

**AN INVESTIGATION ON THE IMPACT OF ONLINE SOCIAL  
NETWORKING ON ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE AMONG HIGH  
SCHOOL STUDENTS IN URBAN AREAS: A CASE STUDY OF  
WESTLANDS SUB-COUNTY, NAIROBI.**

BY

ERICK MWASHEGWA MWADIME

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Communication in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the award of the  
Master of Arts Degree in Communication Studies of University of Nairobi.*

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**DECLARATION**

This project is my original work and has not been presented for a degree in any other University

Erick Mwashegwa Mwadime

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Signature

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Date

This project has been submitted for examination with my approval as University Supervisor

Dr. Bosire

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Signature

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Date

## **DEDICATION**

This study is dedicated to the Almighty God who enabled me to be in a position to carry on with my study by granting me good health throughout the study. I would also dedicate this study to my parents Mr. and Mrs. Arnold Mwadime for their moral support and continuous belief in me throughout the period of study.

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## **ABSTRACT**

Online social networking sites have changed the way people interact and communicate. Most students who are members to these online networking sites spend numerous hours on these sites at the expense of study time. This research paper looked at the impact of online social networking sites on academic performance among high school students in urban areas. The study focused on three respondents i.e. students, parents and teachers and used questionnaire and interviews as tools of study. The findings of this study shed insight on how students use online social networking sites, the time spent and the kind of information sought. The study also provides recommendations on how online networking can be used in order to improve academic purposes.

## **ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS**

**CCK** - Communications Commission of Kenya

**SPSS** - Statistical Package for Social Sciences

**GPA** - Grade Point Average

**SNS** - Social Networking Sites

**KCSE** - Kenya Secondary School Examination

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## **CHAPTER 1**

### **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

Internet has changed the way people interact. Communication and access to information has been made easier. Use of internet is now not only about communication through emails but is also a platform on which people interact. Today it is possible to attend a classroom being taught abroad while seated somewhere in rural Kenya or give evidence directly to an international court in real time with no need to travel, thanks to internet. Sunitha and Narayan (2010) observe that internet is now more about blogs, podcasts, Facebook, and Twitter – tools and technology also called social networking sites a recent phenomenon. Social network sites are the web-based services that allow individuals to (1) construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system, (2) articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection, and (3) view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system (Boyd and Ellison, 2007).

Most of the members to these social networking sites are young people who are still in school. Al-Rahma and Othman (2013) inform that there is no doubt that social media has gained wider acceptability and usability and is also becoming the most important communication tools among students. A large percentage of teenagers in Kenya spend their time online either using smartphones or their computers and other handheld gadgets such as ipads and tablets browsing these social networking sites. Students in all levels of education seize every opportunity they get to access social networking sites to check on status on Facebook and what is trending on Twitter. Teenagers have learnt to multitask as they switch from one SNS to another.

When releasing 2013 KCSE results, Cabinet Secretary, Ministry of Education Science and Technology Professor Jacob Kaimenyi pointed out that one of the causes of poor

performance in languages is electronic communication devices such as mobile phones and computers due to 'spell checking' and 'predictive text' capabilities. Research has shown that social media is negatively associated with academic performance of students. According to Karpinski (2009), Facebook users often devoted lesser time to their studies in comparison to non-users and subsequently had lower GPAs.

Therefore as more teenagers rush to join and continue using SNS the question that comes to mind is, are these SNS having an impact on their academic performance or not. This study intends to find out the impacts of online social networking sites on academic performance of students in high schools.

## **1.1 BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY**

Technology has changed the way people interact. Internet is now easily accessible using mobile phones costing as cheap as Kshs. 1,000. According to CCK 2011/2012 sector report the use of internet in Kenya has been on the rising trend with figures showing that 44.12 percent of the population has access to the internet with majority accessing internet through mobile phones. The report also acknowledges that there has been an increase in Kenyan internet users by 95.63 percent in the year 2011 to 2012.

Service providers have also helped provide easy access to internet by going a step further to provide special offers in order for people to access internet. For instance Kenyan Safaricom has recently launched a new subscription internet bundle allowing subscribers' access to Twitter, WhatsApp and Facebook for Kshs. 10 a day.

Safaricom Chief Executive Officer Bob Collymore observed that the youth have really been behind the increasing demand for data to support their preferred communication channels. These preferred communication channels are the Social Networking Sites (SNS).

Teenagers are among the most avid users of technology in general and social network sites in particular (Lenhart, Madden, Macgill & Smith (2007b). Recent reports find that youth spend nearly 10 hours per day using some form of technology with socially networked media playing a large role in their daily lives (Rideout, Foehr & Robert 2010).

Neelamalar & Chitra (2009), state that members of social sites can easily form groups (called communities) and share their opinions among themselves through discussions threads, forums and polls. On their research on the impact of social network on Indian youth they found out that 95% who are members in one or more social networking sites spend varying amount of time from less than an hour to five hours every day in social networking sites. They also found out that 95% of the youth find the social networking sites as a platform for reconnecting with lost friends, maintaining existing relationships and sharing knowledge, ideas and opinions.

Moreno & Kelb (2012) observed that for adolescents social networking sites are an important medium for self-expression, communication with friends and peer feedback. They further assert that 22% of teenagers log on to their favorite social networking sites more than ten times a day. Studies have shown that adolescents often believe social networking sites reference to be accurate which may influence their own perception and actions (Moreno & Kelb: 2012)

Sunitha and Narayan (2010) observe that social networking has become part of the daily life experience for an increasing number of people. They also further point out that the rapid adoption of social network sites by teenagers in the United States and in many other countries around the world raises some important questions. Ahn (2010) observes that while teenagers are engaged with technology they are more disengaged from another major component of

their lives – school.No one denies that youth use these technologies to communicate with the world, and they do so with high frequency and intensity (Lenhart et al., 2007b).

Most learning institutions have gone a step further and blocked access to SNS through their networks but it is important to acknowledge that students own phones and other gadgets which they can use at home. It is therefore necessary for both educators and parents to recognize the fact that there is high usage of SNS by secondary school students and it is vital to find out what are the effects of these online communities on students’ academic performance.

## **1.2 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

Technological shift from analogue to digital has immensely changed the way people communicate in society. It is something that cannot be wished away. Many teenagers have joined and many more are still joining Social Networking Sites (SNS). Sunitha and Narayan (2010) observe that social networking has become part of the daily life experience for increasing number of people. They further raise concerns such as how do these SNS fit into the lives of these teenagers and what they are learning from their participation. Is whatever being learnt and shared on these social networking services for academic purposes?

Lenhart et al, (2007b) note that 85 percent of teens ages 12-17 engage at least occasionally in some form of electronic personal communication, which includes text messaging, sending email or instant messages, or posting comments on social networking sites. Danah Boyd (2007) expresses concern and wonders if these online activities are like face to face friendships, is they different, or complementary? These questions are very important for parents and educators to ask themselves. It is also very important for both the parents and educators to know what type of information their children seek on these sites. A considerable number of educators and children’s advocates worry that James Billington, the Librarian of

Congress, was right when he recently suggested that young Americans' electronic communication might be damaging "the basic unit of human thought – the sentence" (Lenhart et al, 2007b).

Social Networking websites content is least monitored and these sites though popular with teenagers, do have many issues such as addiction and even online bullying which can have adverse effects on their academic performance.

Kalra and Manani (2013) argue that excessive use of these sites not only have long lasting effect on psyche of students but also affects the physical, mental and social aspect of life. They further add that sometimes these sites also affect the academic achievement of the students because they don't want to leave that particular aura and thus their concentration stands divided. Many students have lost their interest in their studies as they spend most of their time on these sites (Kalra & Manani, 2013). Boyd (2007) states that what started as a hobby for some computer literate people has become a social norm and way of life for people all over the world.

Banquill and Chua (2009) came up with a conclusion that social networking sites do affect one's academics adversely and cause a gradual drop of grades of students. They attribute this to the student investing his or her time in social networking sites instead of their studies. It is therefore vital to investigate whether apart from communicating if there is any other role that these social networking sites play in school going teenagers' life. It is with the above background that this study sought to find out the effects of social networking sites usage by students in high school on their academic performance. It seeks to find out whether whatever information obtained from these networks by students serves the users for academic purposes.

## **1.3 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

### **1.3.1 Main objective**

The main objective of this study is to investigate the impacts of online social networking on student's academic performance in high schools in urban areas.

### **1.3.2 Specific objectives**

1. To find out the kind of information high school students seek on online social networking sites.
2. To establish what other purpose, apart from communication, students use social networking sites for.
3. To establish whether online social networking sites are used by students to improve their academic performance.

## **1.4 RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

1. What kind of information do high school students seek on the online social networking sites?
2. What other purpose apart from communication do students use social networking sites for?
3. Are online social networking sites used by students to improve their academic performance?

## **1.6 JUSTIFICATION**

Technology advancement has revolutionized interaction and communication globally.

Internet access is now everywhere and this has resulted to easy access to social networking sites. Young people who are also students spend so many hours online and on these social networking sites. Precious time which could have been used to study is spent on the internet and social networking sites. It has been noted that language subjects have already suffered a



blow by students having problems in spelling words and consequently affecting their grades in the same as witnessed in the year 2013 Kenya Certificate of Secondary Examination (KCSE) results. This has been attributed to character limitation in some of the social networking sites such as twitter leading to use of short form way of writing messages which unfortunately students have started using when writing their exams in English and Kiswahili subjects.

Socializing via the internet has become an increasingly important part of young adult life (Gemmill & Peterson, 2006). Social networking sites are popular time consuming activity that has an impact on academic performance. Lei & Zhao (2005) in the research on technology use and student achievement found out that computer use may do more harm than good to student achievement in school. In addition, technology that was found to have a positive impact on academic achievement or technology with educational value was not popular and used less frequently. Most secondary students are techno savvy and are members to several social networking sites such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and MySpace.

It is assumed that these children now have acquired specific new multi-tasking skills that they are able to apply in learning setting (Kirschner & Karinski, 2010). However they note that most empirical research show that this is not the case finding either that, (1) children do not possess these skills or, (2) that acting in this way negatively affects the processing of information. Extensive internet use leads to multi-tasking which affects concentration.

It is okay then to say that extensive internet use and social networking sites can have an effect on students' academic achievement and thus this type of research is therefore warranted.

### **1.7 SCOPE OF THE STUDY**

This research will cover high schools in Westlands sub-county, Nairobi. It will only focus on SNS such as Facebook, Twitter and WhatsApp use by students in high schools. Respondents of this study will be students, teachers in secondary schools and parents.

### **1.8 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY**

Limitation of this study will be that students who are going to be covered come from families with different financial backgrounds. They therefore have different capabilities in acquiring technological devices such as laptops, i-pads and even smartphones. Students from well off families have better access to internet and more sophisticated gadgets and thus able to do more online than those from disadvantaged families. This study will be limited to students in high schools in Westlands sub-county in Nairobi.

### **1.9 ASSUMPTIONS OF THE STUDY**

- i. High school students in Westlands sub-county use social networking sites.
- ii. High school students in Westlands sub-county have access to internet in school and at home.
- iii. Students in high schools in Westlands sub-county, Nairobi are active in online social networking sites.

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **2.0 Introduction**

Increased internet use and social networking has become very popular in the recent years. Everyone nowadays is a member to at least one social networking site where they have created a personal profile online which they use to interact. Teenagers and young adults have especially embraced these sites as a way to connect with their peers, share information, reinvent their personalities, and showcase their social lives (Boyd, 2007). Teenagers spend most of their free time on the internet and social networking. As opposed to older generations who used resources like the television or newspaper, teenagers now use the Internet for the majority of their daily activities and information gathering (Lewis, 2008). As for teenagers who are still in school hours spent on the internet can be/is precious study time wasted and this can impact negatively on their academic performance.

Schools are also under a lot of pressure from the public, media and policymakers to embrace technology in their teaching and learning. A recent study by the British Educational and Communications Technology agency, *Personalizing Learning with Technology*, supported the findings by Harrison and colleagues (2004) in England that positively associated higher levels of technology use and school achievement at different key stages in schools but also highlighted the challenges of isolating technology among many other factors that might affect school achievement (Becta, 2007).

Use of technology such as internet is one of the most important factors that can influence educational performance of students positively or adversely. Shah et al. (2001) proposed that student users are affected by the internet and this impact is determined by the type of internet

usage. They are positively affected by the informative use of internet while having drastic impact of recreational use of internet on them.

Technology has really advanced and with so many digital devices most of which are easily portable, it is very easy to access internet. DeBell and Chapman (2006) pointed out that adolescents and young adults are the heaviest users of computers and the Internet. The main use of internet by teenager is communicating and connecting with their peers. SNS becomes the latest online communication tool that allows these users to create a public or private profile to interact with people in their networks (Boyd & Ellison, 2008). A recent survey showed that approximately ninety percent of teens in the United States have Internet access, and about seventy-five percent of these teens use the Internet more than once per day (Kist, 2008). They thus may prefer to chatting with their friends online rather than doing their homework.

## **2.1 Social Networking Sites**

With the increase of technology used for communicating with others and the popularity of the Internet, “Social Networking” has become an activity that is done primarily on the Internet, with sites like MySpace, Facebook, Bebo, Friendster, and Xanga (Coyle et al., 2008).

Paul, Baker & Cochran (2012), in his research on effect of online social networking on student academic performance found that there is statistically significant negative relationship between time spent by students on online social networks and their academic performance.

Studies of adolescents’ use of SNS showed that their profiles contained a wealth of intimate, candid, and publicly available information on a wide range of social issues. According to Williams and Merten (2008), university students are often found to be obsessed with their Facebook profile or Twitter page.

The researchers matched this path of identity exploration and role experimentation to Erik Erikson's development stages (Erikson 1968). Erikson's theory suggests that adolescents between the ages of 13-18 will experience a period of psychosocial crisis – identity versus role confusion. While undergoing this development stage, adolescents become conscious about sexual identity, peer relationships and other social interactions. Willams and Mertne also suggested that the over-dependency on these media may affect a student's attendance at school (2008).

Khan (2012) using the theory of Erikson (1953) noted that in this age of life a student cannot differentiate between his identity and role inside society and he cannot solve the conflict within his role in society and his real identity, to resolve this confusion student get attracted to social networking websites because in between social networking websites he or she finds a virtual life and friends which cannot let him or her (student) to be bored even for single moment.

Trusov, Bucklin, and Pauwels (2009) noted that the Internet is no doubt evolution of technology but specifically social networks are extremely unsafe for teenagers, social networks become hugely common and well-known in past few years.

## **2.2 Social Networking Sites and Academic Performance**

Ahn (2011) argues that to date, two studies exemplify the debate surrounding SNS, youth, and educational achievement. A conference paper by Karpinski (2009) received much media attention with findings that college Facebook users have lower GPAs than students who are not users of the site.

Karpinski offers several hypotheses for these findings. For example, perhaps Facebook users spend too much time online and less time studying. However, the study did not rigorously

examine counter hypotheses and remains a rather exploratory, basic attempt to understand the effect of SNS on learning (Khan, 2011).

Kuppuswamy and Shankar (2010) argue that social network websites grab attention of the students and then divert it towards non-educational and inappropriate actions including useless chatting time killing by random searching and not doing their jobs. However, many researchers also found a positive association between use of internet and SNS and academic performance of the student users.

Wiley and Sisson (2006) argued that the previous studies have found that more than 90% of college students use social networks. In the same way Ellison, Steinfield, and Lampe (2007) stated that the students use social networking websites approximately 30 minutes throughout the day as a part of their daily routine life.

Benzie (2007) noted that the Canadian government prohibited employees from Facebook.com. In the same way Boyd & Ellison (2007) also pointed out that the U.S. Congress has proposed legislation to ban youth from accessing social networking websites in schools and libraries.

According to Khan(2012) it is international law that one must be 18 years old minimum to use social networking websites but unfortunately, Lennart& Madden (2007) calculated a huge amount of underage users which must be violated. According to Lenhart& Madden (2007) calculation it has been analyzed that 41% of 12–13 years old and 61% of 14–17 years old users use social networking websites.

Charlene Li et al., (2007) estimated that students are more likely to use social networking websites; nearly 47% of teenagers (12 to 17year olds) and 69% of young adults (18 to 21year

olds) and 20% of adults (18+) use social networking sites, and only 20% use them to contact other people.

According to Charlene Li et al (2007) student activity on social networking sites focuses on communicating with each other. Khan (2012) notes that the most popular activities done by students and users on social networking sites revolve around looking at profiles of one another, searching for someone here and there, or updating one's own profile, eavesdropping (sensing others activities on social networking websites and analyzing their posts). All these scholarly articles point to one thing, that students spend a lot of precious study time on these social networking sites interacting with others other than doing their school work.

Ahn (2011) informs that research on SNS, social capital, and psychological well-being offers an additional link to student learning through the mechanism of academic engagement. The concept of engagement can be defined in behavioral, emotional, and cognitive terms (Fredericks, Blumenfeld & Paris, 2004).

Behavioral engagement refers to participation in academic, social, or extracurricular activities. Emotional engagement describes the positive and negative feelings students may have towards teachers, peers, and the broader school community. Cognitive engagement depicts the idea that a student is willing to expend the energy to comprehend difficult concepts and learn new skills. As noted in this review, much of the research on SNS suggests that as students more frequently interact with their network, they develop higher quality relationships with others.

Education researchers who examine the social context of learning in areas such as out-of-school time, extracurricular activity and classroom climate also find a link between high-quality relationships, students' academic engagement, and achievement (Eccles & Templeton,

2002; Feldman & Matjasko, 2005; Martin & Dowson, 2009). A major hypothesis among education researchers is that youth participation in extracurricular and school activities increases their social connectedness with teachers and peers (Eccles & Templeton, 2002; Feldman & Matjasko, 2005). Ahn (2011) further informs that this connectedness is related to increased engagement with school and academics.

Engagement has also been related to a lesser likelihood to drop out of school (Fredericks et al., 2004). These hypotheses are still major questions for education research. SNS offer a new context within which to observe how relationships influence school engagement, grades, and student achievement (Ahn 2011).

### **2.3 Theoretical Framework**

Theories are formulated to explain, predict and understand phenomena and in many cases to challenge and extend existing knowledge within the limits of critical bounding assumptions. The theoretical framework introduces and describes the theory that explains why the research problem under study exists (Swanson, Richard: 2013).

The theoretical framework will help to demonstrate an understanding of the theory and concepts that are relevant to the topic of this research paper and that will relate to the broader areas of knowledge being considered. This study is based on the Uses and Gratification Theory.

#### **2.3.1 Uses and Gratification Theory**

Uses and Gratifications Theory, also called Needs and Gratifications Theory is a model that focuses on why people use certain media rather than on the content. Uses and Gratifications theory was propounded by Elihu Katz, Jay Blumler and Michael Gurevitch in 1974.

According to Severin and Tankard (2001), the uses and gratifications theory involves a shift



of focus from the purposes of the communicator to the purposes of the receiver to determine what functions mass communication is serving for audience members. One of the tenets of the uses and gratifications theory is that audiences are active, and they seek to find out the mass media that satisfy their gratifications. The Internet has enabled audience to find and also have more options from which they are able to select the websites and web pages that satisfy their specific needs. The Internet also allows audiences to be in more control of the media.

Uwem et.al (2013) asserts that while using the new media, people are actively combining several motives to fulfill their yearnings and aspirations, properly referred to as gratifications. This also happens when they are using social networking websites. The uses and gratifications approach is therefore a good way to find out what other purpose students use social networking sites for in high schools in Westlands sub-county. From a uses and gratifications perspective, social networking sites have a wide range of information material, thus those who utilize their services and resources should be able to satisfy a wide array of needs (Uwem et.al:2013).Uses and gratification approach will enable the researcher to understand what gratification the students seek and whether that gratification is obtained and what effects of the gratification obtained have on the user of the media (Park et.al:2009).

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.0 Introduction**

This chapter dealt with research methodology. It described the research area, research design, population, sampling frame, and sample, sampling technique, data collection procedure, data processing and analysis.

#### **3.1 Research Design**

This research employed descriptive survey research design. Burns and Grove (2003:1995) define a research design as “a blueprint for conducting a study with maximum control over factors that may interfere with the validity of the findings”. It is as a plan that describes how, when and where data are to be collected and analyzed (Parahoo, 1997).

Descriptive survey research design is a method of collecting information by interviewing or administering a questionnaire to a sample of individuals (Orodho, 2003). This design aims to study existing relationships, prevailing practices, beliefs and attitudes held, processes and effect of developing trends. It can be used when collecting information about people, attitudes, opinions, habits or any of the variety of education or social issues (Orodho & Kombo, 2002).

This study aimed at collecting information from teachers and students in high schools in Westlands sub-county on the impacts of online social networking on academic performance. Primary sources of data were used. Primary sources of data include questionnaires and interviews. This research design was relevant to this study because the researcher used interview and questionnaire to collect information which are the same instruments used in this research design.

The researcher used both quantitative and qualitative research methods. Miles and Huberman and many other researchers agree that these two methods need each other (Banjade, 2007). Qualitative method will enable the researcher to get in-depth data (Mugenda & Mugenda, 2003:203) more often the data is in form of words and these words are often grouped into categories. Quantitative research includes design, technique and measure that produce discrete numerical or quantifiable data. In this case the researcher used questionnaires.

### **3.2 Research area**

This study was carried out in Westlands sub-county, Nairobi. The sample was drawn from high schools in Westlands sub-county which was picked through non probability sampling technique.

### **3.3 Population**

The research population for this study was drawn from high schools in Westlands sub-county. This is in line with the contention by Kothari (2004) who defines the target population as the total number of respondents in the total environment of interest.

The target population of this study was students in high schools in Westlands sub-county Nairobi. There are 66 high schools in Westlands sub-county. The approximate population of students in high schools in Westlands sub-county is 26,400 students. Secondary school students were the key respondents in this study because they are the ones using social networking sites and the main concern of this study.

The researcher picked this population with the assumption that students attending the high schools in Westland's sub-county come from economically able backgrounds thus have more access to internet.

### **3.4 Sampling Frame**

The sample frame is commonly prepared in the form of a physical list of population elements (Ross: 2005). He further adds that a well-constructed sampling frame allows the researcher to ‘take hold’ of the defined target population without the need to worry about contamination of the listing with incorrect entries or entries which represent elements associated with the excluded population.

Kothari (2004) states that a sampling frame consists of a list of items from which the sample is to be drawn. Kothari adds that this frame is either constructed by a researcher for the purpose of his study or may consist of some existing list of the population.

The sampling frame for this study was the list of 66 high schools in Westlands sub-county in Nairobi. This research used this list as its sampling frame because this study was conducted in the above mentioned region.

### **3.5 Sample and Sampling Technique**

An ideal sample should be large enough so that the researcher can be confident, within specified limits that a different sample of the same size if drawn using same procedures can give approximately similar results (Wiersman;1995).This research employed non probability sampling method. Under this sampling method, the researcher makes the deliberate choice of an informant due to the qualities the informant possesses.

The researcher decides what needs to be known and sets out to find people who can and are willing to provide the information by virtue of knowledge or experience (Bernard 2002, Lewis & Sheppard 2006). This method ensured that the sample picked is truly representative of the population being studied.

### **3.5.1 Sample**

The sample size for this study was 250 respondents. This sample size was settled on after considering the time and resources available for this study. There are 66 secondary schools in Westlands sub-county each having an approximate population of 400 students translating to an approximate total population of 26,400 students. Using purposive sampling 10 schools (5 day schools and 5 boarding schools) were picked and in each school 5 students from each form drawn through purposive sampling. The researcher used academic performance to pick the schools. Therefore each school produced 20 students. The researcher picked two best performing students, one average performing student and two poor performing students from each form in the schools sampled. Also through purposive sampling the researcher interviewed 1 teacher from each school picked totaling to 10 teachers. 40 Parents were also interviewed and they were also picked through purposive sampling. The parents picked were from the Parents Teachers Association, class representative and general parents.

### **3.5.2 Sampling technique**

This study used non-probability sampling method to pick the sample. Respondents were purposively sampled in order to get in depth data.

This research was carried out in 10 high schools picked through simple random method. In each school 20 students were picked for the study. The students in each school were distributed evenly in the four classes, that is. Form 1, 2, 3, and 4 therefore ensuring that there is representativeness of the population being studied.

### **3.6 Instruments**

Mugenda and Mugenda (1999), explains that a researcher needs to develop instruments with which to collect the necessary information. This study used questionnaire and interview as instruments of study. A questionnaire consists of a number of questions printed or typed in a

definite order on a form or set of forms (Kothari, 2004). The interview method of collecting data involves presentation of oral-verbal stimuli and reply in terms of oral-verbal responses (Kothari, 2004).

The questionnaires were administered to respondents who then duly filled them on their own to provide the required data for the study. The researcher also conducted structured interviews. Kothari (2004) states that structured interviews involve the use of a set of predetermined questions of highly standardized techniques of recording. Thus, the interviewer in a structured interview follows a rigid procedure laid down, asking questions in a form and order prescribed. This technique is the best for descriptive studies such as this one and also because it is economical and provides a safe basis for generalization.

### **3.7 Data Collection Procedure**

The researcher visited all the schools under study and administered questionnaires' to students picked through purposive sampling. The questionnaires were then collected by the researcher for data analysis. The researcher also interviewed teachers and parents and recorded the findings. The questionnaires together with the interview findings were then carefully analyzed in order to come up with proper report.

### **3.8 Data Processing and Analysis**

According to Babbie (2004) quantitative analysis is the numerical representation and manipulation of observations for the purpose of describing and explaining the phenomena that those observations reflect. The feedback collected from the respondents' questionnaires was coded, entered and analyzed using a computer through Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS Version 16) programs that the findings of the study can be uncovered.

Findings from the interviews conducted were also used to answer the research questions for this study. In presenting the study's findings simple, comparative bar graphs and pie charts

with varying percentages were used. This involved a critical assessment of each response and examining it using thematic interpretation in accordance with the main objectives of the study and then presented in narrative excerpts in the report.

## CHAPTER 4

### FINDINGS, ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSIONS

#### 4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents, discusses and interprets the findings of the study discussed under each objective. Descriptive statistics were used to analyze the data collected. The chapter also provides the major findings and results of the study.

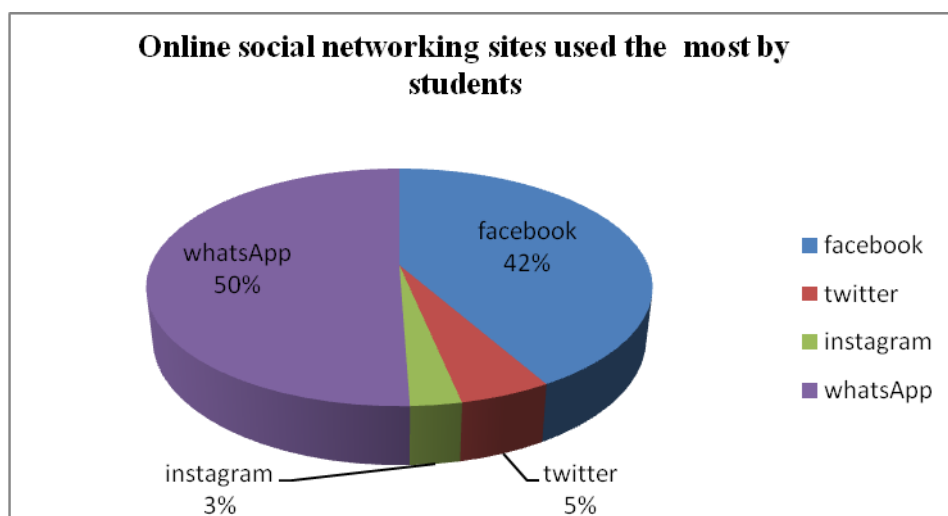
#### 4.2 General and demographic information

##### 4.2.1 Response Rate

The study was conducted on 250 respondents out of which 200 respondents were students, 40 parents and 10 teachers. 180 questionnaires issued to the students were returned, 32 parents and 10 teachers were interviewed respectively. Therefore the study achieved 88.8% response of the target. This response rate was considered appropriate for analysis and reporting as supported by Mugenda and Mugenda (1999) indicating that a response rate of 70% and above is excellent.

##### 4.2.2 Online social networking sites used the most by students

**Figure 1:** Showing online social networking sites used the most by students.





Students are able to get online from various platforms. Some of the various places include at home, at the cyber café, at the malls, and some at school among others. While at home they can access through their smart phones and laptops, and at school they can use the computer labs that have networked computers. It was established that few schools have networked computers and those that have had restricted access to social networking sites. From the above pie chart, most students are using WhatsApp with a 52% response rate followed by Facebook with a 42% response rate. The popularity of WhatsApp is attributed to it being an instant messaging application that runs on mobile phones and can be used while one is on the go and thus allowed multitasking which students are known for.

The researcher found out that students felt WhatsApp to be more interactive than the other sites. Facebook has a substantive percentage because it's an application that has been there for a while and enables students to tag each other especially pictures. In addition it allows connectivity with many users without necessarily having their contact numbers. Twitter and Instagram had 5% and 3% response rate respectively with many students finding the two sites less interesting and a bit monotonous.

**Table 1:** Showing students' favorite online social networking site.

SNS	EO		VO		O		R	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
Facebook	22	12.1	32	17.6	13	7.1	5	2.7
Twitter	2	1.1	4	2.2	8	4.4	2	1.1
Instagram	0	0.0	3	1.6	2	1.1	4	2.2
WhatsApp	46	25.3	30	16.5	4	2.2	5	2.7

**KEY:** EO-Extremely often, VO- Very often, O- Often, R- Rarely

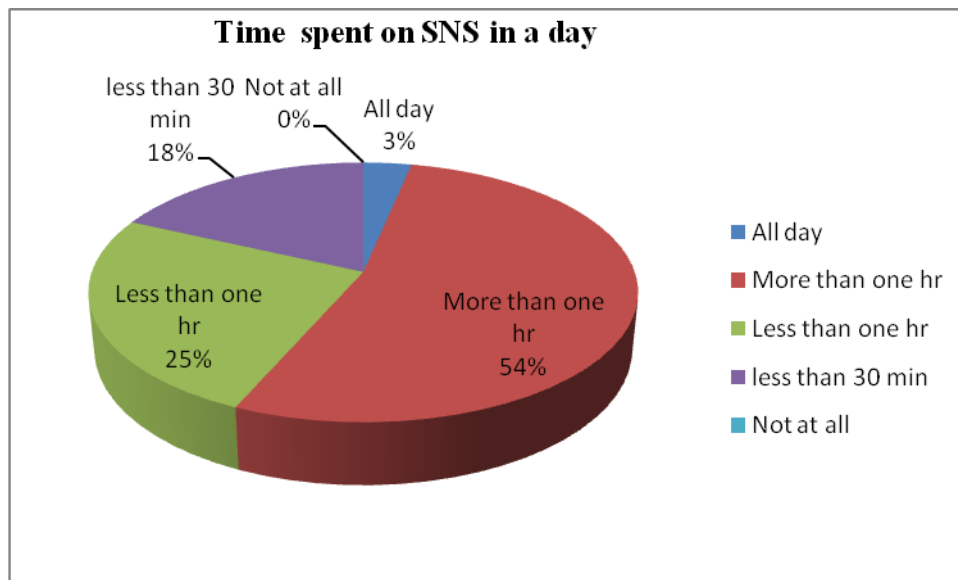
WhatsApp was found to be the most preferred followed by Facebook while Instagram and twitter was found to be rarely used as illustrated by the table above.

#### 4.2.3. Time spent on SNS by students

From the pie chart below it was established that most students spend more than an hour on SNS with a 54% response, less than one hour 25% response and 18% less than 30 minutes.

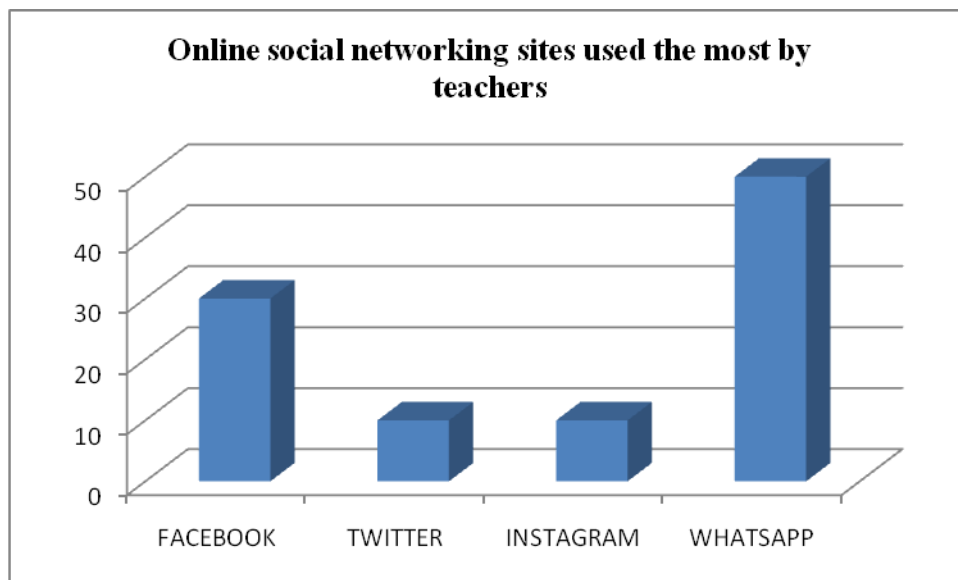
The 3% that spends all day on SNS were found to be those with continuous internet connectivity and may not be necessarily active all day but were logged in.

**Figure 2:** Showing time spent by students on online social networking sites in a day.



#### 4.2.2 Online social networking sites used the most by teachers

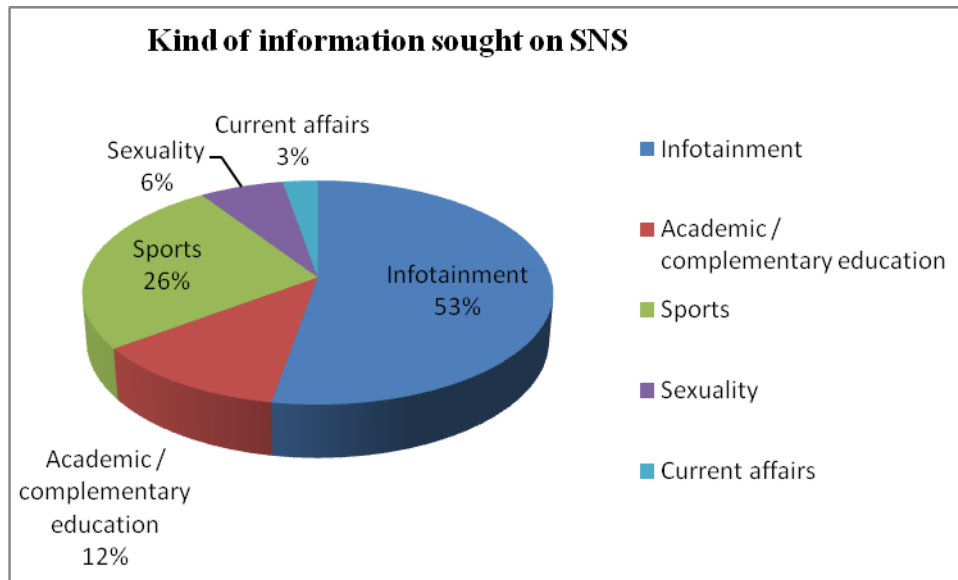
**Figure 3:** showing online social networking sites used the most by teachers.



Most teachers were found to be using WhatsApp with 50% followed by Facebook with 30% and Instagram and twitter with 10% each. It was established that WhatsApp had more users because of the same reasons as indicated above for the students. The research also found out that some teachers do not know about Instagram and those on twitter are passive users. Most of the Facebook users (teachers) admitted that they opened their accounts during the teen years and used the site to connect with long time friends and families.

### 4.3 What kind of information do high school students seek on the online social networking sites?

**Figure 4:** Showing the kind of information sought on online social networking sites.



From the questionnaires it was established that most students seek information on infotainment with a 53% response. Infotainment content entailed material which is intended to both entertain and inform. Information about music artists and movie stars on their latest endeavors can be considered infotainment. The research found out that such information was highly sought by the students due to the need to know the latest music that has been released by their favorite musicians and the need to keep up with the changing trends in clothing and fashion.

On the sports aspect, the research meant information about games, teams and athletes. Sport was ranked second with a 26% response saying they seek sports information on SNS. Many of the respondents follow their favorite teams in the English and Kenyan premier league. In this research current affairs meant news and information that was trending and making headlines at the particular moment. Current affairs had the least response with 3% which

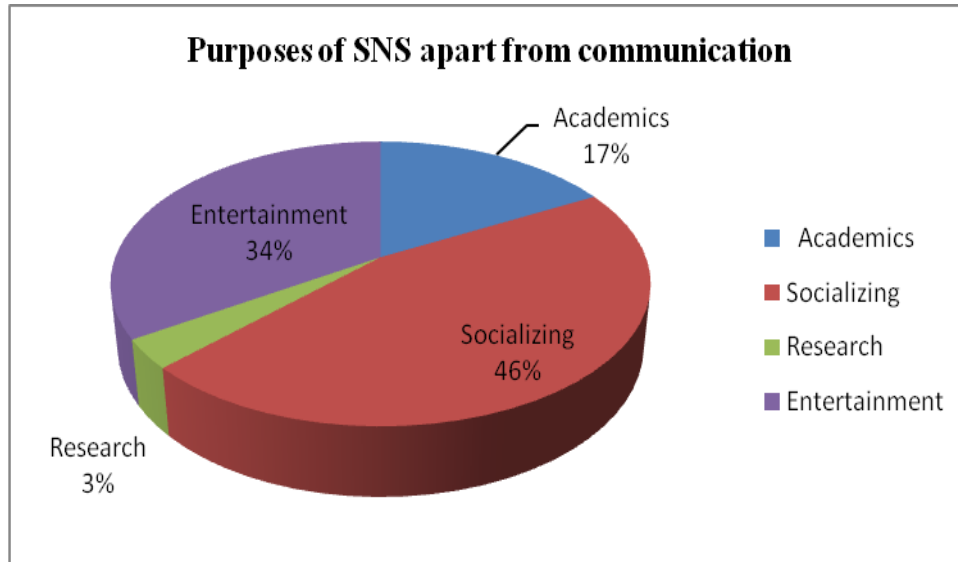
implies that very few students if any seek information of this subject matter on SNS. The lower response on current affairs could be attributed the lack of interest in matters relating to politics, governance, conflict resolution and environmental issues that are less interesting to the students.

Academic/ complementary education entailed information that is meant to enhance their education and complement what the students had learnt in school. Academic / complementary education had 12% response. It was established that students would rarely seek Academic / complementary education through online SNS but rather would opt for group discussion and reliance on class notes and teachers. The research established that the 12% was very little time spent online in relation to academic thus showing the very little devotion to academic matters when on SNS.

Sexuality meant information on matters ranging from sex, sexual habits and escapades. On the sexuality, the research found out that a few students opted to seek information on SNS for curiosity purposes giving a response of 6%. The lower percentage was attributed to some sites having limited access to minors according to the research. Students highlighted the fear of asking their colleagues and thus opted to find information on sexuality on SNS online.

### 4.3. Other purpose, apart from communication, students use social networking sites for

**Figure 5:** Showing other purposes of online social networking sites apart from communication

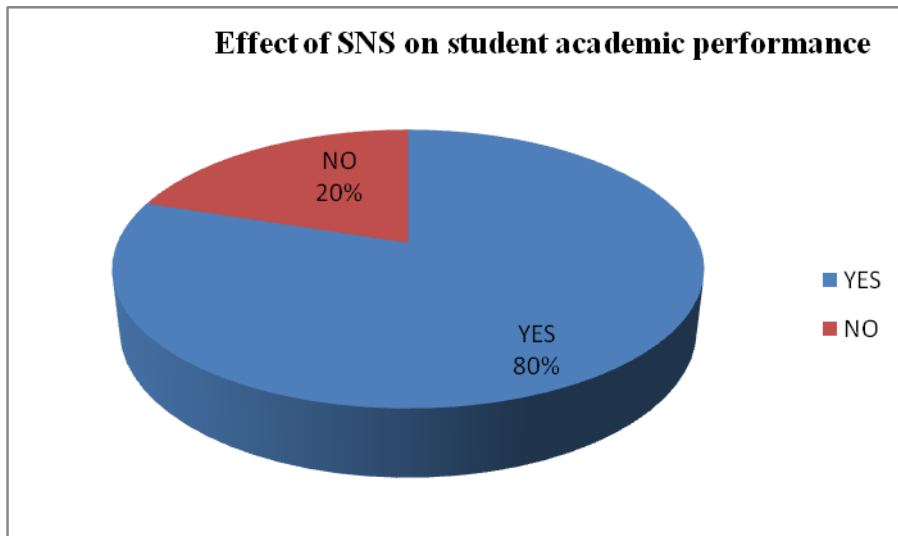


Socialization according to the research entailed making new friends and keeping in touch with fellow students, family and teachers. Entertainment as per the research entailed the sharing of video, music pictures amongst the students. Socializing was established to be the main reason as to why many students visit SNS with 46% followed by entertainment 34%, academics 17% and finally research 3% response rate. Most student were found to spend more time chatting, sharing pictures, twitting and re-twitting thus the high number of those engaged in socializing. The high numbers were also attributed to the many groups formed on platforms like WhatsApp where the students engage in endless conversations. Academics had 17% which is a relatively low percentage. The research found out that this was because the networks that the students have may not necessarily have the same academic need as them. In addition, most students were found to disassociate themselves with academic matters while online and just concerned about

keeping in touch with each other and following up on matters such as fashion trend and music.

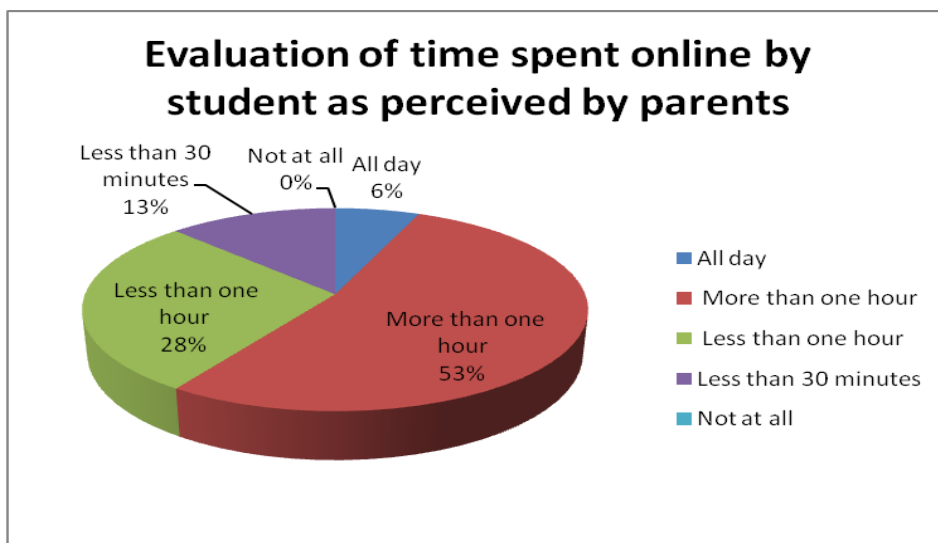
#### 4.4 Are online social networking sites used by students to improve their academic performance?

**Figure 6:** Showing effect of SNS on student academic performance



The research found out that according to the parents and teachers, the use of SNS affects the academic performance of students negatively on a greater scale. This was attributed to the time they spent online whether at school or at home.

**Figure 7:** Showing evaluation of time spent online by student as perceived by parents.



According to the research, 53% of the parents interviewed admitted that their children spent more than one hour online on SNS. The parents felt that the more time spent online on SNS was at the expense of academic work time thus impacting negatively on the students' academic performance. On those who spend less than one hour, the respondents indicated a 28% response, while 6% of the parents felt that their children spent all day online.

The students on the other hand, when asked whether SNS helps improve their academic performance responded with 46.2% saying it improves while 53.8% saying it does not improve their academic performance. Those who said that it improves attributed that to the use of SNS for research and complementary education while the ones who felt it doesn't were the ones who use the SNS for socializing among other uses apart from academics.

The parents and teachers felt that the SNS have a negative impact on the academic performance of their children and students respectively. Of the 32 parents that were interviewed, 68.8% felt that the SNS had a negative impact on their children while 31.3% felt that it didn't have a negative impact on their academic performance.



## **CHAPTER 5**

### **SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### **5.1 Introduction**

This chapter presents a summary, recommendations and suggestions for further research based on the results of the study. The findings were based on the objectives of the study.

#### **5.2 Summary**

The purpose for this study was to investigate the impact of online social networking on students' academic performance in high schools in urban areas. The study findings discussed in the previous chapter can be summarized as follows:

On the kind of information high school students seek on online social networking sites, the study found out that students highly seek infotainment on SNS, followed by sports, academic/complementary education, sexuality and lastly current affairs. The infotainment content included latest information on music released by their favorite musicians and the changing trends in clothing and fashion. On sports, students sought information about the English and Kenyan premier leagues and also famous athletes. Another kind of information sought by the students was academic/ complementary education. On this, the study established that students sought and shared information that supplemented what they had learnt in school and also new knowledge.

Another category of information that students seek on online SNS by is on sexuality.

Information on sexuality entailed content on sexual habits, sex and sexual adventures. The lower response on sexuality was attributed to limited access to sexual content and websites.

The study found out that the students had less interest on information concerning current affairs. This is because the current affairs issues revolve on issues to do with politics and environmental matters which are of less concern to the students as per the study.

The study also sought to establish what other purpose, apart from communication, students use social networking sites for. On this aspect the study ascertained that the main reason why many students visit SNS is to socialize with fellow students, family and teachers. Apart from that, the study found out that students use SNS for entertainment purposes. The students engage in sharing of videos, chatting, sharing pictures, twitting and re-tweeting among others. They also use the SNS for academic purposes and this entailed the sharing of academic content with fellow students and also acquisition of new knowledge.

The responses on usage of SNS for academic purposes was low because the networks that the students have may not necessarily have the same academic need as them. In addition, most students were found to disassociate themselves with academic matters while online and just concerned about keeping in touch with each other and following up on matters such as fashion trend and music.

The study also sought to establish whether online social networking sites are used by students to improve their academic performance. From the respondents, both parents and teachers felt that the SNS negatively affects the academic performance of students while the students themselves felt that their academic performance was not directly affected by the SNS influence. According to the parent and teachers this was attributed to the long hours that the students spent on SNS as compared to time spent on academic work. The respondents indicated that most students spent over one hour in a day on SNS at the expense of study time.

### **5.3 Recommendation**

The recommendations made in this section were derived from the conclusions about the findings of the study:

- i. The researcher recommends creation of awareness on applications that are academic oriented so that the students can utilize them whenever they are online such as evernote, google drive, drop box, iBooks among others.
- ii. The teachers should be encouraged to embrace the use of technology aided devices like tablets so that students can emulate the teachers in positively using technology for academic purposes as the main objective of the devices. This will go hand in hand with the creation of awareness on the availability of academic applications as highlighted on the above point.
- iii. Teachers should be encouraged to interact with the students on SNS by for instance having a group on WhatsApp platform where they exchange views about a particular subject even when they are on holiday. This will in turn encourage the use of SNS to improve students' academic performance.
- iv. The study found out that SNS have a high effect on students' academic performance. As such the students need to be informed through talks and forums on the need to manage their time especially while visiting SNS sites since most of them become so much addicted at the expense of study time. On this part they would be informed on better ways of still visiting the sites but for the right purposes-academic.

#### **5.4.1 Recommendations for further research**

- i. The researcher recommends for an in-depth study and critically looking at the performance variance of a particular student over time when he/she was using and when he/she was not using SNS.
- ii. A study could also be done on the impact of SNS on academic performance of students in the rural areas and compare the findings with the ones in the urban areas.

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## APPENDIX 1

### Questionnaire for students

My name is Erick Mwadime, a student at the University of Nairobi. I am undertaking a study on the impacts of online social networking on students' academic performance in high schools in urban areas: A case study of Westlands Sub-county, Nairobi.

The information you will provide will be used for academic purposes only. Please assist through contribution of information towards this study by answering the following questions.

**Please mark with an (x) or (√) in the box with the appropriate response.**

1. Gender

Male

Female

2. In which form/ Grade are you?

Form I  Form II

Form III  Form IV

3. What type of school do you attend?

i. Boarding school

ii. Day school

4. Are you a member of any online social networking site?

Yes

No

5. Which online social networking site do you use?

- i. Facebook
- ii. Twitter
- iii. Instagram
- iv. WhatsApp
- v. Others (Specify).....

5. Where do you access online social networking sites?

- i. Home
- ii. School
- iii. Cyber cafe
- iv. Others (Specify).....

6. What purposes do you use online social networking sites for?

- i. Academics
- ii. Socializing
- Others (Specify).....

7. Which online social networking sites do you use the most?

**KEY: Extremely Often-EO; Very Often-VO; Often-O; Rarely-R; Not at all-NT**

Online Social Networking site	EO	VO	O	R	NT
Facebook					
Twitter					
Instagram					
WhatsApp					

8. How much time do you spend on these social networking sites in a day?

All day

More than one hour

Less than one hour

Less than 30 minutes

Not at all

9. Do you think accessing social networking sites affects your academic performance?

Yes

No

*Thank you for your participation*

## APPENDIX II

### Interview schedule for the Teacher

My name is Erick Mwadime, a student at the University of Nairobi. I am undertaking a study on the impacts of online social networking sites on students' academic performance in high schools in urban areas: A case study of Westlands Sub-county, Nairobi. I appreciate your time for this interview.

Please mark with an (x) or (√) in the box with the appropriate response.

1. What type of school do you teach?

Day school

Boarding school

2. Are you a member of an online social networking site?

Yes

No

If yes which ones.

Facebook

Twitter

Instagram

WhatsApp

Others (specify).....

3. Do you interact with your students on online social networking sites?

Yes

No

If yes, what type of information do you share with your students?

- Academic
- Social interaction
- Current affairs
- Others specify.....

4. Are your students allowed to come to school with internet accessing gadgets such as smartphones, laptops etc.

- Yes
- No

5. Is it possible for your students to access social networking sites while at school?

- Yes
- No

6. Do you think social networking sites affect your students' academic performance?

- Yes
- No

If the answer for the above question is yes, how do social networking sites affect your students?

- Positively
- Negatively

*Thank you for your participation*

### APPENDIX III:

#### Interview schedule for the Parent

My name is Erick Mwadime, a student at the University of Nairobi. I am undertaking a study on the impact of online social networking on students' academic performance in high schools in urban areas: A case study of Westlands Sub-county, Nairobi. I appreciate your time to answer my questions.

Please mark with an (x) or (√) in the box with the appropriate response.

1. What type of school do your child/children attend?

a) Boarding school

b) Day school

2. Does your child have access to the following?

a. Smart phone

b. Laptop / Computer

3. How much time do your child/children spend online?

All day

More than one hour

Less than one hour

Less than 30 minutes

Not at all

4. How is the academic performance of your child/children?

Excellent

Good

Average

Poor

Very poor

5. Do you think online Social Networking Services have an impact on the performance of your child/children?

YES

NO

If yes, what kind of impact is it?

Positive

Negative

*Thank you for your participation*