



## Effect of Social Media on Interpersonal Relationships of Students in Public Universities in Kenya

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### **Abstract**

*Social media is continuing to grow exponentially based on the wants of the user. The highest percentage of social media users are net generation who have grown up understanding the power of the internet. The current generation is unconsciously addicted to social media and as a result they feel constant societal pressure to be connected with their peers through maintaining a continuous connection with technology. The purpose of this study is to determine the effect of social media on interpersonal relationships of students in public universities in Kenya. The research study covered a sample of 106 students from 10 out of 15 public universities in Kenya. The results indicate that 46.23% of the respondents were female while 53.77% were male. Social media use in the universities was high as stated by majority of the students (68%). Facebook, twitter, email and WhatsApp have emerged as the most popular social media sites and have continued to grow in popularity. Regarding interpersonal relationships, the respondents pointed out that social media not only enabled them to make new friends and keep in touch with them (with a mean response of 4.2524) but also made the friendships stronger as well as improved the quality of relationships between users. (Mean response, 3.7087). This is further supported by a positive correlation between the two variables with a coefficient of 0.377. Generally, social media has had a positive impact on interpersonal relationships among university students over the past decade.*

**Key words:** social media, interpersonal relationships, internet, media sites

### **Introduction**

Social media is a web-based and mobile technology that has turned communication into a social dialogue, and dominates the younger generation and their culture. It is now the number one use for the internet, and this percentage is growing larger every day (Qualman, 2009). Social media are relatively newer forms of media, allowing users to be more interactive with the content, as well as use technologies (both mobile and web-based) to create an interactive platform where individuals and communities share, co-create, and modify user-generated content (Kietzmann,

Hermkens, McCarthy & Silvestre, 2011). People use social media sites such as Facebook, Twitter, and MySpace to create and sustain relationships with others (Boyd & Ellison, 2007). These social media sites let those who use them create personal profiles, while connecting with other users of the sites. Users can upload photographs, post what they are doing at any given time, and send personal or public messages to whomever they choose.

In this information age, social media sites seem to be growing in popularity rapidly, especially among young adults (Pempek, Yermolayeva, & Calvert, 2008). According