media Literacy Indicators

## Tables

Table 1: Correlation between media literacy and social skills correlations

Table 2: Correlation Test of Media Literacy Indicators and Ethical usage of social media

Table 3: Hypothesis testing using the Analysis of Variance test ANOVA

Table 4: Effects of social skills on ethical usage of social media