

Social Networks and Students' Performance in Secondary Schools: Lessons from an Open Learning Centre, Kenya

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Abstract

Given the known positive and negative effects of uncontrolled social networking among secondary school students worldwide, it is necessary to establish the relationship between social network sites and academic performances among secondary school students. This study, therefore, aimed at establishing the relationship between secondary school students' access to and use of social network sites at an Open Learning Centre in Kenya. The centre was located about 30km South West of Nairobi, the capital city. This site was selected because information technology was the designed mode of delivery of the courses at the school, hence, high exposure of the students to quantitative social networking among the young, knowledge and information-thirsty population. The study sought opinions of key informants, parents, teachers and policy-makers in Kenya at the school compound. In addition, it investigated the behaviour of the students to generate both quantitative and qualitative data. Findings in this study showed that secondary school students in Kenya were much more vulnerable to the adverse effects of social networks in a manner consistently and concurrently similar to that found elsewhere in the worldwide. This included conversion of academic into recreational sessions and subsequent poor academic performances among the majority of the secondary school students in Kenya. It is, therefore, necessary for the schools to vet, supervise, monitor, control, censor and restrict secondary school students' access to available information on the SNS in Kenya to enable the students to concentrate on academic excellence. The government, on the other hand, should develop a learner-friendly policy to curb the downward spiraling of academic performances in secondary schools in Kenya attributable to uncensored access to social network sites.

Key words: Social networks, Secondary students', Academic performance, Social network sites

Full text: <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1079148.pdf>