

# Social Media Usage and Academic Performance in Secondary Schools, Kenya

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**Abstract--** The study surveyed the impact of social media on students' academic performance in public day secondary schools. The study was conducted in Kisii County; Kenya where 1132 respondents, (students, teachers and principals) participated in the study. Researcher used mixed method research design. Purposive and simple random sampling techniques were used to obtain the sample of the study. The objectives of the study were: to established whether secondary school students were aware of any social media places, to establish which social media sites were frequented by students in public day secondary schools and find out the influence of social media on students' academic performance in public day secondary schools. The outcomes revealed that majority of students in day secondary school were aware and access social media sites with majority of them spending an average of over two hours per day. The most frequented social sites being What's Up and Facebook and teachers, students and principal strongly agreed that access of social media sites by high school students has affected negatively their academic and language usage.

**Key Words--** Social media, Whats'Up, Facebook, academic performances, internet,

## I. INTRODUCTION

Social media includes an array of internet based tools and services that are designed to advance community development through relationships and information distribution (Arnold and Paulus, 2010). They further state that the tools offer opportunities for personal manifestation as well as connections with other users. Junco, Helbergert and Loken (2011) state that social media encourages teamwork and information sharing. Social media can be used in academic settings to prop up student commitment and expedite better student learning ( Kabilan, Ahmad and Abidin, 2010).

But it was noted by Skenazy (2009) that we think of phones as communication tools, but the reality is they may be just the contrary. The views of Davidson (2011) propose that people are adapting to fresh communication norms in an increasing digital world, learning to hastily attend to, process, and react to multiple and sometimes concurrent message. Given the several possible means that digital communication outfits will continue to impact practices of teaching and learning, instructional communication scholars should perform programmatic research to comprehend how these tools influence classroom communication and consequent learning outcomes (Schuck & Aubusson, 2010).

In connection to this, several studies have been carried out on the effects of social media on the students' learning outcome in colleges and schools. The studies have recognized both positive and negative bearings of social media on students' academic achievement in education (Espinosa, Laffey, Whittaker & Sheng, 2006). However the studies have not proven the effect of social media on students' performance in secondary schools.

## A. Theoretical Framework

The study adopted Uses and Gratification theory and Social Learning theory. Uses and Gratification theory was advocated by Blumler and Katz's,(1974). It claims that responsibility of selecting specific media lies on an individual to encounter their needs, although media compete with other sources of information for the user's gratification. In this study, the overall academic performance of a student is as a result competition between access of social media and academic work. Hence, UGT is an approach which would assist the study to establish other reasons why students use internet.

The Social Learning Theory also holds that an individual's immediate environment influences ones behavior (Bandura, 1997). Bandura added that behavior and responses that are repeated, perceived as real, unique, purposeful and outstanding are further likely to be learned. An individual's socialization development is prejudiced by abundant factors within the surroundings such as the family, school, biological factors and others. Herein, the most common social education situations are the social media sites. Agreeing to Social Learning Theory, the students, friends and situations affect a student's academic performance. Therefore, the use of social media webs by students affect their performance academically.

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Social Media according to Junco, Helbergat and Loken (2011) denotes the internet based devices that encourage relationship and communication. This agrees with Davis et al (2012) who asserted that Social Media refers to technology of web-based application that permits people and associations to generate, connect and share content in a digital environment via a multi-way communication. This presence of social media has made it possible for young people to communicate thoughts, feelings, personal information, and exchange photos and videos.

Social media has come from distant to influence the construction of the global culture and identity. As much as international societies continue to relate with each other, technology is at the same time disadvantaging and disempowering some societies and shifting power to some actors. The United States of America, for example, is attempting and it is on the winning side in transforming the world into its own reflection. What we are evidencing is the 'Americanization' of the world (Berger, 2005). What is significant here is a facet of cultural supremacy and it is seen by the third world as a means of cultural imperialism.

New media does not terminate the old media; instead they advance them by fundamentally changing their approach of existence and operation (Lin, Lee and Robertson, 2011). Leea, Chena and Lin (2015) stated that the new technology of social media is more attractive to the young people as a worth and room for activities which are impossible if done directly face

to face. Lin and colleagues (2011) claimed out that almost one third of adolescents regularly talk on phone, text, view television, listen to music or surf the internet while doing their homework.

Junco, Helbergert and Loken (2011) stated that social media involves a variety of the network tools and services that are intended to encourage community development through collaboration and exchanging ideas. They also state that social media encourages teamwork and information sharing. Also Kabilan, Ahmad and Abidin (2010) recognized that social media can be used in academic settings to prop up student commitment and facilitate better student learning. At the present time, most scholars agree that knowledge not only exists in individual minds but also in discourse and connections between individuals (Kristen, Jessica and Hua, 2013). Kristen, Jessica and Hua also mentioned that interactions between individuals support active participation which is an essential element in the learning of students. They further state that learners need to develop skills, to share knowledge and to learn with others, both in face-to-face situations and through technology including social media.

However, using technologies like social media links and internet is a cause that can influence students' academics positively or poorly (Mehmood & Taswir, 2013). Therefore the participation of students on internet may sway their academic performance either positively or negatively although other studies found no impact of social media on academic performance. The study by Robert and Foehr (2008) show that the new media enhance leisure activities but do not take away time from young people. To support this findings, the study by Ahmed and Qazi (2011) found no relationship between social media and students' academic grades. In addition Negussie and Ketema (2015) documented that time spent on facebook has no significant relationship with students' grades.

Some studies found positive influence of social media on students' academic performance. For example Kabilan, Ahmad and Abidin (2010) found positive influence of social media on the academic performance because it promotes student engagement and facilitates better student learning.

Social media also promotes collaboration and information sharing (Junco, Helbergert and Loken, 2011). According to Ahn (2011) social media encourages students' learning and practicing skills within a particular knowledge area. This is supported by Alloway and Alloway (2012) claimed that social media improves students' working memory and learning skills. In addition Van-Vooren & Bess (2013) assert that social media improve students' English Language learning through tweeting.

Scholars similar to Wang, Wei and Liang (2011), Jeffrey and Adams (2015) and Wilkins et al (2015) found out that social media has a damaging effect on students' overall academic performance. They reiterated that social media affects students' efficiency as well as students' academic performance negatively. Gafni and Deri (2012), Hurt et al (2012) also agrees that time spent on social media affects academic performance negatively. They further claim that social media provides too much stimulation and distracts students from completing their schoolwork.

It was stated by Mehmood and Taswir (2013) that if social networks are well designed and tailored to specific

educational needs of each student, social networking sites can be a useful instrument in improving academic performance among students. It can also offer elasticity in learning, inspire inventive ideas and increase interpersonal interaction among students and instructors. Schuck and Aubusson (2010), argue that there are many possible ways social media continues to influence teaching and learning, therefore programmatic studies should be conducted to be aware of how social media impacts on learning outcomes.

### III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Mixed method research design was used, both quantitative and qualitative data were collected using questionnaires and an interview schedule, concurrent triangulation was used to merge the collected quantitative and qualitative data. Mixed method allows explanation, interpretation, assessment of an occurrence and addressing a question at different levels (Creswell, 2003). Concurrent triangulation design also permits two or more methods to be used to confirm, validate findings within a study.

#### A. Sampling Procedure and Sample Size

The sample size for this study was 1132 respondents from 10 public day secondary schools made up of 10 school principals, 145 teachers and 977 students. According to Best and Kahn (2003), the idyllic sample should be big enough to serve as adequate representatives of the population and small enough to be selected economically, in terms of subject availability.

The study used purposive sampling to select schools and simple random sampling to select the participants.

#### B. Research Instruments

The main tools for collecting data in this research were questionnaires and interview schedules.

Questionnaires were used on students in public day secondary schools. The questionnaires had open-ended and close-ended items. Open-ended questions helped to gather in depth information while close-ended questions gave out structured alternatives to respondents. The questionnaire is favored over other related data collection methods since it allows for collection of data within a short period of time from a relatively literate population (Oso & Onen, 2005). Interview schedules were carried out on principals and teachers in public day secondary schools. The interview schedules helped to gather firsthand information.

#### C. Reliability of Research Instruments

The researcher distributed questionnaires to a sample of 50 students and 10 in 10 schools within research area but not included in the main sample. According to Mugenda and Mugenda (2003) reliability is the consistency of a measure or the degree to which a research instrument yields consistent results after repeated trials. A Cronbach Alpha was calculated and a reliability coefficient of 0.86 was obtained after the revision of the questionnaire items on their ambiguity, the instrument's, thus the tool was reliable based on recommendations by Orodho (2008) that a reliable questionnaire should have Alpha Coefficient of 0.7 and above.

#### D. Data Collection Procedure

After obtaining clearance from ethics committee and permit from National Council of Science Technology, (NACOST), researcher visited the selected schools. The researcher briefly explained the study and the study benefits to the respondents. Issues of confidentiality and voluntary participation were also

discussed. The volunteers signed informed consent forms and issued later with the questionnaires. No names were indicated on the instruments to ensure anonymity. The instruments were collected immediately after they were completed. This ensured that all the questionnaires were returned to the researcher.

#### E. Data Analysis

Quantitative data for this study was analyzed using descriptive statistics with the aid of Statistic Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) computer software version 22.0 while qualitative data were categorized and analyzed the matically based on research objectives. The results were presented using percentages and frequencies in the form of tables. The analyzed qualitative data was presented in narrative form.

### IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

#### A. Student Awareness and Access to Social Media

The findings revealed that 96.6%, (925) of the students are aware of social media sites while 3.1% (30) were not and 93.4%, (892) of the students access internet whereas 6.6%, (63) do not as shown in the table 1 below. From the interview

of teachers and principals the study found out that students access internet.

#### B. Social media sites accessed by students

The study established from the students' responses the social media sites they access. The findings revealed that 43.6% (416) of the students use Facebook, 27.9% (266) use WhatsApp, 5.0% (48) use Twitter, 6.2% (59) use Instagram, 5.4% (52) use YouTube and 11.9% (114) do not access any media as shown in the table 2 below. The study established from teachers and principals interview that students mostly prefer Facebook, whatsApp, Instagram and twitter.

#### C. Satisfaction students get from social media

The researcher also sought to establish the satisfaction students get from social media. The findings show that 43.9% (419) of the respondents seek information for satisfaction, whereby 22.5% (215) for entertainment, 12.8% (122) for pornography, 9.6% (92) obtain affiliation from chatting and 11.2% (107) feel digitalized as shown on table 3 below. Teachers and principals interviewed claim that students use social media sites for chatting, exchanging photos and watching pornographic videos.

Table 1: Student Awareness and Access to Social Media

Statement	Yes		No		Total	
	F	%	F	%	F	%
Student awareness of social networking sites	925	96.9	30	3.1	955	100.0
Student access to internet	892	93.4	63	6.6	955	100.0

Table2: Social Media Sites Accessed by Students

Site	Frequency	Percentage	Valid	Cumulative
			Percentage	Percentage
Facebook	416	43.56	43.56	43.56
WhatsApp	266	27.85	27.85	71.41
Twitter	48	5.03	5.03	76.44
Instagram	59	6.18	6.18	82.62
Youtube	52	5.44	5.44	88.06
None	114	11.94	11.94	100.00
Total	955	100.00	100.00	

Table 3: Satisfaction Students get from Social Media

	Frequency	Percent	Valid	Cumulative
			Percent	Percent
Affiliation for chatting	92	9.6	9.6	9.6
Information	419	43.9	43.9	53.5
Entertained	215	22.5	22.5	76.0
Pornography	122	12.8	12.8	88.8
Digitalization	107	11.2	11.2	100.0
Total	955	100.0	100.0	

**D. Social Media and influence on Students Language**

The researcher sought to find out the influence of social media on students language. The findings showed that 45.5% (435) of the students used short forms of words mixed with numbers while 34.6% (330) of the students use English in communicating in social media and 19.9% (190) use Kiswahili

as indicated by table 4 below. The teachers and principals claimed that most students prefer short forms of words mixed in English and Kiswahili; and short words in English mixed with numerals. This is common when they are having their own conversation, answering questions in written and when writing notes.

Table 4: Language used by Students on Social Media

Language	Frequency	Percentage	Valid Percentage	Cumulative percentage
English	330	34.6	34.6	34.6
Kiswahili	190	19.9	19.9	54.5
Short forms	435	45.5	45.5	100.0
Total	955	100.0	100.0	

**E. Time spent by Students on Social Media**

The researcher also sought to find out time spent by students on social media. The study revealed that 66.8% (638) of the students spend too much time on social media than on academic issues while 33.2% (317) do not as indicated in table 5 below. Respondents also believed that time spend on

social media affects their academic study time as agreed by 77.9% (744) of the respondents and 22.1% (211) did not believe that too much time on social media can affect their performance as 5 indicated in table 5 below. The study also established from teachers and principals that students who access social media spend a lot of time on internet than on academic work during their free time.

Table 5: Time spent on Social Media and effects of spending too much time on Social Media on Academics

Statement	Agreed		Disagreed		Total	
	F	%	F	%	F	%
Do you think you spend too much time on social media than on Academic issues	638	66.8	317	33.2	955	100.0
Do you believe spending too much time on social media can affect your academic performance	744	77.9	211	22.1	955	100.0

**F. Social Media and Students overall Academic Performance**

Further the researcher sought to find out the impact of social media on students' overall academic performance. The study found out that 60.8% (581) strongly agreed that social media has had a negative impact on their overall class performances,

while 26.5% (253) of the respondents agreed that social media has had positive impact on their academic issues and 12.7% (121) said it had no effect as shown in table 6 below. The study found out from teachers and principals interview that students who engaged on social media were performing poorly on their academic performance.

Table 6: Social Media and Students' overall Academic Performance

Effect	Frequency	Percentage	Valid Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
Positive	253	26.49	26.49	26.49
Negative	581	60.84	60.84	87.33
No effect	121	12.67	12.67	100.00
Total	955	100.00	100.00	



## CONCLUSION

From this study, it was noted that students' access internet and social media sites and the frequented sites were Facebook, WhatsApp, Twitter, Instagram and YouTube. It was also noted that students who access social media spend more than two hours on their own. Students strongly agreed that they use social media for chatting, posting photos, entertainment, watching pornographic videos, getting news and sports. This access to social media has a negative impact on their academic performance and language usage. It was revealed that students use short forms of words mixed with numbers in English and Kiswahili when writing notes, answering questions in class and when they are having their own conversation. This usage of short forms of words also impacts negatively on students' academic performance.

## RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE STUDY

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations were arrived at:

1. Schools to set modern computer labs for students to access internet with clear guidelines while monitoring and controlling their anxiety on using the internet negatively.
2. Social media to be modified and used as a learning tool for students to access notes E-books, academic videos, doing homework and consulting teachers.
3. Both teachers and parents to take an active role in guiding and counseling students to minimize time spent on social media nonacademic programs, discourage engagement on destructive social media sites and encourage them to maximize their time on academic activities.
4. Create awareness to students on the social media sites that are academic oriented for the students to operate them when engaged on internet.
5. Teachers should be supported to curdle usage of social media tools like laptops in their teaching for the students to imitate the constructive use of social media tools for academic purposes.
6. Curriculum developers should provide guidance to software developers in the creation of academic oriented sites related to learning activities expected to be used by students in learning institutions.

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