

Influence of Social Media on Online Learning in Public Universities in Nyeri County

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ABSTRACT: The surge in online learning, particularly in public universities in Nyeri County, Kenya, underscores the pivotal role of digital communication, including social media, in shaping educational effectiveness. While online learning offers unprecedented flexibility and accessibility, it also presents significant challenges, notably limited interaction between students and teachers, impacting comprehension and academic performance. This study aimed to investigate the influence of social media on online learning in public universities in Nyeri County. It was grounded in Social Presence Theory and Online Collaborative Learning (OCL) Theory. Adopting a Pragmatism paradigm, it employed a mixed-methods approach with a sample of 440 participants, comprising deans, heads of departments, and students, selected through purposive and stratified sampling techniques for diversity. Findings revealed that 67% of respondents perceived social media positively impacting academic performance, while 30% strongly agreed that it boosted engagement in classroom activities. However, 43% agreed that social media usage during online learning led to distractions. Regarding online learning, 48% believed in Kenya's infrastructure to support online education, while 43% faced technical difficulties. Nevertheless, 51% viewed online learning as effective as traditional in-person learning, with 46% acknowledging its flexibility in time and location. Inferential findings showed a strong positive relationship between social media influence and online learning effectiveness in public universities, with a Beta coefficient of 0.802 and a significant t-value of 14.455. In conclusion, while social media holds promise in enhancing online learning experiences, addressing challenges such as technical difficulties and resource constraints is essential for its effective integration. Public universities should prioritize investments in technological infrastructure and provide comprehensive training for educators to leverage social media effectively, thereby optimizing the educational potential of digital platforms.

Keywords: online learning, digital communication, social media, unprecedented flexibility and accessibility

I. BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

The landscape of global education has undergone a significant transformation with the rise of online learning. This approach has gained widespread popularity worldwide, breaking down geographical barriers and providing students from diverse locations with access to high-quality education from reputable institutions. Online learning has emerged as a response to the challenges encountered by traditional education systems, such as the high dropout rate in American colleges, estimated to be as high as 40% (Bustamante, 2019). Digital communication tools like video conferences and live chats have played a crucial role in reshaping the learning environment, fostering a collaborative and interactive learning model that deviates from the conventional approach. This shift towards online learning represents not just a passing trend, but a fundamental change in the global access and delivery of education.

Kenya has experienced a surge in the popularity of online learning, with digital communication playing a crucial role in its success. Webinars, podcasts, and live chats have become essential platforms, enabling students to access quality education from globally recognized institutions. This surge in online learning has significantly increased educational accessibility and affordability for students who may not have had the opportunity to enroll in prestigious colleges. However, despite this positive momentum, Kenya faces unique challenges, including inconsistent internet access and power disruptions, which disrupt online learning sessions. Language limitations also pose communication hurdles among students from diverse backgrounds (Barasa, 2021).

In the context of Nyeri County, Kenya, the influence of social media on online learning in public universities becomes particularly relevant. Understanding the influence of social media on online learning in public universities in Nyeri County requires an exploration of how digital communication tools, including social media platforms, facilitate or hinder the effectiveness of online education. It also involves examining how universities in the region are addressing challenges related to internet access, power disruptions, and language barriers through initiatives such as technical assistance and language classes. By aligning the background information with the specific context of Nyeri County, this study aims to shed light on the role of social media in shaping the landscape of online learning in the region and provide insights into strategies for enhancing the quality and accessibility of online education in public universities.

II. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The surge in online learning, particularly in public universities in Nyeri County, Kenya, has brought to light the critical role of digital communication, including social media platforms, in shaping the effectiveness of education (Humaira & Munazza, 2020). While online learning offers unprecedented flexibility and accessibility, it also poses significant challenges. One key concern is the limited interaction between students and teachers, impacting comprehension and academic performance (Barasa, 2021). The abrupt transition to online learning, accelerated by the COVID-19 pandemic, exacerbated existing challenges and underscored the urgent need for effective digital communication (Khaled & Abid, 2022).

Inadequate digital communication not only affects engagement but also hampers collaborative learning opportunities. Students may struggle to collaborate, share ideas, and collectively build knowledge due to limited interaction (Abid et al., 2022). This is particularly problematic in public universities in Nyeri County, where social media could play a pivotal role in fostering interaction and collaboration among students and faculty. However, the challenge persists, highlighting the necessity of addressing the digital communication gap to enhance the online learning experience.

Moreover, issues such as motivation and discipline further compound the situation, affecting students' academic performance (Republic of Kenya, 2018). Despite the benefits of online learning, research gaps persist, particularly concerning the specific challenges arising from insufficient digital communication (Ismael, 2021).

To address this gap effectively, integrating theories like the Social Presence Theory and Online Collaborative Learning (OCL) into the problem statement becomes crucial. These theories emphasize the importance of social interaction and collaboration in online learning, highlighting the need for effective digital communication strategies in public universities in Nyeri County to enhance engagement, collaboration, and ultimately, the overall effectiveness of online learning.

III. RESEARCH OBJECTIVE

The objective of this study was to investigate the influence of social media on online learning in public universities in Nyeri County, Kenya

IV. LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical Framework

Social Presence Theory, formulated by Short, Williams, and Christie, is pertinent to understanding the role of digital communication, including social media, in online learning within public universities in Nyeri County (Yoon & Junghoon, 2021). This theory underscores the importance of social interaction in online environments, influencing learners' perceptions and interactions within educational contexts (Wenting et al., 2021). In the context of online learning, it suggests that digital communication tools can affect students' sense of social presence, engagement, and overall learning experience (Kreijns, Xu, & Weidlich, 2022). Research indicates that social presence is enhanced through platforms facilitating interaction, such as online discussion forums and video conferences, fostering a sense of connection among students (Barasa, 2021). Moreover, bidirectional communication positively influences social presence, with educators playing a crucial role in moderating online discussions and providing timely feedback (Ismael, 2021). Aligning with Social Presence Theory, the study highlights the significance of social context, task direction, and interaction in optimizing online learning environments (Morgan et al., 2022).

Similarly, Online Collaborative Learning (OCL) Theory, proposed by Harasim, emphasizes the importance of collaboration and knowledge creation facilitated by the internet (Trietiak, 2020). Collaborative learning involves students combining efforts to achieve common goals, leading to enhanced learning outcomes (Falcione et al., 2019). In both face-to-face and online settings, collaborative learning can be effectively conducted, leveraging technology to promote interaction and knowledge construction (Perry et al., 2023).

The Social Presence Theory and Online Collaborative Learning (OCL) Theory are highly relevant to understanding the influence of social media on online learning in public universities in Nyeri County. Social Presence Theory illuminates how social interaction facilitated by digital communication tools, including social media platforms, can enhance students' engagement and sense of connection in the online learning environment. Similarly, the OCL Theory emphasizes the importance of collaboration and knowledge creation fostered by digital communication, aligning with the potential role of social media in facilitating collaborative learning experiences among students. Together, these theories provide a theoretical foundation for exploring how social media can be leveraged to optimize online learning environments, promote interaction, and enhance educational outcomes in Nyeri County's public universities.

Empirical Review on Social media

Social media are tools that enable social contact, cooperation, and discourse among stakeholders. Blogs, wikis, media-sharing tools (audio, images, videos, text), and networking platforms (Ramdhani & Nandiyanto, 2021; Suroto & Nandiyanto, 2021). The utilization of social media platforms for educational and professional pursuits has been on the rise. These online channels are acknowledged to be beneficial in theory and effective in practice. With the increasing popularity of social media, online learning has also gained momentum as a result (Keenan et al., 2018).

Social media has aided educators in connecting and socializing, collaborative information finding and sharing, content production, understanding information agitation, and modification to improve student-to-student engagement and respect for each other's opinions. Teachers may now effortlessly post photographs and visuals related to their lesson plans using social media sites (Ansari & Nawab, 2020). Teachers may also utilize social media to help students with research tasks by providing connections. Social media is the most effective tool for connecting instructors and students to develop a professional learning network. Teachers can also film the session and submit it to social media platforms so that students can watch or access it at home when they are struggling with their assignments.

Another study done by Ansari and Nawab (2020) titled "Exploring the Role of Social Media in Collaborative Learning: The New Domain of Learning" revealed that the use of social media and mobile devices provides both benefits and obstacles, with the majority of the positives recognized in terms of accessing course information, video clips, transferring instructional notes, and so on. In general, students believe that social media and mobile devices are inexpensive and provide easy ways to access useful information. Western studies have found that using online social media for collaborative learning has a considerable impact on students' academic performance and happiness (Abbas & Maryam, 2018).

A study done by Syed and Firdouse (2019) titled "Examining the Impact of Social Media on the Academic Performances of Saudi Students: A Case Study: Prince Sattam Bin Abdul Aziz University" found that social media network sites can influence students' academic achievement, both positively and negatively. Many people disagree about the hazards of using SNS, yet it also provides advantages. They are concerned that students' addiction to social media would harm their academic achievement. Some researchers argue that excellent multitasking has little or no detrimental consequences for students' academic achievement. The growing effect of social media on students' private and professional lives has prompted scholars and educational institutions to investigate and rethink the idea and substance of educational development in the digital era.

In Kenya, (Munyiva, *et.,al* 2019) did a study on the influence of social media tools on public universities in Kenya. The study found that university students are among the most active users of social media tools and platforms. Social media may be used to boost engagement, communication, and involvement in classroom activities, as well as to improve professional networking. Apart from being a source of distraction and criminality, social media may also lead to addiction. The impact of social media on Kenyan public universities is determined by students' interactions with social media activities and content. Educators, administrators in higher education, and parents should monitor and manage how students utilize social media information.

V. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Philosophical Paradigm: Pragmatism

This study adopted Pragmatism paradigm. The paradigm allows for flexibility in research methods and integrates both positivist and interpretivist positions as per the research issue (Vibha & Christine, 2019). Pragmatism acknowledges the existence of different realities and emphasizes the importance of the research question in determining the approach taken. It facilitates the integration of multiple research methodologies and methods within the same study, enabling researchers to choose the most appropriate methods to address specific objectives (Vibha & Christine, 2019).

Research Design: Mixed-Methods Approach

The research design employed in the study is a mixed-methods approach, combining both qualitative and quantitative methods. This approach integrates quantitative and qualitative methods of study to provide a comprehensive understanding of the research topic (Almeida, 2018). The mixed-methods approach was chosen because it offers more benefits for displaying knowledge than either method alone (Kimmons, 2022) and allows for a systematic application of appropriate methods to address each specific objective.

Population and Sampling: Representing Nyeri County's Public Universities

The target population comprised deans, heads of departments, and students from public universities in Nyeri County, totaling 16,000 individuals. Utilizing purposive and stratified sampling techniques, the researchers selected a representative sample of 440 participants, ensuring proportionality and diversity within the sample (Dudovskiy, 2018). The sample included 390 students and 50 key informants, including deans and heads of departments, to capture a comprehensive understanding of the research topic.

Data Collection and Analysis: Comprehensive Techniques

Data collection methods included interviews, questionnaires, document analysis, and analytics tools. Interviews and questionnaires facilitated the collection of both qualitative and quantitative data, while document analysis provided additional input from relevant sources (Patton, 2017). The data underwent thorough review, coding, and categorization before being analyzed using descriptive statistics, content analysis, and regression analysis. These techniques allowed for the extraction of meaningful insights and the exploration of relationships between variables (Field, 2018). Ethical considerations were also addressed to ensure the integrity and confidentiality of the research process.

VI. DATA ANALYSIS, FINDINGS, AND DISCUSSION

Response rate

A total of 428 questionnaires were delivered to the Universities' (Karatina and Dedan Kimathi Universities) sampled participants. The total number of completed questionnaires was 300 out of 428, resulting in a 70% response rate. The fact that most respondents were eager to learn the results and believed the subject matter was intriguing explains why the result was so high. In a quantitative research, Babbie (2022) discovered that a response rate of more than 50% is enough for assessment, 60% is good, and 70% and above is very good. However, Mugenda and Mugenda (2012) argued that a response rate of 50% or more is sufficient for qualitative testing.

The findings were as shown in Table 5.

Table 1: Questionnaire Response Rate

Response Rate	Frequency	Percentage
Response	300	70
Non-response	128	30
Total	428	100

Source: Field data, 2023

Demographic Information

Gender of the Respondents

The gender category of the respondents was asked in the questionnaire. The study discovered that respondents were unequally distributed by gender. As seen in Figure 2, male made up the vast majority of research participants.

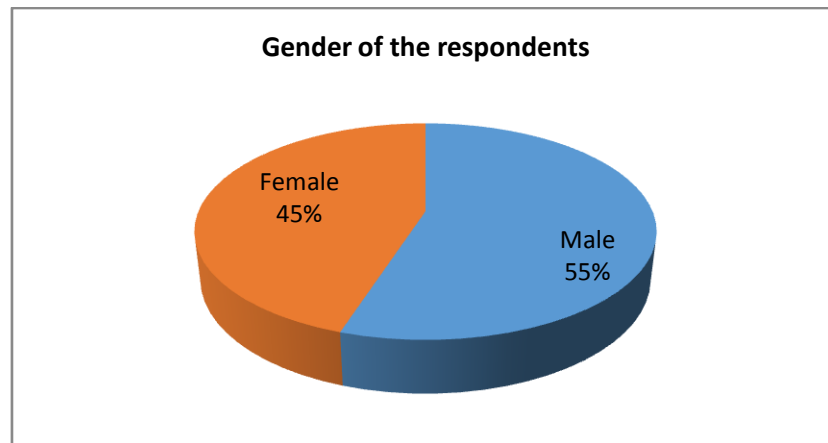


Figure 1: Gender of the Respondents percentages

According to the findings, 45% (135) of the respondents were female while 55% (165) of the respondents were male. Based on this finding, gender distribution was within a close range, thus this study received a balanced approach.

Level of Education of the Respondents

The researcher wanted to find out the highest level of education the participants had attained. The level of education determines how well they would answer the set questions about influence of digital communication on online learning in public universities in Nyeri County. Figure 3 presents findings on the level of education attained by the respondents.

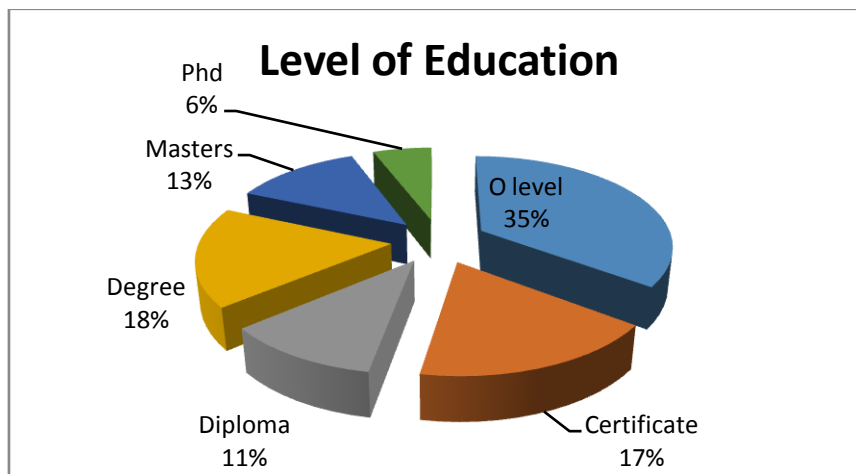


Figure 2 Level of Education of the Respondents

The research revealed that 35% (105) of the respondents held an O-level certificate whereas 18% (54) of the respondents held degrees. Eleven percent (33) of the respondents had a diploma, whereas 17% (51) of the respondents held certificates. Six percent (18) of the respondents possessed doctoral degrees, whereas 13% (39) of the respondents held master's degrees. The research revealed that O-level certificate holders made up the bulk of the respondents. The least number of respondents were deans of students and department heads, who made up the majority of the respondents with Ph.D.

Age of the Respondents

From the results in Table 2 majority of the respondents (34 %) were in the age bracket of 21-30 years ,30% were of below 20 years, 20% were of ages between 41-50 years, 14% were in ages 31-40 while 2% who were the least were above 50 years old

Table 2 Age of the respondent

Age	Frequency	Percentage
Below 20 years	90	30
21-30	102	34
31-40	42	14
41-50	60	20
Above 50	6	2
Total	300	100

Descriptive Findings

Influence of Social Media on Online Learning

Using a table containing an array of questions the researcher sought to find out the influence of social media on online learning and these were the findings when asked about the questions in the Table 3.

Table 3: Social media Measures

Social media Measures	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1 Use of social media for online learning has had considerable impact on academic performance.	13% (39)	67% (201)	10% (30)	5% (15)	5% (15)
2 I frequently use Social Media to boost engagement, communication, and involvement in classroom activities	30% (90)	13% (39)	19% (57)	21% (63)	17% (51)
3 I believe that social media enhances your online learning experience	19% (57)	21% (63)	30% (90)	20% (60)	10% (30)
4 Social media has impacted the level of interaction and collaboration between me and my classmates in online classes	15% (45)	10% (30)	40% (120)	20% (60)	15% (45)
5 I believe social media is an effective tool for providing personalized learning experiences in online education	20% (60)	40% (120)	20% (60)	15% (45)	5% (15)
6 When I utilize social media during online learning, I become easily distracted.	12% (36)	44% (132)	30% (90)	10% (30)	4% (12)
7 I have ethical reservations about utilizing social media for online learning.	30% (90)	17% (51)	23% (69)	20% (60)	10% (30)

The results of the above-mentioned questionnaire were based on the first research objective which was: To determine the influence of social media on online learning in public universities in Nyeri County. Several questions were posed under this objective in order to elicit more detailed responses that would further clarify the objectives' outcomes.

According to the survey, 67% of respondents agreed that the use of social media for online learning had a significant impact on academic performance. This was supported by another 13%, who also strongly supported it. Ten percent of the respondents were neutral in this regard, with another 10% who did not agree and strongly disagreed.

When asked how frequently respondents utilize social media to improve engagement, communication, and involvement in classroom activities, 30% strongly agreed, while 13% agreed, indicating that a big proportion of the respondents were satisfied with this phenomenon. However, a large number of the respondents were of the contrary opinion with 21% disagreeing and 17% strongly disagreeing. On this question 19% were neutral.

Nineteen percent of the respondents agree that social media improve the learning experience on the web, 21% also agreed with the declaration, 30% disagreed and strongly disagreed with the declaration, while 30% were neutral, so that a total of 40% gave a positive response. Of the total of 40% of respondents, social media are neutral about the influence of social media on interaction and collaboration between students and their classmates in online courses. A 20% score disagreed with this assumption, and 15% disagreed with it, 15% and 10% of them strongly agreed to the statement.

When asked whether social media were an effective tool for providing personalized learning experiences in online education, 20% strongly agreed and 40% agreed, indicating that the majority of respondents were satisfied with this phenomenon. Other respondents were of a contrary opinion, with 5% saying they disagreed and 15% saying they strongly disagreed. On this question, 20% were neutral. Twelve percent and 44% agree that if you use social media during online learning, you are easily distracted, 30% gave a neutral answer to this question, 10% and 4% disagreed and strongly disagreed.

The respondents at 23% were neutral when it came to the question regarding the ethical reservations about utilizing social media for online learning. Twenty percent disagreed, and 10% strongly disagreed with the question. Thirty percent and 17% respectively strongly agreed and agreed.

Influence on Academic Performance: The survey found that a significant majority of respondents (67%) agreed that the use of social media for online learning had a substantial impact on academic performance. An additional 13% strongly supported this idea, emphasizing the positive correlation between social media use and academic success. However, it's noteworthy that 10% of respondents were neutral, and 10% disagreed or strongly disagreed. These findings suggest that a substantial proportion of students perceive social media as beneficial for their academic progress.

Enhancing Engagement and Involvement: Regarding the use of social media to enhance engagement and involvement in classroom activities, 43% of the respondents (30% strongly agreed and 13% agreed) expressed satisfaction with this aspect. However, a considerable number of respondents (21% disagreed and 17% strongly disagreed), indicating that opinions are divided. The remaining 19% were neutral. These findings highlight the potential for social media to play a positive role in engaging students but also underscore the varying perspectives on its effectiveness.

Impact on Learning Experience: A total of 40% of the respondents agreed that social media improves the online learning experience, with 19% strongly agreeing and 21% agreeing. Conversely, 30% of respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed, and 30% were neutral on this issue. This suggests a significant proportion of students believed that social media positively affected their overall learning experience.

Influence on Interaction and Collaboration: For interaction and collaboration between students in online courses, 40% of the respondents were neutral, indicating a mixed response to the influence of social media. However, 20% disagreed, and 15% strongly disagreed with the notion that social media effectively foster interaction and collaboration among students. In contrast, 10% strongly agreed and 15% agreed. These findings suggest that social media's role in facilitating student-to-student interaction varies among respondents.

Personalized Learning Experiences: Regarding the effectiveness of social media in providing personalized learning experiences in online education, 60% of respondents (20% strongly agreed and 40% agreed) indicated satisfaction with this aspect. However, 20% of respondents disagreed (5%) or strongly disagreed (15%). The remaining 20% were neutral. These findings indicate that a significant portion of students perceive social media as a tool for tailored learning experiences.

Distraction and Ethical Reservations: Respondents' opinions were more evenly divided on the issue of distractions caused by social media during online learning. A combined 56% (12% and 44%) agreed that social media usage during online learning leads to distractions. However, 30% were neutral, and 14% (10% disagreed and 4% strongly disagreed) did not see social media as a major source of distraction. When considering ethical reservations about using social media for online learning, a total of 47% of respondents (30% strongly agreed and 17% agreed) had concerns about ethics. However, 23% were neutral, while 30% (20% disagreed and 10% strongly disagreed) expressed no significant ethical concerns.

Online learning

Using a table containing an array of questions the researcher sought to find out the influence of the four independent variables on online learning and these were the findings when asked about the questions in the table.

Table 4: Online learning

Online learning	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1 Kenya's present infrastructure is enough to support online education	18%	30%	30%	12%	10%
2 I have faced technical difficulties or challenges while engaging in online learning.	23%	20%	40%	8%	9%
3 I feel more confident joining online learning class	16%	28%	17%	20%	19%
4 Time constraints and scheduling impact my online learning outcomes	10%	15%	54%	11%	10%
5 Availability of resources on online learning, such as textbooks or software has an impact on my online learning.	14%	21%	31%	19%	15%
6 Online learning is as effective as traditional in-person learning.	23%	28%	18%	17%	14%
7 Online learning provides flexibility in terms of time and location.	19%	27%	30%	7%	17%

The survey findings on the impact of independent variables on online learning offer fascinating insights into the perceptions and experiences of the participants. The data, presented in tabular form, illustrates how responses are distributed across various questions related to online education.

Notably, 48% of respondents expressed agreement that Kenya's current infrastructure is sufficient to support online education. This indicates a positive view of the existing technological landscape and its ability to facilitate effective online learning experiences. However, the issue of technical challenges in online learning is a significant concern, with 43% of respondents acknowledging difficulties in this area. This underscores the importance of addressing technological barriers to improve the overall effectiveness of online education in Kenya.

When considering the impact of time constraints and scheduling on online learning outcomes, a significant 54% of respondents took a neutral stance. This neutrality implies a diverse range of perspectives on the extent to which time-related factors influence the success of online learning endeavors. Regarding the availability of resources such as textbooks or software, 35% of respondents agreed that these elements impact their online learning experiences. This indicates a recognition among a substantial portion of the participants that the accessibility of educational materials plays a role in shaping the effectiveness of online learning.

In terms of the perceived effectiveness of online learning compared to traditional in-person learning, a majority of 51% agreed that online learning is as effective. This finding suggests a growing acceptance and endorsement of the efficacy of online education as a viable alternative to traditional classroom settings. Furthermore, when examining the flexibility provided by online learning in terms of time and location, 46% of respondents expressed agreement. This emphasizes the perceived advantages of online education in affording learners the flexibility to engage with course materials at their convenience and from various locations.

Technical Challenges: A notable 43% of respondents faced technical difficulties or challenges while engaging in online learning. This highlights a significant issue that needs to be addressed. To enhance the online learning experience, it is crucial for educational institutions and policymakers to invest in technical support, training, and improving internet connectivity to reduce these challenges.

Scheduling Constraints: A majority of the respondents (54%) were neutral regarding the statement that time constraints and scheduling impact their online learning outcomes. This neutrality suggests that the impact of scheduling constraints may vary among students. Institutions should focus on providing flexible scheduling options to accommodate diverse student needs and constraints.

Resource Availability: Approximately 35% of respondents agreed that the availability of resources, such as textbooks and software, impacted their online learning. This underscores the importance of providing essential learning materials in online formats and ensuring accessibility to such resources. Educational institutions should continue to work on making educational resources more affordable and available.

Learning Effectiveness: A significant majority of respondents (51%) agreed that online learning is as effective as traditional in-person learning. This perception is essential for the legitimacy and success of online education in Kenya. Educational institutions should continue to invest in quality online programs and adopt best practices in online pedagogy to maximize learning effectiveness.

Flexibility of Online Learning: Approximately 46% of the respondents agreed that online learning provides flexibility in terms of time and location. This acknowledgment of flexibility is one of the key advantages of online education, catering to the diverse needs and constraints of students.

Inferential Findings

Table 5: Model Coefficients on Relationship between Social Media Influence and Online Learning

	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	1.142	0.204		5.588	0.000
Influence of Social Media	0.74	0.051	0.802	14.455	0.000

a Dependent Variable: Online Learning in public universities

Source: Field data, 2023

Table 16 presents the model coefficients for the relationship between social media influence and online learning effectiveness in public universities. The unstandardized coefficients provide information about the slope of the regression line, while the standardized coefficients offer insights into the relative importance of each predictor variable.

The constant term ($\beta = 1.142, p < 0.001$) indicates the expected online learning effectiveness when the social media influence is zero. In this case, the constant term suggests that even without any social media influence, there is a baseline level of online learning effectiveness, which is statistically significant. The coefficient for the influence of social media ($\beta = 0.74, p < 0.001$) signifies the change in online learning effectiveness for each unit increase in social media influence. The standardized coefficient (Beta = 0.802) indicates that social media influence has a strong positive impact on online learning effectiveness. Additionally, the high t-value ($t = 14.455$) suggests that the relationship between social media influence and online learning effectiveness is statistically significant. Overall, these results suggest that as social media influence increases, online learning effectiveness in public universities also tends to increase significantly, highlighting the importance of leveraging social media platforms in educational settings to enhance learning outcomes.

The model can be substituted as: $Y = 1.142 + 0.74X_1$

Where Y is online learning and X_1 is the influence of social media

VII. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

Conclusion

A substantial proportion of respondents perceive social media as having a positive impact on academic performance and online learning experiences. However, challenges such as technical difficulties, scheduling constraints, and resource availability remain significant concerns that need to be addressed to improve the efficacy of online education. While the study highlights the potential benefits of integrating social media into online learning environments, it also underscores the importance of addressing underlying issues to maximize these benefits. Technical challenges, including internet connectivity issues and inadequate technical support, pose significant barriers to effective online learning. By investing in technological infrastructure and providing comprehensive training and support for students, educational institutions can empower learners to navigate these challenges and fully utilize the opportunities afforded by online platforms.

Moreover, flexibility in scheduling and enhanced resource availability are essential for catering to diverse student needs and ensuring equitable access to educational resources. Through pedagogical innovation and the development of ethical guidelines for social media use, educational institutions can foster a conducive learning environment that promotes engagement, collaboration, and academic success in online settings.

Thus, while social media holds promise as a valuable tool for enhancing online learning experiences, its successful integration requires a holistic approach that addresses technological, pedagogical, and ethical considerations. By implementing the recommendations outlined in this study, educational institutions can harness the potential of social media to enrich online learning environments and facilitate the attainment of educational goals for all students.

Recommendations

Public universities should prioritize investments in robust technological infrastructure to address the technical challenges identified by respondents. This includes improving internet connectivity, providing adequate technical support, and ensuring the availability of necessary hardware and software resources. By enhancing the technological ecosystem, institutions can create a more conducive environment for online learning, minimizing disruptions and maximizing student engagement.

Educational institutions should offer comprehensive training and support for educators to effectively leverage social media in online learning environments. Faculty members should be equipped with the necessary pedagogical skills and ethical guidelines to integrate social media tools seamlessly into their teaching practices. Additionally, ongoing professional development opportunities can help instructors stay abreast of emerging trends and best practices in online pedagogy, ensuring that they remain effective facilitators of student learning in digital environments. By empowering faculty members with the requisite knowledge and skills, institutions can optimize the educational potential of social media and foster meaningful learning experiences for students.

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