



# INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF ADVANCE RESEARCH, IDEAS AND INNOVATIONS IN TECHNOLOGY

ISSN: 2454-132X

Impact factor: 4.295

(Volume 5, Issue 6)

Available online at: [www.ijariit.com](http://www.ijariit.com)

## The influence of social media tools on public universities in Kenya

Annette Munyiva

[anniemunyiva@gmail.com](mailto:anniemunyiva@gmail.com)

University of Eldoret, Eldoret, Kenya

John Simiyu

[jwsi54@yahoo.com](mailto:jwsi54@yahoo.com)

University of Eldoret, Eldoret, Kenya

Jackson Too

[jtoo@cue.or.ke](mailto:jtoo@cue.or.ke)

Moi University, Eldoret, Kenya

### ABSTRACT

*Students in public universities are among the most active users of social media tools and platforms. There is little research data on the influence of social media on public universities in Kenya. It is critical to study how social media affects the wellbeing and academics of public university students in Kenya. The objective is to determine the influence of social media on public universities in Kenya. The research utilized a qualitative research design facilitated by a systematic literature review methodology. Findings from 12 studies were comparatively analyzed to determine the degree of conformity in a bid to answer the research question. The findings included that the influence of social media on a student's wellbeing and academics depends on the student's engagement in social media activities and consumption of the corresponding content. Social media can be an educational resource, enhance engagement, communication, and participation in classroom activities, and improve professional networking. Social media can also be a source of distraction and cybercrime besides the fact that it can also lead to addiction. The influence of social media on public universities in Kenya depends on the students' engagement with social media activities and content. Educators, higher education administrators, and parents should monitor and control how students use social media content.*

**Keywords**— Social media, Social network, Academic performance, Distraction, Internet addiction, Cybercrime, Learning activities, Networking, Collaborative learning

### 1. INTRODUCTION

The concept of social media has significantly evolved from simply the creation and consumption of multimedia content to interactive virtual networks and communities where people exchange ideas, consume knowledge, and entertain themselves in different ways. Social media tools or platforms are, therefore, interactive computer-mediated and mostly online technologies that facilitate virtual interaction among users. Some of the renowned social media platforms include Facebook, YouTube, LinkedIn, Twitter, SnapChat, WhatsApp, WeChat, and Instagram (1). Consequently, social media sites and tools can be accessed through personal computers or smartphones. Sometimes the term social networking is used interchangeably with social media because they virtually mean the same thing. Fenwick (1) contends that the use of social media has been rising through the years thanks to increased technological advances and internet penetration across the world. For instance, Facebook reported in January 2018 that it had over two billion active users across the world.

Particularly, the use of social media platforms, sites, and tools has been more common among young people compared to other age groups. Burbules (2) notes that college students are among the most active users of social media tools. Consequently, several researchers have attempted to study the impact of using social media tools in colleges. Ideally, Mastrodicasa and Metellus (3) indicate that; understanding the type of activities and sheer time spent by college students on social media is critical for high education administrators. Primarily, the use of social media has both positive and negative effects on the user. Preliminary studies call for more research on the impacts of social media on both student well-being and academic performance (4). Notably, from the preliminary studies conducted on the topic, it has come out clearly that the concept of social media may not be the problem in itself. Instead, the specific use of social media and the purpose of social media activities influence the impact that these tools have on student wellbeing and academic performance (2). For instance, spending more time on social media games and non-academic multimedia content could easily lead to addiction, which has far much worse implications on the student's wellbeing (4). On the other hand, using social media tools for academy research and learning significantly improves class grades due to increased engagement and active participation in classwork.

Given the findings and recommendations of preliminary studies on the topic, it is critical to expanding on the investigation to establish how social media tools influence public universities. Notably, most previous studies have not drawn the line between the impact of social media on private and public institutions. Hypothetically, Gurcan (5) argues that there could be a variance in social

media usage patterns and statistics among the students. The current research seeks to capitalize on this understanding by investigating the influence of social media on public universities (6). Hence, the main purpose of the current study is to determine the influence of social media tools on public universities in Kenya. The findings of this study could have significant practical implications for higher education administrators, instructors, and students alike.

## **2. METHODOLOGY**

The research employed a qualitative research design that is explorative in nature that sought to generate an in-depth understanding of how social media affects students' well-being and academic performance in Kenyan public universities (6-8). The qualitative research design was facilitated by a systematic literature review process that involved conducting a comparative analysis of the findings and reports of previous researchers on the topic. Ideally, Hair et al. (7) qualitative studies only establish narrative or non-statistical data and information that could be used to deeply explore a phenomenon. On the other hand, Kothari (6) notes that a systematic literature review is a credible comparative analysis of concepts, themes, and findings from previous studies related to a topic of interest.

## **3. SAMPLING AND DATA COLLECTION**

The researcher limited the search to studies conducted on the impact of social media use in public universities in Kenya. For a study to be included in the review, it had to be relevant, authoritative (legitimately authored), and conducted within the past 10 years. The strict inclusion criteria were to guarantee the reliability and validity of the findings (6-8). After retrieving the articles from the databases, only 12 met the eligibility criteria. The researcher then embarked on a comparative analysis of the articles to generate information that could help explore the influence of social media tools on public universities in Kenya.

## **4. DATA ANALYSIS**

The comparative analysis process involved a qualitative synthesis of the findings and information presented in the 12 studies. Particularly, the researcher identified and correlated themes in individual studies. The process involved relating concepts between studies and establishing how different studies featured similar themes and findings (6-8). Interestingly, there was an extraordinary congruence among the studies about the influence of social media on public universities. Most of the themes identified were common among different researchers despite there being differences in the context of research as well as when the study was conducted.

Researchers typically contend that social media has both constructive and destructive implications for public universities (1, 2, 3, 5). Particularly, while social media tools could benefit and positively influence learning and career progression among public university students, it can also be detrimental to their educational progress and the quality of life (1-3, 9, 10). Hence, the findings of the systematic literature review have been classified into two major categories that include the benefits and the downsides of social media tools in public universities in Kenya.

## **5. RESULTS**

### **5.1 How Students in Public Universities in Kenya Use Social Media Tools**

Students in public universities in Kenya are among the most active social media users in the nation. Facebook, (10) Tweeter, Instagram, WhatsApp, YouTube, and SnapChat are the most commonly used social media platforms among these college students. Students have an increased understanding of how social media tools can significantly influence their academic success (10). They create groups, pages, and chatrooms on these social media platforms where they exchange ideas, discuss course-related materials, engage in fun events, and even complete their assignments. However, at the same time, students also use social media purely for entertainment purposes (1). For instance, they use social media to both create and consume multimedia content such as photos and videos (11). Students also play games on social media platforms to entertain themselves (1, 10). Notably, through social media, users get to make new friends, meet new people, exchange contacts, and even data. Most students use social media for social interaction, networking, entertainment, and making new friends than for academic purposes.

### **5.2 The Positive Influence of Social Media**

**5.2.1 Enhancing Student Engagement and Participation in Classroom Activities:** Just like any other technological tool, social media platforms can effectively increase student engagement and participation in-class activities. According to research, some students may be too shy or intimidated to openly participate in classroom activities (13). However, Al-Yafi, El-Masri, and Tsai (9) claim that they may find their voice through social media platforms. For instance, in online forums on social media platforms such as Facebook (10), students will be more comfortable expressing their views and engaging in the learning process (12, 13). Ideally, Burbules (2) reports that social media platforms foster discussion and enhance the social expressiveness of the students. However, as it shall be seen, later on, social media can have a distraction effect on the students rather than enhance their engagement and participation in classroom activities.

**5.2.2 Improving Communication and the Connection between Students and Lecturers:** One of the current learning trends in public universities in Kenya is the constancy of utilizing and integrating technology in classroom activities. Both students and instructors alike embrace technological tools for ease of communication and scheduling of classes (3, 11). Social media platforms significantly enhance real-time communication both between students and other students and between students and their lecturers. A WhatsApp group, for instance, can be used to communicate vital academic information such as important dates, course information, urgent notices, and course content/material (14). Members of the group can access such communication in real-time (5, 9, 13). Asemah and Edegoh (12) assert that educators can also answer students' queries via social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter. Importantly, these platforms also facilitate communication between students, which enhances the quality of class discussions.

**5.2.3. The Educational Resourcefulness of Social Media Platforms:** Scholars, researchers, educators, and academicians among other people share create, publish, and share extensive academic research content on social media platforms. For instance, a lot of educational content can be found on YouTube channels and LinkedIn profiles (5, 10, 11, and 13). Some lecturers and professors publish videos with rich course-related material on different YouTube channels that can be accessed freely (1). Students and instructors can leverage these platforms and take advantage of the academic content to enrich and expand their knowledge base (4, 5, 13, and 14). Students and lecturers surveyed in previous studies contend that the academic content on these social media platforms can significantly supplement the knowledge learned in class.

**5.2.4. Professional Networking and Positive Career Prospects:** The main goal of public university students is to successfully go through the system and land a well-paying job in the respective fields of study. Social media has become the main channel through which students enhance their career prospects. Particularly, Fenwick (1) claims that students utilize social networking sites to establish professional contacts and connections with which they can easily obtain employment. LinkedIn, for instance, is a social media platform with a specific focus on professional networking. The site has contacts of companies, businesses, institutions, managers, CEOs, and a lot more information that can be used to improve the career prospects of students (5). Furthermore, alumni associations and college career centers in public universities in Kenya mostly use Facebook, Twitter, and WhatsApp to broadcast job openings and internship opportunities (9). Most businesses have also embraced social networking and created their own social media fan pages and groups where students can join and stay updated on any new developments and job opportunities.

### **5.3 The Negative Influence of Social Media**

**5.3.1 Social Media Platforms are a Major Distraction to Learning:** Most social media platforms were not meant for educational purposes. Hence, they may have a disruptive effect on the learning process. Most social media sites allow users to create and post non-educational content that could easily divert the attention of the students away from the learning process (2, 10, 13, 15,). For example, Veletsianos and Navarrete (11) note that not all videos on YouTube are educational. Some are song videos, graphic content, films, and funny clips among other non-educational content (15). The social networking platforms are also filled with all types of commercials and adverts that have a distracting effect on the learning process. However, studies by several researchers indicate that the use of social media in college has no direct effect on classroom performance (5, 9, 12, and 14).

**5.3.2 Internet Addiction and its Negative Repercussions:** One of the biggest challenges of digital technologies is internet addiction. Researchers have found out that adolescents and youths are more likely to be addicted to the internet than any other age group. Similarly, a major challenge in using social media among students is addiction where students overspend their time in social media activities and less time handling their academic tasks (1, 11). Addiction to social media has been found to lead to detachment from the real world. Particularly, social media addiction makes one rely more on the virtual unreal world created through online communities than the real world (5, 9, and 12). The detachment severs physical relationships and can easily lead to desolation, stress, and depression (3, 15). At the university level, hence, social media addiction can easily disrupt a student's educational progress and compromise their responsiveness to academic objectives. Internet addiction among students is a reality that most parents and instructors need to address as early as possible.

**5.3.3 The Threat of Cybercrime:** Young people are more vulnerable to internet-related crime than any other age group because of their vulnerability. Students admit that sometimes they are harassed and bullied online by people who may want to take advantage of them. According to Mastrodicasa and Metellus (3) identity theft, hacking, and malware attacks are common types of cybercrime that students are exposed to when they use social media platforms. To a worse extent, cases have been reported where students are tricked into engaging in online dating only to fall in love with stalkers, psychopaths, and criminals who have malicious intent other than dating (9, 12). Research further indicates that cases of murder and kidnapping of university students mostly emanate from a student's social media activities.

## **6. DISCUSSION**

The main theme from the reviewed literature sources reviewed is that the influence of social media on a student's wellbeing and academic performance is depended on how they choose to interact with these platforms, the activities they engage in, as well as the time spent on the social networking sites (5, 14). Preliminary findings on the topic suggest that if a student utilizes social media platforms constructively, it will significantly enhance their academic performance and improve the quality of life (2, 5). However, if used wrongly, social media tools could have a detrimental effect on the student's wellbeing as well as their academic life.

Learning becomes more interesting and exciting when a touch of technology is included in the process. Social media increases engagement and participation in classroom activities. Increased classroom engagement and participation can, therefore, significantly enhance academic performance among the students (1-5, 9-14). Furthermore, researchers collectively agree that social media tools can encourage collaborative learning due to improved communication between students and instructors (2, 11). The timeliness and effectiveness of communication through social media platforms improve the students' responses to learning activities (3, 9). Through the platforms, students can ask questions, make inquiries, and offer their perspectives on course content. Instructors can also provide instant feedback and respond to the students through these platforms.

Social media platforms also double up as vital educational resources. Scholars and researchers publish and share educational content through various social media platforms such as YouTube and LinkedIn. Fenwick (1) acknowledges that these platforms have recently become important outlets for critical research findings. For instance, researchers may share the findings of their studies on Twitter or Facebook. Users of LinkedIn can also post-academic content on their profiles or walls for dissemination (10,

12). Hence, social media can be used as an educational resource for learning to supplement normal classroom activities. Students can also utilize social networking sites to establish professional contacts and connections with which they can easily obtain employment during and after their studies.

On the other hand, some researchers argue that the distracting/disruptive effect of social media on the learning process may be only momentary and, therefore, may not significantly affect the academic performance of the learner (5, 3, and 10). Nevertheless, most other studies point to the fact that social media distraction slows down the learning processes and reduces the students' engagement and participation in classroom activities (4). Distraction disrupts normal cognitive learning processes, which affects the students' attention, involvement, and retention in class (13, 15). It is vital for instructors to monitor and control how students engage with the sites to ensure that none of the students is distracted.

Importantly, students agree that sometimes they spend more time on their smartphones chatting and browsing than on handling academic tasks. Consequently, the use of social media, especially among students, needs to be monitored and controlled to avoid addiction. According to Jepngetich (14), some universities in Kenya such as Moi University have barred access to social media sites such as Facebook and YouTube whenever students visit the main library complex by blocking access to the websites through the building's internet infrastructure. The strategy helps reduce distraction and disengagement from academic tasks. Furthermore, it helps to control and monitor how students access social media sites (14). Nevertheless, the strategy is not completely reliable because the students can access the platforms elsewhere even on their mobile devices.

Above all, a student's academic life may be destroyed if they are not careful with who they engage online and the activities they participate in (9-12). It is upon the students to practice prudence and care whenever they utilize social media platforms. Cybercrime majorly targets vulnerable users of social media platforms. Students are at great risk of falling victim to stalkers, kidnappers, identity thieves, and criminals. Parents and instructors are also encouraged to be vigilant of any possible cases of cybercrime where their children or students are victims.

## **7. CONCLUSION**

From the previous studies, it is clear that social media tools have both positive and negative influences on public universities in Kenya depending on how students use them. The social media platforms can be beneficial to students and their academic as well as career progression if used constructively and wisely. The platforms enhance student engagement; are key educational resources; enhance professional networking and career prospects; and improve communication between students and their lecturers. However, when used wrongly and imprudently, these sites could be detrimental to a student's personal life and academic progress. The findings of the study have significant practical implications for educators, higher education administrators, and parents. These three educational stakeholders need to control and monitor how students use social media sites and participate in social media activities. Although it may prove complex, it is critical to implement mechanisms and initiatives that could control how students engage with social media content. Importantly, awareness and educational programs can be instituted to help inform the students on how to take advantage of social media to enhance their scores and how to prudently engage in social media activities.

## **8. REFERENCES**

- [1] Burbules NC. How we use and are used by social media in education. *Edu Theory*. 2016 Aug; 66(4):551-65.
- [2] Fenwick T. Social media, professionalism and higher education: a socio-material consideration. *Studies in Higher Edu*. 2016 Apr 2; 41(4):664-77.
- [3] Mastrodicasa J, Metellus P. The impact of social media on college students. *J of College and Character*. 2013 Feb 1; 14(1):21-30.
- [4] Franklin P, Hossain R, Coren E. Social media and young people's involvement in social work education. *Soc Work Edu*. 2016 Apr 2; 35(3):344-56.
- [5] Gurcan HI. Contribution of social media to the students' academic development. *Int. J Info and Edu Tech*. 2015 Dec 1; 5(12):965.
- [6] Kothari CR. *Research methodology: Methods and techniques*. New Age International; 2004.
- [7] Hair Jr JF, Wolfinbarger M, Money AH, Samouel P, Page MJ. *Essentials of business research methods*. Routledge; 2015 Mar 4.
- [8] Lapan SD, Quartaroli MT, Riemer FJ, editors. *Qualitative research: An introduction to methods and designs*. John Wiley and Sons; 2011 Nov 9.
- [9] Al-Yafi K, El-Masri M, Tsai R. The effects of using social network sites on academic performance: the case of Qatar. *J Ent Info Man*. 2018 Apr 9; 31(3):446-62.
- [10] Liu Y. Social media tools as a learning resource. *J Edu Tech Dev and Exchange (JETDE)*. 2010; 3(1):8.
- [11] Veletsianos G, Navarrete C. Online social networks as formal learning environments: Learner experiences and activities. *Int Rev of Res in Open and Distributed Learning*. 2012 Jan 31; 13(1):144-66.
- [12] Asemah ES, Edegoh LO. Influence of social media on the academic performance of the undergraduate students of Kogi State University, Anyigba, Nigeria. *J Research in Human and Soc Sci*. 2013; 3(12).
- [13] Langat AC. Influence of social media on study habits of undergraduate students in Kenyan universities. *Int J of Novel Research in Humanity and Soc Sci*. 2015; 2(4):42-55.
- [14] Jepngetich K. *Influence of social media on face to face communication among college students: A study of selected colleges in Eldoret (Doctoral dissertation, Moi University)*.
- [15] Koross R, Kosgei S. The role of social media on student unrests in Kenyan public universities. *Int J of Sci Research and Innov Tech*. 2016; 3(6).