

The Influence of Meme Culture on Youth: Addiction and Linguistic Impact

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Abstract

In the digital era, meme culture has become an integral part of youth communication, social interaction, and identity expression. While memes offer entertainment and cultural commentary, their pervasive consumption raises questions about psychological dependency, cognitive changes, and linguistic evolution. This research investigates the impact of meme culture on youth behaviour and language, focusing on meme addiction, reduced attention span, and the emergence of meme-based slang. Through a synthesis of scholarly literature and observational analysis, the report highlights the consequences of excessive meme consumption on academic performance, social communication, and misinformation spread. It further discusses how visual memes, GIFs, and emojis have reshaped youth discourse, creating fragmented yet impactful linguistic trends. The study adopts qualitative analysis and secondary data review, aiming to contribute to media literacy discussions and propose strategies for balancing digital engagement with critical thinking.

Keywords: Meme culture; Youth behaviour; Meme addiction; Attention span; Meme-based slang; Cognitive changes; Misinformation; Social communication; Media literacy; Digital engagement; Linguistic evolution.

1.0 Introduction

Internet memes have become the dominant form of how young people communicate and engage with each other online over the past few years. A meme is usually an image, video or phrase with humorous content or a message rapidly spreading through the internet. Memetic communication, in contrast to many preceding mediums of communication, often fosters the remix, reinterpretation, and repurposing of meme-content by its audiences, so that when users distribute another's message, they can also personalise it or add cultural overlays. This live, crowd-based communication symbolises participatory digital culture in which creativity, humour and social criticism are melded into a potent form of expression.

Memes have evolved into more than just a way to make people laugh. For many young users, memes present a way to relate to peers, respond to news and express complex emotions or opinions in a relatable, manageable format. They are cultural shorthand: a fast way to communicate shared experiences and values. As a result of memes, we can experience a stronger sense of identity with our online communities, sometimes despite geographic, possibly linguistic, and most certainly cultural divides. As such, memes are used as a means of the construction of youth identity, of the formation of digital relationships, and the formation of community relationships. However, the increasingly dominant position of memes also brings with it several issues. The

distinguishing characteristics of memes, such as their brevity, humour, and immediacy, may affect regular viewers' thinking. Overexposure to meme material can lead to patterns of broken attention, where the user is conditioned to treat information in shallow, brief, rapid bursts. This shift can hurt young people's attention span when faced with longer assignments, critical thinking, or ideas in higher-level language. In the classroom, such pressures can lead to decreasing attention spans, more procrastination, and less deep learning.

Moreover, meme language is full of slang, abbreviations, and visual signals that have the power to influence the way young people write and speak. The casual and fanciful nature of meme-related language can cross over into academic or business writing, appearing in oversimplified vocabulary and fragmented sentences. If meme culture can add to creativity and linguistic experimentation, it also comes with the potential to debase the clarity, sophistication, and formality of language, traditionally prized in academic and professional settings.

Another issue is what memes can do to social conduct and disintegration. Memes serve to strengthen bonds and increase group identity, they can also convey prejudice, misinformation, and disunity. Since memes are frequently humorous or exaggerated, not much attention is paid to their contents as they should. This sets the stage for misinformation, bias and/or offensive messages to proliferate with little scrutiny, changing how young audiences think in subtle but crucial ways.

It is therefore important to further understand the broader consequences of meme culture because it is both a double-edged weapon (it has social pros and potential cognitive/behavioural cons). It is important to understand how memes influence kids' thoughts, expressions and relationships so that creative approaches to foster healthy engagement and discourage deleterious effects can be developed. Because young people can make more informed choices about how they express themselves online, it can also enable parents, educators and policy to support young people to develop as responsible digital citizens who engage creatively, within a community, with a critical perspective.

Thus, the purpose of this research is to investigate the cognitive, linguistic, and sociocultural influences of memes on the behaviours of the young population. Considering these upsides and downsides of constant meme exposure, the authors hope to offer the groundwork for practical guidance for healthier digital interaction. In the grand scheme of things, the goal is for youth to be able to participate in the creative and connective atmosphere of meme-making, without sacrificing their grades, interpersonal skills, or their ability to think critically.

1.1 Problem Statement

Memes have become a major form of digital communication among youth, blending humour and cultural references into quick, impactful messages. However, excessive exposure to memes may disrupt cognitive development, weaken critical thinking, simplify language use, and negatively affect academic and social behaviour (Shifman, 2013). Therefore, it is necessary to critically examine how engagement with meme culture influences youth behaviour and to propose strategies for mitigating its negative effects while promoting digital literacy.

1.2 Research Objectives

This study will explore three main goals:

- To find out how memes affect young people's thinking, study habits, and behaviour every day.
- To see how meme language changes the way young people write, talk, and even learn new words.
- To examine how memes help create online communities and friendships, while also looking at how they might pull students away from schoolwork or confuse them with wrong facts.

1.3 Research Questions

1. In what ways do memes affect young people's focus, study time, and overall learning?

2. How does the language used in memes change young people's everyday speech, writing style, and word choices?
3. How do memes help young people form online groups, and what are the risks of these groups taking up too much of their time or spreading false ideas?

1.4 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to look closely at both the good and bad parts of meme culture for youth. By understanding how memes shape the mind and social life of young people, parents, teachers, and content creators can find better ways to support healthy meme use. Such information might help them to design a program that teaches students healthy meme use without losing their focus.

1.5 Scope of the Study

The research focuses on three areas: cognitive and behavioural effects of memes, changes in linguistic and communication styles and the balance between social benefits and academic distractions. It draws on studies from psychology, linguistics and education to understand how memes are redefining youth culture today.

2.0 Literature Review

This chapter tries to integrate a sequence of studies that examine the impact of meme culture on behaviour and communication. This chapter is divided into three principal sections: Cognitive and behavioral effects, which examine the psychological impacts and attentional changes induced by meme consumption; Linguistic transformation and communication styles, which study the ways memes have been at the forefront of a language and internet communication revolution; and Social and educational effects, where attention is given to the wider implications of meme use in social interaction and education. Each section will describe the multi-faceted way that meme culture has influenced the communication of the present and its impact on individuals and society.

2.1 Cognitive and Behavioural Impact

Research has proven that meme participation triggers the brain's reward system, much like slot machines releasing dopamine with each laugh or like (Cecilie Schou Andreassen, 2012). Memes are compulsive or addictive to watch for most people. Clinical psychologists have observed that when users are suddenly cut off—from a network outage to self-imposed “digital detox”—they often experience withdrawal-like symptoms: irritability, restlessness, and a gnawing need to reconnect. Moreover, the “social media hug” meme, where a user clings to their phone at the expense of real-life interactions, perfectly captures how online affirmation has supplanted face-to-face connection for many young people. Such reliance on virtual approval—quantified in likes, shares, and comments—becomes a form of social currency that shapes self-esteem and mood (Andreassen, 2015).

Approaching this from a health perspective, too much screen time or meme-watching results in physical effects such as sleep disturbance, eye strain, tension, and headaches. Screen blue light can interfere with melatonin production, which in turn interferes with sleep patterns. The overstimulation from constant scrolling also makes it difficult for the brain to wind down, leading to poor-quality rest and reduced attention spans during the day.

For example, the “I am not addicted! Where's my smartphone?” meme humorously exaggerates panic and addiction. Even mildly harmless “First World Problems” memes about putting down social media and checking it instantly later illustrate how deeply ingrained this compulsion is, blurring the line between benign humour and genuine psychological distress. Such memes, while humorous on the surface, silently convey the internal conflict most users experience when trying to log off, illustrating how deeply ingrained memes are in everyday digital behaviour.

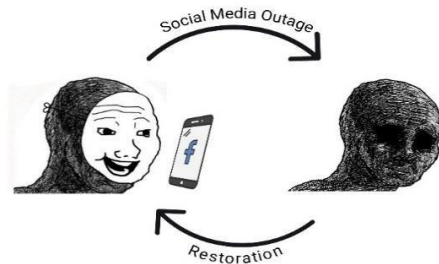


Figure 1: Meme addiction.

Source: [Memes.co](https://memes.co)

With time, the relentless pursuit of instant gratification and endorsements can erode one's capacity for emotional regulation, heighten social anxiety, and perpetuate people's distorted views of themselves as deserving, thus accentuating the complex association between meme culture and mental health (Pooran Chandra Pande, 2024). Researchers have further noted that excessive use of internet humour is usually an emotional defence mechanism—a move to cover up underlying insecurities or discomfort with humour, leading to evasion instead of confronting actual stresses in life. There is also growing concern that incessant bombardment with meme culture might decrease the boredom tolerance threshold

Carr famously asserted that the internet is rewiring our brains for skimming, not deep thought (Barlow, 2010). Memes, being short and briefly consumed, may be part of the trend. To illustrate, students rely on comic infographics, condensing complex theory in a few words, which encourages surface-level comprehension over going deeper. Turel and Bechara found that overindulgence in digital activity weakens the prefrontal cortex's control mechanisms, rendering adolescents more distractible and impulsive (Antonieusterity Bechara, 2017). In classrooms, this is expressed as a readiness to jump from one meme to another—an effect further encouraged by algorithmic recommendations that prioritise fast user interaction. The pace of meme consumption, especially on formats like TikTok or Instagram, fosters an endless engagement loop that drains cognitive attention span.

The habitual disruption of meme consumption also interferes with train of thought. Instead of engaging in one task, users constantly switch between subjects, resulting in compromised ability for sustained attention and depth of knowledge. The simplicity and speed of meme consumption are different from more intricate, intense activities, resulting in cognitive processing changes (Mark Nicholas Glasford, 2024). Furthermore, habitual context switching interferes with working memory, making it more difficult to take in information between time intervals. Furthermore, the brevity of memes renders impatience the norm, habituating users to leave tasks that consume more time than their fleeting attention span. These changes can undermine the formation of patience and persistence -necessary- for activities such as long-form reading, problem-solving, or creative writing over time, representing a salient trade-off between rapid entertainment and extended intellectual activity.



Figure 2: Galaxy brain meme.

Source: Memes.co

The oversimplification of complex ideas into memes risks undermining critical thinking. Knobble and Lankshear (LANKSHEAR, 2007) highlight how memes bypass argumentation in favour of emotional appeal or humour. When educational or political topics are communicated via memes, the line between satire and misinformation becomes blurred (Paul Mihailidis, 2017), as users may mistake a **dank politics meme** or a “**triggered**” reaction image for credible evidence rather than tongue-in-cheek commentary.

In other cases, memes present way-too-simplified versions of arguments lacking the critical context or nuance. Political memes, for example, are prone to using caricatures of opposing ideologies—note the application of “checkmate, libs” or the “Big Brain vs. Small Brain” meme format—and therefore reduce complicated issues into a form suitable for drama or comedy. This process of reduction may lead people to embrace said simplified versions as fact without subjecting the issue at hand to critical examination, thereby adding to confirmation bias in algorithmic echo chambers.



Figure 3: Big Brain-Small Brain meme.

Source: Memes.co

As argued in recent scholarship, meme-mediated discourse prioritizes instant humor or affective reaction over the development of reflective, intentional deliberation (Milner, 2016). Meme types like Wojak reaction faces or spliced “Distracted Boyfriend” videos can disseminate misinformation memes more quickly than corrective memes can respond. Routine exposure to reductionist content in this manner has the potential to desensitize consumers over time to the competencies required to evaluate evidence, balance rival perspectives, and engage in lengthy argumentation—competencies required to human and academic success. By breaking down nuanced arguments into viral soundbites, meme culture offers humor that is accessible at the cost of critical thinking and expert debate, rendering the value of media literacy interventions that educate youth to read and contextualize meme rhetoric apparent.

2.2 Linguistic Transformation and Communication Patterns

Meme culture has also spawned stereotypical slang words such as "sus," "yeet," "based," and "NPC," which originated from specific internet subcultures (He, 2022). First popularized on social media sites such as Vine and TikTok, "yeet" began life as an excited shout exclaimed upon throwing an object vigorously, later becoming a catch-all to describe enthusiasm or approval. "Based," which originated in online forums, refers to someone who is unashamedly authentic, frequently praised for having the courage to defend bold or unpopular views. Concurrently, "NPC" (Non-Playable Character) refers to a person who appears to lack independent thought, reflecting the video game logic where characters repeat lines of dialogue.

These terms encourage in-group identification from young online users, strengthening membership ties and shared cultural referencing. They also establish communication boundaries, mostly with older audiences or those not as sensitive to the latest digital culture. Used in face-to-face interaction, the vocabulary can lead to misinterpretation or misunderstanding, where adults interpret the terms or simply ignore them as nothing.



Figure 4: 'Sus' Slang Origin

Source: Memes.co

Furthermore, the rapid spread of this jargon through memes and comment threads has contributed to the development of distinct **internet dialects**, varying by platform (e.g., Reddit vs. Tok-tok). While this evolution reflects creativity and cultural innovation, it also poses challenges for cross generational dialogue and inclusion. Without media literacy, these expressions may reinforce digital divides rather than bridge them.

Crystal (CRYSTAL, 2007) contends that internet mediated language privileges brevity, emojis, and nonlinear sentence structures over traditional grammar. Popular memes such as the Doge “Such grammar, much wow” panels parody broken English, while the “Mocking SpongeBob” meme—rendered in alternating caps (“I gHuT, iMmA hEaD oUt”)—conveys sarcasm through fractured syntax. Two button memes forcing a choice between “Explain fully” and “Keep it quick” illustrate how concision has become its own punchline. Likewise, acronyms like “idk,” “brb,” and “lol,” alongside emojis (😏, 😏), now pepper formal submissions: instructors report essays titled “My Thesis 😏” or introductions beginning with “TL; DR.” In one classroom irony, the “Distracted Boyfriend” meme was used to model competing thesis statements—yet students transposed its visual shorthand into fragmented paragraphs, eroding logical flow and coherence. Peer reviewed studies link heavy exposure to meme culture with lower scores on grammar assessments, as learners’ default to shorthand instead of constructing full sentences and coherent clauses (Ishkandar, 2015). Writing centres have responded with workshops such as “From LOL to Linguistics,” teaching register switching strategies that contrast the spontaneity of “Igth, imma head out” with the rigor of academic prose. Higher education curricula now incorporate digital literacy modules that dissect memes—using the multipaneled “Expanding Brain” series to map out argumentative progression— while reinforcing the importance of topic sentences, clear transitions, and lexical richness. Only by acknowledging the multimodal appeal of memes and explicitly contrasting memes with formal writing can educators hope to restore clarity, grammatical consistency, and the nuanced expression essential to scholarly communication.



Figure 5: Do not know to dun no transformation

Source: Memes.co

Kress (Muhammad Arslan Manzoor, 2023) says multimodality means using words and pictures together to send messages. Memes are a clear example. For example, the **Distracted Boyfriend** meme shows a man looking at another woman while his girlfriend stands by. We see the joke without many words. The **Expanding Brain** Meme has four pictures of brains that light up more at each step. It shows how ideas can grow from simple to complex without long sentences. Danesi (Avinash, 2022) says that emojis and memes are making a new kind of reading and writing. A single 😊 or 😬 can show we are laughing or feeling awkward. A **Michael Jackson popcorn GIF** means we are watching and waiting. The **Woman Yelling at Cat** meme puts a woman yelling next to a calm cat. It shows how people argue online instead of talking clearly.

These memes only work if people know the picture first. People who haven't seen a meme before may not get the joke. This can leave out older people or those from different cultures. In schools, some students now use GIFs in their essays instead of giving clear examples, thinking pictures can replace words. Teachers worry because full writing matters. To help, schools are teaching literacy. They now include lessons in both picture skills and text skills. They teach me when to use a meme or emoji and when to write a full sentence. Students learn to switch between online talk and school writing.



Figure 6: Woman yelling at a cat meme

Source: Memes.co

2.3 Social and Educational Consequences

Teachers and professors now spot meme language in essays and reports (Faeze Safari, 2024). Students sometimes begin a paper with “**One does not simply...**” (One Does Not Simply meme), instead of a clear topic sentence. Others mock prompts using “**Mocking SpongeBob**” style—writing with mixed capitals and no clear structure. A few even caption a paragraph “**Surprised Pikachu**” when they miss an assignment detail.

These shortcuts—slang, broken grammar, and meme captions—make it hard to meet formal writing rules. In exams and graded essays, clear sentences and strong arguments matter most. When students

borrow meme tone, they may confuse a casual chat with academic work. This mix-up can lower grades, as instructors expect full sentences, correct punctuation, and logical flow.

The ease of copying and pasting a meme panel or GIF can tempt students to skip deep thinking.

Instead of spelling out evidence, they rely on shared jokes. But examiners cannot “read between the lines” of an image; they need words that explain, argue, and persuade. When a paper reads like a social media post—full of humour but lacking detail—students lose marks on style and content.

To fix this, many schools hold workshops on “register shifting.” Students learn when to use memes (in informal chats) and when to stick to formal prose (in essays). By drawing a clear line between meme speech and academic writing, educators hope to protect both creativity and rigor, ensuring students shine in all contexts.



Figure 7: Surprised Pikachu meme

Source: Memes.co

Memes work like a quick code for social groups, letting people share ideas fast and feel part of a circle. Shifman (Cighir, 2024) calls memes tools for social identity and group unity. For example, the **Pepe the Frog** meme began as a simple cartoon but was later used by some hate groups, making those outside feel hurt. Its use can build strong bonds for those “**in the know**,” but shut out or upset others. Another example is the **Karen** meme, where a woman with a short haircut and big sunglasses demands to “speak to the manager.” It can be funny, but it also hurts people who share that name or look.

Online, these memes bring people close in group chats or work threads—but those who don’t know the meme can feel lost or alone. In real life, overusing memes in face-to-face talk can block deeper emotion and trust. To fix this, schools and workplaces should teach both digital and in person communication skills. People need to learn when sharing a -meme fit- and when clear words are better. This balance helps everyone feel included and truly heard.



Figure 8: Pepe the Frog Meme

Source: Memes.co

A 2020 Pew Research report shows that memes can carry wrong facts, especially in politics (Rhys Crilley, 2020). Memes make jokes but hide lies. A meme like **Ancient Aliens** says, “I’m not saying it

was aliens ... but it was aliens.” This short text makes a big claim but leaves out proof. People laugh and share without checking if it is true. The **Roll Safe** meme with a man tapping his head says, “Can’t be fooled by fake news if you never read an article.” People share it and feel smart, but they never check real sources. The **Monkey Puppet** meme shows a puppet looking away when someone says something wrong. It fits how people share wrong ideas while hoping no one notices. The **Drake Hotline Bling** meme shows Drake rejecting “Read full article” and accepting “Share only headline.” This shows that people skip details and pass on wrong info.

Memes use simple images and few words, making them easy to share and fun to look at. But this also cuts out details and context: a complex issue becomes a single panel or a two-line caption.

Because memes spread fast, false stories go viral before fact-checkers can act. When enough people see a funny image, they believe it. Political groups add red “Fake News” labels to memes to make them look like real news. Over time, these wrong memes shape opinions and votes. To stop this, teachers and news sites teach “meme literacy.” They show how to find a meme’s source, check facts, and think before sharing. This helps keep jokes and truths apart and slows the spread of lies.



Figure 9: Drake Hot Bling Meme
Source: Memes.co

3.0 Methodology

To ensure a comprehensive understanding of the topic, a variety of methodologies were employed in this study. These methods were chosen to provide qualitative and quantitative information so that a balanced analysis of the given case would be possible. Data collection, analysis, and interpretation methods used in the research are given below:

3.1 Research Design

This study employs a mixed-methods research design with the integration of qualitative and quantitative methods in investigating the psychological, linguistic, and educational impacts of meme culture on youth. The qualitative part is content analysis of popular memes on social media websites such as Instagram, Reddit, and TIKTOK, and secondary analysis of studies and case studies from the literature. The quantitative part is a standardized survey for a sample of youth respondents with empirical findings on patterns of usage, impacts, and linguistic effects of memes. This triangulation method offers a richer and more complete understanding of the phenomenon with cross-validation of patterns across data sources.

3.2 Sampling Strategy

The study focused on young respondents between the ages of 16-25 years belonging to a private university in Lahore who were heavily engaged in meme culture. 45 participants were interviewed through an online Google Form, and campus interviews were conducted with around 12 students from the same age group. Convenience sampling with variation along academic discipline, gender, and

social background was employed to obtain the sample to assess the consumption behaviour of university students towards memes holistically

3.3 Data Collection

Data for the research have been obtained from primary and secondary sources. Primary data were gathered through an online survey sent to youth participants according to their meme consumption patterns, psychological reactions, and linguistic changes. The survey contained a combination of closed-ended questions, including multiple-choice and Likert scale questions, to measure the frequency of meme use, emotional reactions to memes, and perceived influence on language and behaviour. One-to-one interviews were also conducted around the campus to gather richer qualitative data. Secondary sources comprised peer-reviewed journals, available surveys on digital media consumption, educational reports, and social media analytics. Valid datasets from Pew Research, the American Psychological Association, and Google Trends were utilised to place context on broad trends. Qualitative content analysis was also conducted on memes being shared on popular platforms to derive prevalent themes, humour patterns, and language changes.

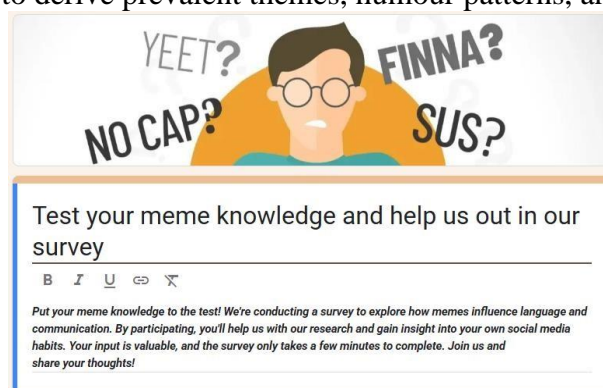


Figure 10: Google Form Page

3.4 Analytical Framework

The study is guided by an interdisciplinary theory that combines media effects theory, multimodal discourse analysis, and social constructivism. Media effects theory explains how exposure to meme content affects attitudes, behaviours, and cognitive trends (Das, 2023). Multimodal discourse analysis provides ways of analysing how image, symbol, and text collaborate to generate meaning in memes (Aminulloh, 2022). Social constructivism explains how common meme culture builds group identity, language use, and social norms among young generations. Integration of the theoretical perspectives guides both quantitative interpretation of survey data and qualitative analysis of meme content.

3.5 Limitations

Despite the large-scale mixed-methods approach, there are some limitations to this study. The primary data, while valuable, was collected from a limited sample size and may not fully represent the broader youth population in terms of geographic, cultural, or socioeconomic diversity. Self-reported responses can also be affected by social desirability bias or selective memory. In terms of secondary data, not all sources may reflect the most current or global trends, particularly given the rapid evolution of meme culture. Lastly, qualitative content analysis introduces a degree of subjectivity, as interpretations of memes may vary across contexts and researchers.

3.6 Ethical Considerations

In this study, Ethical research implementations were followed. Participation in the primary survey was anonymous and consensual, while the recipients were informed about the objective and application of information and data. Only publicly accessible meme content was used for secondary data and content analysis, while assuring adherence to the ethics of digital research. And no confidential data was collected. Meme content was used strictly for academic purposes without being manipulated or re

distribution, and efforts were made to uphold patents and other rights of intellectual property. This study also conforms with the ethical standards for both online content and research using surveys.

4.0 Results and Discussions

The following section presents and analyses the key findings derived from both survey data and digital meme content. It is arranged thematically to examine the linguistic, cognitive, educational, social and cultural impact of meme culture.

4.1 Meme Culture and Cognitive Impact on Youth

Examination and analysis of existing literature research and current social media patterns reveals that constant meme consumption leads to reduced attention spans among youth. Platforms like Tik-tok and Instagram constrain users to consume content in short bursts, encouraging habits of scrolling rather than in depth interaction. It was also revealed by studies that constant digital engagement disrupts individuals' concentration and affect decision making process, this also aligns with the theory of digital rewiring. Social media's meme-rich culture encourages a never-ending loop of material consumption that allow users to interact through few seconds short reels, making it challenging for users to consume and concentrate on long form content.

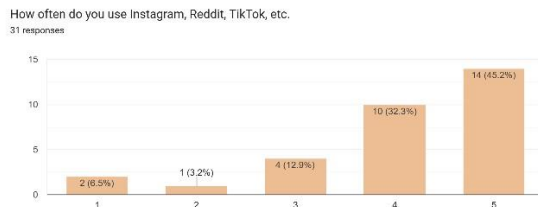


Figure 12: Social Media Consumption

This trend and pattern were revealed in the survey, where a substantial part of participants (45.2%) admitted that memes distracted them while studying, while 54.8% agreed and 19.4% strongly agreed with this statement. Furthermore, 38.7% of respondents reported overspending more than five hours daily on social media, reflecting the strong influence of meme culture in daily lives.

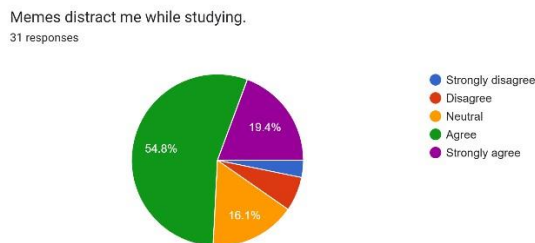


Figure 13: Pie chart of meme distraction

Observations and analysis of meme pages show that humor is mainly drawn from absurd or out-of-context events in order to provoke strong emotional responses. This trend diminishes the mental capacity for critical thinking by feeding the instant pleasure loop. The continuous loop of meme liking, commenting, sharing and reposting reflect addictive behavioral patterns. Furthermore, an addicting feature of meme is algorithm curation, that traps users in seemingly endless cycle by ensuring that users are continuously exposed to memes that matches their interests.

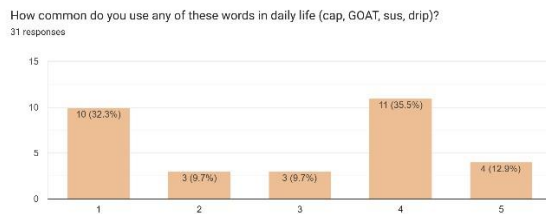
4.2 Linguistic Shifts and Meme Slang

A unique digital accent and slang words have emerged from meme culture and social media. Words like “frizz,” “mid,” and phrases such as “it’s giving...” are now widespread, especially among Gen Z.

Even though these slang terms were expressive but they often lack clarity for older generations and appears informal in academic contexts. Linguists have observed that these elements reveal language evolution but they also risk fragmented communication norms especially when non-verbal digital media (GIFs, emojis) replaced structured speech.

Survey results support this linguistic shift as 71% of participants rated themselves 4 or 5 on how often they use meme slang in real life, and 54.8% agreed that memes have altered their speech pattern. Additionally, terms like "cap," "GOAT" and "sus" have become part of everyday speech, with over 48% of respondents reported frequent usage of these terms. Memes like the “This is fine” dog or “Mocking SpongeBob” are utilized to show how visual memes become metaphorical shortcuts to express sarcasm or criticism without demanding in detail explanation.

Table 1: Meme slang usage in real life



In meme culture, multimodality plays a significant role. In our opinion, meaning is not only conveyed through just words but through social, cultural references and visual juxtapositions. This resulted in a language formation that is context-dependent and often incomprehensible without prior exposure and knowledge. Such dynamic shifts may pose challenges for conventional language teaching but it also redefines and reevaluate digital literacy.

Instructors may have to modify their teaching strategies in order to engage with this evolving digital literacy.



Figure 14: This is fine dog meme

Source: Memes.co

4.3 Educational and Social Implications

Educators report that meme language is becoming more prevalent in formal conversations and academic writing. Students often incorporate casual digital slang expressions into formal contexts, resulting in poor grammar, reduced clarity and lack of critical thinking. Informal observational data shows student assignments including phrases like “that’s a W” or “this gives main character energy,” which could lower rigorous learning despite being expressive.

Our survey found that 41.9% of participants frequently use meme vocabulary in their daily interactions, suggesting a significant shift from online to in person communication. A gap between

formal and informal writing is created when meme language is normalized in class settings and using slangs in academic spaces. Notably, memes like “Is this a pigeon?” or the “Change My Mind” table have been added to social discussions and school presentations.

I use meme slang in real life.
31 responses

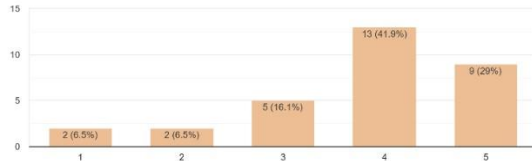


Table 2: Meme Slang constitution in daily talks

Memes have become social facilitators for cultural conditions. Shared humor is the basis of online interaction and group dynamics, promoting a sense of connection and belonging. However, it can also induce social exclusion. People who are unfamiliar with meme vocabulary may feel alienated and struggle to participate in group conversations, creating a gap to social inclusion. These inclusion and exclusion dynamics are particularly prominent in schools or online communities where memes are central to interaction. One participant has even noted that younger generation and siblings (ages 5–12) have started using meme-derived language and behavior, reflecting how meme culture is ingrained in behavioral pattern even in early childhood development.

If you have younger siblings or cousins (ages 5 - 12), have you noticed changes in their language or behaviour due to meme addiction?
31 responses

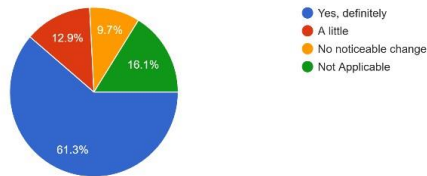


Table 3: Behavioral changes in Children due to meme consumption

One of the alarming elements of meme culture is the viral spread of misinformation through memes. On digital sources, humor frequently act as a mask for unreliable and biased information. A 2020 study found that on platforms like Facebook, political memes significantly build and transform public opinion. Frequently memes lack context and background information, so memes often lead to misunderstanding and sometimes memes are used to cause intentional manipulation. For example: The “NPC Woyak” meme is often used as an exploitation weapon in political debates against opposing viewpoints.

The internet really ruining kids 😞

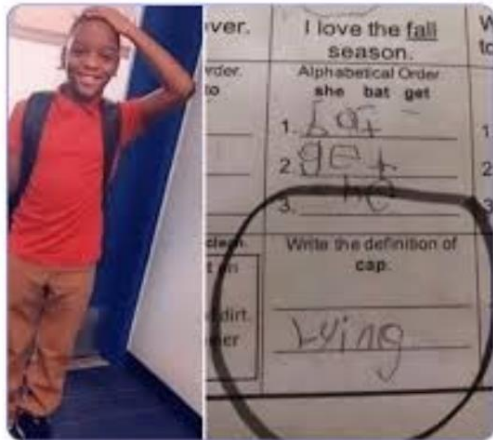


Figure 15: Example of linguistic changes because of memes

Source: Memes.co

4.4 Positive Aspects of Meme Culture

Despite the rising issues around meme culture, it is important to highlight the positive aspects that contribute to youth learning and digital participation. Memes have given people a way to express their humor, creativity and sense of community, in an age where digital expression has become an important part of social interaction. Survey respondents have rated their engagement with memes as high, with 77.4% aged between 18-20, the age group most involved in cultural meme exchanges.

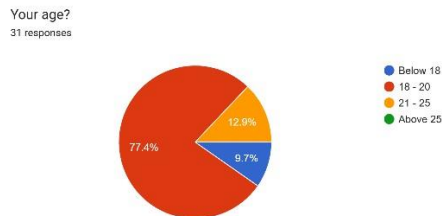


Figure 16: Form Demographics

Visual storytelling, complex messaging, wit and irony is promoted through meme creation. Famous examples like the “Two Buttons” meme or “Galaxy Brain” humorously depict analytical and abstract issues, making complicated topics understandable. Additionally, memes let people feel seen and heard by relating and addressing societal concerns, identity and mental health.

If memes are consumed with critical awareness, then they can act as a catalyst for personal expression and digital competence. The evolving nature of meme culture reflects the changing dynamics of youth identity, digital interaction, linguistic innovation and technological developments.

5.0 Conclusion

Meme culture has become part of digital lifestyle, especially for the youth. Memes have also ceased to merely be a funny occurrence but has become a powerful cultural icon that influences the identity and thought structure of the youth, their communication, personality and ways they approach their lives.

On the positive side, memes are driven by creativity, irony and intercommunity interaction. Memes allow young people to share their elation, feelings and minds with something easier to grasp and it let individuals engage in cultural critique, share opinions and bond over common experiences through cultural sharing. Memes are also an alternative form of communication that caters to those with

language disorders and it's particularly appreciated by neurodivergent folks because of its visual, multi-sensory and non-linear approach.

But memes have great negative impacts, as well. It has generated mental and behavioral issues being an addictive, immediate reward promoting and attention span reducing technology. Memes frequently do damage, erode critical thinking and decimate max reasonable discussion. Moreover, memes can also be a tool of manipulation in social and political context, a way to share lies and hypes.

This report emphasizes the importance of critical awareness while engaging with memes. In order to discern credible information and participate constructively, young people need to be able to reason, to understand technology and to be able to analyze media.

Lawmakers and schools should provide for teachings of digital literacy into curricula so that some of the benefits of meme culture are felt without the consequences. These programs ought to target critical thinking and media analysis, as well as responsible content production and assist youth in appropriating memes in ways that facilitate their psychological, linguistic and social development.

Internet memes culture and its influences on youth deserve further inquiry to mitigate the negative impact and reinforce the positive impact in the social and cultural domain. By the study on meme and its influence on psychology, education and social activity, researchers may help to establish a digital literacy framework to lead to a balanced and healthy participation.

6.0 Recommendations

According to this study, suggestions were made to prevent the negative impact of meme culture on young people's cognitive, language and social development as well as exploit its positive effects. Digital literacy should be a structured module in educational institutions. Such programmers should train students to critically appraise memes and to appreciate the context in which they are presented, the signs that a meme might be misleading and to consider what impact digital material could have on how they think and behave. This will enable students to enter into meme culture more critically and responsibly.

Furthermore, schools, NGOs and the government sector could play a crucial role in conducting awareness programs for youth to adopt balanced social media use. They can also offer tactics for regulating screen time, what to do to stave off meme overconsumption and how to be digitally mindful. Such initiatives, by promoting more healthful consumption habits, can play a role in addressing the negative psychological outcomes that are often correlated with overuse of memes.

Furthermore, teachers can use memes as teaching aids in language and communication lessons. Having students dissect meme structures, tones and cultural references can also enhance critical thinking and media analysis skills. This offers learners an opportunity to interact with digital content in a more active way, getting them to unpack what might be going on in the messages underneath the memes as they're seeing them rather than to simply receive digital content in a passive sort of way.

Workshops to inform and educate the youth on the ethical aspects of meme culture. These workshops might concentrate on how memes change the dynamic of humor, the potential for misinterpretation of this humor and how the use of humor can inadvertently perpetuate stereotypes or false information. These workshops can help young people find ways to be accountable citizens for creating and circulating memes and to navigate the risks of meme culture.

However, schools and local organizations could sponsor meme-making contests or digital storytelling initiatives for young people as a way to share their ideas, challenges and creativity in a positive and healthy manner. Such projects can hopefully leverage meme culture for good by promoting self-expression along with a sense of social responsibility.

Finally, any educational programming that helps usher parents and teachers into a more nuanced understanding of meme culture could help to close the generation gap on this one. Whether adults take over with their mobile phones or whether children are offered support within a well-attended seminar,

direct such programs to promote an empathetic and informed consultation rather than undermining the digital identity. It can also help bridge the generation gap with open conversations about the power of meme culture and what it means for youth identity.

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