Student’s Name:

University Affiliations:

Professor’s Name:

Course Title:

Discourse Community Investigation

**Peer Review Response**

Writing and verbal talks are essential tools when it comes to communicating with other people daily (Clark et al 46). Scholars refer to writing as a channel of bringing forth fresh ideas or for conveying emotions similarly to face to face conversations. Usually, institutions train learners to use writing to; inform, explain and persuade a specific purpose. To be a member of a discourse community one ought to attain certain objectives depending on the; audience, purpose, convention, genres, and topics.

A discourse community is referred to as a group of individuals who have a similar set of discourses (Alison 42). The group also shares basic values, assumptions, and goals (Hunter et al 345). A discourse community can also be referred to as a social network created by participants who have the same set of communicative purposes. In the current digital age, social networks are viewed as independent discourse communities. The latter redefine themselves through constant communication amongst its members. Working towards a common goal can categorize a group as a discourse community. There are members within discourse communities who have the mandate of regulating activities carried out within the community (Hunter et al 342). They act as leaders of the group and try to maintain law and order. Violation of rules set up within a discourse can lead to issues that may make some members feel violated leading them to quit the group which is not in the best interest of any discourse community (Clark et al 47). Relationships within cyberspace can be hard to control and this is a big issue that has been faced by vast online discourse communities. In this paper, a thorough analysis is carried out on an issue that is present within a familiar discourse community. Important data will be collected through a transcribed interview with members of the community.

               In the current society, most people are accustomed to using social media to communicate with peers or family (Clark et al, 45). The social community in these platforms may either be formal or informal. The renowned mediums that host the discourse communities include; Facebook, Instagram, Twitter or Reddit. The primary aim of the hosts is to ensure discourse communities are created where people can form stable friendships or relationships. In this investigation, I opted to look into the social media discourse communities in general since I participate in all and also due to the fact they share the same goals. The interviewees were chosen from each of the platforms to offer information on common issues faced within the social media discourse community. Firstly, it important to learn what social media is. Social media is known as a composition of applications and websites that help individuals to develop and share content through social networking. Social media platforms are the best means of getting informed (Alison 44). Major news outlets utilize social media to share vital messages to its listeners attracting discourse communities who enter into conversations to discuss shared news. Social media platforms are as useful as much as they are destructive. The below interview tries to outline the predominant problems faced by the social media discourse community.

**Transcribed Interview**

Subtopics that were incorporated in questions asked to the participants included;

1. What is your definition of social media?
2. Which predominant issue have you observed in social media discourse communities?
3. What is the best way to solve the issue?

**Interview 1**: An Interview with Sophie Parker a 22-year-old whom we participate in the same Facebook Discourse Community.

**Interviewer**: How do you view Facebook as a social media tool and can you briefly explain how you understand the term ‘social media’

**Sophie**: In my perception, social media includes sites through which different people can send each other; messages, memories, photos or videos. Facebook is a famous social media tool that is used by people of all ages but majorly by teenagers. Through Facebook, teenagers and the youth can conduct social interactions and make positive friendships.

**Interviewer**: What is the major challenge that you have experienced while using Facebook?

**Sophie**: The major issue that I have viewed in the Facebook student platform is cyberbullying. The issue becomes so extreme at times that some individuals commit suicide. I faced a situation where one of the members decided to take their life because she was constantly discriminated against to post anything on the group due to her race. The issue was detrimental and my opinion is that the administrators ought to have controlled the situation before it went worse.

**Interviewer**: What do you think is the best solution to handle such an issue?

**Sophie**: Cyberbullying has become quite rampant on Facebook. This makes most communities to disconnect due to differences that later emerge after groups have been created. It is saddening that some teenagers decide to take their lives due to harsh comments or trolls. Administrators in charge of controlling the Facebook discourse community should be keen on removing members who do not follow rules that ensure everyone is protected from discrimination or bullying.

**Interviewer**; Thank you for the feedback.

**Interview 2:** An interview with my fellow Twitter Enthusiast who is pursuing media studies (Harry Springford, 24 years)

**Interviewer**: Hello Harry and welcome to this exclusive interview.

**Harry**: The pleasure is all mine.

**Interviewer**: How could you define social media?

**Harry**: Social media is a significant platform that is used to communicate with friends, family, schoolmates or with official administrators. The platform is very popular than conventional media which includes; newspapers of television media. In the current world, social media is fast in sharing information and data making it preferred by the youth and other contemporary users. Communities within social media also use the medium for business purposes.

**Interviewer**: Thank you for the well-detailed response. Does Twitter have any issues especially in specific discourse communities?

**Harry**: Twitter is diverse especially when it comes to sharing important news or content. Most communities in the platform have utilized their groups to spread messages and information that conform to their standards. This might seem like an advantage for participants but there are cons involved in the spread of content or information. The discourse communities on twitter are double-edged swords especially when it comes to sharing and spreading data. There is a power held by the laypeople who are assigned the task to leverage news. Some individuals are always susceptible to offering fake news to cause drama in discourse communities. These powerful actors have a great influence on spreading propaganda which storms problems amongst people with different opinions and perspectives.

**Interviewer**: Is the spread of misinformation such a rampant vice in social media?

**Harry**: It saddening that users who spread false information have the most followers on these discourse communities. If you have tried the following features to do with fake news on social sites, one of the elements that have stood out is the creation of conspiracy discourse sites. In these platforms, members are fed with fake and treacherous stories from all over the globe. Some of these sites begin as discussion boards for breaking and emerging news but are later turned in to propaganda platforms. Politicians love propaganda and hence approach administrators of the platforms so that they can help in sharing false news. Twitter is elaborate for sharing content making it a target for propaganda enthusiasts.

**Interviewer**: What is the best way of curbing misinformation and spreading propaganda in the social media discourse communities?

**Harry**: Social media users should be trained on how to differentiate fake news and real news. There are vast ways that people can learn how to identify correct information. Misinformation can be misleading; sites that spread false data should be highlighted by volunteers and avoided by users. Social media platforms are inherently vulnerable to fake news and propaganda and the issue might be here to stay. Positive social media experts should create solutions to save discourse communities from receiving fake news.

**Interviewer**: Thank you, Harry, your content has helped a lot in this investigation.

**Interview 3:** The interview was carried out with my Instagram friend, Patrick (26)

**Interviewer**: How does Instagram act as a social media tool?

**Patrick**: As you know social media is a platform through which current issues and data are spread. Instagram acts as a proper social media tool through which one can communicate with friends and family through photos and videos. In the previous years, the youth have been fond of Instagram in vast ways especially in having fun and catching up with what other users are up to.

**Interviewer**: Most social media tools have their pros and cons. What are the challenges faced on Instagram?

**Patrick**: Instagram is one of the most used sites when it comes to social media. Without critically thinking, most participants find the platform fun and mind thrilling. However, they do not think of the repercussions that are attached to using the sites. Several reports have exemplified how Instagram leads to social media pressure. The pressure becomes too much that some individuals fall into depression. It may sound absurd that one may deprive depression from Instagram. Most people do not acknowledge this sad reality.

**Interviewer**: Do you mean that discourse communities have not sensitized on this issue?

**Patrick**: The thing about Instagram is that users are mostly concerned about who has the best glamor who can get most likes. Most communities try to make sure that they engage more and more followers to get recognition. Individual users are so addicted to creating posts to the extent that they do not notice how it affects them psychologically. Vast reports have been made on how one’s brain is controlled by other peoples’ posts. Judgments made online can either be offensive or positive. There are expectations that one has when making a post on Instagram. When these expectations are not met, one is affected adversely psychologically. Bullying also exists on Instagram and the victims end up having low self-esteem.

**Interviewer**; Social media pressure must be a common issue in the Instagram Discourse Community?

**Patrick**: Sharing videos or images is quite addictive especially amongst the youth. The environment created on social media is influenced by the likes that an individual has on their photos on videos. Lack of followers or likes can contribute to pressure to find ways that one can get more likes. For instance, the female gender has been prompted to post obscene pictures to get followers or more likes. This contributes to these individuals lacking social values while on the verge of getting virtual followers. It is saddening that social media sites have taken a toll on our friendships and relationships making them unhealthy. Instagram discourse communities make us think that we know other people way better by liking their photos and watching their videos. What most people do not know is that this is not a means of making friendships. Genuine relationship needs constant communication and time which is mostly covered through face-to-face conversations. Sites such as Instagram should only be used to enhance established friendships or relationships.

**Interviewer**; Thank you, Patrick, for your time and for sharing essential information about Instagram issues.

**Conclusion**

Social media as earlier mentioned is a discourse platform through which individuals can share ideas, data or one’s point of view. This is of much significant value to both the young and the old. Through these platforms, people from all generations can get to know each other and share ideas which are a bit different from conventional discourse community where people were categorized according to age and social classes. Social media discourse community is one of the favorable outlets through which young peoples’ minds can be reached to make an elaborate difference in them (Curran and David, 73). In times of disaster and calamities, communities within social media offer moral and financial support to help the victims (Curran and David, 74). Many pros are attached to the social media discourse community. However, from the above interviews, it is evident that there are issues that face the members within the social media discourse community. The challenges given are detrimental and can affect social media users adversely. Social media discourse community can mislead us into believing that one has a huge support system yet all this is all vague. Below are a few solutions to curb the challenges faced in the discourse community.

Everyone in the social media discourse community should receive an opportunity to have input. The community can be easily improved by ensuring that everyone feels appreciated within the sites. Users’ interactions in any social media platform should be regulated by a set of rules that ensure that issues such as cyberbullying are permanently eliminated. The risk of miscommunication should be curbed by sensitizing members of a community on the need to use polite language and non-offensive phrases. Most conflicts within social media discourse communities are brought about by users opting to use obscene language (Alison 45). Values should be embraced within the discourse communities to make sure that members are nurtured into being disciplined and courteous to each other. Discourse communities online should encourage face to face communication to avoid virtual ambiguity; social media is relevant but it cannot be a base for our daily relationships and friendships (Zhang and Nuan, 817).

**Work Cited**

Clark, Melissa, Hulda G. Black, and Kimberly Judson. "Brand community integration and satisfaction with social media sites: a comparative study." *Journal of Research in Interactive Marketing* 11.1 (2017): 39-55.

Curran, James, and David Hesmondhalgh. *Media and Society*. Bloomsbury Academic, 2019.

Gilchrist, Alison. *The well-connected community: A networking approach to community development*. Policy Press, 2019

Hunter, Ruth F., et al. "Ethical issues in social media research for public health." *American journal of public health* 108.3 (2018): 343-348.

Zhang, Mingli, and Nuan Luo. "Understanding relationship benefits from harmonious brand community on social media." *Internet Research* 26.4 (2016): 809-826.