Effects of Social Media use on Students' Behaviour: a Case of Secondary School Students in Machakos County, Kenya

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Abstract: Information Communication Technology and specifically social media is one of the most used interactive communication tools today. Almost 95% of the teenagers are operating more than two accounts of social media platforms. The study was guided by two objectives; to establish the behavior displayed by students after social media use and to determine the measures to put in place to mitigate students' behaviors acquired through social media use in Machakos Sub-County. 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 out that secondary school students were exposed to violence-filled video games, movies and songs, sexually explicit photos, unwanted online flirting, bad slangs, pornographic materials, hateful and abusive content. The study also found that social media use inculcated both positive and negative behaviors respectively. Three measures had been put in place to control social media use among students. These included, parental monitoring, guidance and counselling and use of polices on social media. The study thus concluded social media use negatively affected the secondary school students in Machakos County. Based on these findings, the study recommends that school administrators should actively involve parents in developing the strategies to control the use of social media among secondary school students and, the Ministry of Education should channel more resources to support the school administrators in fighting the problems associated with social media by secondary school students.

Keywords: Challenges, Measures, Social media and Student behaviour,

1.0 Introduction

The use of Social media platforms is one among the fastest growing technologies in the 21st century. It enables its consumers to create, share or exchange information, educate one another and get entertained (Khan & Jan, 2015). More recently, schools, individuals and communities have adopted the use social media in the teaching and learning process. According to Livingstone & Bober (2005),social media largely relies on mobile and web-based technology to produce highly dynamic platforms. Kietzmann, Hermkens, McCarthy & Silvestre (2011) further note that social media has tremendously changed the communication process between businesses, organizations, communities and individuals.

Despite the positive use of social media in the institutions of learning, it has also lead to the acquisition of negative behaviour among the youth and in particular secondary school students (Muhingi et al.,2015). The researchers noted that while social media supported recreation among students, it also negatively affects their academic performance. This poor academic performance may be attributed to students 'addiction to social media, which leads to time wastage and in retrospect compromises time spend in studying or completing their academic assignments. This implies that there is need for close supervision, censoring, monitoring, vetting and restriction of students on the use of social media in order to enable them to concentrate on achieving academic excellence.

Other researches in this field also suggest that the use social media may accelerate indiscipline and acquisition of vices among secondary school students (Nyongesa, Kiprop, and Chumba, 2018). The vices include dishonesty and addiction to pornography, both of which destroy the students' morals and character. Other studies have also shown that negative social media use had become destructive to learning and general school unrest. In addition, excessive social media use has further disconnected students from other people, increased stress, depression and other mental disorders. Others social media users are unable to communicate effectively with their peers after prolonged social media usage.

Moshi et al. (2018) reported both negative and positive effects of social media use on learning among high school students. This study revealed that social media use could positively affect learning by providing access to educational content and audio-visual learning aids, and stimulation of an exciting learning environment for the students. However, the study also noted that social media use could serve as a distraction for students, which would make them procrastinate doing their class assignments. Similar observations were made by Muinde (2015) in a study on social media usage on students' behavior in secondary schools in Kitui Central Sub- County. According to this study, skillful social media enabled students to express themselves and become creative. The students were also able to maintain connections with friends and relatives, share visual information and exchange ideas with others.

According to Umar and Idris (2018), excessive use of social media may make students susceptible to anxieties, depression and other psychological disorders, and future health complications. The researchers further noted that social media is highly distractive and adversely affects learning. In other cases, those students who get addicted to social media eventually become socially isolated and may turn to unsafe internet sites and blogs for assistance, thus promoting drug abuse, risky sexual practices, aggressive or self-destructive behaviors.

Busari (2019) examined the problem related behaviors among secondary school students that arose from social media use in Oyo State, Nigeria. Like in other previous studies, the researcher observed that prolonged use of social media is significantly related to social maladjustment among the students. Muia (2016) had earlier made similar observations in a study in Langata Sub County, Kenya where he had reported high prevalence of social media use among secondary school students. The study findings revealed that social media use contributes to students' risky sexual behaviors, violence and, drug and substance abuse, which were linked to increased peer pressure.

Due to the documented vices associated with social media use among studies, researchers have also focused on the strategies that can be mounted to eradicate them. In view of this, Sharon (2012) identified three approaches to deal with the adverse results of the internet addiction among the youth in the United State of America. These approaches include preventive education (information and analysis), engagement of the youth and school going children in extra-curricular activities and, implementing restrictions and limitations on social media use. The other measures that have been put in place included close monitoring of students' use of social media, legal filtering of social media sites accessible to students and active parental participation in the guidance and counselling process. According to Martin et al. (2018) all educational stakeholders (students, teachers, parents and NGOs,) should be educated on the different challenges arising from social media use. Informed measures to encourage proper social media usage among students are crafted. Tezci and İçen (2017) argued that teachers needed to monitor the students 'tendencies where social media use is concerned so that they can adequately offer guidance on proper use to limit any adverse effects. Emeri (2019) also suggested a need to incorporate social media usage in different lessons and counseling programs in secondary schools to guide students on the positive use of social media. The study also underlined that parents and teachers should curtail excessive social media usage by students through effective monitoring and regulation.

Statement of the Problem

Many researchers argue that with the emergence of various social media platforms, student indiscipline in Kenyan secondary schools needs to be tamed (Kiplagat & Ombiro, 2016). The most common cases of indiscipline reported by many researchers is disrespect to the school authority (teachers, prefects and subordinate staff), inappropriate dressing, truancy and bullying among others. In the worst reported situations, students have attacked both teaching and non-teaching personnel with crude weapons and even killed some of them. School unrest among students also affects the teaching and learning process and specifically syllabus coverage. Several researchers in the developing countries argue that this problem may be linked to the anti-social behavior acquired through social media. Kenya is not an exception. This study therefore aimed at finding out the behaviour acquired by secondary school students as a result of prolonged use of social media in Machakos Sub- County, Kenya.

Objectives of the Study

The study was guided by two objectives; to establish the behavior displayed by students after social media use and to determine the measures to put in place to mitigate students' behaviors acquired through social media use in Machakos Sub-County.

3.0 Research Methodology

Research Design

This study applied a descriptive research design. This design was selected since it allowed for in-depth investigation on the objectives of the study, that is the behavior displayed by students after social media use and to determine the measures put in place to mitigate the problem associated social media use among secondary students in Machakos Sub-County. This was attained 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 carried out in Machakos Sub-County in Machakos County, Kenya. The study 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 subsistence 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

Kombo and Tromp (2006) describe a sample as a representative sub-group of target population that researchers propose to study. The researchers used the data collected from the sample to make generalizations about the population. A random sample of 392 students was selected using the Yamane (1967) formula at 95% confidence level or significance level (p) value equal to 0.05 whereas 15 teacher counsellors were purposively selected.

Research Instruments

The study used two data collection instruments namely a students' 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 correctness, clarity and fitness of the research instruments. The weaknesses detected in the research instruments were addressed before using them in the main study.

b) Validity of the Research Instruments

The content and face validity of the instruments was ascertained through expert judgment. The researchers used ICT experts from Machakos University 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 pilot subjects. The re-test was done within an interval of two weeks after the administration of the first set of instruments to the subjects of the pilot study. The scores from both testing were correlated to determine the reliability coefficient. According to Kothari (2003), 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 means, standard deviation, 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

The first objective of the study was to establish the behavior acquired by students after using social media in secondary schools in Machakos Sub-County. In attempt to unearth the behaviour acquired by the students after exposure to social media, the study first sought to establish whether students accessed inappropriate content from various social media platforms. This was based on a five-point Likert scale. The findings are outlined in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Students' Exposure to Inappropriate Content when Using Social Media

| Inappropriate Content	N	Mean	Standard Deviation
a) Violence-filled video games, movies, and songs.	337	3.534	1.349
b) Horror movies.	337	3.329	1.108
c) Sexually explicit photos, movies, and video songs.	337	3.240	1.180
d) Unwanted online flirting.	337	3.226	1.228
e) Risky social media challenges.	337	3.053	1.292
f) Bad slang.	337	2.988	1.222
g) Pornographic materials.	337	2.979	1.161
h) Mean, hateful and abusive content.	337	2.938	1.175
i) Drug abuse-related movies.	337	2.893	1.275
j) Beer, cigarette advertisements, and contests.	337	2.769	1.332
k) Hacking and privacy breaches.	337	2.757	1.265
l) Cyberbullying and online harassment	337	2.712	1.461
m) Fraud, scam, or blackmailing-related activities.	337	2.659	1.192
Composite Mean and Standard Deviation		**3.001**	**0.758**
Valid N	337		

As shown in Table1 above, the study found out that students were exposed to violence-filled video games, movies and songs (Mean=3.534, Standard deviation=1.349). The students were also exposed to horror movies (Mean=3.329, Standard deviation=1.108), sexually explicit photos, movies and video songs (Mean=3.240, Standard deviation=1.180), unwanted online flirting (Mean=3.226, Standard deviation=1.228), and risky social media challenges (Mean=3.053, Standard deviation=1.292). Similarly, the students were further exposed to bad slangs (Mean=2.988, Standard deviation=1.222), pornographic materials (Mean=2.979, Standard deviation=1.161), hateful and abusive content (Mean=2.938, Standard deviation=1.175), drug abuse-related movies (Mean=2.893, Standard deviation=1.275) and beer, cigarette advertisements and contests (Mean=2.769, Standard deviation=1.332).

The responses from the teacher counselors also shown that students in their schools were exposed to inappropriate content in the course of using social platforms. According to the teacher counsellors, the secondary school students were exposed to vulgar language pornographic materials, foul songs, poor dressing codes, cyberbullying, illicit sexual activity and deviant behaviours. The teacher counsellors further decried that the students were also exposed to drug and substance abuse. The findings concur with those of Nyongesa, Kiprop and Chumba (2018), Moshi et al. (2018)

and Muinde (2015), who found that due to the use of modern technology, secondary school students accessed inappropriate website content, which consequently negatively influenced their personal behaviour.

According to the students' responses, the use of social media had affected their behaviour as summarized in Figure 1 below.

Figure 1: Effect of Social Media Usage on Students' Behaviour
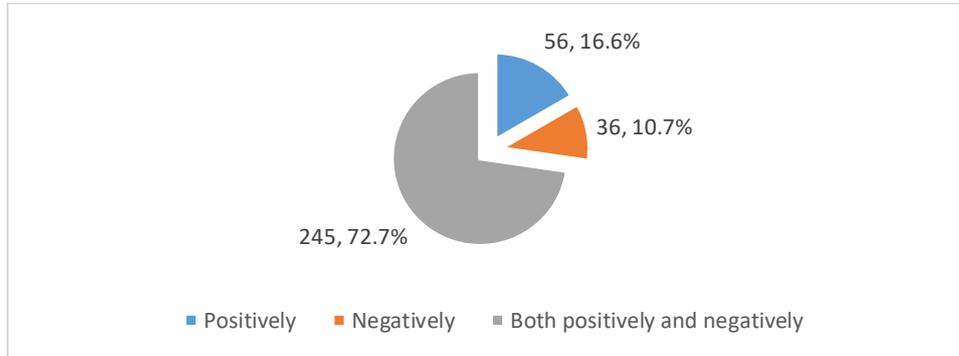
The findings demonstrate that 56 (16.6%) of the students indicated that using social media had affected them positively, whereas 36 (10.7%) said they had been affected negatively. Another 245 (72.7%) of the students noted that social media usage had affected them both positively and negatively. All the 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.

The second objective of the study was to determine measures that could be put in place to mitigate negative behavior among secondary school students in Machakos Sub-County as a result of social media use. The results of the study showed that several measures had been put in place. This included engagement of parents and guardians. The findings from the students' responses are highlighted in Table 2 below.

Table 2. Parental Measures Put in Place to Mitigate the Challenges Caused by use of Social Media among Secondary School Students.

Question	Response	Frequency	Percent
Is your parent/guardian aware of your engagement in social media?	No	26	7.7
	Yes	282	83.7
	Not sure	29	8.6
	Total	**337**	**100**
If yes, do they support or approve of your activities on social media?	No	68	24.1
	Yes	214	75.9
	Total	**282**	**100**
If yes, does your parent/guardian monitor your activities on social media?	No	167	59.2
	Yes	115	40.8
	Total	**282**	**100**

The findings presented in Table 2 above demonstrate that 282 (83.7%) of the students indicated that their guardians /parents were informed of their engagement in social media, 26 (7.7%) stated that their parents/guardians were not

aware. The rest, 29 (8.6%) were unsure whether their parents/guardians were aware of their engagement on social media. Similarly, 8 (57.1%) of teacher counselors interviewed reported that the students' parents or guardians were aware of their children's engagement in social media. The teacher counselors further noted that parents/guardians were the ones who facilitated the purchase of phones and credit used to buy data bundles, thus enabling the students to have access to social media.

The student respondents reported that some of measures that parents/guardians could put in place to mitigate their exposure to inappropriate materials on social media that lead to negative behavior are presented in Table 3 below.

Table 3 Measures Put in place by Parents/Guardians to Deter Students' Exposure to Inappropriate Materials on social media

| Action	Frequency	Percent
a) Advice their children on proper social media use and need to be trustworthy and self-disciplined.	321	92.8
b) Constantly monitor and follow up on what their children are doing on the phone.	294	85.0
c) Avoid purchasing smartphones for their children until they finish school.	268	77.5
d) Ensure their children use mobile phones for educational purposes only and, where possible, buy them books instead.	215	62.1
e) Limiting the hours their children spend on the phone	209	60.4
f) Restricting access to some social media sites on their phones.	186	53.8
g) Installing certain applications that in their children's phones or other gadgets that can aid them to monitor the activities of the children online	137	39.6
h) Teach the children on the consequences of bad activities on social media	102	29.5
i) Not giving their children money to buy credit	83	24.0

The findings in Table 3 show that 321 (92.8%) of the students suggested that parents/guardians should advise their children on proper social media use. About 294 (85.0%) of the students called for the parents/guardians to constantly monitor and follow-up on what they accessed in their smart phones. The results also showed that 268 (77.5%) of the students believed that parents/guardians needed to avoid purchasing smartphones for their children until they completed secondary school education, 215 (62.1%) of the students suggested that parents/guardians should ensure that their children used mobile phones for educational purposes only and where possible, buy them books instead and 209 (60.4%) of them called for parents/guardians to limit the hours their children spend on the phone.

The results further established that 186 (53.8%) of the student respondents emphasized that parents/guardians should restrict access to some social media sites in their children's phones. Consequently, 137 (39.6%) proposed that parents/guardians could install specific applications in their children's gadgets to aid them monitor their activities.

The findings of this study were in line with those of Muinde (2015) where he recommended that parents needed to take a leading role in monitoring the content that their children accessed on social media and the emphasis on responsible use of social media. The findings further concurred with the assertions by Busari (2019) that parents should be vigilant and monitor the activities of their children so that they are not trapped in unsafe practices attributed to social media addiction.

The study also sought to find out whether the secondary schools had policies meant to regulate social media use among students within and outside the school. The findings are outlined in Figure 2 below.

Figure 2. Existence of School Policies on Social Media Use among Students
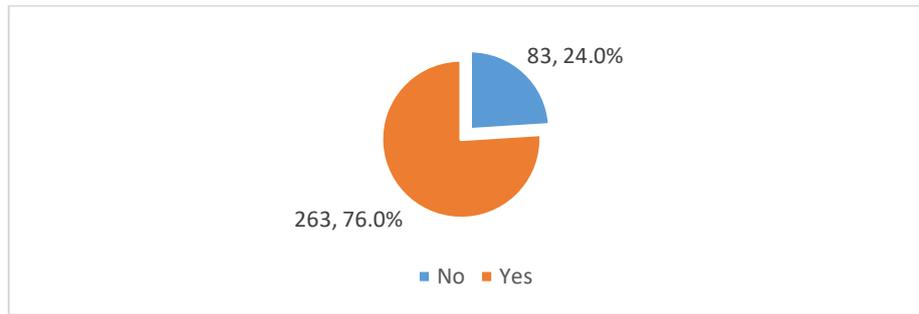
The findings presented in figure 2 above shows that 263 (76.0%) of the student respondents noted that their schools had policies that guided the use of social media. All the teacher counselors acknowledged that their schools had policies and rules of using social forums among their students. The study further assessed the effectiveness of the policies on the control of social media use among secondary school students. The results are presented in figure 3 below.

Figure 3 Effectiveness of School Policies on Social Media Use among Secondary Students
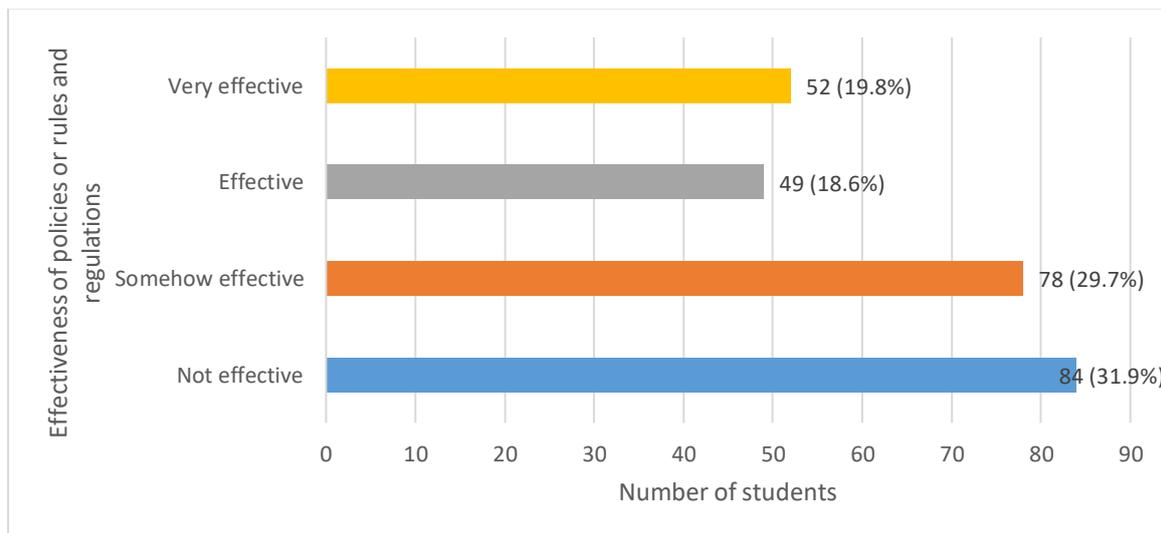
As indicated in figure 3 above, 84 (31.9%) of the student respondents suggested that the policies/rules and regulations were not effective, 78 (29.7%) considered them somehow effective and 49 (18.6%) of the students stated that the policies/rules and regulations were effective. The rest 52 (19.8%) found them very effective. Similarly, 10 (71.4%) of the teacher counsellors reported that the schools' policies on social media use among students were not effective. The rest of the teacher counselors, 4 (28.6%) further noted that such policies were effective. The teacher counsellors who noted that the policies were ineffective complained that some irresponsible teachers and non-teaching staff colluded with the students to sneak in phones to school. Others argued that it was not possible to monitor all students' activities at night while the rest noted that even if policies or rules were enforced, some cases of indiscipline would still arise.

The other measure put in place on how to curb the negative behaviour acquired by use of social media by both the teacher and student respondents was related to the school management practices. Some of the measures that could be put in place according to the student respondents included; creation of awareness (96.2%), guidance and counselling (94.5%), strict enforcement of the no phones policy in school compound (90.2%), installation of CCTV cameras in dormitories to monitor students 'activities at night and regular inspections in schools (78.0%).

Conclusions

The study concluded that majority of the secondary school students in Machakos Sub-County used social media and this negatively influenced their behaviour. It was also concluded that there were several measures put in place by parents and the school management to control the use of social media among the secondary school students.

Recommendations

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

i. That school administrators should collaborate with parents in the endeavor to control the use of social media among secondary school students and,
ii. The Ministry of Education should allocate more resources to support the school administrators in curbing the use of and challenges associated with social media by secondary school students.

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