

**LEVERAGING SOCIAL MEDIA AS A TOOL FOR RESEARCH BY
POSTGRADUATE RESEARCHERS, UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI**

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DECLARATION

This research project is my original work and has not been presented to any other University for academic award. Where another authors' idea has been presented in this project, I have acknowledged the author's ideas citing them in the required manner.

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DEDICATION

This project is dedicated to my late father James Ondieki a person who valued education, my husband Cyrus Omooria and my children Sarah and Jeremy for the support they have accorded me this far.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

CIPL	Centre for International Programmes and Link
ICT	Information Communication Technology
IDIS	International Diplomacy and International Studies
IP	Internet Protocol
JKML	Jomo Kenyatta Memorial Library
UoN	University of Nairobi
SM	Social Media
SNS	Social Network Services

ABSTRACT

Social media is becoming ever-present in today's society and is a designed mechanism to promote behavior change used for social purposes. Some social media platforms (such as facebook) have been emerging as important sources of information and , is influencing human behavior in various domains including healthy living, environmental sustainability, collective action, and other areas such as education and learning. The aim of the study was to examine leveraging of social media as tool for research by postgraduate researchers at the University of Nairobi. The objectives of the study included to: Identify the social media platforms being used by researchers at the University of Nairobi, Identify the purpose of social media practices being used by researchers at the University of Nairobi, Identify the institutions strategies in promoting the use of social media in research at the University of Nairobi, Establish the challenges faced by postgraduate researchers while using social media as a tool for research at the University of Nairobi. The study encompassed a total of 160 respondents from all the six colleges of the University of Nairobi. Respondents were selected using convenient sampling. The study adopted a descriptive survey with the use of questionnaires which had closed and open ended questions and document or desk review analysis to collect data and information. Data collected was analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences and presented in form of tables of frequencies, percentages and charts. The study established that social media platforms are mainly used for entertainment and communication rather research and learning. The study recommended implementation of social media policies, education and training, advanced internet technology and systems and pro-active feedback mechanisms to aid in promoting the use of social media platforms as tools for research by postgraduate researcher University of Nairobi. Development of strategies for embracing social media platforms as tools of research was suggested as an area for future research.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

This chapter seeks to present the introduction of the study and background information on all matters pertaining to leveraging of social media as a tool for research by postgraduate researchers at the University of Nairobi, through the identification of the aim and objectives, research questions, assumptions of the study, scope and limitations of the study. The referred subject matter proves the significance of social media as a tool of research and its importance to postgraduate studies.

1.2 Background to the Study

The use of social media platform has become an important part of daily routine. Social media in the 21st century is used to define a variety of networked technologies that emphasize on all social aspects of the internet as a channel for communication, collaboration and creative expression, and is often interchangeable with the terms web 2.0 and social software (Dabbagh & Reo, 2011a). Currently, technology is a vital part of everyday life for many people, and mobile networks as well as the Internet have enabled people to communicate globally in real time. For many of us, mobile phones, laptops, tablets and other technological devices have become inseparable part of our daily lives. In addition to merely finding information online, the Internet is used as a platform for creating new information collectively. Social media sites, such as Facebook, Twitter and blogs give people the possibility to network and share, discuss and create information together (Jäntti, 2015).

Research and scholarly communication have become social practices due to collaborative processes and knowledge being documented and passed around via social media (Cann, Konstantia, & Hooley, 2011). Researchers are increasingly able to understand more about social media users based on the demographic information they post on social media websites and there communicate with them for research purposes. The influence of this technology on the learning habits of the student is the approach of acquiring information experiences by students on a day to day basis in the institutions of higher learning (Mason & Rennie, 2008: 121-133).

Social media platforms include wordpress, facebook, twitter, blogging, wiki flickr, youtube and google application. More people are accessing social media and revealing information such as their age, gender and occupation. This makes social media websites an effective communication tool, where social platforms such as Facebook and LinkedIn have been found to be an effective method to communicate with individuals and offer a way to construct modern digital platforms where email and social media is part of the large interface (Aina, 2012:149). Universities recognize the need to adapt to these changing environments and their associated demands and expectations in order to fulfill the information needs of students to help them succeed in their academic endeavors (Tess, 2015). The implementation of social media and the use of networks for service delivery are trends that are yet to be fully embraced by academic libraries in sub-Saharan Africa and other regions in the developing world (Chisenga, 2012; Makori, 2012).

One of the basic goals of a university is to provide an enabling environment to conduct research and disseminate knowledge for societal development. Access to information is imperative to successful conduct of research in universities. Moon, Hossain, Kang and Shin (2012:102) in discussing social media as an agent of research in institutions of higher learning, opined that access to relevant resource is necessary for students to take efficient decision in their research. This view is affirmed by Adedoye (2000:282) that access and use of information is needed “for problem solving and decision making” in research process. According to Moon et al (2012:29) used the term informatization to describe institutions (universities) that provide wider access to information to aid research process. According to Hoq (2012:13-21) access and use of information as being vital in efficient research process, also Aina (2012:149-159) argued that access to information is critical in informative research in Africa as elsewhere in the world.

The use of social media in the University of Nairobi is purely for promotional and advertisement purposes since 2003 (University of Nairobi, 2012). Use of social media started in the school of Journalism by the communication students, until late 2010 when it started being utilized by the whole institution. A group of four students from the School of Business has conceptualized and spearheaded the formation of social media clubs dubbed ‘SocialPro Clubs’ in universities across the country. The initiative which was endorsed by the Ministry of Information and Technology was officially launched on 25th October 2012, at the University of Nairobi, School of Business (University of Nairobi, 2012).

1.2.1 Context of the study

The University of Nairobi as the pioneer institution of university education served as the only institution of higher learning in Kenya for some time until other universities were established. It has eight campuses, all located within the capital city and its environs. They include: the Main Campus, Chiromo, Upper and Lower Kabete, Kikuyu, Parklands, Kenyatta National Hospital and Kenya Science Campuses. It has also extra mural centres located at the country's former provincial headquarters which offer some of its academic programmes (Kenya Gazette Act, 2012). The University of Nairobi has diversified academic programmes and specializations for postgraduate courses in sciences, applied sciences, technology, humanities, social sciences and the arts. Through self-sponsored programmes, invaluable opportunity has been opened to Kenyans and non-citizens to further their education. The Board of Postgraduate Studies is responsible for the co-ordination of postgraduate programmes with respect to syllabus, monitoring student progress, admission of students, administration of scholarships, research grants, examinations and the general welfare of postgraduate students. The e-learning services at UoN is a collaborative initiative between Information Communication Technology (ICT) department and centre for learning enhancement and research, it provides institutional support to students and lectures for fostering the use for teaching and learning.

The university has over 15,000 postgraduate students enrolled in various programmes (University of Nairobi, 2012). The population of postgraduate students continues to increase due to the introduction of relevant and innovative programmes which meet the needs of individual students.

Indeed, in line with the University vision, which is “to be a leading center of excellence in the pursuit, development, dissemination and preservation of knowledge, inspired and guided by African values and committed to the virtues of quality and relevance; to contribute to the dynamic of socio-economic and cultural development of Kenya, Eastern Africa and the world at large”, the university offers tailor-made programmes that are demand/customer driven, in collaboration with the partners, in order to suit the needs of the society and in a broader context, the world.

The way of ensuring that the search for knowledge is availed to as many applicants who meet the admission requirements, the mode of study is flexible so that students’ may undertake studies on full-time, part-time basis or by distance learning. The University also conducts lectures at the extra mural centres located in the provincial centres of Garissa, Kakamega, Kisumu, Mombasa, Nakuru, Meru, Nyeri and Kisii. Postgraduate students and lecturers work together as a community of learners to advance knowledge, teaching and research programmes that bring together a wealth of talent in many different disciplines from different countries. Indeed the Centre for International Programmes and Links (CIPL) maintains over 260 international links, memoranda of understanding and exchange agreements with other leading universities, thus ensuring that the postgraduate students are exposed to innovative areas of research through the use of various resources (University of Nairobi, 2012).

1.3 Statement of the Research Problem

Over the years, social media has been used by a few- users- based sites into phenomena that have become useful for numerous of users. The popularity of social media has generated a concern among school authorities, communication experts and socio-psychological researchers about the benefit and potential risks facing postgraduate students as they engage in online social media to cater for their research and learning rather than oral or face-to-face communication. The undergraduate and postgraduate students in developed countries use social media to ask questions about the field of study and to make comparison between materials and the experience from the field (Wolf at el 2012). Various studies have been conducted, which include Mitchel, Wastein (2007) who examined students utilization of Facebook in the University of Cape Town, the study established that the new social media networking has proven to be of positive advantage citing an example of Facebook in learning. The advantage of social media designed for academic gains and found out that, the literature on social media submits helpful suggestions for application in greater education (Lange-Ros, 2015).

The study also established that the access to relevant resources is necessary for researchers to make efficient decisions in their research. The study points to eliminate the old beliefs for both educators and students not being able to know what technology can offer. While conducting their research, it revealed a gap with respect to leveraging social media as a tool for research by postgraduate researchers' which was filled through this study. This study is concerned with the benefits the students derive from using social media as a tool for research. The practical procedure involved is to highlight the

importance of social media platforms plus the constraints associated with the use of social media and possible solutions to the constraints.

1.4 Aim of the Study

The aim of this study was to examine leveraging social media as a tool for research by postgraduate researchers, University of Nairobi.

1.4.1 Objective of the study

The objectives for the study were to:

- i. Identify the social media platforms being used by researchers at the University of Nairobi.
- ii. Describe the purpose of social media practices being used by researchers at the University of Nairobi.
- iii. Identify the institutions strategies in promoting the use of social media in research at the University of Nairobi.
- iv. Identify the challenges faced by postgraduate researchers while using social media as a tool for research at the University of Nairobi.
- v. Recommend the possible solutions for the challenges of social media for postgraduate research.

1.5 Research Questions

The specific question that guided the research was:

- i. What are the social media platforms being used by postgraduate students at University of Nairobi?
- ii. What is the purpose of social media practices being used at University of Nairobi?
- iii. How is the institution's strategy in promoting the use of social media at the University of Nairobi?
- iv. What are the challenges faced by postgraduate researchers at University of Nairobi while using social media as a tool for research?
- v. What are the possible solutions to the above challenges in the use of social media as a tool for research in the university?

1.6 Assumption of the Study

The study was based on the following assumptions:

- i. Currently most postgraduate students use old norms of lectures in pursuing their academic assignments;
- ii. There is lack of utilization of social media platforms by postgraduate researchers they are pursuing their research and learning;
- iii. Failure to use social media platform leads to delays in class presentations, submission of research assignments among many postgraduate researchers; and
- iv. Proper utilization of the social media leads to fast and quality research and learning, and enhance professionalism among postgraduate researchers.

1.7 Scope of the Study

The focus of this study primarily deals with leveraging of social media as a tool for research by postgraduate researchers at the University of Nairobi. The study investigates the usage patterns, regulatory framework, factors influencing the usage of social media platform as a tool for research by postgraduate researchers and ways of mitigating challenges that affect the usage of social media by postgraduate researchers. The study is geographically limited by postgraduate researchers at the University of Nairobi. The site provides a suitable setting in which to gather views from the lecturer, members of staff and postgraduate students undertaking studies at the University of Nairobi.

1.8 Limitations of the Study

It was important for the researcher to identify all short comings that hindered the successful completion of this study. Therefore, the challenges included: availability of time in getting the postgraduate researchers to aid in information gathering as some of them were on vacation and annual leave when the data was collected, unresponsive staff that needed reminded in order to fill the questionnaires. There was also very little information regarding the use of social media in postgraduate research in Kenya.

1.9 Significance of the Study

The expected output of this research is expected to benefit postgraduate researchers, academicians and University Management, demonstrating the level of use of social media as tool for research and learning. This study also hopes to be of immense benefit to the

field of Library and Information Science as the study adds to existing literature for this reason enriching knowledge to the available academic literature on social media.

1.10 Operational Terms and Concepts

Social Media

Social media refers to websites and applications “that enable users to create and share content or to participate in social networking” (Oxford Dictionary, 2013). According to Aghaee (2015) defines social media as an instrument of communication. It encompasses any internet-based or mobile application which operates for the purpose of collaboration, where participants can connect, create, comment, view, share, rate, discover, profile and exchange user-generated content.

Leverage

The ability to influence a system, or an environment, in a way that multiplies the outcome of one's efforts without a corresponding increase in the consumption of resources. In other words, leverage is the advantageous condition of having a relatively small amount of cost yield a relatively high level of returns (Business Dictionary, 2015).

Social Network Sites

These are websites that allow subscribers to interact, typically by requesting that others add them to their visible list of contacts, by forming or joining sub-groups based around shared interests, or publishing content so that a specified group of subscribers can access it (Lange-Ros, 2015).

Postgraduate

It is involved in undertaking study at an advanced level after having graduated from a college or university (Oxford Dictionary, 2015).

Postgraduate students

This is the appropriately registered university students undertaking Masters or PhD programmes at the University of Nairobi.

1.11 Chapter Summary

This chapter has introduced the area of study, highlighted the aim and specific objectives of the study, defined the statement of the problem, spelt out the research questions, indicated the scope and limitations, identified the challenges that hindered the data collection exercise and explained the significance the study.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the relevant literature written in the field of leveraging of social media as a tool for research by postgraduate researchers, specifically its usage of social media for academic gains. It also looked at the use of social media for higher education, social media platform for postgraduate researchers, purpose of social media practices used by researchers, purpose of social media practices used by researchers, information use of social media, current situation and practices on the use of social media in institutions, the challenges of using social media for researchers, knowledge gap, conceptual framework and sums up with the chapter summary.

2.2 Social Media for Higher Education

Social media is Internet-based technology which is often used to advertise possibilities for social interaction among its customers; social media is enhanced through new communication tools and sites which are known as social media. In an attempt to define social media Dabbagh and Reo (2011:1-20) assert that, social media or networking as a term refers to networked tools or technologies that stress the social facets of the web like a medium of communication, collaboration, and inventive expression. According to Ellison (2007) defined social network sites as public web-based services that allow users to develop a personal profile, identify other users (“friends”) with whom they have a relationship.

The term social media used frequently interchangeable with the terms Web 2. 0. Social Network Site and social software. Since the early seventies, internet programs have permitted customers to switch messages with each other, maintain personal profiles and write blog-like journal records. The majority of the apparently new qualities of social media been around lengthy prior to the creation of certain social media like the Facebook (Aina, 2012:149).

Social media is used for various reasons and purposes in higher education and it is exploited for enhancing teaching and learning through providing both teachers and students with academic support services, including e-mentoring, e-feedback and other e-facilities. In recent occasions, using social media is viewed as growing and adopting communication relevant to academic purpose, (Conole, & Alevizou, 2010). The interest rate of utilizing social media across nations varies for instance, in certain countries and among various user communities, many Universities are now striving to develop ways of using social media to support learning.

Currently, technology is a vital part of everyday life for many people, and mobile networks as well as the Internet have enabled people to communicate globally in real time. For many of us, mobile phones, laptops, tablets and other technological devices have become inseparable part of our daily lives. In addition to merely finding information online, the Internet is used as a platform for creating new information collectively. Social media sites, such as Facebook, Twitter and blogs give people the possibility to network and share, discuss and create information together (Jäntti, 2015). The social media

platform such as facebook myspace and twitter leverage on the web to build online social networks amongst the users who share personal interest. The purpose of social media in higher education includes enhancing communication and information sharing among both teachers and students (Gruzd et al 2012:1294-1319). This established that Facebook is used to initiate contact with course peers. In addition, students regard social media as one of the three key means used in facilitating educational experience, alongside face-to-face meetings and using the learning management systems. Studies by Hrastinski and Aghaee (2012:460), opined that Facebook is a common social media platform used by majority of the people in their social life.

2.3 Social Media Platforms for Postgraduate Researchers

There is a demand for more effective collaborative learning which is best made certain through smooth communication between students and teachers concerning their training Wolf et al (2012), the study showed that students are not convinced with existing platforms for interacting using their teachers about training, however, the students are receptive to new social media which will facilitate learning with teachers Mohd et al (2010:17-19) concur with the important use of social media. The University students in Malaysia, although exposed to social media programs and appear to being so comfortable using them for learning reasons, yet students are discovered to be passive instead of active integrating social media in mastering (Mohd et al 2012:19). In integrating social media in collaborative learning, several studies have recognized that students do not know even colleagues who reported very negative encounters using the mediums, although utilizing the media for learning purpose appears appealing to them. Similarly,

Selwyn (2009:160) analyzed Facebook use among students and found few good examples of collaborative learning. Although, students centered on swapping practical and academic information encounters and support. By encouraging and enabling sharing, commenting and creation of knowledge among the users, the Web 2.0 can be said to have influenced the way users communicate. Furthermore, it has been claimed that Web2.0 technologies, such as social media platforms, have affordances that can affect people's actions (Macleod, 2014).

Social media is currently used informally by students to discuss education at all academic level. According to Munos (2011), college students are integrating education related topics into their social networking experience. Social media technologies offer communication that is interactive, low cost and fully searchable as well as platforms connecting with other scholars everywhere (Daniel and Flegin 2011). The study further showed that those graduating with masters and PhD's today must have used social media and, to them, Google scholar is where you begin the search not in the brick and mortar library or journal.

2.4 Social Media as a Tool of Research

One of the basic goals of a university is to provide an enabling environment for conducting research and dissemination of knowledge for societal development. Access to information is imperative to successful conduct of research in the universities. Research by Moon, Hossain, Kang and Shin (2012) in discussing Social media as an agent of research in institutions of higher learning, opined that access to relevant resources is

necessary for students to take efficient decisions in their research. This view is affirmed by Adedoye (2000 p. 282) who notes that access and use of information is needed “for problem solving and decision making” in the research process.

Research and scholarly communication have become social practices due to collaborative processes and knowledge being documented and passed around via social media (Cann, Konstantia & Hooley 2011). Researchers are increasingly able to understand more about social media users based on the demographic information they post on social media websites and communicate with them for research purposes. The influence of this technology on the learning habits of the student is the approach of acquiring information experienced by students on a regular basis in the institutions of higher learning (Mason & Rennie, 2008: 121-133).

2.5 Social Media Platforms for Research

Social media includes tagging system, instant messaging, blogs, wiki and social networking. Services such as twitter, facebook, youtube and google scholar with some features found in these applications such as message blogging, video streaming and social tagging (Field, 2010). Social media programs share most of the characteristics of excellent education technologies, for example enabling peer feedback and matching the social contexts of learning (Rowlands et al 2011).

Social media offers space for informal conversations and strengthening existing associations additionally to creating complete associations with students of comparable

interests and research areas (Gruzd et al 2012:190). Potential of facilitating information distribution is another frequently reported advantage of using social media. For instance, blogging tools are used by many students to disseminate information within their area and to everyone. Although using social media in scholarly towns has introduced benefits, some limits and concerns are also elevated. The study established that the obstacle to using social media in scientific studies is possible lack of time posing the relevance of social media to educational success an issue of interest to both learners and teachers.

The conversational, collaborative and communal characteristics of social media services are thought to reflect a lot of what is proven to be good types of learning and for this reason social media services are shared and encourage active participatory role for customers. In his views Mason (2006:121-123), stated that social media could also benefit students by enabling them to enter new types of collaborative learning according to their interests as well as for their immediate educational success. He further argues that, Facebook has proven that students invest their energy in building associations around shared interests and understanding and this has convinced some educationists to integrate social media for the conventional interaction and dialogue between students and instructors. In other views Maloney (2007:18) supports the sentiments and adds that social media services provide teachers a forum for simple media and positive networking with students.

To add on the above Lemeul (2006:113) looked into virtual learning conditions, namely, Facebook, and YouTube, sites that students and researchers frequent, worked with,

shared, planned and urged reference and knowledge to consider the task to become more visible during the Students' utilization of Facebook in the University of Cape Town. In addition to lecturer engagement with students through the new social media, networking has proven to be of positive advantage in using Facebook in learning and teaching particularly for educational development among micro-communities (Mitchell, & Watstein, 2007:425). Through social media students can share helpful information along with others around the world. Using elevated utilization of social media, personal and work details are blurred (Bosch, 2009:199).

Lastly, Aina (2012:156), studied the use of social media especially facebook, the revealed that students are using facebook and other channels to develop their identity, believes, status and relationship. Social interactions of college students across all media platforms as studied by Lenhart et al (2010), found out that more young adults use social media than any other sources of information and concluded that it can be used as an agent of learning in schools but the study did not include the venue of the study.

Commenting on the blog 'association for social media and higher education' Ryan Lyte, education web producer at United States of America news report said that every college and university benefits the most by having a highly engaged Facebook and twitter programs. 'Students are so high-tech that they benefit by having the brand out there on every platform' (Gruzd, et al 2012:221).

2.6 Strategies in Promoting the Use of Social Media Platforms in Institutions of Higher Learning

The research into academic use of social and other digital media needs to consider four conceptual levels, that of the individual's use as part of that person's biography (characterized by 'digital identities' and 'digital skills'); that of groups ('digital networks' or 'digital communities' of academics); in institutions (the 'digital university'); and the material resources themselves ('digital devices' and their affordances). One might add to these levels that of the wider social context beyond the academy in which academics use (or do not use) social and other digital media and in which academic networks and universities are sited (Fransman, 2013:27-41).

Social media has rapidly designed a significant effect on the area of higher education Rutherford (2010), suggests that social media in most of its forms has transformed the way in which instructors teach, students learn, education managers lead learning and can continue doing so. Due to the mix of the functional utilization of social media by college and college students and also the need for institutions of greater education to satisfy students where previously schools and colleges are progressively anxious to build up a social media existence. The advantages of social media designed for academic gains seem to become a market for a lot of scientists in education and social sciences. To concur with this particular Lange-Ros (2011) maintains that, many scientists have addressed different regions of using social media networking at various academic and social levels. The accessible literature on social media submits helpful suggestions for application in greater education.

This clearly indicates that, the usage of social media by academicians is an interesting area of research for educationists and social scientists. Similarly, Hamid, et al, (2009) adds that, the accessible literature consists of advantageous styles and designs of utilizing it at University level. It describes the development of contents and less focus regarding how to share, interact, collaborate and socialize by its use. Thus there is another reason to warrant using social media in greater education. That usage was confirmed by maintaining setup, which is accustomed to enhance study encounters of students by provision of e-support services for them.

The studies reviewed the literature used samples whose participants were college undergraduate students. College students' use of social media is happening in rapidly growing amounts as new technology becomes available. The study established that computer-mediated communication allows young adults to interact over social media with family and friends (Nalwa and Oswald 2010).

Social network sites help fulfill communication needs and wants and provide a convenient avenue of communication and the ability to stay connected with friends and family, at the users own rate and time (Urista, Dong, and Day 2009). Users can manage their interactions within their own schedule by choosing when they want to read and respond. The internet communication is a solitary activity usually done alone. However, it is efficient because it is a one-to-many method of communication that allows users to quickly spread information.

There is much interest from schools and universities in the potential of public social network sites and social media such as blogs to leverage or complement formal educational activities and enhance learning outcomes (Notley and Tacchi, 2010:73-81). Whilst e-learning frameworks are now integrated into most educational settings, the use of SNS is less comprehensively utilized. Access to social network sites varies according to state and educational level with some states banning access to social network sites and social media services altogether (Notley and Tacchi 2010). Consequently there is a shortage of evidence on the impact of social network sites on young people's formal education (Adams, 2010).

2.7 Information Use of Social Media

A study carried out at Jaypee University of Information Technology (JUIT) Solan India on the use of social media by students in the library for research revealed that facebook was being used for user education in the library a tool of communication and resource management and other services such as; course materials and document delivery services (Lange-Ros, 2011). By stating an argument Adams (2010) concurs by arguing that social media such as facebook and twitter can be used by innovative educators to build up learning communication.

Njiru (2010) investigated on usage of social network sites and its effect on communication patterns of college students at the University of Nairobi. The study revealed that social network sites are quite popular among students and they are using these sites to meet different needs both cognitive and effective. Students use these sites

for entertainment, information, to manage their self esteem and self image, to chat with their friends and family, play games, and to pass time. The study did not look at the importance of social media as a tool of research and learning but concentrated on communication aspect. Gakuo (2012) further did a comparative study of public and private university use of social network sites to offer library services and mentioned very little on social media as a tool of research and did not mention learning.

2.8 Purpose of Social Media practices used by researchers

Social media falls under the Ministry of Communication and Technology in Kenya. There is need for them to direct the institutions of higher learning with policies and programmes toward the use of and development of Information Technology (ICT) in Kenya (Vision 2030). Social Media as part of ICT requires conducive policies to enable students use social media for learning purposes (Eke, et al 2014).

The primary advantage of choosing social media to aid learning and teaching won't be fully recognized until there's much better knowledge of the way the social character of the social media assets may be used to lure low engaged or disengaged students to have interaction in educationally purposeful ways using their high-engaged peers and teachers to ensure that it adds to the prosperity of a lot of students (Kuh, et al 2007)

According to Lupton (2014), using social media can offer various platforms, those universities that use social media are doing it so often in so complex and sophisticated ways creating social ecosystem in which they have learnt to work with and exploit the

affordance of a variety of tools. The benefits of using social media are clear, but so are the potential pitfalls and risks. Using digital technology in higher education is complex enterprise involving ambivalences and negotiations.

The usage of social media as a collaboration and cooperation, the study revealed that in social media there is collaboration and cooperative learning, Aghaee (2010), since educational system have become more learner-based and instructors would rather focus on the educational learning than conveying the content. Dabner (2011) opined that there are prospective benefits of institutions that use social media networking for hooking up with current and prospective students. According to Kear (2010), the rapid pace from the change has brought many institutions not to create strategies for using social media prior to using of programs. Students' engagement signifies both time and effort students purchase educationally purposeful activities and indicate that because peers are extremely influential to student learning and values development, educational intuitions should make an effort to harness and shape the influence to ensure that it's educationally helping to strengthen academic anticipation (Chretien, et al 2009).

Few institutions have embraced the use of Social Media due to the formulation of policies on how to use Social Media as a tool of research and learning let alone for specific education purpose (Munos 2011). However there is growing interest in creating policies and guidelines regarding usage of Social Media in campus. In addition lack of formal instructions is consistent with educational policies and professional ethics that are in place.

2.9 Challenges of using Social Media Platforms as a Tool for Research

Studies have been conducted to examine how using social media and other computer-mediated communication affects learning and research, body connections, read and react to postings made by other users on the site, and send and receive messages either privately or publicly. Individuals may choose to send private messages, write on other user's walls, organize social activities, and keep informed about other user's daily activities. However, users can limit themselves on what information they would like to share publicly with others. Some items they may choose to include are: pictures, favorite books and movies, birthday, relationship status, and location (Tufekci, 2010).

The social media engages students and have to be examined as entrepreneurs of understanding. The medium of internet is marketing with increase in its programs. The interactive character of online conditions has extended with social networking. Hooking up through social networking began as being a niche activity, though time it's a phenomenon. The web sites are employed in many ways like developing metropolitan areas, speaking and blogging (Mehmood, 2013).

The improved usage of social media has become a worldwide phenomenon for quite some time. What began out as being a hobby for several computer literate people has converted to a social norm and existence-style for individuals from around the world Ellison (2007) supports that teens and teenagers have especially recognized these social media to be able to contact their peers, share information, reinvent their personas, and

showcase their social lives. While using the increase of technology helpful for getting together with others along with the recognition on the social media, is now being an activity that's done mainly on the web, with Websites (Coyle, 2008).

Facebook users often lead to time wastage, poor performance academically (Khan 2009). Similarly, (Anand 2003) added that social media is negatively associated with academic performance of student and is a lot more momentous than its advantages. Internet addiction consequently gave rise to internet usage within the last couple of decades and recommended that addicted users prefer using internet setting to back up their personal and professional responsibilities which ultimately leads to poor academic performance. Karpinski (2009) pointed out that Facebook users devoted lesser time to their studies in comparison to non users who did and subsequently had lower grade performance accumulation, also mentioned that among various unique distractions of every single generation, Facebook remains a major distraction of current generation. According to Kubey et al (2001) impairment of educational performance and internet dependency are correlated by utilizing synchronous communication programs including internet sites and forums.

2.10 Empirical and Intellectual Studies

There is a demand for more effective collaborative learning which is best made certain through smooth communication between students and teachers concerning their training Wolf et al (2012), the study showed that students are not convinced with existing platforms for interacting using their teachers about training, however, the students are

receptive to new social media which will facilitate learning with teachers Mohd et al, (2010) conquers with the important use of social media. Mohd et.al, (2012) carried out a study of the use of social media for university students in Malaysia, which exposed social media programs. Students were comfortable using them for learning reasons, yet students are discovered to be passive instead of active integrating social media in mastering. The Biggest percentage in this area of study shows that studies on the use of social media as a tool of research and learning is concentrated in countries outside Africa and with a few in Africa but with concentration of the use of social network sites in libraries. Makori (2012) finds that the university libraries in Africa have embraced the use of application 2.0 system (social media). However, the study collects data from documented sources while his study fails to mention which university was studied. Utulu and Okoye (2010) studied the use of website in general selected universities in Nigeria and mentioned a little on the social media.

2.11 Knowledge Gap

The biggest percentage in this area of study shows that studies on the use of SM as a tool of research and learning is concentrated in countries outside Africa and with a few in Africa but with concentration of the use of SNS in libraries.

There are no known baseline studies carried out in Kenya concerning leveraging of social media as a tool of research. Africa and Kenya in particular, face unique challenges as they try to implement ICT services in their daily activities for instance, the cost of availing enough bandwidth and technological phobia. The studies which have been

carried out around the world concentrate more on learning outcomes ignoring the research bit of it. In Kenya the studies carried out concentrates more on the library and mass communication. This study adopted the use of cross-sectional descriptive survey which survey seeks to find out certain facts concerning an existing phenomenon will produce an in depth understanding on the use of social media as a tool for research which the current research will fill and have a Kenyan perception.

2.12 Conceptual Framework

The key concepts involved are the independent variables and the dependent variable. The dependent variable is the usage of social media while the independent variables include; demographic variables such as education level, age, behavior factors (include teaching strategies and tasks and assignment) geographical dispersion of participants, availability of recipients and accessibility of media

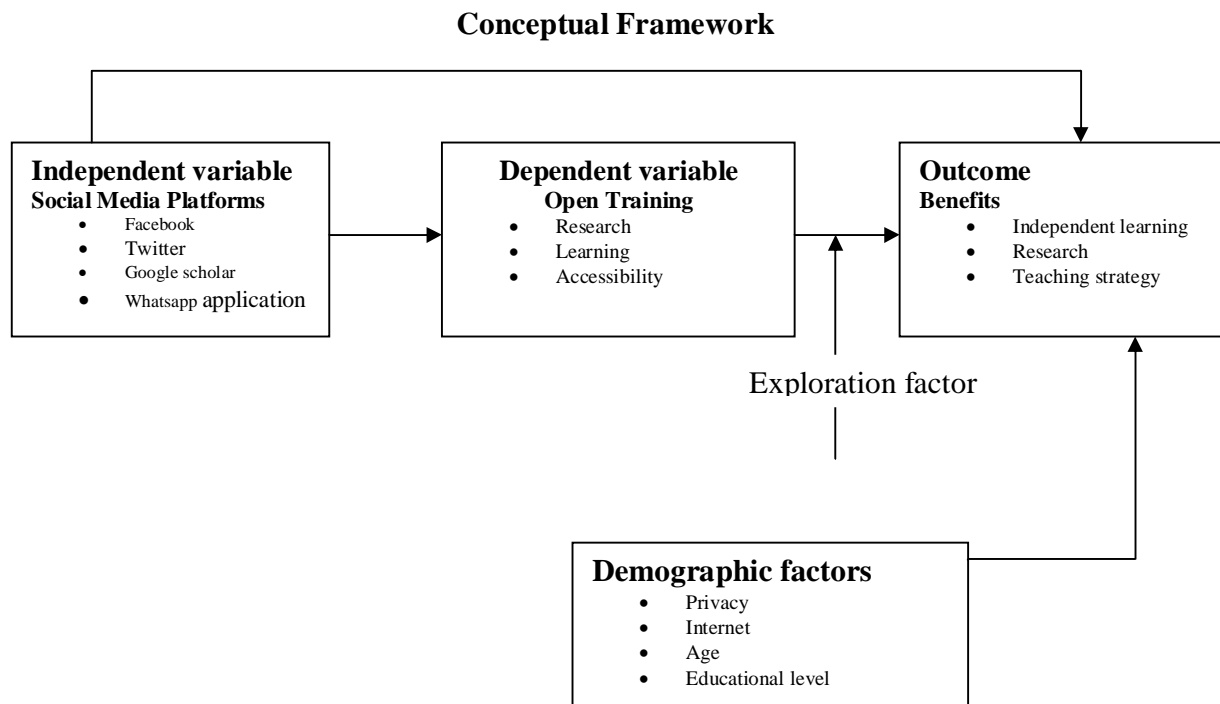


Figure 2.1: Conceptual Framework (Researcher, 2015)

Provision of information to the students and lecturers are the core values of any institutions of learning. Provision of information can be done through either the social media or formal norms of lectures.

Methods of providing information in this study through social media are influenced by several factors (intervening variables). In this case, factors that may affect the use of social media in accessing of information include availability of access, security of the participants in contributing to the research, the availability of bandwidth, internet, the IP address so that they can be able to respond to the questions at hand and the accessibility of media tools and equipments.

The dependent variable will have an effect on how, when and what type of information will be disseminated via social media. This will assist in teaching strategies where the lecturers will be able to know what tools to use while teaching and the media to use while sending notes and assignments to the students. They may opt to use twitter to communicate to their students and colleagues. There are also some task and assignment where the participants can use the social media to contribute the assignment through the use of facebook or YouTube and video link which shows the other participants thoughts.

Demographic factor includes; age and privacy of the participants who contribute to chats by group members in the social media platform. If the platform is composed of professional body, one can tell by the contributions made in the discussions. Additionally, if the topic is of economic benefit or useful knowledge, one is likely to receive many followers this many contributions.

2.13 Chapter Summary

This chapter has discussed relevant literature in Leveraging of Social Media as a Tool for Research by Postgraduate Researchers, specifically its usage for academic gains. It also looked at the use of social media for higher education, social media as a tool research, information use of social media, administration support of social media and the challenges of using social media for research, knowledge gap and wraps up with conceptual framework.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter provides information on the research design, area of study, target population, sample and sample size, sampling technique, data collection method, research instrument, pilot test, validity and reliability, data collection procedures, data interpretation and analysis as well as ethical issues considered during the study.

3.2 Research Design

Research design is an outline, a plan, or a strategy used to arrive at findings for a question (Kothari, 2011). Descriptive research and questionnaire survey with closed and open ended questions and document or desk review analysis were used to collect data and information. This method was used because the study intends to elicit the opinions of the respondents on leveraging in social media as a tool for research among postgraduate researchers at the University. The University of Nairobi will allow for an in-depth investigation of the problem and also help in giving insights and proper understanding the use of social media.

Table 3.1: Research design

OBJECTIVE	REASERCH TYPE	RESEARCH INSTRUMENTS
The current situation in social media	Quantitative	Interview/document review
Institutional involvement in the use of social media	Qualitative	Document review
The social media platforms being used in the university	Qualitative	Interview/document review
Challenge faced by users who use social media	Quantitative	Questionnaire

3.3 Area of Study

The area of study was the University of Nairobi. The choice of the area was because of proximity which ensured effective distribution and collection of data through the use of questionnaires and document reviews.

3.4 Target Population

The population of the study consisted of 160 postgraduate researchers at the University of Nairobi, out of the possible 16000. According to Mugenda (2003:44-46) the sample size is 10% of the total population if the population is more than one thousand.

The University of Nairobi has about sixteen thousand (16,000) postgraduate researchers for all the campuses, based on the statistics provided by the University of Nairobi (UON 2013) which was verified from various faculties. The population of this study therefore consisted of 160 postgraduate researchers at the University of Nairobi.

3.5 Sampling and Sampling Technique

Table 3.2: Sample Size

POPULATION CATEGORY	POPULATION SIZE	SAMPLE SIZE
Postgraduate researchers	16000	160
TOTAL	16000	160

Source: (UON 2012)

3.5.1 Sampling Techniques

The researcher used convenient sampling technique whereby the questionnaire were administered to the respondents who were attending lecturers at the time of data collection.

3.6 Data Collection Methods

The study entailed the use of questionnaires which was had both open ended and closed ended questions to collect data from the respondents. Document review was used to provide evidence of some of the data collected that was relevant to the study.

3.6.1 Questionnaire

Self constructed questionnaire was the instrument for data collection. Questionnaire in this study is referred to a self-completion instrument with predefined questions to gather data from respondents. The questionnaire design was based on the objectives of the study. The questionnaire was divided into two parts: The first part consisted of the introduction which entailed the demographic details of the researcher, while the second part consisted of questions directed to answering the research questions according to study objectives.

Questionnaires were appropriate for obtaining factual and attitudinal information for research questions about self-reported beliefs, opinions, characteristics, and present or past behavior. The questionnaires were delivered by the researcher to the respondents and collected at an agreed time or emailed back.

3.6.2 Document Review/ Desk Review Guide

Document review is a supplementary method that was used to confirm some of the data gathered. This involved review of documents such as statistics for social media users',

information requests, information resource order requests, social media policy documents, workshop papers, and university online portal.

3.7 Pilot Study

Pre-testing of data collection tools has been described as one of the major tasks that should be employed before the actual data collection is carried out. According to Mugenda & Mugenda, (2003), propose that the number of individuals that can be used for pre-testing may range from two to ten. Pre-testing of data collection instruments was done at Kenyatta University Main Campus, Thika between September 2015 and October 2015. Five postgraduate researchers were used to pretest the questionnaire. Responses from the pilot study were vital to the focus of the study since the experiences helped to make arrangements for the final study.

The objective of piloting was to eliminate some ambiguous questions, establish if there are problems in administering the instruments, establish feasibility of the study, anticipate and amend any logical and procedural difficulties regarding the study, and allow preliminary (dummy) data analysis. After pretesting, the questionnaire was revised to fit the purpose of the study.

3.7.1 Validity

Validity refers to the quality procedure or a tool used in the research is accurate, correct and right. Validity was established for standardization of the research instrument to be used in the study by carrying out a pre-test on a sample population which is similar to the

target population. This helped the researcher to identify inappropriate items in measuring the variables for modification or discard. This improved the quality of the research instruments hence increasing validity.

3.7.2 Reliability

Reliability was established by computation of Cronbach's Coefficient Alpha of 0.7 which assumed to reflect the internal consistency of the instrument as suggested by Kothari (2011). This was done by calculating the correlation of each item with every other item to yield the average of all the correlation coefficients (alpha (α)).

3.8 Data Analysis

Data analysis involved descriptive statistics which included organizing and interpreting data collected from the study. The analysis of data was in line with the research questions and objectives. Since the study employed both quantitative and qualitative data, the data collected using questionnaires was prearranged and coded in order to identify similarities and differences for easy matching. Quantitative data was analyzed using descriptive statistics such as percentages, frequencies, mean and standard deviation and represented in tables, graph, charts and figures using SPSS.

3.9 Ethical consideration

The researcher had an introduction letter from the department of Library and Information Science, for permission to collect data. Assurance was given to respondents that the information provided was treated confidential and used for academic purposes only.

3.10 Chapter Summary

This chapter provided information on the research design, area of study, target population, sample and sample size, sampling technique, data collection method, research instruments, data collection procedures, data interpretation and analysis and wrapped up with the ethical issues considered during the study.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

4.1 Introduction

This chapter outlines the data presentation, data analysis, results and discussions of the study. The study used questionnaires and document reviews to obtain data and information. The study used Likert scale in collecting and analyzing the data whereby the scale of 5 points was used in computing the means and standard deviations. The results were then presented in frequencies tables, graphs and charts as appropriate with explanations being given in prose.

4.2 Response Rate of Respondents

The study targeted a total population of 160 respondents. From the total population, the study used 160 respondents of which 117 questionnaires were responded to and returned. 43 questionnaires that remained were not responded to by the respondents. The overall response rate was 74.00% which was adequate for analysis. The response rate is demonstrated in Figure 4.1 below.

Table 4.1 Response Rate of Respondents

RESPONDENTS	DISTRIBUTED	RETURNED	PERCENTAGE
Postgraduate researchers	160	117	74.00
TOTAL	160	117	74.00

4.3 Background Information of Respondents

The study sought to inquire information on various aspects of the respondents' background, in terms gender, Level of study, faculty, year of study, Department, age and designation of staff in the stipulated categories. However, in the questionnaire for staff age was not factored in as the respondents in this category could not be comfortable revealing their age. This information aimed at testing the appropriateness of the respondent in answering the questions regarding social media as a tool of research by postgraduate students at the University of Nairobi.

4.3.1 Gender Distribution

Majority of the respondents in the study were male. From the total number of respondents, male respondents were 57% while female respondents were 43%. This signifies that most of the respondents were male and is attributed to the fact that most students in the faculty of Science and Engineering are male unlike in the faculty of Arts and Diplomacy which are dominated by female student. The findings are as shown in figure 4.1 below.

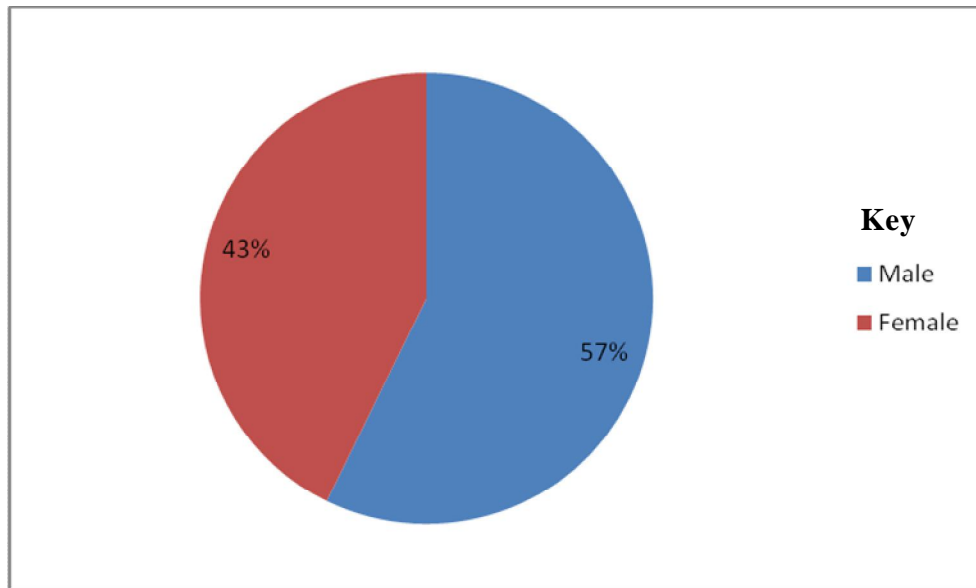


Figure 4.1: Gender Distribution

4.3.2 Level of Study

The findings indicated that 5.4% of the respondents are enrolled for PhD, 73% for masters and 21.6% for postgraduate diploma holders. From this statistics, it is clear that leveraging social media as a tool for research by postgraduate researchers at the University of Nairobi is possible as a high level of understanding and comprehension is important in enhancing social media as a tool of research and learning at the University. The findings are as shown in table 4.2 below.

Table 4.2: Level of Study

RESPONDENTS	FREQUENCY	PERCENT	CUMULATIVE
			PERCENTAGE
PhD	6	5.4	5.4
Masters Level	81	73.0	78.4
Postgraduate Diploma	24	21.6	100.0
TOTAL	111	100.0	

4.3.3 Faculty

The findings revealed that majority of the respondents were from the faculty of arts with a response rate of 49.5%. This may be attributed to the fact that faculty of arts has the largest population in the university of Nairobi. Faculty of engineering, IDIS and Science were at 17.9%, 18.9% and 14.4% respectively. The findings are illustrated in Figure 4.2 below.

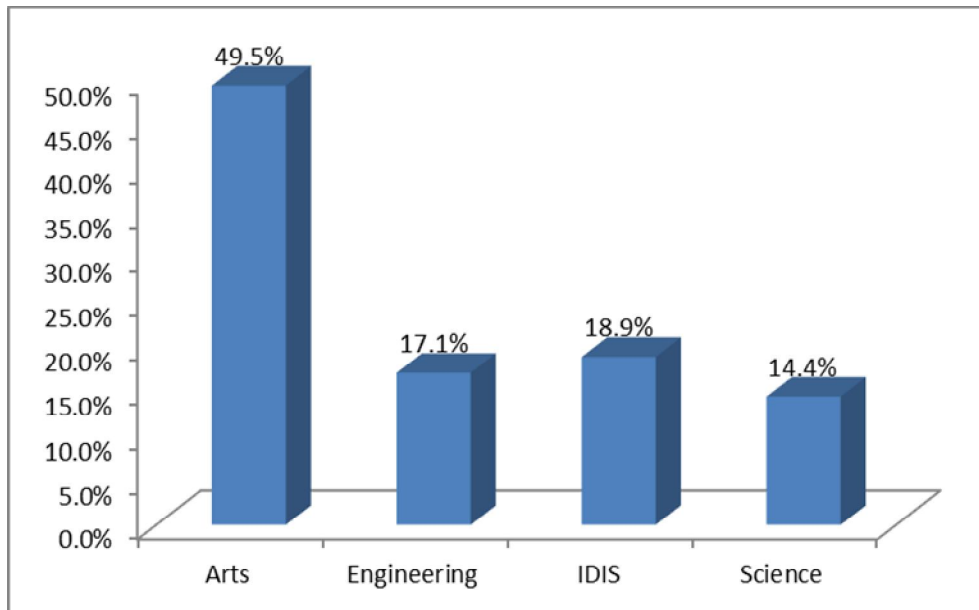


Figure 4.2: Faculty of respondents

4.3.4 Year of Study

The findings revealed that majority of the respondents were 2nd years with 46.8% unlike 3rd years who were 18.9%. 1st years were 34.2%. The results are illustrated in Figure 4.3 below.

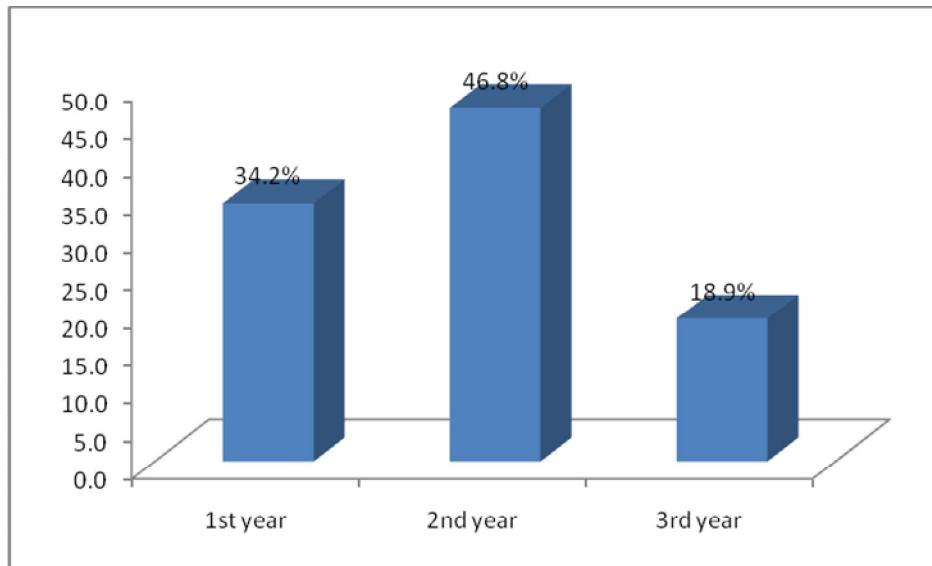


Figure 4.3: Year of study

4.3.5 Department

The study also sought to inquire about the department of the staff respondents this was in a bid to find out the staff awareness as a department on social practices in the university. The study revealed that most respondents were from the Library and information Science department with 67%. Hence majority of the respondents were Librarians. This may be attributed to the Library effort to train users on use of electronic resources through the information literacy programs hence knowledgeable on tools necessary for social media to enhance research and learning in the university. Department of Diplomacy and International Relations was 17% while Political Sciences was 16%. The findings are illustrated in Figure 4.4

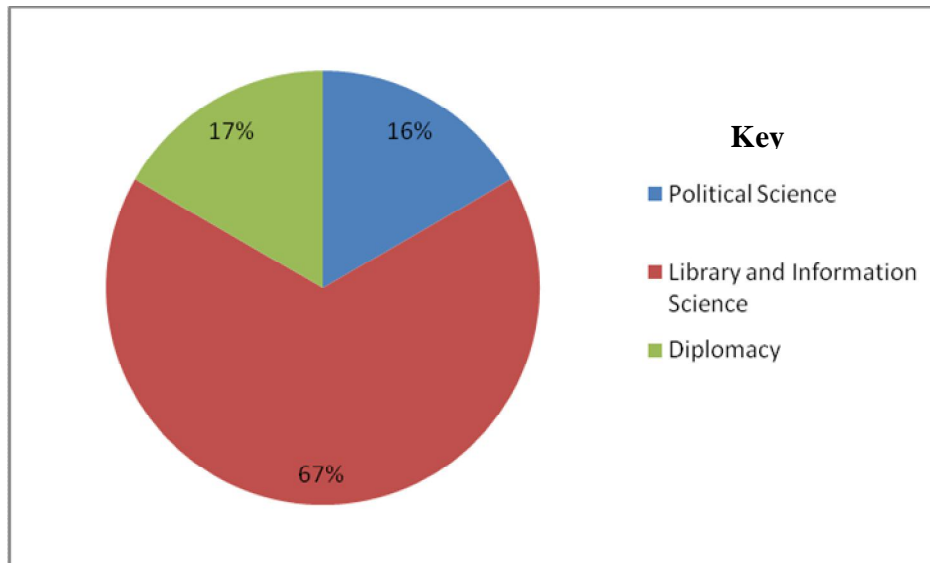


Figure 4.4: Department of Staff respondents

4.3.6 Age

The Study found that most respondents were of older age. The analysis found out that those between 25-35 were with the highest percent of 47.7. This is assumed to be the learning age as most individuals in this category are in schools. Those between 35-45 were the second highest with a percent of 24.3 while those between 45-55, 55-65 and below 25 were at 21.6%, 5.4% and 0.9% respectively. The results are shown in Figure 4.5 below,

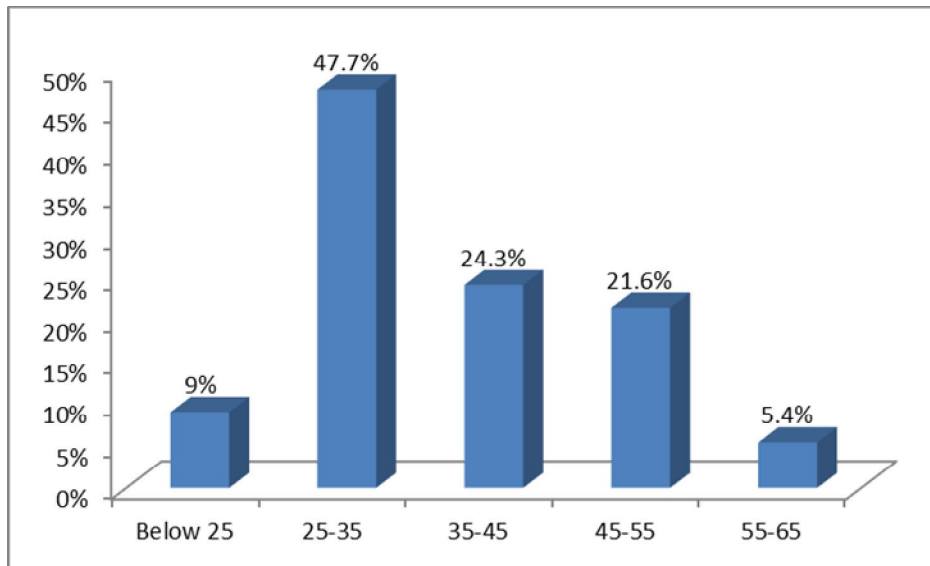


Figure 4.5: Age of the respondents

4.4: Social Media Platforms at the University of Nairobi

The respondents were asked to rank the social media platforms used at the University of Nairobi using a Likert scale of 1= Never, 2=Rarely, 3=Sometimes, 4=Frequently and 5=Very frequently. The purpose of this question was to find out the frequency of general usage of social media platforms at the University. The study found out that Whatsapp (mean=4.13) and facebook (mean =4.03) are the frequently used social media platforms at the University. This could be attributed to the fact that Whatsapp is instant and closer to the recipient unlike others social sites. Google scholar (mean=3.63), Wikipedia (mean=3.61) and YouTube (mean=3.26) are sometimes used by the respondents probably for research and learning purposes. Twitter (Mean=2.97), Blogging (Mean= 2.70) and Interactive website (Mean= 2.35) are the least used social media platforms at the university. Instagram, Skype and Viber were other social media platforms that were mentioned from the study. The findings are as tabulated in Table 4.3

Table 4.3: Usage of Social Media Platforms

PLATFORM	MEAN	STANDARD DEVIATION
Facebook	4.03	1.159
Twitter	2.97	1.383
Youtube	3.26	1.155
Google scholar	3.63	1.448
Wikipedia	3.61	1.129
Whatsapp	4.13	1.134
Blogging	2.70	1.428
Interactive Websites	2.35	1.227

The study also sought to find out the purpose for which the social media platforms mentioned above were used. The study established that the social media platforms are frequently used for Social Networking (mean=4.31), Communication (mean= 4.18) and Entertainment (mean=4.10). Social media for trending purpose is also frequently used (Mean=3.97) unlike for Research (mean=3.89) and Learning (mean=3.15). The results are shown in Table 4.4 below.

Table 4.4: Purpose of Social Media Platforms

PURPOSE	MEAN	STANDARD DEVIATION
Social Network	4.31	0.905
Entertainment	4.10	0.995
Trending	3.97	0.960
Learning	3.15	1.234
Research	3.89	1.049
Communication	4.18	1.149

4.5 Purpose of Social Media Practice being used by Postgraduate Researchers at the University of Nairobi.

4.5.1 Level of accessibility and use of Social media as a tool for research

The study also sought to find out the purpose of social media being used at the University of Nairobi. The Study first looked at the level of accessibility and use of social media as a tool of research for postgraduate researchers. This was to find out how often/ frequent the respondents used social media for research purposes. The study established that Google Scholar (mean=3.94), Wikipedia (mean=3.76), Youtube (mean=3.27) and Blogging (mean=3.02) were frequently and used for research purposes. Facebook (mean=2.93), Whatsapp (mean=2.91), Twitter (mean=2.87) and Interactive website (mean=2.80) are rarely used for research purposes at the University of Nairobi. The results are tabulated in Table 4.5

Table 4.5: Social Media as a Tool of Research

SOCIAL MEDIA	MEAN	STANDARD DEVIATION
Facebook	2.93	1.456
Twitter	2.87	1.149
YouTube	3.27	1.222
Google scholar	3.94	1.275
Wikipedia	3.76	1.104
Whatsapp	2.91	1.456
Blogging	3.02	1.456
Interactive Website	2.80	1.334

4.5.2 Assessment on the use of Social media at the University

The staff were asked to indicate the assessment of the use of social media at the University of Nairobi. This is because the staff deal directly with impacting skills and knowledge in terms of the benefits, and how to use social media for research. The staff are also instrumental in policy formulation in regard to use of social media at the University. The staff rated that 31% of postgraduate students quite often use social media platforms while 11% always use social media platforms at the University. 29% of the students do not use social media platforms at all, while 13% often used social media platforms. Rare use was represented by 16% by the postgraduate students at the University. The findings are illustrated in Figure 4.6 below.

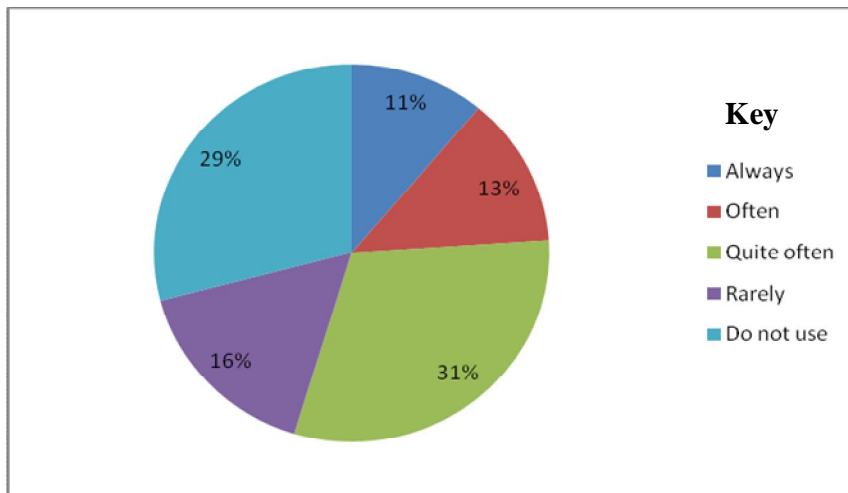


Figure 4.6 Assessments on Use of Social Media Platforms

4.5.3 Social Media and Research

In order to find out the current situation in terms of social media practice at the University, the study sought to find out the effectiveness of various types of social media as tools of research for postgraduate students. Google scholar, Blogging and Interactive website with mean of 3.91, 3.68 and 3.23 respectively, are the excellent social media platforms used for research at the University of Nairobi. Wikipedia, Facebook, Whatsapp, YouTube and Twitter are poorly used for research purposes at the University of Nairobi with mean of 2.95, 2.93, 2.70, 2.56 and 2.04 respectively. The findings are as illustrated in Table 4.6.

Table 4.6: Effectiveness of Social Media Platforms at UoN

SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS	MEAN	STANDARD DEVIATION
facebook	2.93	1.120
Twitter	2.04	0.781
YouTube	2.56	1.077
GoogleScholar	3.91	1. 232
Wikipedia	2.95	1.216
Whatsapp	2.70	1.097
Blogging	3.68	1.309
Interactive Website	3.23	1.262

4.6 The Institutions Strategies in Promoting the use of Social Media for Research

4.6.1 Mechanism for Social media Feedback

The study sought to explore the involvement of UoN in social media research. This was important so as to find out the strategies put in place to support social media practices at the University. The study established that, 17.6% of the respondents noted availability of mechanism while 80.7% noted lack of mechanism for getting feedback about the use of social media in place. Those who noted yes, noted availability of online portals, registration for email address, suggestion box,, Hang out's, Ask a librarian and pop ups as means of getting feedback. The results are show in Table 4.7.

Table 4.7: Availability of Mechanism for Research

MECHANISM	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE	CUMULATIVE PERCENTAGE
Yes	21	17.6	17.9
No	96	80.7	100.0
Total	117	100	

4.6.2 Social Media Policy

The study also sought to find out the availability of policies that aid in the use of social media. The study established that availability of the open access policy is the immediate policy that aid scholars in the use of social media platforms. In addition of open communication platforms, encouragement of staff and students to use social media platforms and providing access to information are policies supporting use of social media in the University. Information technology and communication policy is an additional policy that was established to be of use at the University of Nairobi. The results of the study are tabulated in Table 4.8 below.

Table 4.8: Mechanism/Policies for use of Social media

POLICIES				
AVAILABILITY OF MECHANISM	Open access	Open Platforms	Student and staff are communication encouraged to use social media	Provide access to information
Yes	3	1	1	1
TOTAL	3	1	1	1

4.7 Challenges in Use of Social Media

The study also sought to find out the challenges faced by postgraduate students in using social media as tool of research at the University. The study revealed that information from social media being unreliable was the highly faced challenge with 45.4%. This may be attributed to the fact that no citations are normally used in social media research hence cannot be used for scholarly research. Inadequate bandwidth, slow internet connections and inadequate computers are challenges faced by students at the University of Nairobi at 16.8%, 13.4% and 11.8% respectively. No privacy of information, expensive to access internet and unco-operative staff at 5.0, 3.4% and 2.5% respectively are the least challenges encountered by students in access of social media platforms. The findings are as tabulated in Table 4.9 pg 38.

Table 4.9: Challenges in Use of Social Media

CHALLENGE	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE	CUMULATIVE PERCENTAGE
Inadequate bandwidth	20	16.8	17.1
Unreliable information	54	45.4	63.2
Unco-operative Staff	3	2.5	65.8
Inadequate Computer	14	11.8	77.8
Slow Internet	16	13.4	91.5
No Privacy of Information	6	5.0	96.6
Expensive to Access Internet	4	3.4	100.0
TOTAL	117	100	

4.8. Solutions to the Challenges Faced in use of Social Media

The Study also sought to find out possible solutions to aid in use of social media platforms as tools for research at the University. The study established that verification of information from social media and accounts could aid in providing authenticity /credibility of the information gathered from the social media platform (32.8%).

Implementation of social media policies and provision of in-links re-directing users to research sites in the social media platform could attract more visitors to the site hence boosting social media as a tool of research as presented by 17.6% and 16.8% respectively. Enhancing internet technology (15.1%) through provision of computer with modern technology installing powerful servers and underground fiber cable and sensitization and training of users (10.1%) on the need to posts research and educative posts through the social media could revolutionize the idea of social platforms not only used for internet but also for educative purposes. Permitting social media platforms to be used for research (5.9%) was the least cited solutions to promoting social media and research in the modern knowledge based society. The findings are tabulated in Table 4.10 below.

Table 4.10 Solutions to Challenges faced in Use of Social Media Platforms

SOLUTIONS	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE	CUMULATIVE PERCENTAGE
Verify Information and Accounts	39	32.8	33.3
Implement Social Media Policies.	21	17.6	51.3
Provide links Re-directing to Research Sites	20	16.8	68.4
Sensitization and Training	12	10.1	78.6
Enhance Internet Technology & Connectivity	18	15.1	94.0
Social Media Platforms to be used in Research	7	5.9	100.0
TOTAL	117	100	

4.9 Further Comments on the Study

The study also sought to find out comments and opinions in regard to the research area as a bid to enrich the study. The findings revealed that majority of the respondents advocated for embracing social media as a tool of research (48.7%) and hence approving the platforms as sources of information in research. The study was also found to be

relevant as it addresses the knowledge gap in social media as a communication tool in scholarly research and dynamism in ICT and virtual libraries (23.5%). Some scholars advocated for social media to be complimented with other sources of information for back up purposes (14.3%) while least respondents advocated for enlightening of scholars on the need and use of social media platforms as a way to boost research activities and move away from the tradition of viewing social media platforms as mere platforms for platforms and communication (11.8%). The findings are shown in Table 4.11.

Table 4.11: Opinions/Comments on the Research

COMMENTS/OPINIONS	FREQUENCY	PERCENT	CUMULATIVE PERCENT
Embrace Social Media as a Tool of Research	58	48.7	49.6
Social Media to be Complimented with other Sources of Information	17	14.3	64.1
Enlighten Scholars on Use of Social Media Platforms	14	11.8	76.1
Study Relevant due to Dynamic in ICT and Virtual Libraries	28	23.5	100.0
TOTAL	117	100	

4.10: Chapter Summary

This chapter has presented, analyzed and discussed data collected from the study in relation to the objectives of the study. The information gathered is used to discuss the findings and inform the summary, conclusion and recommendations that are presented in the next chapter.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY OF THE FINDINGS, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

This chapter gives an overview of the findings, conclusions and recommendations made from the study. These are based on objectives and research questions of the study. The aim of the study was to examine leveraging social media as a tool for research by postgraduate researchers, University of Nairobi.

The objectives of the study were to:

- i. Identify the social media platforms being used by researchers at the University of Nairobi.
- ii. Describe the purpose of social media practices being used by researchers at the University of Nairobi.
- iii. Identify the institutions strategies in promoting the use of social media in research at the University of Nairobi.
- iv. Identify the challenges faced by postgraduate researchers while using social media as a tool for research at the University of Nairobi.
- v. Recommend the possible solutions for the challenges of social media for postgraduate research.

5.2 Summary of the findings

The summary of the findings are as follows:

5.2.1 Demographic Information of the Respondent

Demographics characteristics of the respondents revealed that gender distribution was skewed towards males as opposed to females as shown in Figure 4.1 pg 28. The study revealed that most student respondents were pursuing masters hence, of high level of education confirming the assumption that students in higher level of education envision a high level of comprehension in support of social media platforms and research as shown in Table 4.2 pg 29. Additionally, majority of the respondents were from the Faculty of Arts attributing to the fact that faculty of arts has the largest population in the University of Nairobi as shown in figure 4.2 pg 29.

The findings revealed that majority of the respondents were 2nd years as illustrated in Figure 4.3 pg 30. Library and information Science department had most staff respondents confirming the Library effort to train users on use of electronic resources through the information literacy programs hence knowledgeable on tools necessary for social media to enhance research and learning in the university as shown in Figure 4.4 pg. 31. The Study also found that most respondents were of older age. The analysis found out that those between 25-35 were with the highest percent. This is assumed to be the learning age as most individuals in this category are in schools as shown in shown in Figure 4.5 pg 32.

5.2.2 Social Media Platforms Used at the University of Nairobi

The first objective of the study was to identify the social media platforms being used at the University of Nairobi. The study findings revealed that Whatsapp and Facebook are frequently and commonly used social media platforms at the University, supporting Njiru (2010) sentiments from the literature review, whose study revealed students use these sites for entertainment, information, to manage their self esteem and self image, to chat with their friends and family, play games, and to pass time. Google scholar, Wikipedia, YouTube, Twitter, Blogging and Interactive website are other social medial platforms evidently used at the University of Nairobi as shown in Table 4.3 pg 32.

The study revealed that social media platforms are frequently used for social networking, communication and entertainment by postgraduate students at the University. This contradicts Gruzd, et al., (2012:1294-1319) who notes that the purpose of social media in higher education includes enhancing communication and information sharing among both teachers and students, unlike networking and entertainment as shown from the study. Trending, research and Learning purposes are rarely used for social media platforms at the University as shown in Table 4.4 pg 33.

5.2.3 Purpose of Social Media Practice at the University of Nairobi

The second objective of the study was to describe the purpose of social media practices being used by postgraduate researchers at the University of Nairobi. The study established that Google Scholar, Wikipedia, YouTube and Blogging are frequently used social media platforms for research purposes. This confirms Wolf, et al., (2012),

statement from the literature review who affirms that despite the fact that students are not convinced with existing platforms for interacting using their teachers about training, the students are receptive to new social media which will facilitate learning with teachers. Facebook, Whatsapp, Twitter and Interactive website are rarely used for research purposes at the University of Nairobi as shown in Table 4.5 Pg 34.

The staff further rated the usage of social media platforms by postgraduate students as quite often while few students do not use social media platforms at all. This is in support of Daniel and Flegin, (2011) from the literature review, who established that college students are integrating education related topics into their social networking experience. Social media technologies offer communication that is interactive, low cost and fully searchable as well as a platform connecting with other scholars everywhere as shown in Figure 4.6 pg 34.

The current situation in terms of social media practice at the university, established that Google scholar, Blogging and interactive website are the excellent social media platforms used for research at the University of Nairobi. Wikipedia, Facebook, Whatsapp, YouTube and Twitter are poorly used for research purposes at the University of Nairobi with as shown in Table 4.6 pg 35.

5.2.4 Strategies in Place for Promoting Social Media in Research

The third objective of the study was strategies put in place to promote the use of social media in research. The study established that, majority of the respondents noted lack of

mechanism for getting feedback about the use of social media. The few respondents who pointed to the availability of mechanism, noted availability of online portals, registration for email address, suggestion box, Hang out's, Ask a librarian and pop ups as means of getting feedback as shown in table 4.7 Pg 36.

The staff further established that availability of the open access policy is the immediate policy that aid scholars in the use of social media platforms. In addition, open communication platforms, encouragement of staff and students to use social media platforms and providing access to information are policies supporting use of social media in the University. Information technology and communication policy is an additional policy that was established to be of use at the University of Nairobi as shown in Table 4.8 pg 36. However, Munos, (2011) from the literature review notes that few institutions have embraced the use of Social Media due to the formulation of policies on how to use Social Media as a tool of research and learning let alone for specific education purpose.

5.2.5 Challenges in Use of Social Media

The fourth objective was to find out the challenges faced by postgraduate researchers while using social media as a tool for research at University of Nairobi. The study revealed that information from social media is unreliable. This affirms; Moon, Hossain, Kang and Shin (2012) sentiments in discussing social media as an agent of research in institutions of higher learning, and opines that access to relevant resource is necessary for students to take efficient decision in their research. Inadequate bandwidth, slow internet connections and inadequate computers, lack of privacy of information, expensive to

access internet are the least challenges encountered by students in access of social media platforms at the university as shown in Table 4.9 pg 37.

5.2.6 Solutions to the challenges faced in use of Social Media

The fifth objective was to suggest possible solutions for the challenges of social media for postgraduate researchers. The study established that verification of information from social media and accounts could aid in providing authenticity/credibility of the information gathered from the social media platform. Additionally, implementation of social media policies and provision of in-links re-directing users to research sites in the social media platform could attract more visitors to the site hence boosting social media as a tool of research. Enhancing internet technology through provision of computer with modern technology installing powerful servers and underground fiber cable and sensitization and training of users on the need to posts research and educative posts through the social media could revolutionize the idea of social platforms not only used for internet but also for educative purposes. Permitting social media platforms to be used for research could promote research in the modern knowledge based society as shown in Table 4.10 pg 38.

5.3 Conclusion

The study concluded that:

Social media platforms are frequently used for social networking, communication and entertainment by postgraduate researchers at the University rather than for research and

educative purposes hence a lot of sensitization and training should be done on the importance of social media platform for education and research. Students are receptive to social media platforms which facilitates learning and sharing of ideas amongst each other. Integrating of education related topics into their social networking experience is made possible through interacting with scholars worldwide.

Institutions should embrace use of Social Media platforms by formulating policies on how to use Social Media, This will ensure regulation and verification of information posted in the social media platforms hence making the information credible to be used by scholars for research and education purpose. Institutions of higher learning should create active channels for feedback on raise of social media platforms so as to have interactive sessions to share best practices and ideas on how to support social media and research. The use of social media platforms to aid in research, learning and teaching will only be fully recognized when there's knowledge to manage users to use social media for education purposes through sensitization and training.

5.4 Recommendations

From the study findings and conclusions, the following recommendations are made:

5.4.1 Social media policies

Institutions of higher learning should set and implement social media policies to aid in securing information and facilitate easy flow and dissemination of information from various scholars across the divide and world. This will create confidence among the users

hence promoting social media platforms value in enhancing research and learning. This will also ensure regulation and monitoring of content posted in the platforms consequently ensuring authenticity of the sites.

5.4.2 Advanced Internet Technology and Connectivity

Institutions of higher learning should embrace new advanced modern technologies and systems as a way to propel immense and fast communication between scholars. Increase in bandwidth, development of powerful servers, expansion of space for storage of computer hardware and enhance remote access will greatly enhance the practice off use of social media platforms at institutions. The facilities should also be adequate to cater for the growing number of student population in institutions.

ICT department of UON should consider putting research contents online and issue users with accounts/passwords for access. This will allow a 24/7 access and also enable postgraduate researchers to access the information without location restriction. In addition the bandwidth should be increased to alleviate the problem of low internet connectivity which affects users' access to e-resources. ICT personnel should also design user friendly interfaces for users for ease of use, and install more internet stations to allow access by more users.

5.4.3 Education and Training

Information literacy sessions should be carried out frequently so as to equip the students with skills and advice on possible ways social media platforms can be used as avenues for peer discussions, posting assignments, creation of groups in the social media sites that

promote education practices. This will promote the use of social media platforms as apart from entertainment and leisure, the channels will be used as ways to generate video of class presentations in YouTube and share discussions on relevant issues regarding research and learning.

5.4.4 Pro-active Feedback Mechanisms

Mechanisms put in place to give feedback on use of social media platforms are effective. Ongoing communication between, administrator and users is important in supporting the social media as tools for research. Citing an example of the University of Cape Town in South Africa, they have adopted the use of face book in learning.

5.5 Suggestions for Further Research

5.5.1 Strategies for Embracing Social Media Platforms as Research tools

For clearer visions on how social media platforms can be used as tools for scholarly research, sustainability strategies of managing and controlling information deposited in the sites should be studied, where research and learning is able to take place without the contention and limitation to not be used in scholarly research.

5.6 Chapter Summary

The chapter has discussed major findings in the study, given recommendations and suggested further research area. Institutions have to put down and implement social media policies to ensure effective use of valuable information that can be acquired from the platforms.

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APPENDIX 1:
PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

Mary Moraa Ondieki
P.O. Box 42607-00100
NAIROBI.

The Dean
Faculty of Art (Library and Information Science)
University of Nairobi
P.O. Box 39009-00100
NAIROBI.

Dear Sir,

RE: PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

The above subject refers.

I am a postgraduate student of Information Science at University of Nairobi, Nairobi Campus, in the Faculty of Art department of Library and Information Science. I am currently undertaking a research titled: *leveraging social media as a tool for research by postgraduate researchers, University of Nairobi*. I am seeking permission to carry out the research by conducting interviews with teaching staff and students in postgraduate studies. The information collected will be strictly confidential and only used exclusively for academic purposes.

Yours Sincerely,

Mary Moraa Ondieki
University of Nairobi
C54/73414/2014

APPENDIX II:

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR POSTGRADUATE STUDENTS

INSTRUCTIONS

Please indicate your response by ticking the provided boxes. For questions that require suggestions or comments, please use the provided space.

Background Information

1. Gender: Male () Female ()
2. Level of study (Tick(√) one only) PhD () Masters () Postgraduate Diploma ()
3. Faculty.....
4. Year of study (Tick (√) one only) 1st year () 2nd year () 3rd year ()
5. Age:
 - a) Below 25 ☐
 - b) 25-30 ☐
 - c) 35-40 ☐
 - d) 45-50 ☐
 - e) 55-60 ☐
 - f) 65-70 ☐

Social Media Applications

6. Rank the following social media platforms according to use Using a scale of 5 indicate the ranking in usage as follows: 5=Very frequently, 4= Frequently, 3= Sometimes, 2= Rarely, and 1= Never. Please tick (√) once in each row.

PLATFORMS	5	4	3	2	1
Facebook					
Twitter					
YouTube					
Google scholar					
Wikipedia					
WhatsApp					
Blogging					
Interactive website					

Any other (specify).....

7. Indicate for what purpose you use the social media platforms. Using a scale of 5 indicate the usage as follows: 5= Very frequently, 4= Frequently, 3= Sometimes, 2= Rarely, and 1= Never. Please tick (✓) once in each row.

PURPOSE FOR USE	5	4	3	2	1
a. Social network					
b. Entertainment					
c. Trending					
d. Learning					
e. Research					
f. Communication					

Any other specify.....

8. Show the level of accessibility and use of social media as a tool of research for postgraduate studies? Using a scale of 5 indicate the level of accessibility and use:

5= Always 4= Often 3= Quite often 2= Rarely 1= Do not use. Please tick (✓) once in each row.

SOCIAL MEDIA	5	4	3	2	1
Facebook					
Twitter					
YouTube					
Google scholar					
Wikipedia					
WhatsApp					
Blogging					
Interactive website					

Any other (specify).....

9. Rate the effectiveness of the various types of social media as tools of research for postgraduate studies. Using a scale of 5 rate the effectiveness of social media platforms as follows: 5= Excellent, 4= Good 3= Average 2= Poor 1= None. Please tick (✓) once in each row.

SOCIAL MEDIA	5	4	3	2	1
Facebook					
Twitter					
YouTube					
Google scholar					
Wikipedia					
WhatsApp					
Bloggng					
Interactive website					

Any other (specify).....

Social Media Strategies

10. (a) Does the university have a mechanism in place for getting a feedback for the usage of social media.

Yes () No ()

(b) If the answer in 10(a) above is ‘YES’, show the mechanism in place of getting feedback about the use of social media in place.....

.....

11. What are the challenges you face while using social media as a tool of research at the university

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

12. Suggest possible solutions to the above challenges in the usage of social media as a tool of research in the University

.....

.....

.....

13. Please feel free to make any comment(s) relevant to this study

.....

.....

Thank you for participating

APPENDIX III: QUESTIONNAIRE FOR STAFF MEMBERS

INSTRUCTIONS

Please indicate your response by ticking the provided boxes. For questions that require suggestions or comments, please use the provided space.

Background Information

1. Gender: Male () Female ()

2. Designation

3. Department

Social Media Applications

4. Rank the following social media platforms according to usage: Using a scale of 5 indicate the ranking in usage as follows: 5= Very frequently, 4= Frequently, 3= Sometimes, 2= Rarely, and 1= Never. Please tick (√) once in each row.

PLATFORMS	5	4	3	2	1
Facebook					
Twitter					
YouTube					
Google scholar					
Wikipedia					
WhatsApp					
Blogging					
Interactive website					

Any other (specify)

.....
.....

5. Indicate for what purpose the postgraduate students use social media platforms. Using a scale of 5 indicate the frequency of use: 5= Very frequently, 4= Frequently, 3= Sometimes, 2= Rarely, and 1= Never. Please tick (✓) once in each row.

PURPOSE OF USE	5	4	3	2	1
g. Social Network					
h. Entertainment					
i. Trending					
j. Learning					
k. Research					
l. Communication					

Any other (specify).....

.....

.....

6. Show the level of accessibility and use of social media as a tool of research by postgraduate student? Using a scale of 5 as follows: 5= Always 4= Often 3= Quite often 2= Rarely 1= Do not use. Tick (✓) the most appropriate in each row.

SOCIAL MEDIA	5	4	3	2	1
Facebook					
Twitter					
YouTube					
Google scholar					
Wikipedia					
WhatsApp					
Blogging					
Interactive website					

Any other (specify).....

.....

.....

7. Indicate your assessment of the use of the social media at the University of Nairobi by postgraduate students by ticking (✓) against the most appropriate response.

- a. Always ()
- b. Often ()
- c. Quite often ()
- d. Rarely ()
- e. Do not use ()

8. Rate the effectiveness of the various types of social media as tools of research for the postgraduate studies. Using a scale of 5 rate the effectiveness of social media platforms as follows: 5= Excellent, 4= Good 3= Average 2= Poor 1= None. Tick (✓) the most appropriate in each row.

SOCIAL MEDIA	5	4	3	2	1
Facebook					
Twitter					
YouTube					
Google scholar					
Wikipedia					
WhatsApp					
Blogging					
Interactive website					

Any other.....

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Social Media Strategies

9. (a) Does the university have a mechanism in place of getting feedback from the students about the usage of social media

Yes () No ()

(b) If ‘YES’ in 9(a) above what are the mechanisms in place in getting feedback from students at the university

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10. (a) Does the university have a written policy on social media

Yes () No ()

(b) If ‘YES’ in 10(a) highlight what the policy on social media entails. Tick (✓) the most appropriate in each row

POLICIES
Open access
Open Communication Platforms
Students and Staff are Encouraged to Use Social Media as Tool of Research
Provide Access to Information

Any other (specify).....

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11. What are the challenges faced by postgraduate students in the University of Nairobi while using social media as a tool of research.

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12. Suggest possible solutions to the above challenges in the use of social media as a tool of research in the University

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13. Please feel free to make any comment(s) relevant to this study

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Thank you for participating