

## ■ Original Article

# Challenges and influence of using social media on students in higher learning education in Tanzania

Shafii S Swai <sup>1\*</sup> 

<sup>1</sup> BRAC, Dhaka, BANGLADESH

\* Corresponding author: Shafii Swai E-mail: [swaishafi@gmail.com](mailto:swaishafi@gmail.com) ORCID: 0000-0002-6720-4353

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## ABSTRACT

The advancement of science and technology affects all element of human existence, including education. Social media is one example of this advancement. As many institutions used social media in providing education and as a vital instrument to improve students' enthusiasm in learning, social media succeeded in penetrating its Influence on the education sector. The purpose of this study is to look at the obstacles that tertiary level students have when incorporating social media into their learning process, as well as the impact of social media on their learning activities. The researcher employed the qualitative approach using interviews as the data collecting method, interviewing three university students from three different courses and one university teacher. This research was carried out at a single university in Zanzibar.

**Keywords:** social media, English language learning

## INTRODUCTION

### Background of the Study

The development of science and technology touches every aspect of human life including education and social media are among this development [1]. Social media succeeded in penetrating its influence on the education sector as many institutions adopted social media in providing education and as an essential tool to increase the students' interest in studying [1]. Though there are some instructors found challenges in the application of social media in the teaching process, it is due to training issues [2].

In the context of East Africa, the application of social media in education receives few responses from students,

teachers, and institutions, so the influences of social media in teaching in higher learning institutions are unknown [2].

In Tanzania, social media are not fully utilized to learn the English language, but they are used as means of information [3]. Most instructors are still using the teacher-centered approach [3]. The instructors faced challenges of a large number of students per class. This hinders the chance for class participation for every student. Only a few get the chance [3].

### Factors Influencing Uses of Social Media in Education in Tanzania

The application of social media in education influenced the challenges of the traditional learning environment and the increasing number of enrolments in higher learning

institutions [4]. Furthermore, the increased internet use among the students results from the introduction internet bundles as students' packages. The government needs to simplify the provision of education [4]. Moreover, the development of information and communication technology facilitated the production and presentation preservation of learning material, but the challenge of transporting these materials emerged, and the application of social media became a compelling alternative [4].

### **Most Used Social Media in Education**

Many social media are used in education, but the most used social media include Facebook and YouTube [1, 5]. Myspace, Twitter, and LinkedIn [6]. The researchers found that 90% of the students claim that they are also using Facebook for education activities [1]. Facebook has become a learning tool in education [7].

### **Statement of the Problem**

Social media application in learning is crucial for simplifying the learning process in higher education institutions; however, social media provides an opportunity for distance learning. In Tanzania, there is fewer social media application in learning [4]. The students and the higher learning institution face the problem of poor internet and the high cost of internet bundles [4]. However, the few institutions that succeed in using social media have recorded the importance of using social media in enhancing learning. The situation led to the complete closure of universities and colleges for four months during the corona pandemic time. At that time, learning activities were stopped, and only one university, The Open University of Tanzania, was continuing because it was using an online system including social media in its education activities [4].

Adopting and applying social media in higher education in Tanzania will simplify the learning process and provide distance learning opportunities to students and teachers [8]. Social media enable student discussion. Social media will improve students' grammatical knowledge. Social media in education improves the interaction between teachers and students [5]. Teacher can use social media to quickly provide feedback to the students [2]. Social media help students communicate with English native speakers.

### **Research Questions**

1. How do social media influence learning for students?
2. What challenges do the Tanzanian students in using social media in learning?

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Social Media and Its Influence**

The application of social media in education has both positive and negative impacts. The records show that many respondents agree on the positive influences of social media on learning. Nevertheless, studies found that there is abnormal use of social media by students that negatively impact students. It was noted that students use social media to discuss political-religious matters [4].

### **Social Media in Higher Education**

Social media is now an essential part of education. This platform enhances student engagement and performance. However, most universities are still using traditional methods such as smart boards and projectors [9]. To enhance critical thinking skills, collaboration, and enhancement of individual knowledge construction, educational institutions are adopting the application of social media in education activities.

### **Uses of social media by students**

Social media has three main parts, profile, friends, and comments the comment. Part is where individuals can write their ideas. The uses of social media in education include both proper use and everyday use [1, 8]. The appropriate use of social media in education involves a well-structured system of education planned with a specific period in which the learner has to achieve the prescribed performance [1]. The same writer shows that everyday use of social media in education is when a person learns and acquires social media skills and experience. The researchers found that 90% of the students claim that they are also using social media for education activities [1].

### **Use of social media by institutions and teachers**

There is the hesitation among the educator to use social media in teaching; the studies found that only a few teachers are using social media in their teaching activities because they do not trust social media [10]. Arguably, the teachers who claimed to use social media in teaching mentioned the uses of social media, including giving students assignments, exams, tests, and providing learning material [7]. Also, their searchers found positive responses from educational institutions on using social media. The research conducted in Israel found that the universities created more than 70 Facebook and Twitter accounts to simplify education for their students [1].

### **Challenges facing students on using social media in education**

**Privacy concern:** Some students and teachers are not using social media for learning due to fear of revealing their identity on social media because it will be misused [11]. According to Tanzanian police, there is a much increase in cybercrimes [11]. In addition, it was noted that teachers and institutions condemned social media for being unsafe for students using them [6].

**Little response from instructors:** The lack of training on using social media in education raises a challenge. Some are aware but fear that incorporating social media in education may be destructions for students' attention in the class [11]. For example, the research was conducted on the uses of social media in English language classrooms. The findings revealed that students positively perceived the program, but instructors faced challenges in solving minor issues about students' misunderstandings [11].

**Unsupportive curriculum:** It was found that challenges facing students from the curriculum include no straightforward evaluation method for their homework and assignments through social media [11]. Moreover, the content available on websites does not correlate with the curriculum [11]. In addition, it was noted that social media contain a limited quality of content [6].

### **Influences of Media on Student Academic Life**

The application of social media influence students' academic life in both negative and positive ways, it was found that social media has both positive and negative impacts on students' academic life [12].

#### **Negative influences of social media**

Studies found that there is abnormal use of social media by students that leads to negative impacts on students. When social media is used in informal learning situations, the result will be negative [1].

Among many negative influences of social media on student academic life is time-consuming, blogging, charting, and games are things that students use to waste time with [1]. For example, it was found that students use 30 minutes to three hours per day [12]. Hence, that led to poor performance in their examination results from their colleges [13].

Since it is free and open, it may be used as a tool for personal attack and enhancing bullying and depression [2]. Furthermore, social media enhanced the student to

plagiarize the academic works. They can use social media to search and copy answers for the assignments given [2].

#### **Positive influences of social media**

Social media enhance exploration and interaction learning among the students as it enables students to write, edit and share ideas in written form, audio form, or video [5]. Students use social media to reinforce their learning activities to increase their academic performance [1]. Social media increase the effectiveness of student participation in the learning process. Social media simplified the students' research activities [1]. It was shown that social media application in education influences motivation and understanding [14].

#### **Research Gap**

Research on challenges students face in using social media in education has not been conducted. Moreover, in Tanzania, most research is conducted on general education. Few kinds of research are specific to higher learning education and language learning. Furthermore, there is no research dealing with social media and its influence on English language learning in Tanzania.

### **METHODOLOGY**

#### **Research Paradigm and Philosophical Assumptions**

##### **A research paradigm**

According to [15], the researcher who chooses to use pragmatic research will focus on three critical things: the use of multiple methods of data collection that will help them answer the research questions. Secondly, they should employ numerous sources of data collection. And lastly, emphasize the importance of researching that best addresses the research problem.

In this research, the researcher used the interview method of data collection to answer the challenges students face in using social media in learning (**RQ2**). The researcher used the interview method of data collection to answer how social media influences learning for Tanzanian students. (**RQ1**). The researcher used single data sources, including an interview with teachers and students. The researcher aimed to solve the research problem. The problem will be solved by applying social media in higher education in Tanzania, which will simplify learning. The application of social media will provide distance learning opportunities to students and teachers. It will enable student discussion and English language learning and improve the interaction between teachers and students.

**Table 1.** Research paradigm and philosophical assumptions

Research paradigm	Philosophical assumptions			
Pragmatism	Ontological beliefs (the nature reality) The reality was found by collecting different participants' views about the truth.	Epistemological beliefs (how fact is known) Through engaging in participants' daily activities, conducting an interview, & evaluating the participants' questionnaires.	Axiological beliefs (role of values) The researcher adds & includes some of his opinions & interprets the participants' views.	Methodological beliefs (approach to inquiry) The researcher employs a qualitative approach to data collection & analysis.

### **Philosophical assumptions**

In ontological assumptions, the researcher shows different views found in the findings [15]. As a researcher, I collected the participant's pictures of the reality of the problem. Other participants were involved, such as teachers and students. Regarding the epistemological assumptions, the Researcher, based on quotations of what the participants say as evidence of findings, collaborates and engages in activities in the field with participants. As a researcher, I have been involved in students learning activities in the college, the students' interviews were recorded and transcribed, and their quotations were taken. Axiological, the researcher discusses advantages that shape the findings and includes their interpretation concerning participants' interpretations. Some views of the researcher will be added together with collected data [15]. Methodologically, the researcher employs a qualitative approach to data collection and analysis (**Table 1**).

### **Data Collection**

#### **Interview protocol**

1. Basic information about the interview, in this stage, the researcher list essential details about the interview process, the Researcher arrange time and date of the interview and the place where the discussion will take place, and the researcher makes sure that the participants have this information as well [16]. As a researcher, I decided that the interview's place, time, and date would determine the participant's suggestion. They will suggest the date and time where they will be free, and I will follow them.
2. Introduction this step of the interview, involves the instructions of the discussion. The interviewer introduces themselves to the participant, explains the purpose of the interview, provides the consent form to the participants, describes how the interview will start, and lastly provides definitions of key terms

used in the discussion [16]. As a researcher, I will follow all the required procedures in this step. In addition, I will define key terms like social media, higher learning education, and social media application in education.

3. **Opening question:** This stage involves simple questions that will bring participants' attention and eliminate their fear about the interview process. Here, there will be a question to get information about the participant's background [16]. As a researcher, I will ask questions to explore the participant's background information and connect with the study.
4. The content question, this step involves the questions that aim to answer the research question [16]. As a researcher, I will ask the prepared interview questions that seek to answer research questions and collect background information on the study.
5. Using probes involves the questions that seek more explanation to get enough information [16]. As a researcher, I will use a semi-structured interview type. So, there will be unprepared questions to find more information from the participants.
6. Closing instructions, this step involves the conclusion of the interview session. It involves thank giving, asking if it is possible to meet again if necessary for clarifications and assuring participants of the interview's confidentiality [16]. As a researcher, I will follow this process.

### **Participants**

The researcher chooses to use purposeful sampling techniques. In this technique, the intentional researcher chose participants that would contribute to the required formations [17]. Also, I prefer to use maximum variation as a purposeful sampling strategy. According to [16], complete variation sampling involves selecting participants with different characteristics.

As a researcher, I decided on three university students from three courses, one from the first year, the second from the second year, and the last from the third year. These will help the researcher collect data from students with different levels of experience at the tertiary level. In addition, I select one university teacher. Teachers will provide information on their adventures on challenges facing students on the social application at the tertiary level.

In addition, the researcher applied the snowball sampling technique. The snowball sampling involves the researcher requesting participants to choose other participants they think will be helpful for the study [15]. The participants will be asked to invite their fellow students for the interview. In addition, the teacher will help the researcher to propose the students that will help in the discussion.

## Data Analysis

### *Data analysis framework*

Data analysis involves taking together and segmenting data [15-17]. In analyzing data, the researcher applied sequential steps from specific to general with multiple levels of analysis. The collected data from interviews will be analyzed through the following procedures.

#### **Step 1: Organization & preparation of data for analysis:**

This step involves transcription of the interview [16]. The tape-recorded interview will be converted into written form, and some hints that discussion was noted during the interview process [16].

**Step 2: Reading all data:** At this step, the researcher reads the transcribed interviews and notes down the collected data's important key points [16]. As a researcher, I will read the transcribed data to find the critical information required for the study.

**Step 3: Coding all data:** Coding is organizing data by categorizing them and naming or writing a word in a margin for representation [16]. The transcribed data will be coded to categorize information collected from the interview by a researcher. In that sense, there are three types of coding. Those are expected codes, surprising codes, and codes of unusual or conceptual interest [16]. As the researcher, I will choose desired code for this approach based on expecting code from literature [16].

**Step 4: Description & themes generation:** The description process involves an extension of information about the study, while themes are categories that are formed in the coding process. Themes are the significant finding of the qualitative studies and are sometimes used as the heading

in the finding section [16]. As researcher, themes will be generated from the coded data.

**Step 5: Representation of the description & themes:** The most used way of description and themes representation is the use of the narrative passage chronologically to present the analysis findings [16]. I will apply this approach to present the research findings as a researcher.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

### Introduction

This section will discuss the finding and discussion of this study. The section focuses on answering two research questions.

1. How do social media influence learning for students?
2. What challenges do the Tanzanian students in using social media in learning?

### Influences of Using Social Media on Learning for Students

#### *Teacher-student & student-student interaction*

The study found that social media application in education simplifies interaction. Social media facilitate student-to-student interaction through sending and receiving learning materials, faculty announcements, and enhancing discussion. Moreover, the study found teacher-student interaction where the teacher used social media to send students' reports and assignments.

#### *Social media enhance learning activities*

The study found that social media was used to simplify learning activities in tertiary-level education in Tanzania. Social media is used by students to search for learning materials and conduct discussions. Social media help students improve their understanding by searching for additional materials for clarification [1].

In addition, social media help the students in their research activities [1]. Students collect data through social media, for example, through interviews using WhatsApp. And through social media, students collect relevant materials for the literature of their research projects.

### Challenges Faced by Students in Using Social Media in Learning

#### *Technological challenges*

The study finds technology issues as among the challenges students face in using social media at the tertiary level in

Tanzania. Technology creates the challenge of poor network connection with low internet speed in rural areas in Tanzania. In this situation, students may not be able to use social media in learning activities.

Moreover, the issue of the higher cost of internet bundles creates a challenge for students to use social media. The price of an internet bundle in Tanzania is 1GB for 3,500TZS equals 1.52 USD. The maximum time to use this bundle is between two to three days, so buying a bundle every two days for 3,500 TZS is difficult, especially for self-funded students.

### ***Economic challenges***

Among the economic challenges tertiary-level students face in using social media in education is the ability to buy the accessories that could enable them to use social media as a learning tool. The challenges remain for self-funded students. The simple smartphone can cost 150k, which is not affordable for a first-year student who is firstly reporting to university.

### ***Wastage of time***

The student declares that instead of using social media for studying, they use it to chat with friends, blogging, and gaming [1]. They are also using discussion groups for love affairs. Moreover, the students avoid the application of social media in learning as the tool for searching for learning material because the searching process consumes much time due to low network connection.

### ***Society's negative perception***

The study found that negative perceptions of some of the members of society toward the application of social media are one of the challenges students faces. The parents think that when their children are exposed to social media, it will simplify moral erosion as they are using WhatsApp groups to share pornographic videos. Moreover, the institutions' negative perception of social media creates challenges for students to use social media in learning activities [6].

### ***Invalid content material***

The existence of social media creates a free world for anyone to post anything with or without ethical consecration. The teacher claims that the students searched learning material and came across the invalid and inequality material published by the false teacher who is not qualified in a given professional [6].

### ***Lack of awareness of application of social media in education***

The lack of awareness among teachers, institutions, and students is also a challenge. The students are unaware that social media can be used as a learning tool. Moreover, the institutions are not aware of using social media as a learning tool [10]. Arguably the teachers hesitate the social media application because of little awareness of using social media without destructing the student's concentration [11].

## **CONCLUSION**

### **Introduction**

This section will present the conclusion of the study. The section contains significant findings, the contribution of the research, and recommendations.

### **Major Findings**

The study finds both positive and negative influences [12]. The positive effect includes simplifying learning activities and simplifying discussion activities among the students, and the negative influences include wastage of time. Moreover, the study found many challenges facing meeting Tanzanian tertiary level students. Such challenges have economic challenges, technological challenges, lack of awareness, and invalid content material.

### **Contributions of the Study**

This study contributes to the awareness of society, teachers, students, and institutions on the challenges and importance of using social media in teaching and learning activities in Tanzania. There is little social media application in education in Tanzania [3]; so, the awareness provided will increase the social media application. Through the Influence of social media on tertiary level students, the education stakeholders will be aware that social media can be used as a tool for teaching and learning at the tertiary level in Tanzania.

### **Recommendations**

The study recommends that the institutions take initiatives to ensure that the teachers and students know how to apply social media in learning activities as the changing world requires technological advancement in education. Moreover, the students may face the negative impacts of the social media application when they apply social media in abnormal use; so, the students must be insisted on the proper use of social media for the positive results. In addition, institutions are advised to help the student access the internet services, such as providing free Wi-Fi to students and teachers.

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