



## THE INFLUENCE OF SOCIAL MEDIA ON SOCIAL BEHAVIOR OF STUDENTS AT NJALA UNIVERSITY

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### ABSTRACT

Social media has become pervasive, impacting the social and cultural fabric of our society. It has revolutionized the way we communicate, interact and socialize. New technologies help facilitate and provide flexibility in communicating and sharing of resources. This new approach to consuming and creating information is in particular attractive to youths as a platform and space for activities not possible in the face-to-face context. Students use social media tools for many purposes such as access to information, group discussion, resource sharing and entertainment. This has generated speculation on their use and related positive and negative implications, in both the short and long terms. Although many studies have investigated the impact of social media on University students' social behavior, none have focused on Sierra Leone. Hence, this study should contribute valuable findings. Its purpose is to explore the impact of social media on students' social behavior.

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### INTRODUCTION

The Internet started as far back as 1969, and then known as ARPANET; it was originated and developed by ARPA (Advanced Research Project Agency) that operated with the US Defense Department, (Singley,2009). The aim of ARPANET was to establish communication amongst military agencies and store huge amount of important data/information as regards the nuclear holocaust. The aim was to ensure that the defense communication network survived any nuclear attack. This was successfully achieved through the use of a network that allowed data to pass through multiple ways from the data source to data destination, (Greenwood, 2008). According to Comer (K.Morrison, 2007) assuming the network got destroyed; there would be full communication through other paths. This is the origin of the Internet.

The internet comprises millions of interconnected computers and has the greatest information storage globally. It is very difficult to calculate users of the internet in the whole world and come out with an exact figure, but it is possible to give an estimate of number of users. Social media is defined as web-based activities which give access to individuals to build unrestricted or semi-public profiles in a confined system; locate and connect to some other users, view and navigate the list of connections with the ones created by others inside the system, (Ellison, 2007). Social media can also be thought of as belonging to a group of internet-based activities which built around an ideological and technological basis of web 2.0 platform, which enable the construction and exchange of consumer generated content, (Kaplan,2009). It is believed that social media sites actually produce a remarkable effect on the users' social behavioral patterns, (Elias M.R, 2009). Users always have the guidelines of how

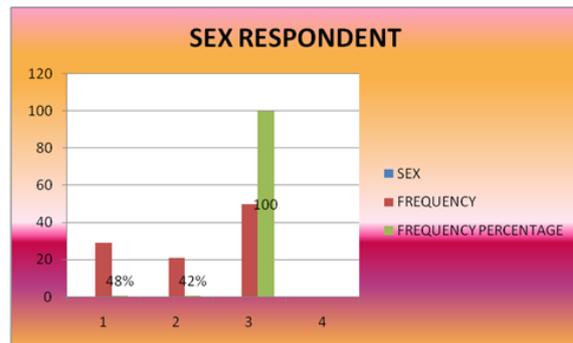
to make maximum use of the SMTs through the profiles. Profile means the recording and organization of behaviors (S.Ganbs, 2010). The user's profile can contain such information as user's name, age, gender, locality, pictures, hobbies, what etc. Dwyer et al. (Widmeyer, 2008) reported that a profile is digitally self-presenting machinery to the users. SMTs such as Facebook, MySpace Twitter, possess some features that assist users to video, share and interact fully on the websites by letting users' profiles into the Internet. Social media networks are means of grouping individuals of the same community to the same basis of related interest. To form a network, there must be full accommodation that will create possible interactions. SMTs create the same opportunity with a platform of unlimited restrictions as long as you are registered with that particular network, (K.Flad,2010). To belong to a particular social media network, you must provide your profile and express a readiness to share ideas and interact with others.

According to Clippinger (2000), human beings have always appeared in social classes and always have highly cultured social signaling and administrative mechanisms which enforce difficult forms of supportive behaviors. According to Clippinger (2000) the primates have been proved, in the history of discovery and evolution to exhibit group social behavior and it is observed that they carry out activities in groups. A study carried out about the world's population highlighted that over 60% of the world's populace will migrate to the cities by 2030,(World Population Report,2007). Man in need of social context is one of the reasons behind social media phenomenon (D.Boyd, 2007).

**Result and discussions**

**TABLE -1 (Sex respondent)**

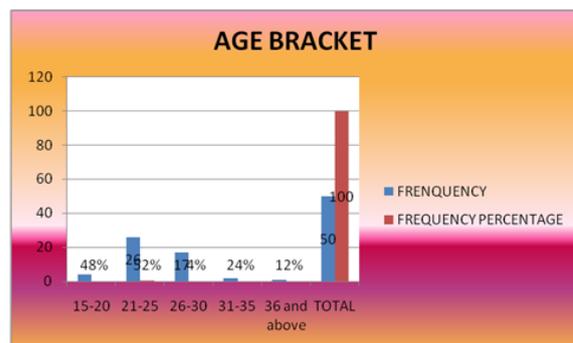
SEX	FREQUENCY	FREQUENCY PERCENTAGE
Male	29	48%
Female	21	42%
<b>Total</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>100</b>



The sex respondent was measured base on whether the subject under investigation was either male or female. The sex of respondents was labeled as MALE and FEMALE were assigned respectively for the calculation of the frequency and percentage distribution of each sex categories. The study includes 50 respondents. Among the respondents interviewed, there were 29 (48%) male and 21 (42%) female. The percentage distribution of respondent sex has been shown in figure [1] above.

**Table 2 (age bracket)**

AGE RANGE	FREQUENCY	FREQUENCY PERCENTAGE
15-20	4	8%
21-25	26	52%
26-30	17	4%
31-35	2	4%
36 and above	1	2%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>100</b>

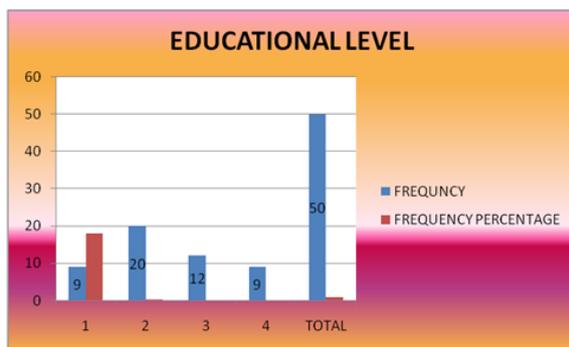


This table shows the age bracket of respondent. Out of the 50 respondent, 4 (8%) fall within the age bracket of 15-20 years. 26 (52%) fall within the age bracket of 21-25 years. 17 (34%) fall within the age bracket of 26-30 years. 2 (4%) fall within the age bracket of 31-35 years. 1 (2%) fall within the age bracket of 36 and above. This is done by the

researcher for the reader to understand the data analysis.

**Table 3 (educational level)**

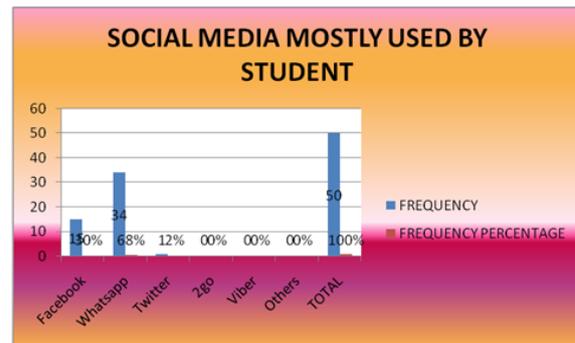
YEAR	FREQUENCY	FREQUENCY PERCENTAGE
1	9	18
2	20	40%
3	12	24%
4	9	18%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>100%</b>



The table above shows the educational level of respondents. As seen from the table, a total 9 (i.e. 18%) of the respondents were in first year, 20 (i.e.40%) were in second year, 12 (i.e. 24%) were in third year and 9 (i.e. 18%) were in the fourth (final) year. This shows that the respondents with the percentage of 40 (second year students) were more than all the others level of respondents.

**Table 4 (the social media mostly used by students at Njala University)**

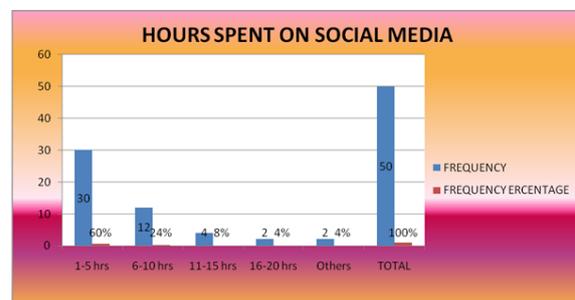
SOCIAL MEDIA	FREQUENCY	FREQUENCY PERCENTAGE
Facebook	15	30%
Whatsapp	34	68%
Twitter	1	2%
2go	00	00%
Viber	00	00%
Others	00	00%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>100%</b>



This table proof to us about the mostly used social network by students at Njala University. As seen from the table respondents (students) with the frequency of 15 (i.e. 30%) used facebook, 34(i.e. 68%) of the respondents used Whatsapp, only 1 (i.e. 2%) of the respondents use twitter while the other social media student in the table are not used by any of the respondents i.e. 2go, viber and others. So from the information given, Whatsapp happens to be the most frequently used social network (media site) by students of Njala University.

**Table 5 (hours spent on social media by respondent)**

HOURS	FREQUENCY	FREQUENCY PERCENTAGE
1-5 hrs	30	60%
6-10 hrs	12	24%
11-15 hrs	04	08%
16-20 hrs	02	04%
Others	02	04%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>100%</b>



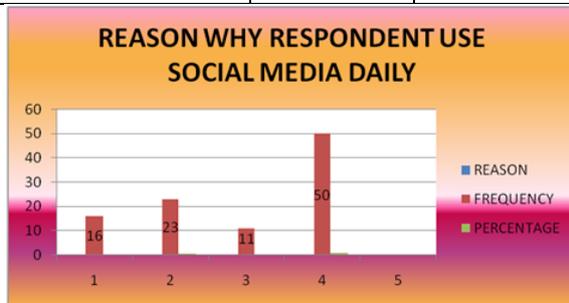
From the table above, we are able to know the number of hours spent on social media by students (respondents) at the Njala University. From the question administered asking about the number of hours spent on social media, the respondents who choose between 1-5 hours make a total of 30 (i.e.60%), 6-10 hours are 12 (i.e.24%), 11-15 hours were 04 (i.e. 8%), 16-20 hours were 2(i.e. 4%) whiles

those who could not choose any of the above stipulated numbers of hours were 2 (i.e. 4%).

All these analysis were done using frequency and percentage to help the researcher to present accurate information.

**Table 6 (show the reason why respondents use social media daily)**

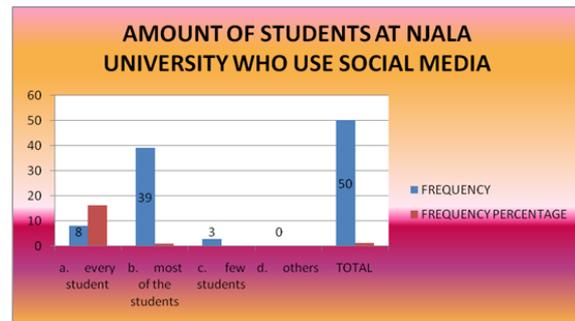
REASON	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
1. For information purpose	16	32%
2. communication purpose	23	46%
3. for updating	11	22%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>100%</b>



The use of social media sites by respondents must have a reason, so the researcher thought it necessary to make an inclusion of this. This table shows the reason why respondents (students of Njala university). Use the various social media various reasons are given, but the following analyzed in this table are worth discussing. A number of 16 (i.e. 32%) of the respondents say they use their social media for collection of information, 23 (i.e. 46%) of the respondents say for communication purposes and 11 (i.e. 22%) of the respondents say it is as a result of updating themselves on current issues in the world. All these are cleverly done by the researcher to make this study explicit and clear to the reader

**Table 7 (showing the amount of students at Njala University who use social media)**

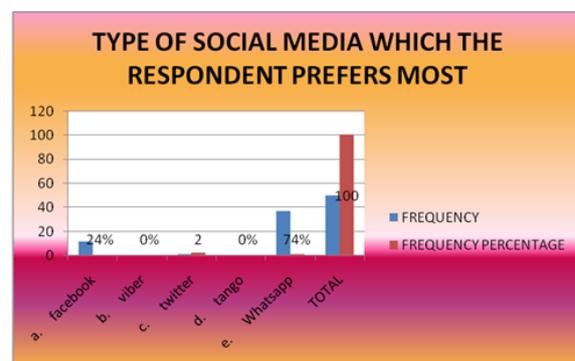
NO. OF STUDENTS	FREQUENCY	FREQUENCY PERCENTAGE
a. every student	08	16%
b. most of the students	39	78%
c. few students	03	06%
d. others	00	00%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>100%</b>



Shows the amount or number of students at Njala University who are highly involved in the use of social media sites. From their responses, a number of 08 (i.e. 16%) show the number of respondents who choose the option of “Every student”, 39 (i.e. 78%) choose the option “most of the student” 03 (i.e. 6%) choose the option (few students) while the other option which ask for “other “none of the respondents could chose it. For this the researcher is able to find out that the option with the highest percentage i.e. 78 % (every student) proof that all students must use social media site in one way or the other.

**Table 8 (showing the type of social media which the respondent prefers most)**

NAME OF THE TYPE OF SOCIAL NETWORK	FREQUENCY	FREQUENCY PERCENTAGE
a. facebook	12	24%
b. viber	00	00%
c. twitter	01	02%
d. tango	00	00%
e. Whatsapp	37	74%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>100</b>

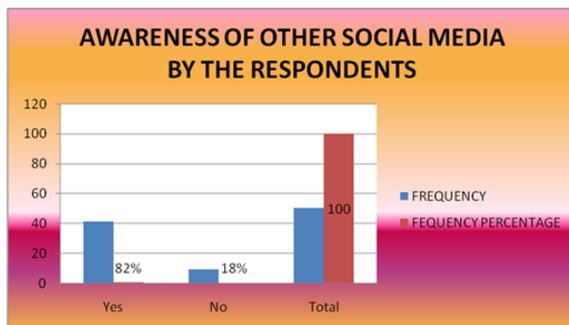


This table shows the types of social media preferred by respondents. In this table 12 (i.e. 24%) of the respondents prefer “facebook” to any other social media, while 37 (i.e. 74%) of the respondents

preferred” Whatsapp” to all the other social media. None of the respondents could prefer the other social media sites i.e. viber, twitter and tango. This shows that much interest is not pay on them. And from the responses, Whatsapp” happens to be the most preferable social media used by students at Njala University.

**Table 9 (showing the awareness of other social media by the respondents apart from the ones stated)**

OPTION	FREQUENCY	FREQUENCY PERCENTAGE
Yes	41	82%
No	09	18%
<b>Total</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>100</b>



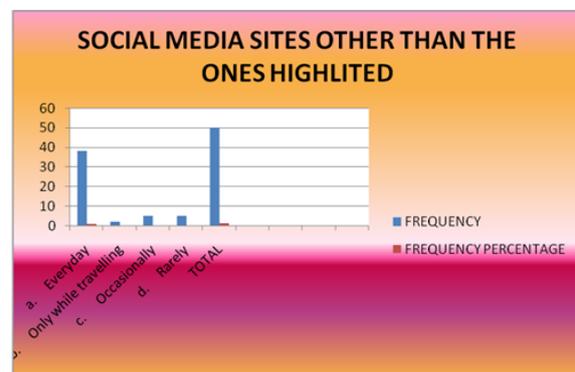
The above data Shows the awareness of other social media by respondents apart from the ones stated in answer “table 8 above. One of the questions from the questionnaire was used to get the consent of respondent about them getting awareness on other social media. This question was deliberately chosen by the researcher to know the responses of the respondents. And from their responses, 41 (i.e. 82%) of them answered “YES” while 09 (i.e. 18%) answered “NO”. Which means majority carries the vote.

**Table 10 (showing other social media sites other than the ones highlighted in question 25 above)**

OTHER SOCIAL MEDIA	FREQUENCY	FREQUENCY PERCENTAGE
BBM	7	14%
IMO	14	28%
MESSAGER	5	10%
LINE	3	6%
Ebudy	4	8%
Skype	5	10%

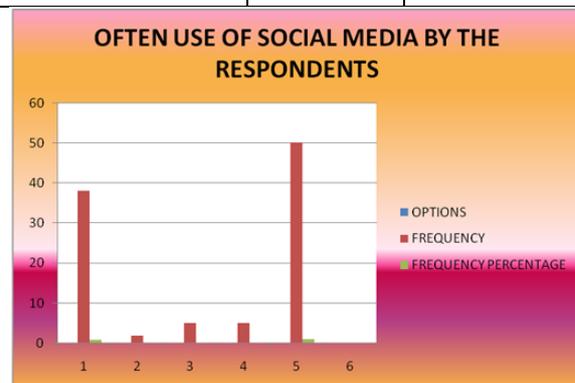
Wechat	3	6%
No. other social media	9	18%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>100%</b>

This table shows the other social media sites shown by the respondents that were not included in the questionnaire. And this is shown thus: 07 (i.e. 14%) of the respondents name “BBM” 14 (i.e. 28%) IMO, 05 (I.E. 10%) “MESSENGER” 03 (i.e. 6%) “LINE” 04 (i.e. 8%) “EBUDY”, 05 (i.e. 10 %.) “SKYPE” while the balance 3 (i.e. 6%) of the respondent’s total of “50” name the social media WECHAT. Apart from all the other social media sites named above 09 (i.e. 18 %) of the respondents could not name any of the social media.



**Table 11 (showing the often use of social media by the respondents)**

OPTIONS	FREQUENC Y	FREQUENCY PERCENTAGE
a. Everyday	38	76%
b. Only while travelling	02	04%
c. Occasionall y	05	10%
d. Rarely	05	10%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>100%</b>



The table the frequency nature at which the respondent do visit these social media for their various reasons which has been early discussed above. From their responses the researcher was able to find out that a number of 38(i.e. 76%) visit the social media site "everyday" 02 (i.e. 04%) only while travelling. 05 (i.e.10%) do visit there sites occasionally while member of 5 (i.e. 10%) also visit these social media sites rarely. From this the researcher was able to get a valid proof from the respondents themselves.

#### Summary

This research has shown much indication that social media with regards to Social Network Site (SNSs) has become one of the fastest and most important means of communication in recent times. Its power is mostly comparable to a magnetic force which draws or connect people from different part of the world. It is obvious that every resurgence in technology advancement, including Information and communication technology comes with its good and adverse side effects if not well administered or misused. This is mostly applicable to social network sites usage by youths/young adults.

In contrast to the above, the researchers in summary also acknowledge and take cognizance that the user of any devices must be influenced either directly or indirectly by such devices. Investigations were carried out to know the influence of such media on social behavior of student at Njala University. The study acknowledges that the use of social network sites (SNSs) has effect on the student's academic work, morality, emotion and interaction with other member of the society both within and outside its environment.

#### Conclusion

Survey research design was used to carry out this study. This concludes that social networking sites have created a phenomenon over the past decade and its effects are rapidly observed in our present society in the behavioral lifestyle of our youth (students of Njala University).

Whatsapp followed facebook and BBM have surfaced as the most popular among network sites and have continued to grow in popularity and usage among students. Some students, as found in

the study are now addicted to the sites, that if they do not have access to them daily they feel emotionally imbalanced and unsatisfied. The advent of the social media following the popularization of the internet has marked a watershed all over the world in virtually every sphere of life especially in the area of communication, socially, economically, emotionally and even development wise. One glaring fact is there was already a shift in value system in Sierra Leone before internet stepped in and catalyzed the whole process. People were in denial of what had been happening but internet just amplified it to becoming obvious so much so that the table had been turned around to blame it (internet) for moral decadence. Considering the fact that social media has brought about a lot of positive changes in the lines of the users, throughout the world in so many ways that has led to improvement, progress and development, it was hard to dwell on the negative effect but yet it has to be done especially with the breed of students at Njala University has today.

#### Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following recommendations were put forth by the respondents and the researcher to ameliorate those negative effects attributed to the influence of social media on social behavior of students at Njala University.

1. To start with, what a system like the Njala University students need is fundamentally a character formation system that will repair and return the character of its people (students) and has to begin with the family from every home. Most problem of the world begins with the family, increase, children are no longer spending time with their parents, and they tend to imbibe what they see on the TV and the internet, and internalize it as the accepted way of life.
2. There should be a proper guidance, parents should pry or reduce their children access to TV, ipad, internet etc. Prying in this case doesn't mean that they would no longer use it (internet devices) but set a limit of a time schedule so that most their socialization time will not be spent online.

3. Africans especially Sierra Leoneans need to believe in themselves and that should start from mind liberation. The major problem with students of Njala University is not the social media but their families as a whole. We blame the social media for everything but yet there is no conscious effort to change the status quo.
4. It is also wise to consider instance on value on original human thinking in fact, there should be some kind of award for morals and originality based on merit and not nepotism.
5. Finally, there was recommendation for enlighten and education of the public on the implication of addition and abuse of the social media. At this point, there is a serious need for reorientation because some users are not even aware of what they are doing to themselves and to the society in general. It should be a duty of agency in partnership with Universities and socialization agents to educate minds.

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