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Social Media Addiction among Students of Makerere University Kampala Uganda

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ABSTRACT

There are many reasons why students use social media. The motives for using social media include meeting new people, entertainment, maintaining relationships, social events and media creation. These motives are among the common engagement of university students who use social media as findings of some studies show. It was revealed that postgraduate students of Makerere University made social use of the Internet including sending and receiving email, socializing through social media (mostly Facebook), chatting, and making new friends. In another study carried out at the University of Education, social media was also used for connecting with old friends and family members, finding new friends, obtaining or sharing learning materials, receiving updates on events, posting information and whiling away time. The socialization feature of these platforms which enables interactive exchange with others in real-time and the ability to get close to popular people they adore mostly in entertainment may contribute to their choice and use of social media. Some of these identified motives people engage in on social media have been described as potentially addictive and may therefore lead to social media addiction. The Internet in itself is not addictive instead, the social functions, self-expression, communication, and building of personal ties on the Internet are what is addictive. Since these are common features of social media there is a very high likelihood that many users are addicted to it.

Keywords: Social Media, Addiction, Students, Makerere University, Kampala and Uganda.

INTRODUCTION

The ease of internet access worldwide has made it one of the most popular mediums for seeking information and communication [1]. The internet is now very vital in the modern world. It has become an important instrument in education and social life such that it is gradually becoming indispensable in the daily life of many people [2]. The internet is a highly enlightening and entertaining medium, therefore people engage in several activities on it; some of which may be potentially addictive. One such activity is the use of social media [3]. The introduction of social media in the last decade has largely attracted many people. This has therefore shifted their focus from mainly using just traditional media and traditional forms of social networking for social interaction [4-6]. The mass appeal of social media could be an issue of concern, especially with regard to the steady increase in the time users spend online. Also, the qualities of social media make it a desirable escape for many of these people increasing their dependency on it; thereby contributing to the growth of the social media addiction phenomenon worldwide [7-8]. Social media has become a global phenomenon and a very important means of communication among peers, families and all members of persons. Social media sites such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and LinkedIn and mobile instant messaging services (IM) such as WhatsApp, Viber and IMO and video calling services like Skype have become popular means of communication in the past few years. Statistics show that active social media users the world over

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are estimated at about two thousand two hundred and six billion, a global diffusion of 30% which raised the number of users by about one hundred and seventy-six Million users in the last year alone (www.socialmediatoday.com). [9] define social media as a public web-based service that permits users to create a personal profile, identify other users with whom they can relate or have a connection, read and react to posts made by other users on the site, and send and receive messages either privately or publicly. [3] also define Social media as virtual communities where users can create individual public profiles, interact with real-life friends, and meet other people based on shared interests. Any website that enables social interaction by users is considered a social media site. Such sites are powered by Web 2.0 an online technology with the ability to allow users to interact and share information online. The increase in the number of these social media sites, combined with the fast growth and advancement of mobile device technology in the last few years, coupled with the ease of access to broadband and mobile data services have created a major avenue for daily social interaction encouraging regular profile updates and replies to comments and messages in real-time.

Statement of Problem

Social media offers university students several benefits and opportunities, including access to information, extended social networks, social skills practice, identity expression, informal learning opportunities, interest-based groups, development and maintenance of friendships, and fun. Social media has been described as an important part of a university student's person's life and a platform for experimentation, creative self-expression, and identity formation. The increased use of social media, or social network sites (SNS), by university students across the world has several risks and consequences. They include privacy concerns such as sharing too much information, posting false information about themselves or others, exposure to fraudsters and marketers, and addictions to Internet or social media use that might impact negatively their social, psychological, and emotional well-being. Other possible negative outcomes are exposure to cyber-bullying, allowing others access to personal information, exposure to inappropriate content, sexting, and outside influences of third-party advertising groups and sleep deprivation, which can lead to low academic output. In Uganda, one major concern about Internet use, including the use of social media is cyber fraud, locally known as obufeele. Cyber fraud includes using stolen credit cards to make online purchases, conducting online dating scams, and luring contacts to participate in money transfers. In spite of the prevalent use of social media by university students across the world, few studies have investigated social media use by university students in Uganda, with most of the research focused on issues of national policy and access. Thus there is a need for youth-centred research on social media use to address this knowledge gap.

Aim of the study

To find whether students of Makerere University were addicted to social media and the level of their addiction.

Specific Objectives

- I. To identify the social media platforms Makerere University students use.
- II. To determine the uses of social media platforms by university students.
- III. To examine the Challenges that are in social media addiction by university students.
- IV. To find Ways forward how to address the challenges that came with social media addiction by university students.
- V. To find whether students of Makerere University are addicted to social media and the level of Social media addiction among them.

Research Questions

- ✚ Which Social media platforms do students of Makerere University use the most?
- ✚ What do Makerere University students use these social media platforms they are on for?
- ✚ Are students of Makerere University addicted to social media and to what extent?

Significance of the Study

Using Social media has become one of the main daily activities of people. Accordingly, there is an increasing interest in research on social media by scholars around the world. However, there is scanty literature on all aspects of social media with respect to Uganda. Most of the literature that the researcher came across that was related to Uganda in this field were non-scholarly articles mostly blog posts and opinion pieces without empirical studies backing the conclusions that were made. A number of studies have been carried out in other countries which have looked at not only internet addiction generally, but addiction to social media sites especially Facebook while very little has been done in Uganda. Finding literature on various aspects of social media which is now an essential part of the lives of many people in Uganda is quite difficult. Therefore, there is the ad to build on the knowledge base of social media studies in Uganda for future reference and therefore this study is aimed at adding to the body of knowledge in this area.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The study employed the quantitative methodology of research under which a descriptive survey was used to investigate the phenomenon of social media addiction among students of Makerere University. According to [10], a study that seeks to acquire information by interviewing or administering a questionnaire to respondents is a descriptive survey.

Area of Study

Makerere University is located on Makerere Hill which is one of the many hills on which Kampala the capital city of Uganda is built. The main campus is about 5 km to the north of the city centre covering an area of 300 acres. The location offers an excellent academic environment free from all forms of disturbances associated with the city Centre location as portrayed in the university anthem.

Population of Study

The population of this study is students of Makerere University. Since all units in the chosen population could not be observed because of factors such as time limitations and financial constraints, a section of the population was selected as a sample from the entire population to represent the whole. According to [11-13], a sample consists of a fraction or part of the total number of elements or units in a defined population. A sample is derived from the population. For this study, the sample size was 200, made up of students from the four colleges of the university namely the College of Education, College of Basic and Applied Sciences, College of Humanities and the College of Health Sciences. Probability sampling was used for this study and under this method the Stratified sampling technique was used to divide students into strata after which simple random sampling was used to select participants in the survey. Under the stratified sampling technique, all members of the population are put into strata and a specific number is subsequently drawn from each stratum to represent the whole. In the case of this study, the stratum represents each college in Makerere University namely the College of Education, College of Humanities, College of Basic and Applied Science and the College of Health Sciences. This means that, out of every college, a specific number of respondents were selected to participate in the study. This was to give all subsets of the sample frame equal probabilities of selection. To allow for equal representation of students from each stratum, a formula was used to select the specific number of respondents:

$$nh = (Nh / N) * n$$

Where nh is the sample size for stratum h , Nh is the population size for stratum h , N is the total population size, and n is the total sample size (www.stattrek.com).

According to data on student enrolment in the 2014/2015 academic year obtained from the Planning and Management Information Services Directorate (PIMSD) of Makerere University (the body responsible for compiling students' statistics for Makerere University), the total student population for the university as at 2015 stood at 40000 with the breakdown by the college as follows:

College of Education - 100

College of Humanities - 567

College of Basic and Applied Science - 790

College of Health Sciences - 980

Applying the sampling formula, 30 students were sampled from the College of Basic and Applied Science, 150 from the College of Humanities, 4 from the College of Education and 16 from the College of Health Sciences.

Data Collection

The Survey method was employed in collecting quantitative data in this study. A survey is a systematic way by which people volunteer information about their attitudes, behaviours, opinions and beliefs. It is a commonly used research methodology designed in social science research to collect data from a defined population and the instruments that are often used are questionnaires and interviews. The survey method was employed because it is a proven way of effectively answering research questions and it is also an inexpensive way of achieving that goal. For this study, the researcher collected the data with assistance from two other people each administering questionnaires in one college. One college (College of Humanities) had a large number of the sample therefore all three people helped in collecting the data for that college.

Data Analysis

Data obtained from the field were inputted into the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 20 which is a software designed for the analysis of social science research data to translate the raw data into frequencies and percentages to help present the data in the form of tables and charts which were then analyzed based on the research questions and later discussed to arrive at conclusions.

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RESULTS

Profile of Respondents

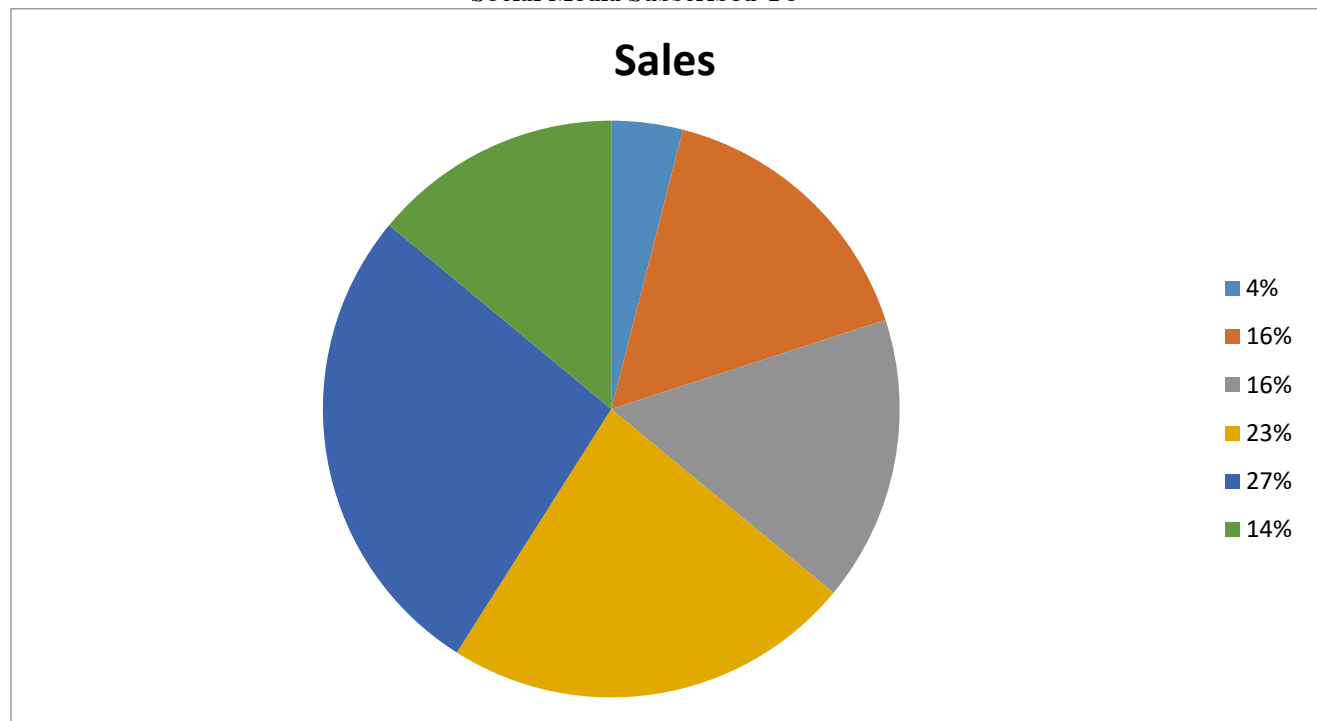
The sample for the study was made up of fifty-six per cent and forty-four per cent which is an exact reflection of the current student population at Makerere University by gender (Source: Student Enrolment 2014/2015 by Gender – PIMSD). Majority of the respondents for the study fall between the ages of 18 – 30 years while only a tenth of them are between the ages of 31 – 40 with the remaining being above 40. This also reflects findings of studies by the Pew Internet Research Center which found that the majority of social media users in Uganda fall between the ages of 18 – 30. Respondents were drawn from all year groups with the exception of level 100 because at the time of the study the admission process to admit freshmen was still ongoing.

Findings Related to research questions

Social media use among Makerere University students

RQ1. Which Social media platforms do students of Makerere University use the most?

Figure 1: Social media sites respondents are subscribed to
Social Media Subscribed To



f = 735

4% -represents the number of people who do not use social media.

16%- represents the number of people who use Twitter.

16%- represents the number of people who use Instagram.

23%- represents the number of people who use Facebook.

27%- represents the number of people who use WhatsApp.

14%- represents the number of people who use Skype.

Figure 1 above shows the various social media sites that students are subscribed to. The question posed was a multiple-response question hence the total frequency exceeds the total number of respondents which is 200. Respondents were allowed to choose as many social networks they subscribe to from a list provided and also mention any other they were subscribed to which was not included in the list.

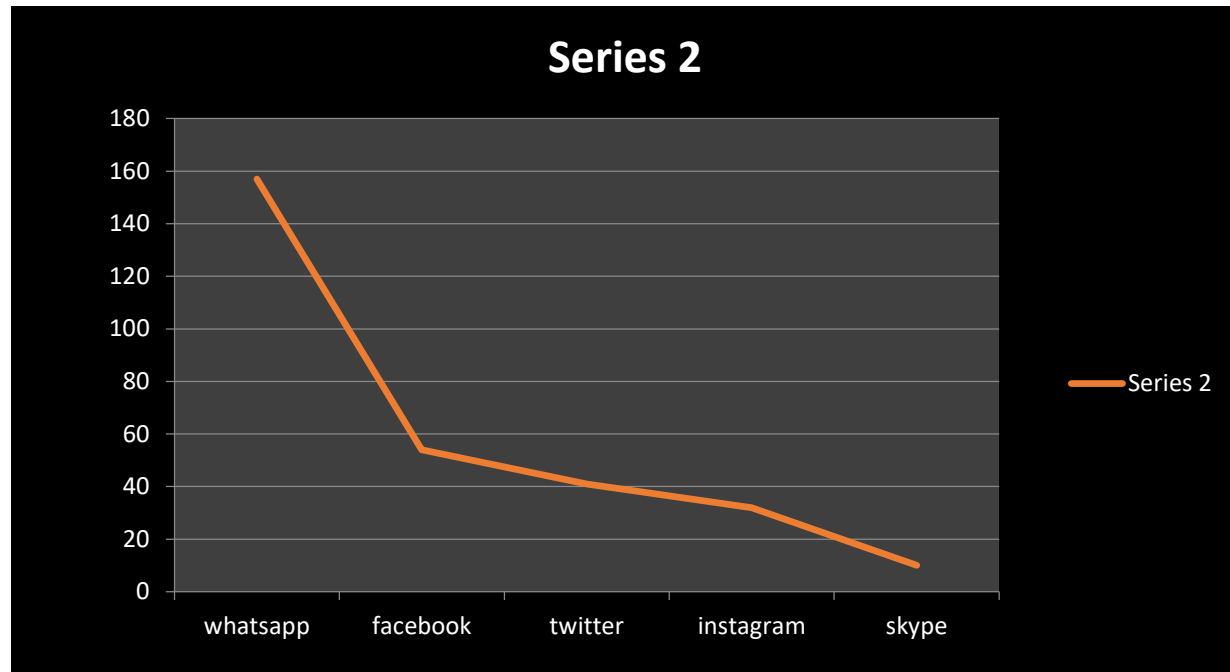
Findings show that all but one of the respondents was subscribed to WhatsApp while over three-quarters of them are subscribed to Facebook. Twitter and Instagram each are subscribed to by 117 respondents while Skype has been subscribed to by 102 of the respondents. The remaining 4.4% of respondents (32 respondents) mentioned that they were subscribed to other social media platforms which were not included in the list to be chosen from and these include Snapchat, LinkedIn, Telegram, IMO, kik, google+ and WeChat with Snapchat being the most mentioned.

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Respondents were also asked to choose the social media platform they used regularly based on the ones they said they were subscribed to. This was an open-ended question and respondents were allowed to choose as many as applied which resulted in the total number of respondents being more than the 200 used for the study.

Figure 2: Social media respondents use regularly



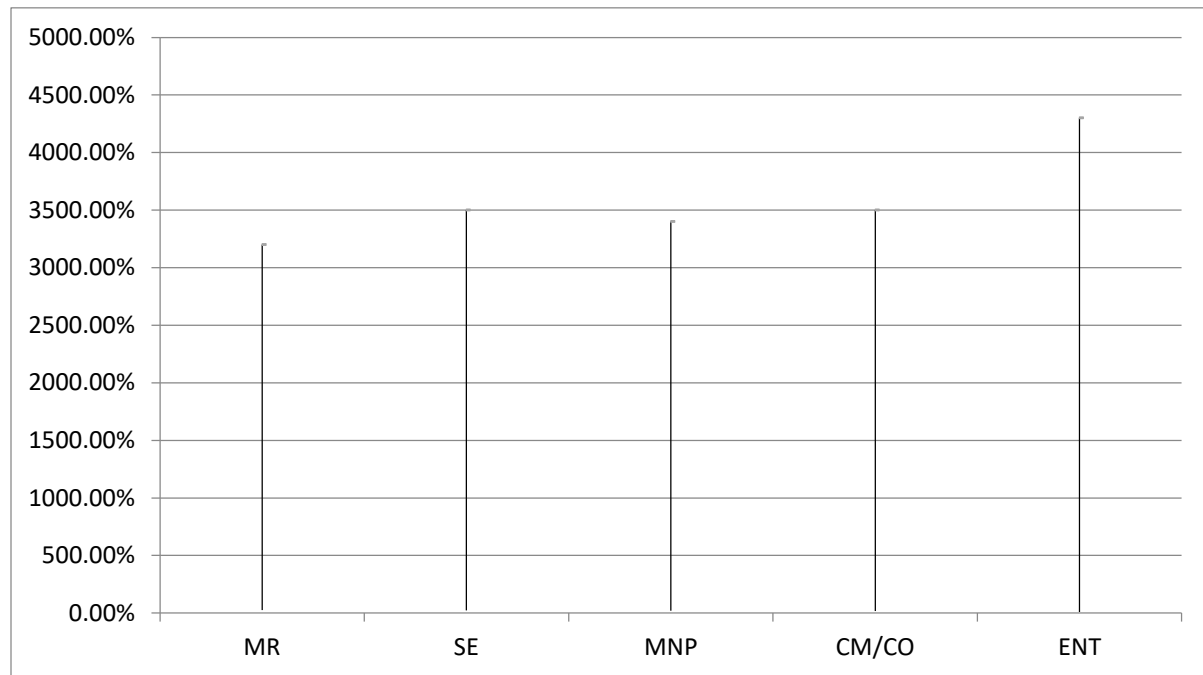
f = 301

More than half of the respondents said they use WhatsApp on a regular basis followed by Facebook which has over a quarter of the respondents using it regularly. Just a little over a fifth of the respondents said they use Twitter regularly and 32 (10.6%) others said it was Instagram they used more often. 10 (3.3%) respondents chose Skype as the media they use regularly while the remaining 7 (2.3%) who responded to the question mentioned other social media platforms which were not included in the list provided to choose from.

RQ2. What do students use these social media platforms they are on for?

Variables for this question were derived from [14] five motives for which people use social media. The five motives are entertainment, creating media content and sharing opinions, meeting new people, for social events and maintaining relationships.

Figure3: Reasons for using social media respondents are subscribed to



MR-maintaining relationships.

SE-social events.

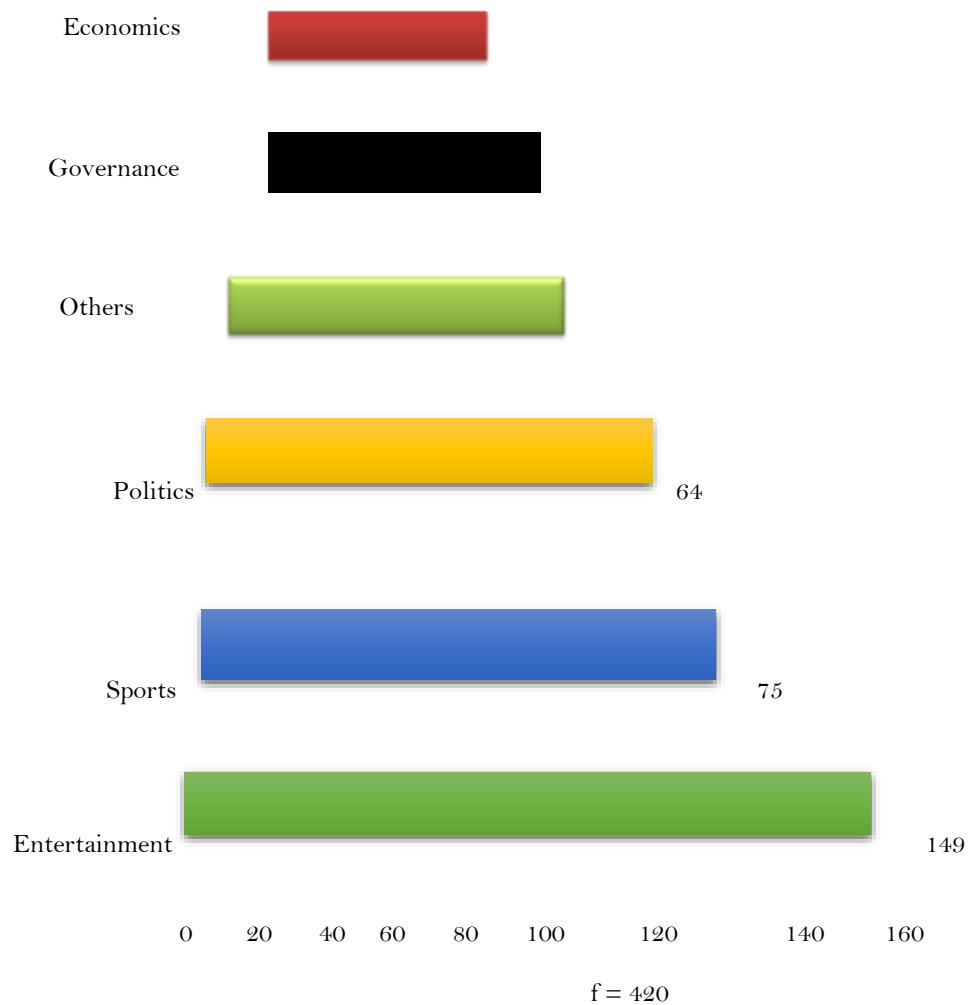
MNO-meeting new people.

CM/CO-create media content and share opinions.

ENT- entertainment.

The results show that the majority of the respondents use their social media accounts for entertainment, followed by those who use social media for creating media content and sharing opinions and those who use social media to meet new people. A little above half of the 200 respondents said they use it to for social events and about a fourth said they use it to maintain relationships. From the data, the majority of students of Makerere University use social media for entertainment more than any other reason for using social media.

Figure 4: Issues discussed on social media

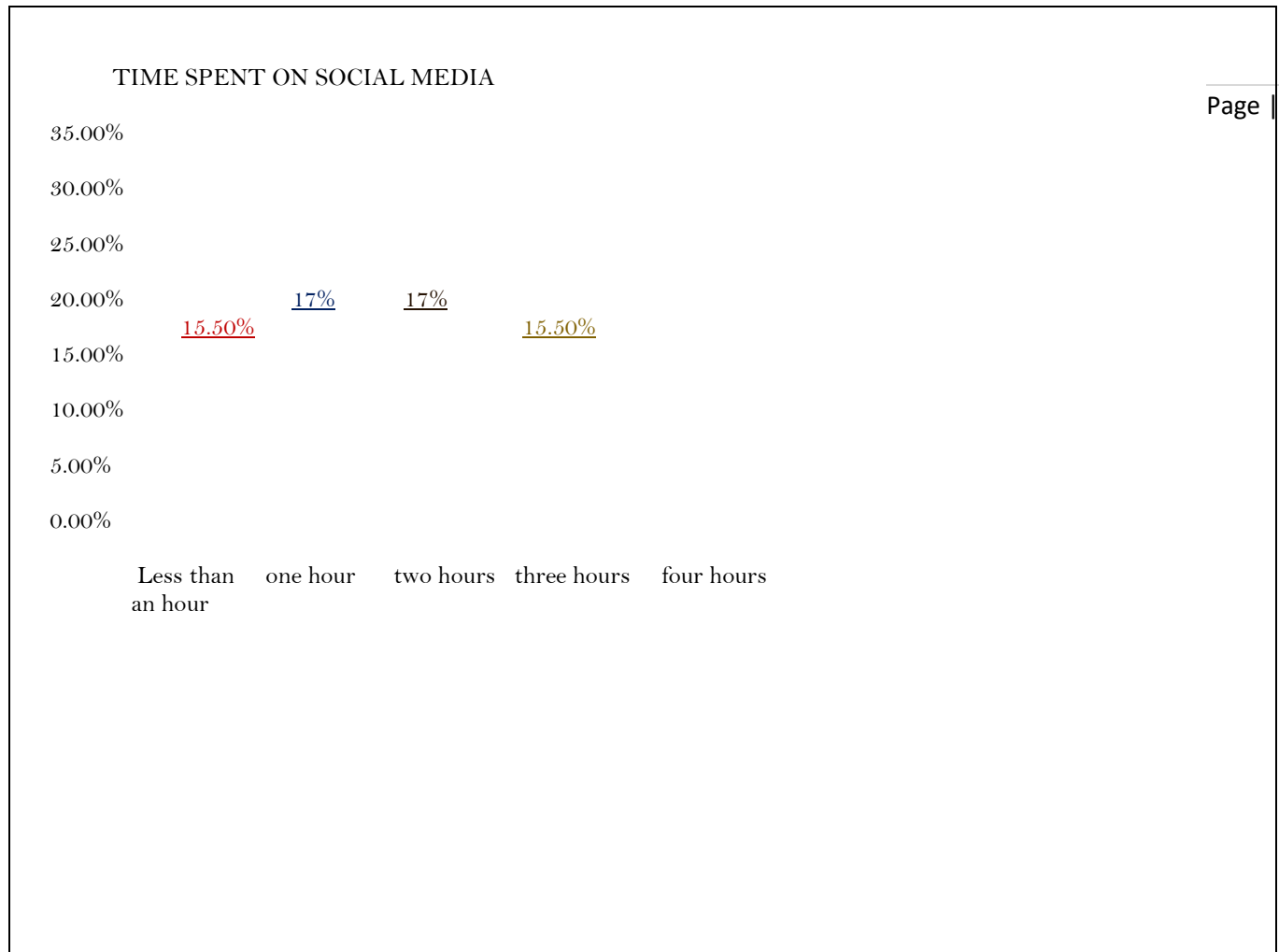


Respondents were asked what they discuss on the social media platforms they are subscribed to. Most of the respondents said they discussed issues pertaining to entertainment, followed by sports, and then politics. A little over a fifth of them said they gave attention to issues concerning governance while a little under a fifth said their interest was with economic issues. A fourth of the respondents said they discussed other issues such as business, fashion, academics, general issues, religious matters, health and humanitarian issues.

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Figure 5: Average time spent on social media daily



f = 200

Figure 5 shows the time respondents spend on social media daily. A majority of the respondents (35%) said they spend four or more hours on social media daily. Other respondents (17%) said they spent two hours on social media a day, another 17% of the respondents also said they spend one hour on social media daily. Three hours were spent on social media by 15.5% of the respondents daily, while the other remaining 15.5% said they spend less than an hour on social media a day. As reviewed in related literature earlier, a study by [15-17] identified time spent using social media as one of the dimensions of social media addiction because it was clearly linked to all the identified factors of the phenomenon. This implies that, the more time spent using social media, the higher probability for social media addiction to exist. As the results have shown that the majority of Makerere University students spend more than four hours daily on social media, it further supports other findings from this study that show the existence of addiction among students.

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Internet Addiction Test

This section analyses the 13 items derived from the Internet Addiction Test (IAT) by Dr Kimberly Young used in this study. These 13 items are questions that were based on what studies have shown to be the factors that determine whether one is addicted to internet use or in the case of this study, social media or not. There are six factors that determine addiction and they included Salience, Excessive use, and neglect of responsibilities, anticipation, Neglect of social life and lack of self-control. Answers to the questions were in the form of a 5-point Likert scale and respondents selected their responses to each question based on the one that best applied to the frequency of the behaviour described in the question.

Responses for each of the 13 items are represented in the tables below.

Table1-How often do you find that you stay online longer than you intended?

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Not applicable	8	4%
Rarely	39	19.5%
Occasionally	50	25%
Frequently	46	23%
Often	33	16.5%
Always	24	12%
Total	200	100%

A quarter of the respondents said they occasionally stay online longer than they intend to, while 23% of them admitted to frequently staying online longer than they intend to. Rarely, 19.5% of them stay online longer than they intended to and another 16.5% said they often stay online longer than they intend to when they log on. Other respondents (12%) said they always stay online longer than they intended while the remaining 4% said the question does not apply to them.

Table 2: How often do you form new relationships with fellow online users?

Response	frequency	Percentage
Not applicable	7	3.5%
Rarely	64	32%
Occasionally	61	30.5%
Frequently	37	18.5%
Often	20	10%
Always	11	5.5%
Total	200	100%

When asked how often respondents form new relationships with fellow online users, 32% of the respondents said that happened rarely and 30.5% said they occasionally form new relationships with other users, 18.5% said they frequently did, while a tenth said it was often the case. Some other 5.5% of the respondents said they always form new relationships with other online users while the remaining 3.5% said the question did not apply to them.

Table 3: How often do others in your life complain to you about the amount of time you spend online?

Response	frequency	Percentage
Not applicable	36	18%
Rarely	63	31.50%
Occasionally	27	13.50%
Frequently	26	13%
Often	23	11.50%
Always	25	12.50%
Total	200	100%

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The majority of the respondents (31.5%) said people in their lives rarely complained about the amount of time they spend online, 18% of them said people occasionally complained about the amount of time they spend online, Others (13%) said it was frequently the case, 11.5% also said people often complained about the amount of time they spend using social media, 12.5% of the respondents said there was always a complaint about the time they spend online but the remaining 18% respondents, however, said this did not apply to them.

Table 4: How often do your grades suffer because of the amount of time you spend online?

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Not applicable	80	40%
Rarely	77	38.5%
Occasionally	18	9%
Frequently	10	5.5%
Often	11	5.5%
Always	4	2%
Total	200	100%

According to Table 4, 40% of the respondents said their grades are never affected by the amount of time they spend online and another 38.5% said their grades were rarely affected. Nine per cent (9%) agreed that their grades were occasionally affected by the amount of time they spent online, another 5.5% said it was often the case and 5% said their grades were frequently affected and the remaining 2% said their grades were always affected by the number of time they spent online.

Table 5: How often do you check your social media accounts before something else you need to do?

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Not applicable	13	6.5%
Rarely	29	14.5%
Occasionally	43	21.5%
Frequently	47	23.5%
Often	43	21.5%
Always	25	12.5%
Total	200	100%

From the table above it can be said that 23.5% of respondents said they frequently check their social media accounts before something else they needed to do while 21.5% said they occasionally did. Another 21.5% said they did that often while 14.5% of the respondents too said they rarely checked their accounts before doing something else they needed to do and 12.5% said they did that all the time while the remaining 6.5% of the respondents said it did not apply to them.

Table 6: How often do you block disturbing thoughts about your life with soothing thoughts of social media?

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Not applicable	32	16%
Rarely	56	28%
Occasionally	34	17%
Frequently	23	11.5%
Often	35	17.5%
Always	20	10%
Total	200	100%

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The table shows that 56 respondents rarely block disturbing thoughts about their life with soothing thoughts of social media, while 35 said they often did that. Thirty-four respondents said they occasionally blocked disturbing thoughts with social media, twenty-three others said they did that frequently, while 20 of them said that was the case all the time. The remaining 32 respondents however said this did not apply to them.

Table 7: How often do you fear that life without social media would be boring, empty and joyless?

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Non-applicable	29	14.5%
Rarely	48	24%
Occasionally	37	18.5%
Frequently	22	11%
Often	22	11%
Always	42	21%
Total	200	100%

It can be deduced from this table that, apart from 29 of the respondents (14.5%) who said that they did not fear that life without social media would be boring, empty and joyless, 24% said they rarely felt that way and 21% of them said they always feared, while 18.5% of the respondents said they occasionally feared that that would happen. Of the remaining respondents, 11% each said they frequently and often feared life without social media would be boring, empty and joyless.

Table 8: How often do you lose sleep due to late-night social media use?

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Non-applicable	33	16.5%
Rarely	51	25.5%
Occasionally	41	20.5%
Frequently	29	14.5%
Often	39	19.5%
Always	7	3.5%
Total	200	100%

This table shows responses participants gave when they were asked how often they lost sleep due to using social media at night. A few of the respondents (3.5%) said they always lost sleeping time due to late-night social media use, while just a little over a quarter of the respondents said they rarely lost sleep. 20.5% said they occasionally lost sleep. 39 of the total number of respondents said they often lost sleep, 29 said they frequently did, while 33 (16.5%) said they never lost sleeping time because they used their social media accounts during the night.

Table 9: How often do you fantasize about being online?

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Non-applicable	51	25.5%
Rarely	46	23%
Occasionally	26	13%
Frequently	46	23%
Often	27	13.5%
Always	4	2%
Total	200	100%

Table 9 shows that over a quarter of the respondents said they never fantasized about being online while a little under a quarter of the respondents said they rarely fantasized about being online. Another group of 23% of the respondents said they frequently fantasized about being online while 13.5% said they often did. Occasionally, 13% of the respondents fantasize about being online and only 2% fantasize about being online all the time.

Table 10: How often do you find yourself saying "just a few minutes" when online?

Response	frequency	Percentage
Not-applicable	22	11%
Rarely	45	22.5%
Occasionally	25	12.5%
Frequently	32	16%
Often	52	26%
Always	24	12%
Total	200	100%

More than a quarter of the respondents said they often experienced this, 45 (22.5%) of them said it rarely happened while 32 (16%) said they experienced this frequently. One-eighth of the respondents, 25, representing 12.5% said they occasionally said that 24 (12%) of them said it always happened while the remaining 22 (11%) said it does not apply to them.

Table 11: How often do you try to cut down the amount of time you spend online and fail?

Response	frequency	Percentage
Non-applicable	34	17%
Rarely	52	26%
Occasionally	35	17.5%
Frequently	31	15.5%
Often	38	19%
Always	10	5%
Total	200	100%

Respondents were asked how often they try to cut down the amount of time they spend online and fail and their responses revealed that the majority of them (26%) rarely failed in trying to cut down the amount of time they spend online while 17% of them never failed in their quest as they said it did not apply to them. 19% of the respondents often failed, 17.5% also said they failed occasionally and 15.5% said they frequently failed. Very few of them (5%) said they always failed in attempting to cut down the amount of time they spend online.

Table 12: How often do you choose to spend more time online over going out with others?

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Non-applicable	40	20%
Rarely	66	33%
Occasionally	25	12.5%
Frequently	18	9%
Often	37	18.5%
Always	14	3%
Total	200	100%

A third of the respondents said they rarely choose to spend more time online over going out with others, one-eighth of them said they occasionally did while 37 of them said they often spent time online instead of going out with others, 25 occasionally and 18 frequently. However, a fifth of the total number of respondents said they never choose to spend more time online over going out with others.

Table 13: How often do you feel depressed, moody or nervous when you are offline, which goes away once you are back online?

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Non-applicable	64	32%
Rarely	51	25.5%
Occasionally	36	18%
Frequently	20	10%
Often	26	13%
Always	3	1.5%
Total	200	100%

More than a third of the respondents said feeling depressed, moody or nervous when offline did not apply to them. Just a little over a quarter said they rarely felt that way, 18% of the respondents experienced those feelings occasionally, 13% often and 10% of the respondents said they felt that way frequently with the remaining 1.5% accepting that they felt depressed, moody or nervous when offline, which goes away once they are back online.

Level of Addiction

Are students of Makerere University addicted to social media and to what extent?

Scores for each respondent's answers to the 13 items of the Internet Addiction Test (IAT) included in the questionnaire were summed up and grouped in a range of points.

The scores were ranged as follows:

0 – 14 points: None.

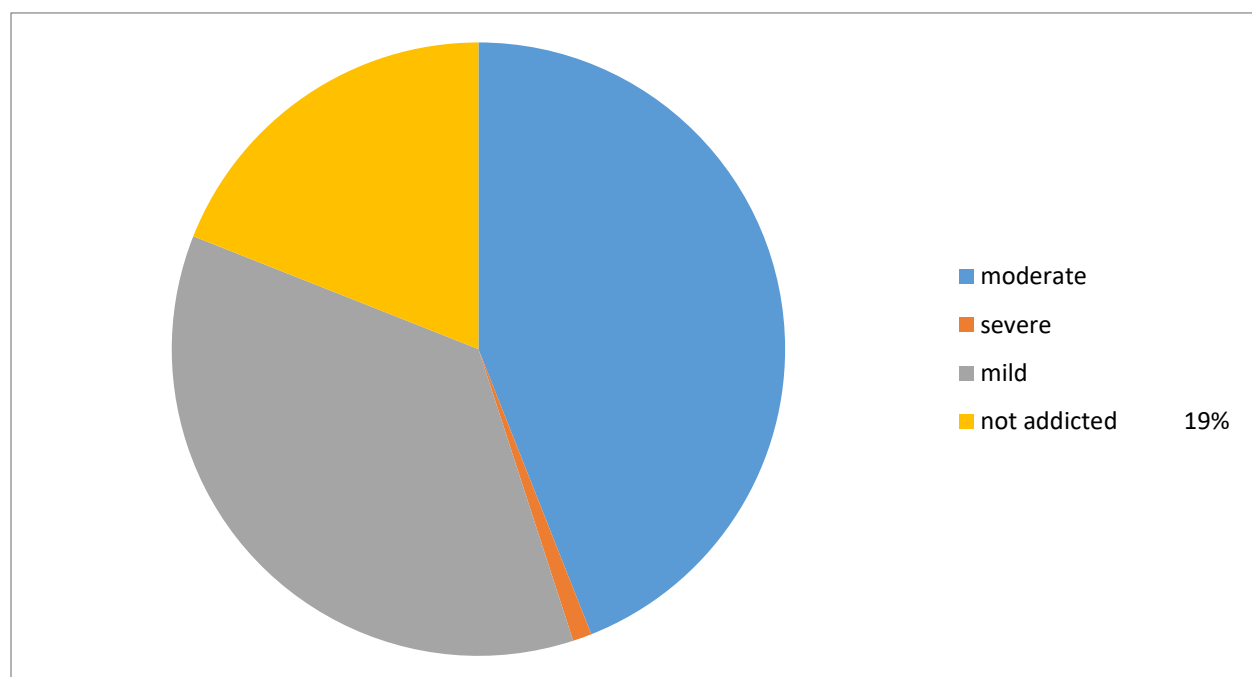
15 – 29 points: Mild.

30 – 59 points: Moderate.

60– 80 points: Severe.

The percentage for each group was calculated and the results are represented in the chart below.

Level of addiction to social media among students



f =200

Moderate- 44%

Severe- 1%

Mild – 36%

Not addicted – 19%

Figure 6 shows the various levels at which students are addicted to Social media. Although all the respondents sampled for this study use social media, not all of them are addicted to Social media. The surveys revealed that 19% of the respondents obtained scores below any of the levels of addiction and are therefore not addicted to social media. A majority (45%) of students obtained scores that placed them at a moderate level of addiction while 35% obtained scores that fall within the mildly addicted range. Only one of the respondents can be said to be severely addicted to social media after scoring 60 points which falls within the severe level of addiction. These findings confirm the existence of the social media addiction phenomenon among students of Makerere University although it is not at an alarming level.

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Summary

This chapter presented the results of the information gathered from the survey conducted among 200 students of Makerere University. The study found that WhatsApp is the most subscribed to and most used social media at Makerere University. It also found that the majority of the students subscribed to these platforms for entertainment which also makes up the issues most discussed on these platforms by students. Findings also showed the existence of social media addiction among students at different levels with the majority being at the moderate level and just 1% being severely addicted.

DISCUSSION

The discussion of the findings of this study will be done in connection to the research objectives, theoretical framework and the literature that were reviewed in chapter two. To this end, this sub-section seeks to establish how the findings reflect the assumptions and principles that underpin the Uses and Gratification and the Media Systems Dependency theories. The first objective was to identify the social media platforms students of Makerere University use the most. The study revealed that all the respondents are subscribed to more than one social media platform. WhatsApp was identified as the most popular social media tool among the students, with 99.5% of the respondents having subscribed to this platform. This was followed by Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and Skype in that order. Some of the respondents mentioned that they were subscribed to other social media platforms such as Snapchat, LinkedIn, Telegram, IMO, Google+, Kik, WeChat and Snapchat. The findings from this study tie in with the study by [18] which showed that the majority of the respondents use almost all popular social media platforms. The point of departure is that while [18] identified Facebook as having the largest number of users, this study confirmed WhatsApp as the most popular social media platform although Facebook was also highly popular. The findings also show that WhatsApp is the most regularly used social media platform although almost all respondents had alternatives. This finding is in agreement with the postulations of the Uses and Gratification theory which explains that there is a motive behind audiences' choice and use of media. According to the theory, media consumers are at liberty to choose from a variety of channels, specifically one that fully meets their needs although they have many alternatives and social media certainly offers a wide range of platforms for the audience to choose from. Findings also confirm assertions by the Media Systems Dependency Theory which posits that the more a medium fulfils the needs of a user the more dependent he/she is on that media therefore students use WhatsApp more regularly than any other social media platform because it satisfies their reason for using social media more. Each of these platforms has its strengths and specialized functions, hence the selection of one platform is an indication of what the audience wants to use the medium for, which confirms assertions by the theorists of the Uses and Gratifications theory that users look for a media source that best satisfies their needs although they may have alternative choices. This means the users turn to the particular social media platform that meets their expectations which in this case is WhatsApp. The extent to which the social media platform is able to deliver and meet the expectations of the user determines the degree of dependency on that social media channel. Findings show that all the reasons for which respondents chose to join and use social media can be satisfied more by WhatsApp which the majority of respondents also chose as their most regularly used social media platform. This analysis ties in with the postulations of the media systems dependency theory which states that the more a person is dependent on a specific media to fulfil his or her needs, the more the media will become important to him/her. The second objective sought to determine what students use the social media platforms they are subscribed to for in descending order, students use their social media accounts for entertainment purposes, to create media content and share opinions, to meet new people, to create awareness for social events and to maintain old relationships. This finding confirms the research finding by [18-25] that the majority of the respondents use these social media platforms mainly for social purposes. All these studies found that the majority of the respondents use these social media platforms mainly for social needs such as friendship, and maintaining and forming new relationships, with the most dominant being entertainment as most of them said they joined social media because of entertainment and the issues they discussed most on these platforms is about entertainment.

The third and main objective was to find if addiction existed and the level of addiction among students of Makerere University. Generally, the findings confirmed the existence of the social media addiction phenomenon among students of the University of Ghana and also showed that addiction existed at different levels i.e. mild, moderate and severe levels of addiction. At the mild level are average users who use their social media accounts a bit too long but have control over their usage. At the moderate level, the user may experience occasional or frequent problems because of their use of the media while at the severe level, social media usage causes major problems in some aspects of the user's life like poor academic performance in the case of students. Findings showed that almost 80% of the respondents were moderately and mildly addicted while only 1% were severely addicted. However, findings also showed that almost 20% of the respondents were not within any of the various levels of addiction. The findings also

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revealed that the majority of students of Makerere University spend over 4 hours on social media daily. This further confirms the existence of addiction to these sites among students as time spent on social media has been identified as a dimension of addiction in the study by [15] with results of another study carried out by the University of Derby in the UK which shows that users who spend an average of 3.6 hours per day on social media are classified as addicted. Also, Responses to one of the questions asked in the IAT (How often do you find yourself saying “just a few minutes” online?) showed majority of students spent more time than intended using social media and had difficulty in trying to cut down the amount of time they spent online. This confirms two of the six factors (excessive use and lack of self-control) that determine the existence of addiction mentioned earlier in Chapter 4. These finding specifically relates to the basic assumption of the media systems dependency theory. This theory is anchored on audiences’ dependence on media for their needs to be met. From the study findings, social media addiction is present but not at its optimal level. It can, therefore, be inferred that the sampled population are dependent on social media because of needs they want to meet when using a platform.

CONCLUSION

The study has shown that students of Makerere University are active users of social media. The findings revealed that the most popular social media platform used by students of Makerere University is WhatsApp with almost all respondents subscribing to it and using it on a regular basis. Entertainment is the most discussed issue on social media by students of the University and it is also the major reason why the majority of them use social media. Importantly, the study confirmed the existence of addiction to social media among students though not at an alarming rate. It revealed that most of them are mildly and moderately addicted with only one person who is severely addicted. This is an indication that Uganda has not been left out of the effects of advancement in technologies like the internet although compared to other places where similar studies have been carried out; the country is just a beginner. [15] found in his study that students with higher social media addiction rates have poorer academic records than those who are either moderately addicted or not addicted. The same can be deduced from the findings of this study. Although the current study did not set out to establish a correlation between social media addiction and academic performance, the research focused on students and this is an important issue that concerns them and must therefore be looked at. One of the questions asked as part of the items which were used to test for addiction, (How often do your grades suffer because of the amount of time you spend online?) had the majority of the respondents saying their grades were not affected by their use of social media. This majority fall within the mild and moderate levels of addiction. However, the respondent who fell within the severe level of addiction said his grades always suffered as a result of using social media. It, therefore, backs the results of Al-Menayes’ study. Findings show there is relatively low addiction to social media among students of Makerere University, hence, it can be deduced that excessive social media use does affect academic performance. Although addiction to social media is not yet at an optimal level among students, like all other addictions negatively affect aspects of life, this could be a cause for concern and attention must therefore be given to the phenomenon so as to prevent a negative impact on students’ performance.

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