SOCIAL MEDIA USE AND ITS EFFECTS ON STUDENTS' BEHAVIOR IN THE SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN MACHAKOS SUB- COUNTY, MACHAKOS COUNTY, KENYA

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Abstract

Social media is one of the most used interactive communication tools in the current world. Almost every person above the age of ten years is operating an account of any social media platform. The study was guided by two objectives; to examine prevalence of social media use among secondary students and, to determine behavior displayed by the students as a result of social media use. The study was anchored on the social learning theory. A mixed-method research design was adopted. Purposive sampling was used to select 15 teacher counselors, while 392 students were selected using a simple random sampling. The study found that 97.4% of the secondary school students in Machakos Sub- County were regular social media users. The students preferred using WhatsApp, YouTube, Instagram and Facebook. The study also found that social media use inculcated both positive (60%) and negative (40%) behaviors respectively. The study thus concluded a high prevalence of social media use among secondary school students in Machakos Sub-County. Based on these findings, the study recommends that school administrators should come up with stringent strategies to control the use of social media among secondary school students and, the Ministry of Education should develop policies for curbing the use and challenges associated with social media by secondary school students.

Key words: Internet users, Platform, Psychological behaviours, Social media

1.0 Introduction

Social media is one among the fastest growing web application in the 21st century. It entails the use of different platforms that allow people to create, share or exchange information,

educate one another and get entertained (Kaplan & Haenlain, 2010). Of late, individuals and communities use social media to share and exchange user-generated content. According to Abu-Shanab & Altarawneh (2015) social media largely relies on mobile and web-based technology to produce highly dynamic platforms. Kietzmann and Christopher (2011) further reports that social media has led to substantial and inescapable changes to communication between businesses, organizations, communities and individuals.

The digital technology and specifically the internet connectivity is rapidly expanding globally. This has enabled people of all cadre to have an easier access to various social media platforms (Gedik & Cosar, 2020). For instance, in 2006, just two years after Facebook was invented, the number of people using the platform rose to one billion (Ayodele, 2013). The social interaction through the Facebook revolutionized the traditional communication technology such as physical letters and telegram messages among others. The Facebook platform has also improved the quality of research in education and also the teaching and learning process (Batrinca & Treleaven, 2015). Other social media platforms such as twitter, WhatsApp, YouTube and Instagram have also enhanced social interaction and communication between people in all corners of the world. Nielsen and Schrøder (2014) also noted that majority of the internet users spend most of their time on social media platforms.

The role played by social media platforms is further emphasized by Bolton et al (2013) when they alluded that it enhances sharing of information, opinions and knowledge resulting in educational advancement and solutions to cultural and socio-economic issues. The use of these platforms have also tremendously influenced many other human transactions and activities; business networks, blogs, forums, enterprise social networks, photo sharing, micro blogs and service reviews, social bookmarking, virtual worlds, social networks, video sharing, and social gaming (Anjugu, 2013). Despite the positive contribution by social media in the society, if not wisely used it may also negatively influenced people's behavior, attitudes and perceptions (Wu, Li, & Chang, 2016).

With the growing popularity on social media use, many people and in particular the teenagers and students are using it for carrying out research, learning and even doing examinations (Ahn, 2011). On the other hand, the increased access of internet-connectivity through mobile phones and other devices by secondary school students, social media usage by students has reached such a upsurge that it is a major area of concern to all stakeholders in education due to its potential risks (Emeri, 2019). According to Asare-Donkoh (2018),

secondary school students dominate social media users worldwide, spending a substantial volume of their time on the internet on various platforms. These students spend more time usually multi-tasking by visiting several sites to access volumes of content. Elder (2017) underlines that in America, for instance, high school students log in to their preferred social networks more than ten times a day to reinvent their personalities, share information, connect with their peers and parade their characters' social lives.

Given the central role played by social media (television (TV), cell phones, movies, radio, video games and computer networks) on children's daily lives, it has been argued that social media can potentially have negative effects on them. These effects cut across the children's cognitive, social, and behavioral development (Ray & Jat, 2010). A study by Valenzuela, Park and Kee (2008) supports the notion that both the medium technological capabilities and the actual content transmitted through social media negatively influences people's attitudes and behaviors. The secondary school students are not an exception.

In their study, Yang & Lee (2020) noted that social media is the most commonly used platform through which students interact in peer groups and eventually form long lasting associations. Some of these associations have resulted in learning deviant behaviours such as conforming to cults and other immoral practices (Akubugwo & Burke, 2013). However, on the other hand, Akubugwo & Burke (2013) also cautioned that the influence of social media on students' behaviour should not be completely demonized as it may also lead to positive character formation. This therefore implies that the behaviour acquired through social media use is highly influenced by how one uses it. Based on this, since secondary school students have a wide access to different social media sites their behaviour may oscillate between the two extremes; positive and negative.

According to Moshi, Ndeke, Stephen, & Ngozi (2018) most studies in this field have concentrated on the harmful effects of social media without exploring the possible ways in which it can be harnessed to promote positive behavior among students. These researchers point out that social media use among secondary school students cannot be wholly condemned or fully adopted without critique. While many available studies have concentrated on the influence of social media on students' learning behavior, the effects of social media on users have been found to cut across the social, psychosocial, health and sexual aspects of life.

Statement of the Problem

Many researchers, argue that with the emergence of various social media platforms, student misbehavior in Kenyan secondary schools has reached an alarming level (Kiplagat & Ombiro, 2016). These includes disrespect to the school authority (teachers, prefects and subordinate staff), inappropriate dressing, truancy and bullying among others. In the most gruesome incidents, students have attacked both teaching and non-teaching personnel with crude weapons and even killed them. Unrest among students also affects parents. Several researchers in the developed countries argue that this problem may be linked to the anti-social behavior acquired through social media. Only a few studies in this areas have been carried out in the developing countries. This study therefore aimed at finding out the influence of social media on secondary school students in Machakos Sub- County, Kenya.

Objectives of the study

The study was guided by two objectives; to establish the prevalence of social media use among students and determine behavior displayed by the students as a result of social media use.

3.0 Research Methodology

Research Design

This study applied a mixed-methods research design. This design was chosen since it allowed for comprehensive research to be undertaken on the prevalence and influence of social media use on students' behaviour in secondary schools in Machakos Sub-County, Machakos County. This was achieved by the use of qualitative and quantitative approaches. The research design was adopted because it enhanced the validity of the findings of the study as supported by Creswell (2014).

Location of the Study

The study was conducted in Machakos Sub-County in Machakos County, Kenya. The area covers 6,208 square kilometers, the latitude for Machakos County, Kenya is -1.267009, and the longitude is 37.320177, with a population of 1,421,932 as of 2019. The gender representation is male (49.4%) and female (50.6%). Machakos town is in Machakos Sub-County. It is both an urban and rural setup. The main occupation of the residents is small scale farming and SME businesses. It is also a tourism attraction center with main activities being camping, hiking, and eco-tourism.

Sampling Procedure and Sample Size

Mugenda and Mugenda (2012) define a sample as a sub-group, or a part of target population that researchers intend to study. The researchers used the information derived from the sample to make generalizations about the population. A random sample of 392 students was computed using the Yamane (1967) formula at a 95% confidence level or significance level (p) equal to 0.05 whereas 15 teacher counsellors were purposively selected.

Research Instruments

The primary data collection tools for this study were a student questionnaire and an interview guide for the teacher counselors.

a) Pilot Study

A pilot was carried out in two secondary schools in Athi-River Sub-County in Machakos County. The objective of the pilot study was to determine the accuracy, clarity and suitability of research instruments. The deficiencies detected in the research instruments were addressed before using them in the main study.

b) Validity of the Research Instruments

The content validity of an instrument was improved through expert judgment. The researchers used ICT experts to establish the validity of the instruments.

c) Reliability of the Research Instruments

The reliability of the questionnaire was assessed using the test-re-test method. The test-retest involved administering the same instrument twice to the same subjects. The re-test was done after two weeks after the initial administration of the instruments to the subjects of the pilot study. The scores from both testing periods were correlated to determine the reliability. According to Kombo and Tromp (2006), a reliability coefficient greater than or equal to 0.7 is regarded as adequate. A reliability coefficient of 0.78 for the students' questionnaire was obtained.

Data Collection Procedures

This involved collection of clearance letters from Machakos University and a research permit from the National Commission of Science Technology and Innovation (NACOSTI. The questionnaire was self-administered by the researchers. Face-to-face interviews were conducted with the teacher counselors.

Data Analysis

The quantitative data collected was cleaned, coded and entered into the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) for analysis. The quantitative data was analyzed using frequencies and percentages while the qualitative data was analyzed using content analysis.

Logistical and Ethical Consideration

The researchers obtained informed consent from all the respondents before administering the research instruments. Adherence to ethical principles was observed; privacy, confidentiality and anonymity of data.

4.0 Results of the Study.

Prevalence use of Social Media Use Among Students

The first objective was to establish the prevalence of social media use among secondary school students in Machakos Sub-County. The respondents were first asked to identify the social media platforms accessed by students in secondary schools in Machakos Sub-County. The results from the student respondents are shown in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Social Media Platform Accessed by Secondary School Students

Social media platform	Frequency	Percent
WhatsApp	310	92.0
You Tube	275	81.6
Facebook	272	80.7
Instagram	222	65.9
Snapchat	135	40.1
Twitter	111	32.9
Tik-Tok	49	14.5
Likee	32	9.5
Tinder	4	1.2
Wattpad	4	1.2

Table 1 shows that 310 (92.0%) of the student respondents indicated that they used WhatsApp, 275 (81.6%) used YouTube, 272 (80.7%) used Facebook and 222 (65.9%) used Instagram. The findings further showed that 49 (14.5%) of the students were using Tik-Tok. These findings imply that secondary school students in Machakos Sub-County accessed different social network platforms. The findings are consistent with the assertion by Gedic and Cosar (2020) that most students do access various social media platforms either at home or in school.

Similarly, the respondents were also asked to state whether students in their schools used social media platforms. The findings of the study as reported by the student respondents

showed that 337 (97.4%) of the students had used different social media sites whereas only 9 (2.6%) had not. A summary of the findings is presented in Figure 1 below.

Figure 1: Students Response on the Use of Social Media in their Schools
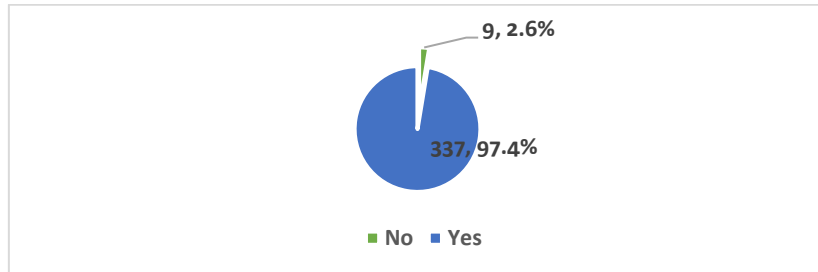
These findings are consistent with those of the teacher counselors who noted that majority of the students used social media as represented by 13 (86.67%) respondents while the rest 2(13.33%) noted that they were not aware whether their students were accessing social media. From the above findings, it can be inferred that the majority of the secondary school students in Machakos Sub- County were actively using social media.

The study aimed at establishing the amount of time in a day that students spent on social platforms. The results as per the students' responses are outlined in Figure 2 below.

**Figure 2: Time Spent by Students on Social Media in a Day**
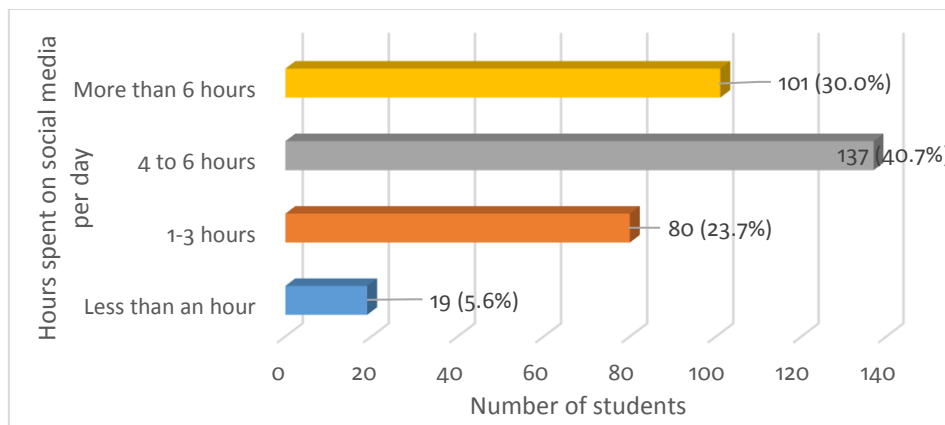
As shown in Figure 2, it was found that 19 (5.5%) of the students used upto less than an hour daily on social media, 80 (23.7%) spent 1 to 3 hours on social media daily, while 137 (40.7%) and 101 (30.0%) of the students spent 4 to 6 hours and more than 6 hours on social media respectively. From the interviews conducted, 6 (42.9%) of the teacher counselors argued that their students spent 2 hours on social media daily, 5 (35.7%) noted that the students spent 3hrs. In addition, two (14.3%) and one (7.1%) of the teacher counselors asserted that their students spent 4 hours and 6 hours daily on social media. Therefore, it can be inferred that most students

in secondary schools in Machakos Sub- County spend several hours on social media daily. The study findings agreed with those of Muthui and Sirera (2017), who established that secondary school students spent long hours using social media. The findings were further supported by Kennedy (2019) who found out that majority of secondary students spend 4.5 hours daily on social websites.

The second objective of the study was to establish the behavior displayed by students after using social media in secondary schools in Machakos Sub-County. The students' opinions on how social media had affected their behavior is summarized in Figure 3 below.

Figure 3: Effect of Social Media Usage on Students' Behaviour
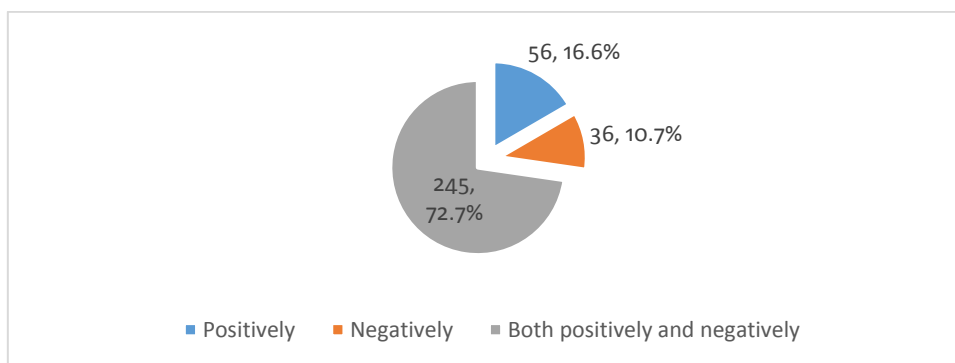
The findings demonstrate that 56 (16.6%) of the students indicated that using social media had affected them positively whereas 36 (10.7%) said they had been affected negatively, whereas 245 (72.7%) of the students noted that social media usage had affected them both positively and negatively. All the teacher counsellors acknowledged that social media had influenced the behavior of their students, when 4 (28.6%) of them noted that social media influenced their students negatively. The rest, 10 (71.4%) indicated that social media use had both positively and negatively influenced their students' behavior. The findings are consistent with Emeri's (2019) assertion that there was a need to incorporate social media usage in different lessons and counselling programs in secondary schools to guide students on the positive usage of social media.

Conclusions

The study concluded that majority of the secondary school students in Machakos Sub-County study use social media platforms. In addition, the average time spend by the secondary school students in the use of social media in Machakos Sub- County was 4 hours daily. It was also concluded that the use of social media had both positively and negatively influenced the students' behaviour

Recommendations

Based on these findings, the study came up with two main recommendations:

i. That school administrators should put in place stringent strategies to control the use of social media among secondary school students and,

ii. The Ministry of Education should develop policies for curbing the use and challenges associated with social media by secondary school students.

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