

## THE INFLUENCE OF SOCIAL MEDIA ON TANZANIAN HIGHER LEARNING STUDENTS' PERFORMANCE

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### ABSTRACT

**Purpose-** This study aimed to analyze the influence of social media on Tanzanian higher learning students' performance. It specifically examined the influence of social media on students' academic performance.

**Methodology-** The multiple regression analysis was used to analyze data collected from the Institute of Social Work where 94 questionnaires were involved in the field.

**Findings-** Three hypotheses were tested and results demonstrated that the Benefit of Using Social Media and Academic Performance (BUSM) and the Effect of Using Social Media and Academic Performance (EUSM) have a positive influence on both dimensions of academic performance while Awareness of Time Wastage on Social Media (ATWSM) revealed that there is no relationship with students' academic performance.

**Conclusion-** Therefore, this article concludes that despite the significant influence of social media, students should make proper use of social media to improve academic performance.

**Keywords:** Social media, students' performance, higher learning, time wastage, development.

**JEL Codes:** M31, E21, D11

### 1. INTRODUCTION

The World is enjoying the development of science and technology which has improved ways of communication and broadened the scope of interactions of people through online platforms (Oberiri, 2016 & Samita, 2022). This technological development came with some challenges that seem to affect students' performance (Rithika & Selvaraj, 2012). Developing nations including Tanzania have also been affected by poor students' academic performance in higher learning institutions caused by social media which is the result of technological advancement.

Social media is a diverse form of online communication used by individuals and communities in creating networks that allow sharing of information and other content as well as videos (Alam & Aktar, 2021). According to Designation & Bihar, 2022; Zahid, et al., (2016), social media are described as an emerging digital communication channel that creates user-oriented information sharing. Bakeer (2018) sees social media as computer-mediated tools that allow people or companies to create, share, and exchange information on career interests, ideas, and pictures. Samuel (2022); Habes et al., (2018) stated that the wide social media platforms used by individuals and students of higher learning institutions are Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, WhatsApp, Instagram, blogs, TikTok, LinkedIn, and many others. This platform allows users to interact with one another in exchanging information, opinions, and knowledge (Oberiri, 2016; Owusu-Acheaw, & Larson, 2015).

The most interesting thing in this online platform is that it allows a person or user including students to use it in different ways they may wish without considering its negative or positive impacts on the particular group or community (Samuel, 2022). The positivity and negativity of social media depend on the prevailing circumstances. On professional level, for example, social media allows people to expand or broaden knowledge in a particular field and build their professional network by connecting with other professionals in their concerned field (Mese & Aydin, 2019).

There are different views regarding the effects of using social media on students of higher learning institutions. Amin et al., (2016) argue that there are conflicting opinions on the positivity and negativity of using social media, which depends on the perception of the individual using the social media. Literature shows that students spend a lot of their time on social media both during the day and at night (Bakeer, 2018). Concentration and log time spending on a social media may influence change to an individual and affect their altitudes positively or negatively. In his cultivation theory, George Gerbner (1960) explains

the long-term effects of television viewers in relation to perceptions in social reality. He argues that the repeated actions turn to attitude and behavior which may impact community and bring change to the society.

Alwagait et al., (2015) argue that the use of social media platforms by students influences their performance positively because learning involves exchanging and sharing of skills and knowledge. As such, social media provide a special platform to students to develop skills, share knowledge and encourage teamwork. Mehmood and Taswir (2013) confirm that social media can be used in academic settings to prop up students' commitment and facilitate better student learning. Tamayo and Dela Cruz (2014); Raut and Patil (2016) agree that knowledge not only exists in individual minds but also in discourse and connections between individuals. Mehmood and Taswir (2013) add that social media support active participation which is an essential element in the learning of students (Ghareb & Sharif, 2015).

Rithika and Selvaraj (2012) argue that social media provide opportunities for connecting with friends, classmates, and people with shared interest. It facilitates and or bolsters the learning process through academic interaction, discussions, sharing materials with classmates, and organizing studies (Amin et al., 2016). The challenges are when students' misuse the social media platforms. Alwagait et al., (2015) maintain that teaching, learning, communication, research, job and exchange of information are done with the help of social media. This necessitates knowledge sharing, knowledge seeking and inter-personal communication (Singh & Gill, 2015).

Talaue et al., (2018) argue that social media is dangerous for teenagers as they form a false impression. Literatures revealed that the use of social media had affected the academic performance of students because they spent most of their time on the platform rather than studying (Hanaysha, 2016; Mensah & Nizam, 2016). Students use social media sites to chat rather than for academic purpose, something which affects their academic performance. Oguguo et al., (2020) revealed that social media contributed towards negative academic performance claiming that the academic performance of students has been affected due to the use of social media. Talaue et al., (2018) posit that students who spend more time on social media are likely to perform poorly in their academics. This is because instead of reading books, they spend time chatting and making friends via social media which definitely affects the academic performance (Larson, 2015; Stainbank & Gurr, 2016).

The debate on whether social media has positive or negative impact on the academic performance of the students created a knowledge gap that pointed to scant information on the influence of social media as far as students' academic performance is concerned. This triggered the researcher to conduct a study on the influence of social media on Tanzanian higher learning students' performance.

## **2. LITERATURE REVIEW**

This article used the Cultivation Theory propounded by George Gerbner (1960). It examines long-term effects of television viewers in relation to perceptions in social reality. The theory argues that people who spend more time watching television are more likely to perceive the reality of the world. As a primary storyteller in our society, television not only impacts on individual ideologies but also influences society as a whole as the fundamental manifestation of the mainstream culture. As a form of social media, Television is a primary source of information that impacts individuals' ideologies and influences society as a whole. Therefore, this theory is relevant in this article because it explains the impact of social media platforms. The fundamental manifestation of culture affects the individual's academic performance because of the misuse of communication technology.

### **2.1. Social Media and Students' Academic Performance**

Social media networking is sharing and generating knowledge and all of these features are of great value in the context of higher education. Kolhar., Kazi, and Alameen (2021) stated that social media play an important role in the field of education and students' life (Kolhar et al., 2021). It is easier and convenient to access and provide information and communicate via social media. According to Kolhar., Kazi, and Alameen (2021), teachers and students are connected to each other and can make use of these social media platforms for the working of their education. Rithika & Selvaraj (2012) argue that challenges arise when social media are incorporated into academic course without clear purpose. Students are afforded multiple opportunities to improve learning and access the latest information by connecting with learning groups and other educational systems (Fasae & Adegbilero-Iwari, 2016). Students can also exchange information by connecting with different individuals, which can have a positive impact on student learning outcomes (Ghareb & Sharif, 2015).

### **2.2. Time Wastage in Social Media and Academic Performance**

The social media technologies have completely transformed the communication landscape, making information available and accessible to all people without barriers (Hanaysha, 2016). Kiplagat and Ombiro (2015) argue that social media platforms are excessively used and adopted by most students in higher learning institutions and as a result they spend too much time on social media sites searching information (Mangden, 2023). The amount of time students spend on social media sites may vary significantly. It may also depend on the activity they carry out on these sites (Amin et al., 2016). If students do not manage time well, they may feel agitated when examined or tested. According to Samita (2022), there are so many distractors for

their academics and that they are aware that the use of social media may waste their time in the studies. Therefore, the following hypotheses were developed:

*H1: There is a positive relationship between time wastage by students in social media and their academic performance.*

*H0: There is a negative relationship between time wastage by students in social media and their academic performance.*

**2.3. Benefit of Using Social Media and Academic Performance**

Social media networking is sharing and generating knowledge. This has a great value in the context of higher education (Designation & Bihar, 2022). It plays an important role in the field of education and students’ life. It is convenient to access the information and communication whereby students benefit the most (Azizi et al., 2019). Bakeer (2018) observed that social media incredibly improve students' educational activities such exercises, group discussions and other academic assignments of a course. Celestine and Nonyelum, (2018) argue that students depend on social media to obtain information and add content to the lecture notes in the class when there is a need. It is true that students don’t take initiatives to study hard, instead they spend much time on the platforms which may lead to loss of concentration on academics (Victoria, 2023). Even though social media seem to remain an effective communication tool over the decades, it has enabled different individuals to receive information both locally and globally with just the click of a button and has encouraged insightful academic activities (Mansour et al., 2020). Therefore, the following hypotheses were developed:

*H2: There is a positive relationship between the benefits of students using social media and the academic performance*

*H0: There is a negative relationship between the benefits of students using social media and the academic performance*

**2.4. Effect of Using Social Media and Academic Performance**

Samuel (2022) argues that it is not far from the fact that most students worldwide have social media accounts and are always glued to various social media platforms for different activities. Some use the networks for educational purposes and others for non-educational activities (Meena and Vidyapeeth, 2020). Literature inform that most students use social media for communication only and not for searching academic materials while others dedicate their time on social media for non-academic activities such as chatting with their colleagues and loved ones when lectures are ongoing (Kolhar, Kazi, and Alameen, 2021; Habes et al., 2021). Sivakumar (2015) argues that students’ academic performance is affected by many factors. However, the impact of social media on the performance of student is the most important than any other factor. This is attributed to the fact that students consume additional time interacting with their friends and sharing information on social media websites than time spent on academic activities (Walelign et al., 2021). The repetitive action affects students psychologically as they become addicted to look over own status every now and then rather than spending that time on other activities including academics (Amin et al., 2016). Therefore, the following hypotheses were developed:

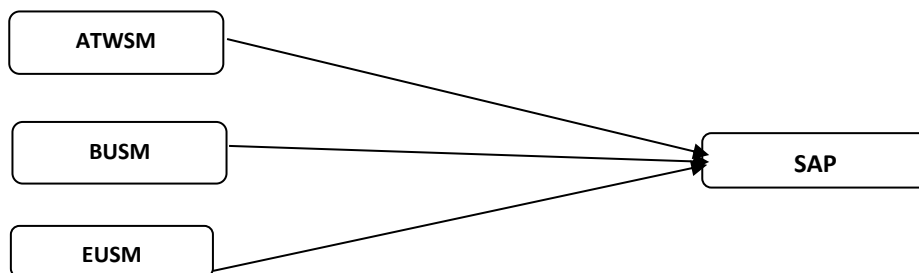
*H3: There is a positive relationship between effects of students using social media and their academic performance*

*H0: There is a negative relationship between effects of students using social media and their academic performance*

**2.5. Conceptual Framework**

The framework proposed for this study was based on theoretical results as described in the introduction. The conceptual framework underlies the relationship between social media usage, which is measured by Awareness of Time Wastage on Social Media (ATWSM), Benefit of Using Social Media and Academic Performance (BUSM) and Effect of Using Social and Academic Performance (EUSM) on Students’Academic Performance (SAP) at higher leaning institutions. Based on the description above, the conceptual framework of this study, presented by ATWSM, BUSM, EUSM and SAP, can be described as follows:

**Figure 1: Research Conceptual Framework**



Source: Field Data (2024)

### 3. DATA AND METHODOLOGY

This study used descriptive research design whereby the positivism research approach was adopted. This scientific research method based on the predetermined assumptions of the hypothetical relationship between the independent and dependent variables whereby the collected data were used to confirm or to verify the results using statistical data. The survey research design was selected since it recognizes the trends and patterns of data collected. The five-point Likert Scale questionnaire was used to collect data from students studying at the Institute of Social Work, Dar es Salaam. Simple random sampling techniques were used to obtain 94 respondents for the study. The Statistical Package for the Social Science (SPSS) version 21 was used to perform multiple regression analysis. Cronbach alpha was used in a pilot study to test the reliability and validity of the data collected in this study.

### 4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

Multiple regression analysis in research is applied to explore the predictive ability of a set of independent variables on dependent variable (Prasad, 2018). It allows comparison of independent variables and find the best set of variables that predicts a dependent variable (Frost, 2017). The article intended to explore the relationship between social media usage and students' academic performance in Tanzanian institutions of higher learning. The study focused on three variables namely; Awareness of Time Wastage in Social Media (ATWSM), Benefit of Using Social Media (BUSM) and Effect of Using Social Media (EUSM). Variables were assessed in terms of their predictive power (Ochogor & Amah, 2021). Multiple regression analysis was used to determine the strength of relationship between variables by determining how well the data fits the model, how much of the variance in the dependent variable (SAP) is explained by the independent variables (social media factor), to provide an indication of the relative contribution of each independent variable, to determine the statistical significance of the results in both the model and individual independent variables, to estimate model coefficient and the last is to test the hypotheses of the study (Ochogor & Amah, 2021). The following are the results of the analysis done by multiple regression aimed at achieving the study objectives on the influence of social media on students' academic performance. The model summary provides useful information on how well the model fits the data. The table below presents the information from the analysis. The multiple correlation coefficients represented by R is considered to be the best measure of the quality of the prediction of dependent variable. Frost (2017) provides a guideline on how to assess the degree of correlation between variables. He states that if R lies between 0.10 and 0.29 it is an indication of a small correlation, 0.30 and 0.49 indicates medium while 0.50 and 1.0 indicates large correlation.

**Table 1: Model Summary**

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.576 <sup>a</sup>	.526	.513	.78046

Source: Field Data (2024), Predictors: (Constant), ESMMM, ATWSMM, BSMMM, b. Dependent Variable: SAP

The results from the model summary indicate that the value of correlation coefficient R is 0.576. This implies that there is a large correlation between variables. The value shows that all social media factors are good indicators for the occurrence of students academic performance. This has also been supported by Frost (2017) who argued that if the value of correlation coefficient R is above 50 percent, then it indicates that the data fits the model, which implies that there is a strong relationship between variables. The coefficient of determination presented by R square was used to find out the variance. The R square is defined as the proportion of variance in the students' academic performance that can be explained by the social media factors. It is the proportion of the variation counted for by the regression model above and beyond the means model. Frost (2017) proposed that the highest R square (above 50%) is considered to be one of the indicators of a good model. The results from the analysis (Table 1.0) indicate that the value of R square is 0.526. This value implies that social media factors explain 52.6 percent of the variability of students' academic performance and 47.4 percent of variation is caused by other factors indicated in the model. That means the proposed social media factors exactly predict the students' academic performance. The adjusted R square shows how much of the variance in the students' academic performance is explained by the social media factors included in the model. Frost (2017) argues that the low discrepancy between R square and adjusted R square indicates a good fit of the model. Table 1.0 indicates R square which is 57.6 percent and adjusted R square which is 51.3 percent whose discrepancy is low at 3 percent which is less than 5 percent. This small deviation implies that they are closely related. Stephen (2018) argues that for a good model, adjusted R square should always be less or equal to R square.

The study intended to test whether the independent variables (social media factors) significantly predict the dependent variable statistically (students' academic performance). F – test was used to test whether the overall regression model was a good fit for the data at the selected probability level. It was intended to check if the social media factors (ATWSM, BUSM, and EUSM) statistically predict Students' Academic Performance (SAP). The predictor is said to be statistically significant if the P value is less than 0.05 and if more, then they are said to be insignificant. The data in ANOVA table shows that the F-ratio is given by  $F(3, 90) = 7.788, P 0.000$ . The good fit of data in this analysis of regression model implies that the social media is statistically significant predicting the students' academic performance as indicated in the data.

**Table 2: ANOVA<sup>a</sup>**

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	14.797	3	4.932	7.788	.000 <sup>b</sup>
	Residual	56.998	90	.633		
	Total	71.794	93			

Source: Field Data (2024) a. Dependent Variable: SAPPP, b. Predictors: (Constant), ESMMM, ATWSMM, BSMMM

It was important for the study to know the contribution of each social media factor included in the model in predicting the students’ academic performance. Study results provide an avenue for higher learning institutions to consider social media factors with a high contribution towards improving students’ academic performance. The study proposes that each social media included in the model has a contribution to students’ academic performance.

The study used standardized coefficients from coefficients Table 1.3 which compare different social media factors by considering the  $\beta$  values. Using standardized coefficient means that all values for each of the different social media factors have been converted to the same scale so that comparison can be made simple. The coefficients table represents the standardized coefficient  $\beta$  values for each social media factor and their significance marked. The  $\beta$  values represent the contribution of each social media factor to students’ academic performance. Results from table 3 show that the  $\beta$  values under standardized coefficients for ATWSM, BUSM, and EUSM were 0.040, 0.455 and 0.152 respectively. Since the study intended to compare the contribution of each social media factor by considering the  $\beta$  values, the results imply that BUSM has the largest beta value followed by EUSM. This implies that BUSM has a stronger or greater explanatory power on the students’ academic performance followed by EUSM while ATWSM has no contribution.

**Table 3: Evaluation of Contribution of Social Media Factors Model Coefficients**

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	Collinearity Statistics		
	B	Std. Error	Beta			Tolerance	VIF	
1	(Constant)	1.681	.513		3.277	.001		
	ATWSMM	.027	.064	.040	.418	.677	.950	1.053
	BSMMM	.584	.124	.455	4.712	.000	.946	1.057
	ESMMM	-.163	.104	-.152	-1.564	.012	.928	1.077

Source: Field Data (2024), a. Dependent Variable: SAPPP

Multiple regression analysis was used to test the proposed hypotheses which are H1, H2 and H3 related to students’ academic performance and social media related factors. Results from the regression coefficient show that there is a significant relationship between BUSM and SAP ( $\beta = 0.455$ , Significant at 0.000). Another result from the regression coefficient shows that there is a significant relationship between EUSM and SAP ( $\beta = 0.152$ , Significant at 0.012). The results from the regression coefficient also show that there is no relationship between ATWSM and SAP ( $\beta = 0.040$ , Significant at 0.677). Estimates model coefficients show the direction and size of effects for each social media factor on students’ academic performance.

**4.1. DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS**

The results show that BUSM has a positive influence on raising students’ academic performance. Therefore, there are benefits attached to using social media on the part of students as it can raise academic performance. This is because the media are used for searching academic materials which assist them in attempting their assignments and examinations. The finding is supported by Samuel and Frempong-Kore (2022); Chukwu et al., (2022) who argue that social media incredibly improve students' educational activities such as group discussions and individual assignments. Sivakumar (2016); Samita (2022) state that social media simplify the sharing and generation of knowledge. All of these features are of great value in the context of higher education. So, they play an important role in the field of education and student’s life. Kolhar et al., (2021) maintain that social media help Teacher Educators to be connected with their students off campus as well as with their ex-students. Jagannathan and Vezhaventhan (2022) argue that lecturers use social media as a way of facilitation by creating groups and accounts for students where the information can be accessed. Despite the academic benefits students get from the social media, the study also revealed that the media have negative effects as the students concentrate on them instead of studying. This implies that most of the students have been affected academically by concentrating on social media all the time instead of concentrating on academic activities. Oguguo et al., (2020) state that in recent times, poor academic achievements have been caused by social media which resulted from technological development. Students should be conscious of the time they spend on social media sites in order to have more time for classroom activities and homework (Akinola et al.,2023). Tamayo (2014) claims that though lecturers inform that students are wasting most of their time perusing nonsense issues on social media, the result indicated that ATWSM has no influence on raising the students’ academic performance. This implies that the time that seems to be wasted by students on social media has no impact on their academic performance. Interestingly,

this data shows that time wastage by students on the social media platforms does not contribute to poor academic performance because there are students who perform poorly even without using social media.

## 5. CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

The article investigated the influence of social media on Tanzanian higher learning students' academic performance. The literature informed that social media influence students' academic performance (Samuel & Frempong-Kore 2022). Social media are measured by Awareness of time wastage on social media, Benefit of using social media and academic performance and Effect of using social and academic performance. Therefore, this article concludes that social media has a significant influence on students' academic performance. Hence, students should make proper use of social media for improving academic performance. The results revealed that social media has a significant relationship with students' academic performance. Therefore, in order to improve and raise students' academic performance, every individual should emphasize the proper use of social media platforms. Parents and higher learning institutions should come up with strategies to educate students on the importance of making proper utilization of social media platforms so as to improve their academic performance.

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