



Affordances of Social Media among Young Adults in Selected Universities in Kenya

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Abstract

The study assessed the affordances of social media use among young adults in selected universities in Kenya. The study utilized a qualitative approach to generate and analyze data. Twenty-two in-depth interviews and two focus group discussions were conducted among university students purposively picked from seven universities in Uasin Gishu County. The universities were conveniently selected. The interviews and focus group discussions were recorded, then transcribed and analyzed thematically. Blogging has become a source of employment for a lot of youth, all they need to do is look for a trending topic write about it and wait for comments and likes that way increasing traffic on their platforms and get paid. Learning opportunities such as cooking can also be learnt online thanks to Facebook for has made the world a global village, you can engage people from far without spending money for travel, and you can make friends overseas in a place you may never visit. You can form a group of special interest and discuss your issues regardless of participants' location. Users can interact at an affordable rate compared to face to face. Affordance of FB interactions includes its innovative features, memory and storage capabilities and entertainment features. FB is supporting interactions by acting a reliable storage and reminder. FB reminds users of special events in their lives these events are tagged to friends across networks and celebrated online. This unique innovation helped maintain relationships and adds value when people use then well. This study recommends a reconceptualization of the understanding of interactions and relationship formation in the light of contemporary trends in social network sites. Institutions and families be sensitized on the need to engage young people with a view of enhancing the importance of face-to-face communication which cannot be replaced by online interactions.

Keywords: Social media; Interactions; University students

INTRODUCTION

Online social networking is a popular trend today, especially, among teenagers and young adults in universities. This study examines the influence of Facebook on the social interactions and social relationships of users who are in universities (Masrom et al, 2021). This study is situated under human communication which has several levels including group communication, interpersonal communication, public communication and organization communication among others. Specifically, this study addresses interpersonal communication and relationship development and how such relationships are affected by social media use (ibid). The global innovations and advancement of computer technologies have had significant impact on various spheres of life such as communication. Ellison and Boyd argue that the revolution in computer technologies through the internet has transformed many aspects of modern society, including social interactions (Boyd et al., 2007).

The rapid advancement and use of online internet services, which are technology-mediated, are taking over other social interactions which are mostly face-to-face engagements. Interpersonal interaction and communication have been replaced by online communication as users of online social networking consistently log online to communicate and interact with other users (Drago, 2015).

Social media is a catalyst of the rapid expansion of online communication, as it allows users to consistently interact with other users, thereby creating a sense of belonging. Social media can be differentiated based on their distinct characteristics. These include discussion forums such as Reddit, Quora and Digg; social networks, such as Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn; bookmarking and content curation networks, such as Pinterest, Flipboard, and Blogs; media sharing networks, including Instagram, Snapchat, YouTube; and publishing networks, including WordPress, Tumblr, Medium, among others. According to (Mahan *et al.*, 2015) social network sites are the most widely adopted of all social media platforms.

Clarke equates being 'communicatively skilled' with 'socially skilled' and believes that to become socially skilled, one has to effectively interact with other people in a range of social situations. Clark opines that good communication and interpersonal skills are being sensitive to the attitudes and beliefs, and rules and norms of social interaction with others. Students using social networking sites are engaged in a complex range of communicative and creative events that exhibit attention, tone, style, subject matter and writing process to the audience. These are critical skills useful for improving one's communication skills, but what matters most is whether these skills are enough to help students communicate in a real-world of face-to-face interaction with peers (Clarke, 2015).

Face-to-face communication involves, body language, choice of words, facial expression, vocal variety, movements and positioning, listening skills, which together make up components of effective messaging. Nonetheless, in the online social networking sites, a lot of these aspects are missing because they are substituted with elements like emojis, webcam for visual cues, and microphone for audio cues, among others. In online social networking, the critical elements of effective communication are missing, including immediate feedback and response, which can generally be obtained and achieved solely via face-to-face communication (Abd Rahman, 2014).

Contrary reports on the influence of social media on interpersonal communication have been presented by several scholars. Action research by Izar *et al.* (2009), found out that by being involved in social networking sites, a student's interpersonal communication skills can be enhanced through frequent communication and expression. This is attributed to their tendency to interact with different people in a virtual manner and as a result, it improves their communication skills. Hesse (2013), equates the use of social networking sites to a form of 'augmented reality'. She found out that social networking sites do not impede interpersonal communication from taking place, but in fact, support the formation of real-life relationships.

Kaplan & Haenlein (2010) give an all-inclusive definition of social media: "*social media is a group of Internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0 and that allow the creation and exchange of user generated content*" (pg 210). Social media consists of different Internet applications such as social networking sites, blogs, virtual game worlds, and social worlds.

Social media creates applications such as social networking sites that consist of Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter among others. According to Boyd and Ellison (2007 pg. 21), social network is "web-based services that allow individuals to; construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system, articulate a list of other users with whom they share a

connection, and view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system". For the purpose of this research the terms social media will be used broadly to encompass social network sites, such as Facebook (Boyd, 2007).

According to Boyd & Ellison (2008) social media incorporates a list of users with whom individuals share a connection, thereby allowing individuals to make visible their list of connections to others and to traverse their social networks. Similar to the other social media sites, Facebook contains a web page into which users enter personal information such as date of birth, gender, address, religious view, educational background and, relationship status. Once users complete creating their profile, they are directed to identify others with similar relations by either, searching for registered users of Facebook and sending a friend request or by requesting their friends through email to join Facebook. On successful completion of friend requests, the two users' personal profile and their entire social networks are disclosed to each other. This allows SNS users to transverse networks by clicking through friends' profiles so that one's social network expands rapidly across people in the network. This is the ability of Facebook and other social media sites to attract millions of users around the globe.

Previous research on social media interrogated ways social media affects privacy and helps build and maintain social capital while other studies pointing to the relevance of social networking sites (SNS) as personal networks with individuals' identity formation and signaling, focus on impression management, users' profile authenticity, and the negotiation of users' social relationships (Madden, 2013). Boyd & Heer (2006); Ellison *et al.* (2007); Donath (2007) analyzed the reasons people use Facebook through the uses and gratification model, among the reasons they found were for social interaction, professional advancement, and entertainment. Only a handful of scholars have attempted to investigate the link between usage of the internet and interpersonal communication with friends and family members (Boyd, 2006).

Statement of Problem

Online social networking sites are being widely used by people in fulfilling their interaction needs. Despite the convenience and benefits of online social networks, its wide dissemination, prevalent use, and over-reliance negatively impact the essence of interactions among young adults in terms of intimacy and affection. Studies have shown that social media gives users a more advanced and convenient lifestyle by enabling a friendly and comfortable way to remain connected with other users. As online social networking consistently and continuously attracts more and more users, problems are also generated in almost equal measure. People become slowly addicted and consequences are visible on the decline of face-to-face interpersonal interactions. People's habits including relationships, emotions, ideas, health, and behavior are changing slowly because of social media influences.

Young adults today spend considerable amounts of their time on the internet and online social network sites as a way of connecting with their peers, showcase their social lives, share information, and reinvent their personalities. Social networking has become part of the daily life experience for an increasing number of people. The problem that prompts this study is that social network sites have altered how people interact with each other. With social networking sites becoming the central facilitators of daily interactions among young adults in universities, interpersonal interactions are missing out, consequently affecting social relationships among members of society.

According to Boyd (2008) online social network communication creates an atmosphere of difference between face-to-face communication, online technologies have altered the underlying design of social interaction and information distribution. Kalra and Manani

(2013) argue that excessive use of social network sites not only have a long-lasting effect on the psyche of students but also affects the physical, mental and social aspect of life.

New technological advances and the internet have negatively influenced the process of communication. No aspect of human life has been influenced immensely by the internet other than how people communicate with one another. Relationships that were initially created and maintained through physical interaction have now been almost overtaken by online social networking which is responsible for creating a new form of interpersonal relationship (Little, 2016). The increased use of social network sites among university students has increased physical distance among its users by lowering the rate of face-to-face interactions which normally allow people to share their feelings, information and meaning via verbal and non-verbal messages. With the decline in interpersonal interactions human relationships are weakened and cannot be replaced by social media such as Facebook interactions.

A lot of research has pointed out what people do online, while little has been research has focused on impact of the shift from physical to online and how this then affects human relationships (Little, 2016; Christensen 2018). There are limited studies in Kenya on the influence of social media on interaction patterns among young adults in universities where this research draws its tenets. The purpose of this study therefore was to assess the affordances of social media among young adults in selected universities in Kenya.

METHODOLOGY

Research Approach

This study was conducted using the qualitative approach. This study utilized qualitative approach belonging within the constructivist paradigm.

Sampling

The study was conducted in universities within Eldoret town, Uasin-Gishu County. Eldoret town was selected as it hosted many public and private universities. Uasin Gishu County is home to five public universities and three private universities, namely; the number of students enrolled are detailed below Moi University (35,000), University of Nairobi campus (600), University of Eldoret (20,000), Kisii University campus (1,700) and Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology campus (1,300), Mt. Kenya University campus (2,500) and the Catholic University of Eastern Africa (CUEA) campus (1,700).

Since the universities and university campuses were closely located and within a fairly busy Eldoret town, students interacted on the social media platform and were available for participation. This research targeted young adults from universities within Eldoret town. Second and third year students were purposively selected to participate in the study. First year students were left out from the study because they were new to the institution and may not have networked well, whereas the fourth years were busy preparing for completion of their studies in the university.

The study used purposive sampling to select students who used Facebook for their daily interactions. The snow balling technique was used to recruit study participants for in-depth interviews, after the first participant was interviewed, they referred the researcher to the next participant. This was done until the saturation point was reached. The total population of the study was 40 respondents. The study used two focus group discussions, FGD 1, which had ten participants, and FGD 2, which had nine participants. The study also used in-depth interviews where 21 participants that frequently use FB were purposively selected for participation.

Data Generation Techniques and Processes

The study used focus group discussions and in-depth interviews to generate data

Data Analysis

The study employed qualitative analysis which means to; reduce, sort, analyze, categorize. The key steps for analysis and data processing are to reduce to definitive statements and sort, codify, classify or categorize in form of theoretical concepts, analyze concepts and compare with the outcomes of the textual review, then drawing conclusions. The study carried out a thorough text analysis in form of qualitative data processing, then developed and assigned themes that created meaning, insights and patterns. The study focused on tenets and processes of thematic data analysis that include; transcription, organization of data into retrievable sections, coding and organizing data into themes and subthemes.

Transcription

Data from the FGD and interviews were transcribed verbatim as soon as possible to ensure recall of interview and FGD discussions. For proper recall and interpretation of transcription, the audio recordings were listened to again and compared to the verbatim transcriptions. The non-verbal clues and gestures were noted as they too communicate meaning. Transcription notation symbols, comments and the taking of field notes as suggested by Henning *et al.* (2004) were used to capture non-transcribable text to gain as much of the complete picture as possible.

Data Organization

After texts were transcribed and thoroughly read to obtain a comprehensive impression of the content, the next stage was thematic data analysis. Data was organized in manageable and retrievable sections. This stage involved cleaning and winnowing of data. Attempts were made to re-familiarize with the data by re-reading notes, making notes and memos where they were needed. This step led to coding.

Coding

This study utilized open coding to analyze the qualitative data. In the study, as progress was made with analysis, further sub-themes and subcategories were included to identify meaning connections, relationships and trends that helped developed codes.

RESULTS

Commercial Use

Respondents have overwhelmingly supported the idea of FB being great for commercial purposes including entrepreneurship, business networking, advertising and promotional purposes. From the other affordances mentioned, commercial purposes take lead.

We only use FB to advertise our county, I was in the communication department for internships and we tell people what's happening in our county through the FB pages. It also has the benefit of promoting people's businesses in ways that F-T-F cannot, one for example selling or dealing in shoes could take photos of a variety of shoes and disseminate widely thereby earning a name in the trade and equally selling to a wider market than F-T-F would ever accomplish. It has empowered young people in campus in this manner. (RS 1). Respondent one believes that FB has done a great deal in advertisement and promotion thus encouraging and empowering students and businesses.

It has an advantage for business activities because you can reach a huge number of potential clients, for example if you can have thousands of followers and you became unique and famous in your products line, you may not need another outlet of advertising if your FB profile is updated, trending and followed by many stakeholders. (RS 12)

Another benefit of FB over FTF is the group communications, you are able to know who is there, what is the agenda of the group and what is usually communicated by who or who, sometime you may have favorite conversationalists that one may wish to closely follow, there are some groups like high school groups, family groups, close family groups and specific business groups. (RS 12).

I have also used Facebook for business. I am a young entrepreneur and use my gift as an artist to make money through selling my art. Facebook has played a major role in building my clientele through my business page “Art by Dee”. This has been made possible by the features Facebook has created for business profiles such as promotion and post sponsorships. My work has reached more people through Facebook than it would have I been used traditional advertising methods. (RS 13).

Respondents twelve and thirteen have supported the idea that FB enables people engage in business activities, respondent twelve asserts that if you have a good product line and many online followers there will be no need looking for further advertisement for products other than on FB, she adds that FB groups created for business purposes are also a great way to run successful business. Respondent thirteen adds that she has personally benefited from FB forums in running successful enterprises.

Global Interactions, Networking and Connectivity

Respondents have mentioned global interactions and connectivity with interest groups as another key benefit of FB interactions; they mention that unlike F-T-F where you need to spend on travel, FB allows for instantaneous live video calls that serve the same purpose. Respondents also mention the possibilities of FB global interactions that allow networking with interest groups that would otherwise be impossible if interactions were physical.

FB has made the world a global village, one of its attractions over F-T-F is that you can engage people from far without spending money on travel, you can make friends overseas in places you may never visit. It helps overcome financial and physical barriers and also saves time. For example, some shy people can never talk when you meet but they are the real orators without fear on FB. (RS, 5).

FB is not affected by geographical boundaries you can communicate with anyone in the world any time of day and night, FB is also affordable, we cannot be able to talk to everyone on a one-to-one basis because of time or sometimes we may be forced to travel but FB takes care of this, getting information on FB is faster and easier. FB allows users to freely speak even when they have speech or personality troubles. (RS, 7).

Respondent five feels that FB is a global village and a serious means of engagement which is convenient and affordable. He also believes that it helps introverts express their opinion without fear. Respondent seven adds that some communication barriers such as physiological barriers or emotional barriers can be avoided when engaging in FB interactions.

Information Sourcing, News and Entertainment

Several interviews have supported the idea that FB interactions are today more likely to be used than the traditional media for news sourcing. Respondents mention that they remain on FB because they benefit from live streaming of news anytime of the day or night, they also get breaking news instantaneously, before the stories are aired on broadcast stations, respondents also argue that FB interactions have no gate keeping and everything is show as is.

Today I can survive without following news on TV, because I can easily get the same and even better-informed content from FB, this I can get anytime, I do not have to wait for the seven o'clock or nine o'clock news. I can get images of terrorist killed and be happy to proof that actually the recce squad did a good job, I can also follow my favorite football teams' matches and live scores. (RS 9).

In the current dispensation, media houses have adopted a model that creates interaction with the consumers of the information and other products they disseminate, the one I utilize more being news. Therefore, Facebook as well keeps me abreast with the daily occurrences. (Respondent 3).

FB empowered mobile journalism; people can now share information about the things happening around them with the rest of the world. One can interact with multiple people at the same time. It has created ways of communication that is visual and real-time such as video calls and live sharing of events and things that are happening. Advertisement, Group communication, new ways of communication e.g., video conferencing (RS 13).

Respondent thirteen adds that FB interactions have empowered mobile journalism and through online interactions we can get to know what's happens globally, that FB interactions are now innovative with live streaming, video conferencing and group communications, this new media therefore becomes useful to its users and may take over the traditional mass media. Some respondents have also mentioned affordances of FB to include information sourcing, a place to search for scholarship opportunities and exchange programmes for students, job and internship searching and looking for academic content including lectures and notes.

It also offers us a platform where we can easily compete for employment opportunities or meet someone who might be of help in the course of pursuing their careers. FB is good for students seeking scholarships, I for instance shared an opportunity I got on FB with a friend who eventually got a scholarship in Canada. I have seen students move for mobility programmes in China and the USA through FB connections. (RS 20).

In the same spirit, the young adults are as well positioned to interact on social media with all groups of persons including rare well to do individuals who can catapult them to their dream jobs a factor not common in a face-to-face interaction. (RS 4).

Facebook facilitates the appreciation of diversity among the young adults, they get to acquire skills on how to relate, tolerate and move along with persons of a different culture to theirs. This is relevant and makes more sense because limitation to one's environment can limit one's circles to the normalcy of society; same friends, same backgrounds, same aspirations. (RS 18).

Facebook plays a critical role in enhancing self-improvement in terms of appearance or general personal grooming, etiquette, presentation and even language improvement among other factors. Young people through Facebook get to aspire for improved standards of doing things as they experience them unfold in the various platforms of interaction, they are a part of on Facebook (RS 18).

Respondent five believe that FB has also facilitated diversity among the youth on different quarters, like how to relate to other cultures. It is also her believe that FB has promoted good grooming among the youth, the exposure on FB then improves the life standards of the users as experienced on FB Interactions. FB is also preferred more than its close competitor Instagram as it uses less bundles compared to FB. Students are not yet financially stable and a platform that is convenient and affordable will always be welcomed.

You can load ten Mbs to our phone and can use it the whole day, chatting loading and following but ten Mbs on Instagram can only upload a phone and work for less than ten minutes. FB Mbs are even cheaper than the normal sms on any telephony network and that is why it is widely adopted. (RS 5)

FB breaks cultural limitations, it enables users to air their opinion without restriction, it encourages open dialogue which allows all and sundry express their opinion. Offline communication has gate keeping and sieving but on FB youth can say anything they want; it allows the youth to identify some of the challenges they face without fear. (RS 8).

FB enables timely information; Moi University is a large campus and sometimes it would take months before you meet up with your friends but because of FB students are enabled to keep in touch in a timely manner. (RS 4).

Takes place in a less formal environment as compared to the normal face-to-face interaction thus people are free to contribute content pro-less restriction. Facebook interactions are more flexible as opposed to the face-to-face communication. Those involved have the liberty to engage in the conversations or back off if the interaction is not rewarding to them. (RS 16).

On FB you feel freer to communicate anything because there is no fear of being judged, judgment easily occurs on F-F-T than on online communication and that's why us students prefer being online as we discuss each and everything without the watchful eyes of the community around us and also to chat away and beyond the cultural norms that our real friends could be inhabiting. (RS 17).

Respondent four sees the major affordances of FB as open discussion and timely information. Respondent eight applauds FB for its ability to break cultural limitations while communicating. Respondent five brings out the argument of affordability, that FB is cheaper compared to other SM platforms. Earlier a respondent has mentioned the introduction of FB kadogo that is free. Respondent sixteen and seventeen hint on flexibility of interactions on FB, emphasizing that the nature and environment of FB interactions allow users to interact freely, which is not common in F-T-F interactions. By the responses some affordance of FB interactions includes its innovative features, memory and storage capabilities and entertainment features.

Facebook gives you reminders on events and birthdays which help one to maintain the relationships that she has. It makes you aware of what is going on around you and keeps you informed on matters such as health and politics. Through you can get access to a wide range of information that will be unavailable to you through face-to-face interactions. (RS 15).

The features on FB are also a plus over F-T-F interaction, the exact words can remain online longer even when the person is dead. Record is kept and kept well without fear of distortion. FB also competes with personal interaction because emojis are created to cater for body language and emotion symbols. Flowers though fake can also be sent of FB to celebrate anniversaries or even propose to a girl. (RS 21).

On FB one can attach heavy photo albums and videos which is practically impossible on F-T-F interaction, you can practically share your whole life with photos yet on a one to one even photo album shared cannot say as much as what can possibly be said on FB. (RS 20).

Respondents twenty and twenty-one agree that FB's ability to store information is good for interaction purposes, they see this as a great strength that FB has over face to face interactions. Respondent twenty on adds that FB interaction competes with physical

interactions because it has emojis that covers up for lack of body language that occurs on physical interactions.

DISCUSSION

The study shows that Facebook is rated highly as a good tool to run business or rather for commercial purposes, young adults in the university confirm that they have gotten unique opportunities to develop themselves financially. Some respondents mentioned that through FB they have stated very successful business ventures that sort out their financial burdens. From the study there are demonstrations that some students already have great product lines, some have networks with multinational corporates and that there are existing FB pages dedicated for business within universities in Uasin Gishu.

Respondents twelve and thirteen argue that through FB one does not have to go in to the trouble of paying huge amounts of monies for advertisements. The idea is that the networks or number of followers are the biggest way to advertise, Wright *et al.* (2016) posits that the emergence of SM such as Twitter and FB open up millions of opportunities for marketers, the scholar insists that the ability of SM to segment the market, is a key reason to its overwhelming success. This argument is consistent with the point raised by respondent six, that group segmentation of users assists business people make more sales Through FB unlike F-T-F interaction can reach highest number of clients and it's easier to group your followers in to various categories with the purposes of marketing at different levels. FB innovations create very special features for promotions, marketing and technologies such as newsfeeds, videos and photos in order to reach clients in a special way.

The features on FB allows business to easily share photos, videos, likes and dislikes and this causes seamless interactions with clients and thereby leading to an opportunity to efficiently meet customer demands. The study shows that FB is used for promotional purposes and survey of groups for purposes of finding interests. According to Song & Yoo (2016), SM carries the benefits of marketing mix, information source and enabling clients to make purchase decisions. This is consistent with the argument of Respondent six who says that groups on FB gives unique opportunities to individuals who run business online to know the agenda and interest so as to meet group needs.

More scholars have also come in support of the idea that SNS, including FB, are good for marketing, Petouhoff (2011), stated that SNS and digital devices have greatly transformed marketing, customer service and sells turn over. Consisted with the study findings that young adults use FB mostly for marketing and its consequent benefits is an argument by Stelzner (2011) who claims that brands are taking advantage of social networks interactions for advertising and making sales.

The study supports the idea that FB interactions are better than mass media for purposes of news sourcing, breaking news, citizen journalism and information sourcing. Respondents assert that they mostly depend on FB interactions to get the whole story because there is no element of communication blocking. Respondents add that they can get to read comments and reactions of the virtual worlds and even get further feedback from the source of the news. Respondent nine, claimed that he is not subjected to wait for prime news on broadcast because he can get the news anytime. The study revelation that FB is used by younger adults to seek news is consistent with a study arguing that "Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, WhatsApp, and Google+ are by far the most important net-works for news in that order, but for younger users Insta-gram, Snapchat, and Tumblr also come into the picture" (Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism, 2015, p. 80).

The study also reveals that some features on FB are increasing the desire for young adults to seek news and consequently share the news in their networks. Respondents agree that FB is by far the most used by young adults while in pursuit for news, they agree that Instagram is mostly used by young adults seeking to showcase their lifestyles, this argument is consistent with a study from Reuters (2015) which showed that when it comes for news purposes, FB leads by far compared to the other SNS.

Respondent thirteen talked of FB empowering mobile journalism among youths to the extent that users of FB are able to get more detailed perspective of any news item, innovations such as video conferencing and live streaming are working well towards empowering mobile journalism. According to Chang media consumption habits change very fast and users are now moving to emerging trends. This argument supports the idea of respondent thirteen that indeed mobile journalism is a new trend that is taking up shape slowly as a favorite to the younger generation in terms of what they seek in news items. This argument is supported by PR Newswire who advance the idea that tools like SM have created alternatives in news pitching, and as news consumption habits change it becomes even harder to attract attention of the younger audiences.

Through the study it is noted that today's media houses have resulted to embarrassing new media a way to interact better with its constituents and avoid losing its share market. The study shows that majority, if not all of the major media outlets in Kenya have developed social media pages that are active and engaged. That even before breaking news goes on air, the content is already on its social media pages. The key social media used by key broadcast stations are Facebook and twitter, FB taking lead. This goes to show just how far FB has influenced interactions between media outlets and its constituents. In Kenya, almost all media stations read out comments of users of FB and also use FB leads to bring out stories. According to Jeong & Chyi (2014) some of the reasons news organizations are forced to join SNS is there need to target audience demographics, enhance their image and better brand themselves.

The study shows that interactions among young adults in the universities are improved as a result of FB use on matters academic and information sourcing. The study has revealed that majority of students are registered on FB, some more active than others. Respondents argued that FB is the gateway to other SNS, as other SNS prompt you to open an account using email or FB account. This fact makes users forced to stay on FB while to some users, FB carries memories and personal content that is important. Consistent with the study finding that FB is more common around academic circles is an argument by (Aaen & Dalsgaard 2016), that the most used SNS among learners and teachers is FB. However, some scholars like, (Leafman & Mathieson 2015), posit counter arguments that students prefer e-mails to communicate with lectures as they perceive emails more professional while SNS considered informal and inappropriate for teachers to interact with learners.

Besides this, the study shows that students sometime use FB for academic purpose, some use FB to interact with comrades on academic matters, share lecture materials and notes, have group discussions and even post live lectures. Respondent twenty-one narrates that FB has enabled her get opportunities for scholarship and assisting other students get mobility programs in countries like china and USA. Brandtzag (2012) argument tallies with respondents twenty one's view, Brandtzag emphasizes that SNS are used as reliable direct information sources explicitly by students. Willemse, Waller, & Suss, 2010 adds that students use of SNS for information sourcing is not surprising given the popularity and availability of user generated content. Many people in search of information especially the young adults rely on easily accessible material even though the information may not be credible.

On academic research, the study findings show FB is used by young adults in universities for purposes of information seeking more than for research and direct study. The students argued that as much as they use FB for entertainment they also multitasked and interacted with colleagues on academic matters on a lesser level. The study consistently shows that students do not use FB directly to get academic material but rather as a way to interact around academic matters. The study reveals that on rare case lecture students' interactions occur on FB, respondents support the idea that more interactions online can be good and support the teaching and learning process. The idea of FB use for lecturer student interactions are supported by Akcaoglu & Bowman, and Pruett, & Vareberg (2016) who posits that SNS are emerging as new and important methods of interactions among teachers and learners in higher education.

Study shows that respondents are in support of learner teacher online interactions on matter around giving feedback, sending course work and general academic interaction, some respondents have had class sessions and assignments done on FB and think that the idea is trendy and useful to them. This idea is supported by (Ean & Lee, 2016) who argue that SNS provide opportunities for learners and teachers to continually be in contact transcending the traditional classroom and creating new teaching and learning spaces.

The study finding shows that FB enables unlimited connections with people globally, according to the words of respondent four, young adult users of FB are connected to people of status that would have otherwise been impossible to connect to. The respondents in the FGD and interview resonate in their support of FB being a good catalyst for global interactions and connectivity that then plays a critical role in causing meaningful engagements between people. Respondents in both interviews and FDG mentioned that because of the ability of FB to cause global connections, they are better placed to tolerate and relate well with people of different cultures and backgrounds. (RS 18, FGD 1, 3).

The study finding demonstrate that young adult's network well because FB is able to connect people of relevant interest groups that would otherwise be possible with F-T-F communication. A match is clear between the FGD and interviews as both agree that FB interactions helps those with difficulties of physical interactions, be it among introverts, emotional barriers, physiological or simply shy people, all get a new platform to interact through SM. The finding further reveals that when compared to other SNS used by young adults in the university, FB is more affordable and friendlier to use. The interviews and FGD tally that FB is cheaper compared to its close competitor, Instagram. The young adults agree that in campus they experience money challenges thus choosing to remain on FB as they use far less bundles, both Interview sessions and FGD found out that students are lured by the free Facebook kadogo in days when they have no bundles, consequently luring them more not to delete accounts.

Innovative feature of FB is another finding in this study, FB innovations have been drastically improved over time to try and cover up on the limitations of not being physical interactions. The finding brings out the argument that with constant improvement FB cuts much of its limitations, some of the innovative features include the memes and emojis that are meant to take care of body language on FB interactions. Live streaming and broadcast have helped people from different continents feel the distance being reduced. The arguments by both interview respondents and FGD respondents is that FB is good for interactions especially when people are separated by distance and life changes, they argue that in such cases FB plays a good role in maintaining relationships.

By the responses some affordance of FB interactions includes its innovative features, memory and storage capabilities and entertainment features. The finding also shows how FB is supporting interactions by acting a reliable storage and reminder. The finding shows that

some users of FB have ignored the thought to delete their profiles just because they have all their life's memories in store in FB. FB reminds users of special events in their life's, anniversaries, birthdays, parties, picnics, travels etc, these events are tagged to friends across networks and celebrated online. The study shows that this unique innovation helped maintain relationships and adds value when people use then well.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusion

Several studies have been undertaken globally trying to establish the role that SM has on user communications. The studies show different findings depending on the study location and severity of SM use. This research set out to determine the influence of online social network mediated interaction on young university adults within UasinGishu County, Eldoret town.

The research findings demonstrate that SNS are inevitable contemporary trends and an essential medium of interaction among young university adults. Young adults are especially prone to the challenges of chasing after trends in technology, so there exists a real problem affecting youths in Kenyan universities. The use of SNS has also been seen to significantly change the social behavior of users that it even affects their daily activities. Face-to-Face communication is gradually being replaced and equipped with mediated communication including online social networking.

The study findings and an analysis of previous recent related literature provided evidence that the rapid use and expansion of SNS is negatively affecting the interactions of young adults in universities. Young adults are becoming over reliant on FB mediated interactions to stay connected with friends and family and are consequently neglecting personal engagements, sometimes users are inhibited by cell phone and other devices even when in the presence of others.

Majority of the study respondents felt that social bonds are weakened as a results of FB mediated interactions, respondents agree that majority of users are not even aware when SNS come in the way of proper interactions. The study shows many users communicate frequently with colleagues via FB than in person, indicating that F-T-F interactions are on the decrease both in quality and quantity.

If not controlled, the rapid adoption of SNS for interactions may cause a radical shift in communication methods. Will there be more conflicts in communities? Will the young adults be able to interact face to face while in the workforce, or will the SNS interactions completely separate users in communities thus result to fewer actual friends and a more isolated less fulfilling life?

The study findings revealed that indeed SNS are negatively impacting on human interactions that if not controlled may change forever, apart from distracting users from engaging in quality F-T-F interactions, SNS also affects user's willingness to communicate physically and consequently weakens social bonds.

Study findings suggest that a paradox exists, social media may connect and disconnect at the same time. There is rapid use and expansion of social networking sites for interaction purpose among young adults in universities. Given the prevalence of SNS in the daily lives of young adults in universities an understanding of its impact on social interaction is paramount. Overreliance of Facebook mediated interactions negatively impacts youth interactions, distracting users from engaging in quality face-to-face interactions, weakening social bonds and, at time causing conflicts among users. Nevertheless, interactions through Facebook have contributed in developing and enhancing social relationships in

geographically dispersed locations. The study concludes that while Facebook mediated communication has contributed in the fusion of time and space, hence strengthening communication among individuals in geographically dispersed locations; it is equally undermining the development social relationships and weakening social bonds among young people.

Recommendations

Families and institutions

The study recommends that institutions and families be sensitized on the need to engage young people with a view of enhancing the importance of face-to-face communication which cannot be replaced by online mediated interactions. Institutions and families should caution users to be partial and monitor their activities and interpersonal interactions on social media.

Curriculum Developers

University curriculum developers should include social media topics; management and appropriate use of SNS among young adults in universities. Students should be made aware of the benefits and risks of SM indulgence for them to take caution early enough. With knowledge of the dangers of SM, young adults should exercise self-caution on its use.

Mentors / Counselors

Guidance and counseling session be organized in universities to remedy students who have been negatively affected by social media through addiction or those who have experienced cyber bullying or other online vices. Young adults in universities to be sensitized on ways to enhance their personal experiences with social media use, by affirming their social identities.

Young Adults Users of FB

It's very important to strike balance at all cases, FB is good and bad, choose how to use it wisely. Identify your gratifications of using FB, is it for education purposes, information, entertainment, know your gratification right from the onset. FB should be used depending on appropriateness of place, time and situation. Youths should be informed of effects of FB on social relationships.

Since Online social networking is already a significant part of young adults' lives, user must take note that it should not be used as replacement to interpersonal interactions, it should rather be an alternative way of interacting. Users of SNS should monitor their online interactions, such that they do not lose out on real world interactions in pursuit of virtual interactions. FB should be a catalyst for social development, for relationship development and for economic empowerment for youths.

SNS users should endeavor to remain true to who they are, users should avoid being provoked or influenced to change their real identities, and users should not act so as to fit it to certain groups. Young adults should also cautiously accept friend requests from strangers, be discreet on what they post as this gives them out to public judgment. Contentment by users goes a long way in sustaining relationships, users should not pile up unnecessary pressure on themselves in order to conform to what is trendy as this hurts individual users and their relationships with others.

FB users both online and offline should acknowledge their identities, this is so because, when users are aware of who they are and define their boundaries, they then create a ripple effect where other users relate to them in the same fashioned manner. There should be consistency both online and offline in terms of establishing the criteria of interactions with

other people. It is important that Facebook users learn to draw a line between sharing one's life and exposing one's life. Features on FB should be improved, for example groups on FB should have features and provisions for administrators who can gate keep to ensure only meaningful interactions are taking place.

Intimate relationships can be initiated online but measure must be taken to reinforce them physically. Physical relationships have been alluded to last longer than online relationships, therefore FB should be used frequently only when people are separated by distance. Intimate relationships online should be handled with caution, nourish intimate relationships through interpersonal interactions, avoid posting public display of affection online. Keep your private life private.

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