

Determinants of Social Media Usage for Knowledge Sharing by Higher Education Students in Tanzania

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ABSTRACT

This paper investigated the determinants of social media usage for knowledge sharing by higher education students in Tanzania. The study used a mixed-methods approach with a convergent research design. The population of the study is 633 postgraduate students from the four higher education institutions located in northern Tanzania. An online survey was used to collect quantitative data, and 171 responded out of the expected 239 respondents. Quantitative data were descriptively analysed using SPSS version 24, while qualitative data were analysed thematically using Atlas TI. The findings revealed that perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use were the factors that determined the use of social media by students in the selected higher education institutions in Tanzania. The problem of internet connectivity was reported to impede knowledge sharing among students. The study recommends that the management of the selected higher education institutions offer training and ensure the availability of internet connectivity around campuses.

Keywords: Higher education institutions, Information sharing, knowledge sharing, social media, Tanzania.

1. INTRODUCTION

The use of social media has completely changed the way students communicate and learn in higher education institutions around the world. Because they are free to download and use, social media platforms are useful for knowledge and information sharing. They can also increase the flow and distribution of knowledge, resulting in better utilisation of tacit and explicit knowledge (Muneja and Abungu 2012). One of the most significant components of knowledge management is knowledge and information sharing, which is the act of exchanging knowledge and information across individuals, teams, departments, and organisations using a human-based mechanism and a technology-driven process (Paulin and Suneson 2012). According to Zaffar and Ghazawneh (2012), universities implement knowledge and information-sharing practices to ensure that created knowledge and information are shared by their academics and students via various platforms, such as social media, to achieve the intended results. Ponera and Mubuyaeta (2023) opine that social media should be used to promote interaction and collaborative learning among students in higher education institutions because they facilitate the sharing of knowledge and information, which in turn strengthens their knowledge base. Cetin and Kinik (2017) affirm that knowledge and information-sharing practices enable academic staff, student groups, and the institution as a whole to generate, process, codify, own, store, exchange, and use knowledge and information to achieve academic goals. Kolan and Dzanza (2018) alluded to the fact that university students in Ghana believe that the use of social media technology has improved their academic work and academic

achievement. Various studies have reported on the increase in the use of social media in Tanzania (Maiga, 2017; Deo and Shao, 2014; TCRA, 2020; Mchome, 2017; Liang, 2017; Mushi, 2016).

1.1 Statement of the Problem

The use of social media among students in higher education institutions in Tanzania has increased in recent years as pointed out by various scholars. However, the determinants for the use of social media for knowledge sharing among higher education students in Tanzania are still not well known. Thus, the current study intends to uncover the existing knowledge gap.

1.2 Objective of the Study

The main objective of the study is to examine the determinants of social media usage for knowledge sharing by higher education students in Tanzania. The specific objectives are to:

- (i) To determine factors influencing the use of social media by students
- (ii) Examine factors affecting the use of social media among students

1.3 Research Questions

The study was guided by the following research questions:

- (i) What are the factors influencing the use of social media by students?
- (ii) What are the factors affecting the use of social media among students?

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Factors Influencing the Use of Social Media by Students

Various factors influence students to engage in the usage of social media for knowledge exchange in universities (Miss and Omekwu 2014). Academic self-efficacy is seen as one of the determinants of students using social media to improve their academic performance (Boahene, Fang, and Sampong 2019). Other factors include knowledge exchange culture, motivation, and technology (Njiraine 2019; Nunes, Kanwal, and Arif 2017). A study conducted in Jordanian higher education by Alhawary et al. (2017) discovered that information exchange using social media among academics is determined by organisational support, personal characteristics, and technology factors. The presence of policies and guidelines on the use of social media is another important factor that determines the use of social media for knowledge sharing among students. Thus, Akakandelwa and Walubita (2018) affirm that it is now vital for university administration to develop rules that encourage innovative use of social media for educational purposes while minimising its detrimental impact on the learning process.

2.2 Factors Affecting the Use of Social Media among Students

Knowledge is a valuable asset that any organisation must manage to ensure successful knowledge sharing while maintaining organisational competitive advantages (Souteh et al., 2018). Some factors, however, may have an impact on knowledge sharing in organisations. According to Razmerita, Kirchner, and Nielsen (2016), some of the factors impeding effective knowledge exchanges in organisations include employees' tendencies to hoard knowledge. Jabbary and Madhoshi (2014) hold that organisational culture may impede knowledge sharing in universities since it may impose negative attitudes on university administrators regarding the use of social media for knowledge sharing. A study by Maiga (2017) discovered that organisational

support, human factors, and technology factors may impact or hinder information exchange behaviour among academics in Tanzanian higher education institutions.

3. METHODOLOGY

This study employed mixed methods research (MMR) and a convergent research design, allowing the researchers to collect both quantitative and qualitative data at the same time. The study's population included 633 postgraduate students from four selected HEIs in Tanzania's Northern Zone. A final sample of 239 people was chosen using Krejcie and Morgan's (1970) table for estimating the sample size. Out of the estimated 239 respondents, 171 postgraduate students completed the online survey. Three interview sessions were scheduled with the heads of academic departments at each higher education institution (for a total of 12), but only eight heads of academic departments accepted the invitation. The acquired quantitative and qualitative data were analysed using various approaches. Thematic analysis was performed on the qualitative data gathered from interviews using Atlas.ti version 7. While the quantitative data were descriptively analysed with SPSS version 24, the results were presented in tables, frequencies, and percentages. The quantitative and qualitative strands were blended for comparison, and different reasons for their convergence and divergence were given.

4. RESEARCH FINDINGS

5.1 Demographic characteristics of the respondents

The findings show that the majority of respondents were male 116(67.8%) compared to women 55(32.2%) as shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Gender of Respondents

| Gender of respondents | Frequency (n=171) | Percentage |
|------------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------|
| Male | 116 | 67.8% |
| Female | 55 | 32.2% |
| Total | 171 | 100 |

In terms of age, Table 2 shows that 83 (48.5%) of postgraduate students were between the ages of 28 and 37, followed by 43 (25.1%) of respondents between the ages of 18 and 27, 33 (19.3%) between the ages of 38 and 47, 10 (5.8%) between the ages of 48 and 57, and 2 (1.2%) over the age of 58. The majority of respondents were young and knew how to use social media, making them qualified to contribute the information sought by this study.

Table 2: Age of Respondents

| Age of respondents | Frequency (n=171) | Percentage |
|---------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------|
| 18-27 | 43 | 25.1% |
| 28-37 | 83 | 48.5% |
| 38-47 | 33 | 19.3% |
| 48-57 | 10 | 5.8% |
| Above 58 | 2 | 1.2 |
| Total | 171 | 100 |

4.2 Factors Influencing the Use of Social Media among Students

Table 3 revealed that 97 (56.7%) respondents were influenced to use social media because of the need to interact, 96 (56.1%) possessed skills in using social media, 95 (55.6%) trusted their peers, 92 (53.8%) they were motivated to use such platforms, and 89 (52.0%) have a positive attitude they developed towards social media. Further, 86 (50.3%) mentioned the presence of technology, 77 (45%) perceived ease of use, 74 (43.3%) perceived usefulness, 71 (41.5%) mentioned educational compatibility, 71 (41.5%) indicated personal expectations, 62 (36.3%) mentioned management support, 48 (28.1%) mentioned policy requirements, and 33 (19.3%) mentioned university culture.

Table 3: Factors Influencing the Use of Social Media

| Responses of academic staff | | |
|--|-------------|-------------------|
| Responses | N-30 | Percentage |
| Need to interact | 97 | 56.7% |
| Skills of using Social media | 96 | 56.1% |
| Trust among postgraduate students | 95 | 55.6% |
| Motivation | 92 | 53.8% |
| Individual attitudes towards knowledge sharing | 89 | 52.0% |
| Presence of technology | 86 | 50.3% |
| Perceived ease of use | 77 | 45.0% |
| Perceived usefulness | 74 | 43.3% |
| Educational compatibility | 71 | 41.5% |
| Personal expectations | 71 | 41.5% |
| Management support | 62 | 36.3% |
| Policy requirement | 48 | 28.1% |
| University culture | 33 | 19.3% |

To gain a better understanding of why postgraduate students choose to utilise social media technologies, participants were asked to identify the factors that influenced their decision to use social media platforms for sharing knowledge. Figure 1 is a word cloud that was used to display the factors that interview participants mentioned several times.

Participant HoD-8 explained that:

“The use of social media facilitates the rapid flow of knowledge and has eliminated the distance factor in getting desired knowledge and information”.

5.3 Factors Affecting the Use of Social Media for Knowledge Sharing

Respondents were asked to mention factors affecting the use of social media for knowledge sharing at their institutions. The findings revealed that 79 (46.2%) postgraduate students indicated a lack of skill in the use of social media. 82 (48.0%) lack of training, 80 (46.7%) absence of the required technology, 60 (35.1%) absence of policy, 116 (67.8%) unreliable internet, 61 (35.7%) lack of awareness, 65 (38.0%) lack of trust, 75 (43.9%) unreliable power sources, 78 (45.6) insecurity 66 (38.0%) mentioned the absence of knowledge sharing culture, 59 (34.5%) mentioned the lack of management support, and 47 (27.5%) mentioned the tendency to hoard knowledge as presented in Table 4.

Table 4: Factors Affecting the Use of Social Media by Students

| Responses of postgraduate students | | |
|--|--------------|-------------------|
| Response | N-171 | Percentage |
| Unreliable internet | 116 | 67.8% |
| Lack of training on the use of Social media for Knowledge Sharing | 82 | 48.0% |
| Absence of the required technology/facilities | 80 | 46.8% |
| Lack of skills in the use of Social media for knowledge sharing | 79 | 46.2% |
| Insecurity | 78 | 45.6% |
| Unreliable power sources | 75 | 43.9% |
| Absence of knowledge-sharing culture | 66 | 38.6% |
| Lack of trust | 65 | 38.0% |
| Lack of awareness on the use of Social media for knowledge sharing | 61 | 35.7% |
| Absence of policy regarding knowledge sharing | 60 | 35.1% |
| Lack of management support | 59 | 34.5% |
| The tendency of hoarding knowledge | 47 | 27.5% |

5. DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The findings of the study established that factors such as the perceived usefulness of social media in academics, perceived ease of use of such media outlets, and the need to interact and establish new relationships determined the students' decision towards using social media for exchanging knowledge at the selected higher education institutions in Tanzania. The findings reflect the findings of a study conducted in Pakistan by Abbas et al. (2019), who discovered that the perceived usefulness of technology influenced university students' decisions to utilise social media. The study further revealed that other factors such as positive attitudes towards the use of social

media, availability of internet connectivity, and educational compatibility of social media also determined its use.

Regarding the factors affecting the use of social media, the findings of this study indicated that an unreliable internet connection was a major factor impeding the use of social media for knowledge sharing in the selected higher education institutions for the study. Similarly, Mchome (2017) discovered that unreliable internet reduced the use of social media among secondary school students in his study done in Tanzania. Other factors included a lack of training on the proper use of social media for educational purposes, the absence of policies and procedures on the use of such platforms, the absence of the required technology, and the absence of a culture of knowledge sharing.

6. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The study concluded that the determinants of the use of social media for knowledge sharing among students at the selected higher education institutions in Tanzania were the perceived usefulness of such platforms in academics, their perceived ease of use, and the need for interaction among the students. The problem of internet connectivity affected the use of social media for knowledge sharing at the selected higher education institutions for the study to a greater extent because some students could not afford to buy their internet bundles to get connected. Therefore it is recommended that:

- i) Management of the higher education institutions selected for the study should ensure internet connectivity is available around the campuses by increasing internet bandwidth.
- ii) Training on the proper use of social media should be offered to ensure students are not addicted to social media for non-academic matters because it may impact their academic performance.

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