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## **Dynamics of Social Relationships Formation and Management in the Online Platform among University Students at Selected Universities in Kenya**

By

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Social media is increasingly replacing face-to-face interactions to become the preferred medium for interaction, especially, among the youth. Technology is thus altering the manner in which people interact with each other, with the potential negative consequences on the development of communication and social skills. As online social networking consistently and continuously attracts more and more users, problems are also generated in equal measure. Studies have shown that excessive use of social network sites not only has a long-lasting effect on the psyche of students but also affects the physical, mental, and social aspects of their lives. To assess dynamics of social relationships formation and management in the online platform among university students at selected universities in Kenya. The study utilized a qualitative approach to generate and analyze data. Twenty-two in-depth interviews and two focus group discussions were conducted among university students purposively picked from seven universities in Uasin Gishu County. The universities were conveniently selected. The interviews and focus group discussions were recorded, then transcribed and analyzed thematically. The findings suggest that there is rapid use and expansion of social networking sites for interaction purposes among young adults in universities. Overreliance on Facebook-mediated interactions negatively alters the nature of social interactions among youths consequently affecting the formation of social relationships. Online interactions distract users from engaging in face-to-face interactions, weakens social bonds, and cause conflicts among users and non-users. Nonetheless, interactions through Facebook have contributed to developing and enhancing social relationships in geographically dispersed locations. The study concludes that while Facebook mediated interactions have contributed in the fusion of time and space, hence strengthening communication among individuals in geographically dispersed locations; it is equally undermining the development of social relationships and weakening social bonds among the youths. Online social networking is already a significant part of young adults lives, user must take note that it should not be used as replacement to interpersonal interactions, it should rather be an alternative way of interacting. Users of SNS should monitor their online interactions, such that they do not lose out on real world interactions in pursuit of virtual interactions. FB should be a catalyst for social development, for relationship development and for economic empowerment for youths. Guidance and counseling session be organized in universities to remedy students who have been negatively affected by social media through addiction or those who have experienced cyber bullying or other online vices. Young adults in universities to be sensitized on ways to enhance their personal experiences with social media use, by affirming their social identities.

**Keywords:** Kenya, Social media, Interactions, University students

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### **Introduction**

Online social networking is a popular trend today, especially, among teenagers and young adults in universities. This study examines the influence of Facebook on the social interactions and social relationships of users who are in universities.

Before the entry of mobile phones, social media was a distant phenomenon and face-to-face was the primary medium used to communicate on an interpersonal level. The telegraph came before the mobile phone and was one of the first devices to significantly influence global communication. According to Sydney Aronson, the telephone was the first modern technological invention that connected people on a more intimate level (Aronson, 1977). Around the 20th century, the mobile phone had been upgraded and its influence on communication was beginning to be felt. The technological developments of the internet and mobile phones have created a platform where people can easily interact. The mobile phones synergy with the internet and other technologies has transformed a hand-held device into an increasingly essential tool in people's day to day activities.

People's manners of interacting and connecting have been drastically changing over the years with new ways of access to information and transmission being discovered and used. Innovations in computer-mediated communication have revolutionized methods of interaction which have been highly adopted. These revolutions have consequently affected our interactions with each other, how we present ourselves, and our social, cultural, and biological patterns. However, no matter the levels of innovation and technological sophistication, our primary needs of sharing meaning remain constant (Trenholm, 2020).

With a variety of communication choices created by the use of the internet and technology, individuals are still seen to prefer social network sites in greater numbers. Social Network Sites (SNS) have enabled people to network and interact globally, thereby impacting the lives of many people. Laborie et al (2015) observed that the internet is now more about Facebook, Twitter, blogs and, podcasts. Most users of social media are young people who are still in school. Al-Rahmi and Othman (2013), posit that there is no doubt that social media has gained wider acceptability and usability and is also becoming the most important communication tools among students (Al-Rahmi & Othman, 2013; Laborie, Mylonas, Roose, & Wallace, 2015).

A high number of university students are registered on Facebook and spend a good amount of time using smart-phones and computers, browsing social network sites, particularly, Facebook. They go overboard multitasking so as not to miss any opportunity to check on Facebook status. Recent reports find that youth spend nearly 10 hours per day using some form of technology, with socially networked media playing a large role in their daily lives (Rideout, Foehr, & Roberts, 2010).

Facebook is today's leading social network site with the highest number of subscribers. Facebook was launched in 2004 by founder Mark Zuckerberg. Zuckerberg's initial intention of FB was to provide a communication and support network for Harvard University students. Registration was later extended to include those with an email address

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from any of the Harvard's associate educational institutions. By 2006, Facebook registration restrictions were gradually withdrawn until there were none in place and services were given free of charge (Ellison, Steinfield, & Lampe, 2007). In February 2009, Facebook was recorded as having 175 million subscribers, and that figure rose by five million every week. By 2011, Facebook had exceedingly grown and the number of its registered users globally had risen to more than 750 million (Facebook Adverts, 2011). Facebook currently boasts over a billion users

Kenya has been greatly impacted by technological advances which play a significant role in the lives of many people. Mobile networks and the internet have made social media a preferred means of interpersonal interaction which enabled people across the world to network, share, interact, and come up with information. In Africa, Kenya is ranked at position seven on the number of Facebook users but leads in East Africa (Internet world stats, 2012). Portland (2014) describes Nairobi to be the city that is most active within East Africa and the sixth in the continent when tweeting. Kenya has recently been considered as the leading nation that has embraced the adaptation of technology and again shows the same in terms of social media usage (CAK, 2019).

### **Statement of Problem**

Online social networking sites are being widely used by people in fulfilling their interaction needs. Despite the convenience and benefits of online social networks, its wide dissemination, prevalent use, and over-reliance negatively impact the essence of interactions among young adults in terms of intimacy and affection. Studies have shown that social media gives users a more advanced and convenient lifestyle by enabling a friendly and comfortable way to remain connected with other users. As online social networking consistently and continuously attracts more and more users, problems are also generated in almost equal measure. People become slowly addicted and consequences are visible on the decline of face-to-face interpersonal interactions. People's habits including relationships, emotions, ideas, health, and behavior are changing slowly because of social media influences (Abbasi & Alghamdi, 2017).

Young adults today spend considerable amounts of their time on the internet and online social network sites as a way of connecting with their peers, showcase their social lives, share information, and reinvent their personalities. Social networking has become part of the daily life experience for an increasing number of people. The problem that prompts this study is that social network sites have altered how people interact with each other. With social networking sites becoming the central facilitators of daily interactions among young adults in universities, interpersonal interactions are missing out, consequently affecting social relationships among members of society.

According to Boyd (2008) online social network communication creates an atmosphere of difference between face-to-face communication, online technologies have altered the underlying design of social interaction and information distribution (Boyd, 2008). Kalra and Manani argue that excessive use of social network sites not only have a long-lasting effect on the psyche of students but also affects the physical, mental and social aspect of life (Kalra & Manani, 2013).

New technological advances and the internet have negatively influenced the process of communication. No aspect of human life has been influenced immensely by the internet other than how people communicate with one another. Relationships that were initially created and maintained through physical interaction have now been almost overtaken by

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online social networking which is responsible for creating a new form of interpersonal relationship. The increased use of social network sites among university students has increased physical distance among its users by lowering the rate of face-to-face interactions which normally allow people to share their feelings, information and meaning via verbal and non-verbal messages. With the decline in interpersonal interactions human relationships are weakened and cannot be replaced by social media such as Facebook interactions.

A lot of research has pointed out what people do online, while little has been research has focused on impact of the shift from physical to online and how this then affects human relationships. There are limited studies in Kenya on the influence of social media on interaction patterns among young adults in universities where this research draws its tenets.

### **Study Objective**

The purpose of this study was to understand how mediated communication through Facebook is altering the nature of social interactions among university students and how these impacts on formation and development of social relationships.

### **Review of Related Literature**

#### **History of the development of communication**

According to Tomkins (2005), the earliest ways of sending messages over geographical distances were both visual and sound. In ancient Egypt, Greece and China people used sound to relay messages during the day and beacon fires at night. Drums were used by various civilizations globally to broaden the human voice for communication purposes. The genesis of online networking was born around 550 BC when a concept similar to postal cooperation was set up in Iran and people rode horses and horse-drawn wagons to convey mails and parcels. In the 18th and 19th century, gadgets such as the telegraph was invented in 1972, the telephone in 1980, and the radio in 1891, which reinvented the manner of disseminating messages over long distances (Travis 1994). The need to express communication between institutions in urban settings, coupled with busy traffic, led to the further development of better techniques of telegram and letter transportation.

A further advancement of the phone and radio elevated communication a notch higher, leading to a new scenario in the 20th century that featured expansion and advancement of the internet. According to Hafner, (1998), the internet grew from the exchange of single messages to multiple messages. Email, Bulletin Board System (BBS), Internet Relay Chat (IRC), Blogger, Live Journal and Napster were part of the essential sites for social communications and sharing. The 21st century led to the emergence of social media that has grown at rapid speeds including the era of the Internet-relay-chats (IRC). Today, social media is quickly transforming into a culture of online landscape. Social media has created a huge space from which people can speak with each other, consequently having an impact on the manner in which people keep in touch. Instant messaging has resulted in the emergence of other means of communication where the standard and reaction time has greatly reduced.

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### **2.2.1 Development of Interpersonal Communication**

Interpersonal communication is considered a mutual, continuous process of sending, receiving, and adapting both the spoken and unspoken messages between people to create and change the perceptions that exist in our minds (Smith & Wilson, 2009).

The history of communication demonstrates that whenever any new medium arrives on the communication platform it affects the communication patterns of society. Among the earliest forms of communication was the pigeon - courier that was undermined by the invention of the telegram. The importance of the radio was overtaken when television arrived in the communication sector. Today Internet-based exchange has changed interpersonal communication globally with its immediacy (Wood, 2012). Chatting on social media is a good example of Internet-based interpersonal communication nowadays, making it more likely to gratify users because of the immediacy, convergence, and effectiveness of networking. During online interactions, people communicate whatever they think is important and this is not limited to social issues only. Interpersonal communication on social media has become an important tool of self-expression and self-presentation where individuals attempt to project a perfect life irrespective of reality. People strive to present created or edited pictures of themselves and their surroundings.

The affordability of smart-phones and advanced technological structures are catalyzing addictions to social media and the desire for self-gratification leading to peer pressure. Youth are technically robots that are constantly addicted to posting and checking comments every moment making students become slaves of social media. People end up comparing themselves to others who seem happy on Facebook, thereby finding themselves and their lives miserable as compared to what they see on social media yet this kind of portrayal of happiness is not possible in everybody's life. This leads to a fake life that is full of envy and jealousy by those that are left as spectators on social media. Besides the above argument, various researchers are supporting the fact that too much use of the internet to seek information leads to a decrease in concentration span, creativity, and originality of thought. Nicholas Carr (2014) argues that while the internet enables our cognitive ability to scan and skim, it reduces our intellectual ability to concentrate and contemplate. He further argues that the internet gradually makes us incapable of long hours of intellectual focus. While social media is serving its function of interpersonal communication for social interaction by enabling faster and cheaper communication anywhere anytime, this very feature is becoming a threat to interpersonal communication (Carr, 2014).



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Largely due to the virtual nature of communication, people have become obsessed and addicted to connecting all the time with update status on social media which is consequently leading to ‘not communication’ in the real world. Most frequent internet users are overwhelmed in their virtual communication that they hardly find time to engage in conversation with family or those near their physical surroundings. The aspect of the internet over-communication is not only affecting the quantity and quality of communication but it is also affecting the kind of diction, and language we are using in our informal and formal written communication.

Users are shifting away from the real world and living a virtual world full of fake identities and intimacies consequently alienating those who have no regard for social media or those who are simply disinterested. A case in point affecting the language of social media is the adoption of nonexistent acronyms to facilitate interpersonal communication on Facebook. These acronyms are eventually adopted into spoken language that may not be understood universally by those that are not on social media sites.

### **Genesis of online communities**

Six degrees.com was the first service for online communities that emerged in the mid-90s and attempted to identify and map a set of real relationships between real people using their real names (Kirkpatrick, 2011), thus creating users' personal profiles based on real interests and identity information. Social media began in early 2000 at Silicon Valley, with Friendster representing a breakthrough as the first social network for consumers. It offered a platform and tools for users to create personal profiles, upload pictures and connect with other friends registered on the platform. Friendster was followed by Myspace and Facebook that started competing for dominance and capturing the largest numbers of users.

Myspace was the first social media to attract mainstream media attention when News Corporation acquired it for \$580 million (BBC 2005). This evident popularity of social media propelled the growth of Facebook and YouTube, which indicated a “shift in the organization of online communities” and introduced a new organizational framework for virtual communities organized around personal networks (D. M. Boyd & Ellison, 2007). Facebook was introduced to the public in 2004, and quickly gained more users than the social media pioneer Friendster and Myspace that were mainly focused on music. In the third quarter of 2012, the number of active Facebook users had surpassed one billion, making it the first social network to ever reach such numbers in record time.

According to Facebook’s rapidly growing statistics, as of the second quarter of 2018, Facebook had 2.23 billion monthly active users. The average user has 155 friends and spends an hour a day on the site.

Facebook has created a personalized profile page for each user, the Newsfeed that displays real-time social data of the users' activities (e.g., create, connect, like, tag, etc.) and their friends, clustering them into social graphs showing all the connections linking users to people, preferences, activities, and shared interest groups.

#### **2.2.4 Communication through Facebook**

Communication is an integral component for the functioning of Facebook. Without a means of communicating, there would be no interactivity, participation and social networking. Facebook immensely relies on people’s regular communication for generation of content on the platform. The Facebook platform provides for several communication tools in order to encourage users to remain active consumers of its services.

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Castells (2009) defines communication as ‘the sharing of meaning through the exchange of information’ (pg. 54), and divides the process of communication between “interpersonal communication” and “societal communication.”

Interpersonal communication takes place between two people: the sender of the message and the recipient and often allows for a response. Castells further argues that societal communication is the traditional form of broadcast communication from one to many, directed to no one in particular and flows in one direction only. This includes television and radio. However, in the recent past years, it has allowed recipients a means of response. Communication on Facebook therefore incorporates many communication formats allowing users to communicate on a one-to-one basis through instant chat service and email; on a one-to-many broadcast basis through the creation of wall posts and individual profiles, access to which can be restricted to selected users; on a many-to-one basis as users register their details with Facebook; and on a mass self-communication basis by enabling users to broadcast communication widely by making it available to everyone on the site.

Communication through Facebook has a variety of forms and is not confined to written texts only. Today Facebook allows users to communicate even better through the uploading of self-created videos, uploading links such as YouTube videos and creating and uploading photograph albums and favorite photos. These actions illustrate Thompson’s claim that ‘individuals are constantly engaged in the activity of expressing themselves in symbolic forms’ (Thompson 1995: pg. 167). Thompson’s argument that self-expression is an activity that never ends is a reflection of Facebook’s nature as users are given an opportunity and are able to continually update their personal profiles, express themselves, and communicate their preferences in various ways to continually display revised versions of their self-identity (Ambrozas, 1997).

Through Facebook communication, users can simultaneously inform a wide array of friend’s personal events about their lives such as status change from single to married, anniversaries, and birthdays free of charge and would receive response immediately they receive the message, therefore, rendering temporal and spatial boundaries irrelevant. People mainly use Facebook to maintain contact and build personal relationships and Twitter as a way of staying updated with the ever-changing news item and trends.

### **Situating the Study in the Field of Communication Studies**

Communication is a fundamental need in people's lives and a source of social capital, it plays a role in outlining people’s roles and boundaries in society. People cooperate with each other as a desire to survive and the main source of the connections is communication. In the 21st century, there is a challenge of over communication which is developing a new kind of social order that strengthens mass communication and weakens interpersonal communication. Social media is transforming the contours of social interaction, emotions like love, friendship, family bonding, intimacy and language are finding various platforms of expression (Bala, 2014). Kiran further emphasizes that the new medium always invades the traditional methods. Scholars have argued that too much reliance on social media in seeking information reduces creativity and originality of thought, that the quality and quantity of communication, language, diction, and grammar are also affected. Further, youths are straggling to showcase themselves by posting statuses and edited photos in an effort to brand themselves or build certain images about themselves in the virtual world, yet these images sent out may be totally different from their realities. Those persons not registered on social media or lack interest in it may feel alienated which may cause a digital dived.

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## **Human Communication**

Human communication is composed of both intrapersonal communication and interpersonal communication. Intrapersonal communication being that communication you have with yourself, whereas interpersonal communication occurs during interaction with others, it can be face-to-face as well as through electronic channels (Vito, 2019).

According to DeVito (2019) human communication has some principles that must be observed for effective communication. The first principle is the process of adjustment; this reflects on intercultural communication when one has to differentiate cultural background with different signals and meanings, here the process of adjustment is to reduce the gap by making communication successful. Communication is ambiguous as messages can be interpreted in different ways. The most common ambiguity created would be on grammar; this can be counteracted by the use of native language to reduce such ambiguity. Another principle is that communication involves content and relationships dimension. A communication piece should involve a relationship between a speaker and listener; and the content of the message; the influence of social media will be studied following tenants of this principle. Another principle is that communication has power, this is one's ability to influence and control the behavior of another person. In this study, this would mean the ability of a social media user to influence other users negatively or positively. Successful communication is purposeful, entails cause, and effects intending to learn, to relate, and to influence. This calls for this study to investigate the influences of social media on communication in the same form. The last principle is that communication is inevitable, irreversible, and unrepeatable. The gist is where interaction is always ongoing all the time, where, what is said, cannot be reversed and repeated, taking an example of a message posted up on Facebook, to what extent can it be reversed and repeated for the purposes of communication.

There are several stages in interpersonal relationships of human communication. Relationships normally start from the contact stage; it's the stage of getting to know someone physically, with the qualities of friendliness, warmth, and dynamics. This initial part creates perception to a person. On the contrary relationships on the online platform begin without a physical evaluation. On the online platform, perception is formed through online signals and meaning. The second phase of interpersonal relationship of human communication is involvement; a sense of mutuality and being connected is developed. This phase allows the relationship to grow and may also happen through social media. This phase allows users of social media to get to know each other in-depth and the contents being shared and posted are assumed to be genuine. This study will generally focus on the ways types of communication shared and language on Facebook are used and how they influence interpersonal communication but not really to analyze deeply the genuinely of contents shared.

The third phase of interpersonal relationships is intimacy; this involves interpersonal commitment and social bonding. Individual's bond and may wish to display publicly through Facebook. The final phase would be either repairing the relationships, deteriorating with dissatisfaction, or dissolution with separations. In all the stages of interpersonal relationships in human communication, individuals need to take cautious steps at every stage for social unity. According to Tubbs (2010), the first characteristic of relationships is its context. Context refers to the setting and the social-psychological environment of a relationship that takes place. This is reflective of a social media scenario, being an online space where acceptance of relationships can take place through messages and requests posted on the requisite pages of Facebook.



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Another characteristic of relationships is time. The longer the time taken the further a relationship is developed on grounds of trust, interdependence, and commitment, this is now notable and becoming a trend as such elements developed through social media over time. In the social sphere, there is no objective answer or reality to affirm whether such elements have a negative or positive impact on social cohesion. The research aims to investigate the influences the social media space has on communication style and how this communication could be evolving over time. The last characteristic of a relationship is trust. Deception can be a cause of a lack of trust and commitment.

Communication in interpersonal relationships has been influenced by technology with its advantages and disadvantages. There are times when the one-on-one communication between human beings falls through the cracks and technology can take control (Sorensen, 2010). It is also stated that social networking such as Facebook has changed the ways of communication. The concern is that the influence of technology can be a hindrance to interpersonal relationships but to McQuillen (2003), the entry of the Internet has made the world smaller in terms of global interaction but wider in terms of one-on-one relationships. According to Madianou and Miller (2013), the profound transformation in the usage of increasingly converged communication technologies has implications in the ways interpersonal communication is enacted and experienced (Madianou & Miller, 2013).

Referring to Mustafa and Hamzah (2011), internet technology is being adopted rapidly and is increasingly being used by the majority of people. Internet is being used for more than just information processing and now as means of communication in social interaction (Mustafa & Hamzah, 2011). Today interactions may take place in the virtual world without having a face-to-face conversation at the same place and same time. More and more people use social media to meet their psychological and social needs. Internet is the place to meet and interact and form social relationships. This view has affected the pattern of behavior with the advancement of technologies. The use of social network sites (SNS) is designed to connect people with friends, family, and other strong ties, as well as to efficiently keep in touch with a larger set of acquaintances and new ties (Burke, Kraut, & Marlow, 2011).

As per the arguments of Gross and Acquisti (2005), SNS has drastically increased over the years. Recent, services such as Facebook, Tribe and Friendster allow millions of users to create online profiles and engage in sharing information with a vast network of friends. This is particularly useful when users around the globe could not meet friends on a face-to-face level due to hectic lifestyles. This would similarly apply to university students who travel globally to seek higher education or those who are separated from their friends through exchange and mobility programs. This implies the need of looking at the behavioral change when social media is widely used in people's daily life (Gross & Acquisti, 2005).

A counter-argument was raised by Tyler on whether the internet is changing social life or staying the same. Tyler posits that the basic nature of people's relationships with others may have changed less because of the Internet than is often suggested. Tyler argues that rather than people turning to the internet as a way of hiding from real life, those that are lonely and socially anxious, turn to the internet as a means of forming close and meaningful relations with others. He further states that the internet offers features that enable users to have added efficiencies in their communications. It is used together with other channels like telephone and mail communications. According to Tyler when relations have been developed to a certain level, users will strive to bring the relationship to the real life. It is also mentioned that "whether the Internet is, in fact, a social-leveling technology depends not upon the

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technology itself, but upon the political and social framework within which it is implemented” (Tyler, 2002, pg. 195).

In support of Tyler's idea, DeAndrea et al, indicated that people use social network sites to interact with friends, family and acquaintance, according to them these basic motives, manifested through communication, are not vanquished because social interaction occurs online (DeAndrea, Ellison, LaRose, Steinfield, & Fiore, 2012). Social network is a community structure based on individuals or organizations connected through the Internet by specific types of interdependencies such as friendship, family, common interests, dislikes, acquaintances, or prestige. Arguments arise on social media's pros and cons. This research will deliberately focus on and investigate whether Facebook interactions are useful for the development of meaningful and intimate social relationships among its users.

### **Computer-Mediated Communication**

CMC is a new phenomenon yet unique interaction platform that may soon substitute or supplement FTF interactions. In a study with an international sample, Parks and Roberts (1998) found out that approximately 94 per cent of the participants (91 per cent from the U.S., Canada, and Australia), had formed at least one actively involved personal relationship on the Internet.

Among the scholars, the jury is still out on whether or not individuals develop meaningful relationships on the internet, as compared to FTF interactions. Some scholars argue that online networking has liberated interaction patterns from the traditional constraints and boundaries like time and place. CMC has had negative consequences in terms of building personal relationships compared to FTF interactions, which has an abundance of verbal and nonverbal clues (Baker, 2002).

Some scholars have argued about the disadvantages of CMC, among the barriers in CMC is a high degree of uncertainty about interactions due to limited cues, according to Parks and Adelman, (1983) CMC as compared to FTF, result in greater uncertainty making it almost impossible to identify behavioral norms, rules governing relationships, and interpretations of certain behaviors displayed in interactions. This weakness and gaps displayed by CMC could be catalysts to discouraging the development of intimate interaction thereby establishing poor relationships.

It is difficult for attraction to occur in a CMC setting because interpersonal attraction typically assumes frequent interaction, physical presence and access to a wide range of social information. Kim (2000) argues by stating that the text-based nature of CMC and its lack of socio-emotional cues may facilitate aggressive behavior, as a result, people may forge fewer socio-emotional bonds. CMC brings a challenge of lack of interaction history and shared norms which consequently possess a challenge to the development of close relationships on the online networking platform, this line of thought is further given weight by Kim (2016) who assert that CMC users tend to engage in more verbal aggression, inappropriate self-disclosure, and conflict-inducing behavior than FTF interaction partners. For example, “flaming” refers to abrasive or even abusive behavior that is common in CMC and that pose a threat to online relationship development.

On the flip side, some scholars have addressed the pessimist assumptions about relationship development on CMC. The negative assumption has also been questioned by new theories and empirical findings. Walther et al (2008) proposed the SIP on CMC that offers an alternative argument that CMC’s weaknesses due to reduced cues and channel deficiency could be overcome over time if interactions occur frequently and are sustained for

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a prolonged time. The proponents of the theory state as much as few nonverbal cues are present in CMC, given enough time for frequent message exchanges and self-disclosure, intimate relationship development can occur in CMC just as it occurs in FTF interactions.

According to Walther et al (2008) users of CMC may not only become intimate over time but may even become “hyperpersonal” thereby creating a greater sense of intimacy than FTF partners can, Walther further argues that the equivalent of nonverbal symbols for example emoticons on Facebook and other visual signs can contribute to the success of relationship development over time.

Utz confirmed the tenants of SIP theory in her study of German college students. The respondents in the study who predominantly used the internet reported developing friendships online and they expressed emotions through paralanguage. In the study, it comes out that the link between making online friends and the use of paralanguage is made possible by the time spent on the internet for communication purposes. Meaning that sustained online interaction should be able to overcome the absence of physical displays of affection and lead to a close, meaningful relationship (Utz, 2000).

## **Methodology**

### **Research Approach**

This study was conducted using the qualitative approach. this study utilized qualitative approach belonging within the constructivist paradigm.

### **Sampling**

The study was conducted in universities within Eldoret town, Uasin-Gishu County. Eldoret town was selected as it hosted many public and private universities. Uasin Gishu County is home to five public universities and three private universities, namely; the number of students enrolled are detailed below Moi University (35,000), University of Nairobi campus (600), University of Eldoret (20,000), Kisii University campus (1,700) and Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology campus (1,300), Mt. Kenya University campus (2,500) and the Catholic University of Eastern Africa (CUEA) campus (1,700).

Since the universities and university campuses were closely located and within a fairly busy Eldoret town, students interacted on the social media platform and were available for participation. This research targeted young adults from universities within Eldoret town. Second and third year students were purposively selected to participate in the study. First year students were left out from the study because they were new to the institution and may not have networked well, whereas the fourth years were busy preparing for completion of their studies in the university.

The study used purposive sampling to select students who used Facebook for their daily interactions. The snow balling technique was used to recruit study participants for in-depth interviews, after the first participant was interviewed, they referred the researcher to the next participant. This was done until the saturation point was reached. The total population of the study was 40 respondents. The study used two focus group discussions, FGD 1, which had ten participants, and FGD 2, which had nine participants. The study also used in-depth interviews where 21 participants that frequently use FB were purposively selected for participation.

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### **Data Generation Techniques and Processes**

The study used focus group discussions and in-depth interviews to generate data

### **Data Analysis**

The study employed qualitative analysis which means to; reduce, sort, analyze, categorize. The key steps for analysis and data processing are to reduce to definitive statements and sort, codify, classify or categorize in form of theoretical concepts, analyze concepts and compare with the outcomes of the textual review, then drawing conclusions. The study carried out a thorough text analysis in form of qualitative data processing, then developed and assigned themes that created meaning, insights and patterns.

The study focused on tenets and processes of thematic data analysis that include; transcription, organization of data into retrievable sections, coding and organizing data into themes and subthemes.

### **Transcription**

Data from the FGD and interviews were transcribed verbatim as soon as possible to ensure recall of interview and FGD discussions. For proper recall and interpretation of transcription, the audio recordings were listened to again and compared to the verbatim transcriptions.

The non-verbal clues and gestures were noted as they too communicate meaning. Transcription notation symbols, comments and the taking of field notes as suggested by Henning et al. (2004) were used to capture non-transcribable text to gain as much of the complete picture as possible.

### **Data Organization**

After texts were transcribed and thoroughly read to obtain a comprehensive impression of the content, the next stage was thematic data analysis. Data was organized in manageable and retrievable sections. This stage involved cleaning and winnowing of data.

Attempts were made to re-familiarize with the data by re-reading notes, making notes and memos where they were needed. This step led to coding.

### **Coding**

This study utilized open coding to analyze the qualitative data. In the study, as progress was made with analysis, further sub-themes and subcategories were included to identify meaning connections, relationships and trends that helped developed codes.

### **Ethical Considerations**

A consent letter was received from Moi University for fieldwork and a clearance from NACOSTI. Prior permission was sought from target participants, and their privacy was assured. Participants need to be comfortable sharing their beliefs and feelings about the topic, for this reason, responses were anonymous and identities were not disclosed. The study adhered to voluntary participation and participants were advised that their decision and participation would have no impact on the academic standing of the university. Finally, extra caution was taken to avoid any kind of plagiarism in the thesis.

### **Results**

There were a total of 40 respondents. In the in-depth interviews 21 respondents participated, of which 11 were female and 10 were male. A total of 2 FGDs were conducted, which had a

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total of 19 respondents, 10 females and 9 males. FGD respondents were spread from all the universities and from the second and third years of study.

### **Modernity and Trending Social Culture**

According to some respondents Facebook is the ideal place for users to adopt and copy new trends that are in the raise locally and internationally. It is through Facebook that users are changing their lives by adopting to what seems fashionable and what is trending. Majority of the respondents claim that young adults in universities are no longer themselves or original, they dislike their present states and want to ape what is popular in the SMS.

Interactions are changing, first we copy some people then we are no longer original, we copy how people carry themselves, we are skewed in our judgments because of what we see online, what celebrities make us think is correct and not through our conscious minds and not through critical thinking  
**(RS 1)**

Some respondents have argued that the desire of young adults to always be trendy has made the users tired and weak, users of FB have become isolated and tried to even think of talking to each other because they are overwhelmed online.

It is not uncommon for a lecture room full of young adults not to sport at least a good number lost in their phones so often on Facebook checking what's trending, who has posted what. Both men and women want to know about the socialites they follow what they have in store in terms of fashion etc. The bottom-line is Facebook has robbed the beauty and essence of originality among us in the universities **(RS 4)**

People are very fake in the virtual world and this does in no way help social interactions or rather meaningful social capital among young people. People are unable to meet and interact, we hear cases of suicide in the universities because there is no platform for students to vent out what is hurting them be it relationships going soar or hitting the rocks with academic matters **(RS 13)**

Respondents one, four and thirteen are all concerned that FB encourages users to fake their lives and this faking affects the levels of social interactions, in their respective arguments there seems to be a clear agreement that when social ties are torn apart then individuals suffer from many dangers such as cases of suicide, suspicion, skewed judgments, depression and lack of critical thinking ability.

### **Development of Rapid Casual Relationships**

FB is being highly regarded for the creation and initiation of wider than ever opportunities to create friendships. However according to majority of the respondents the relationships on FB could be higher in number but shorter in lasting periods and weaker in nature. FB and SM is credited for creating opportunities for interactions but the interactions are too superficial, young adults are connecting more than ever before in history but the downside is that these interactions are not adding up in being quality in nature, users can still be very lonely while claiming to have thousands of online friends. Young adults have realized the dangers that can



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occur as a result of online interactions and they now fear to expose relationships on FB since anyone person with a sinister motive can work with an intention to harm other users.

When I was in university, we had a portal for students, a place where those who we elected would keep us informed, but mostly this site has negatively worked in building relationships. This site would be a place of small talk politics and romance in campus. The down side of such sites is that where users had a misunderstanding there was a downfall or things could not work out those involved in the turmoil would disseminate their troubles online to everyone. This becomes a place of shame, abuses and laughter for the haters. In the campus portal, incidences of nude photos of students posted online were common and this has really destroyed possibilities of healthy relationships in campus **(RS 14)**

For me it has defiantly worsened relationships among us in campus, FB is a place to expose someone, it focuses on the bad side of someone, it hides the good parts of individual and only dwells on the negative **(RS 4)**

Some respondents have claimed that FB interactions are the inn thing today because of FB people are able to socialize more than ever before in history, that human ties have become stronger and people are living in better communities as they are able to socialize and solve their problems together. Some young adults claim that they are now connected with long lost friends whom they would have otherwise never met if there was no FB. SM in that case has reshaped interactions globally and in most positive of ways.

I interact a lot with my peers, I talk to lots of opposite sex friends, we flirt a lot, I actually enjoy flirting and making new friends, FB has enabled me be known and I get good receptions when I meet my online friends for the first time. I am able to even make friends in the diaspora which makes me a global person **(RS 4)**

Some young adults believe there are authentic relationships that emerge from Facebook. Authentic in that they lead to healthy and productive relationships or outcomes that are either long lasting or short-term based depending on the reason of establishment. On the contrary, there are also illegal relationships that emerge from Facebook.

Some relationships have positive impacts but some advance negative effects on the participants and are against the expectations of the society. They include; relationships that advance drug trafficking, illegal smuggling, robbery with violence, gangs also form on Facebook and lure innocent users extorting cash from them in pretense that they offer certain services. The case of imposters is also forming ground for illegal relationship that young adults can come together and indulge in **(RS 3)**

The third respondent believes that there are healthy relationships on FB however just like the other respondents pointed out that FB has its negative effects which include illegal relationships that advance vices such as drug trafficking, violence, terrorism and tribalism.

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There is change in the manner that interactions and friendships are viewed through SM like Facebook, online people value interactions in a whole new contemporary way that is different from how friendship and interactions were carried out in the past. People express love by tagging each other, sending emojis and not really being there for those they love, this is captured emotionally by a respondent.

Nowadays FB love is show in a different way, we show love by posting photos and not buying flowers, tagging in posts is a new form of love. When you fail to tag a loved one, you are not showing love. This has reshaped the whole purpose of interaction for meaningful friendships. On birthdays we send emojis and electronic flowers to replace that much needed and appreciated phone call and consequently making life easier but breaking relationships **(RS 6)**

The aspect that FB allows anyone to post their opinions without fear is working towards damaging some otherwise good relationships, FB has the power to destroy relationships as people are courageous to say anything because they are not in close proximity to those they attack online. Those ones that post online are sometimes unable to express themselves offline and avoid interactions. FB is accused of initiating relationships quickly but not capable of maintaining the relationships.

It has really reshaped how people interact, initially people would take time to know each other, visit each other but today students just engage directly on FB **(RS 4)**

The nature of FB allows for users to fake identities, post anything they wish without fear of being known and again attack anyone. Since majority of FB users are young adults in universities has allowed for students to be vulnerable to stalkers who have bad motives, FB is the one stop shop to reach anyone who an online attacker may wish to get to.

In my opinion the online social networks are full of malice with selfish people who may not mean well, what majority of people are after is to fulfil their own needs and not yours. People who make request seek to fulfil a particular need which many not be in your favor **(RS 4)**

I have witnessed relationship terminating because of FB friendships and companionships, I have seen students extorted, used, killed and raped because they had dared nature a relationship through FB **(RS 12)**

This fact then makes students suspicious of online friend request, especially accepting friend requests from unknown people or people with strange names. Some people have names such as Lucifer and this sends a wrong impression to other online users who consequently decide to privatize their accounts closing the opportunity to make friends with some genuine online users of FB.

Today there are many fake profile or accounts on FB, or just people with real profiles but posting all the fake staff there, so how can a relationship begin on a fake account? Nowhere! Who is real anymore on FB? However, FB is good

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for client and businessman relationship because you can get so many clients and develop long term relationships after assisting each other makes some bucks and partner for customers **(RS 10)**

Respondent 10 narrates the fact about fake profiles on FB, she bitterly expresses her disgust about unreal people or unreal profiles, on these accounts she totally dismisses any productive online friendships, she only approves of business interactions that can develop truly genuine friendships.

If we talk about peer relationships, I think FB has helped to maintain peer relationships as I know people I went with to high school and luckily through FB we are still able to maintain contact and talk to each other, I also believe that romantic relationships do start and last through Social media and online stuff is dangerous, they say internet never forgets, what you post will be exposed in clarity and in detail, watch people you engage, insults, groups you get in and relationships you develop **(RS 9)**

Respondent 9 believes that FB does not have much influence although it has helped maintain peer relationships. Just like majority of the respondents the respondent believes that FB has negative stuff influences and results. Respondent sixteen below advocates that FB indeed reshapes interactions positively by its innovative features that allow users to have unique abilities to interact in a friendly and timely manner.

Today with the provision of the online status that shows whether the persons you want to engage with are actually online, has enabled easy communication among not only the university students. The environment on Facebook is a less formal one and people communicate at almost equal levels as though they were peers. It has also reduced the world into a small community where students from across the world converge and share their concern. Networked relationship has been a possibility thanks to Facebook **(RS 16)**.

Focus group discussions conducted deemed to support the responses from the in-depth interview like one of the respondents from the FGD had this to say:

Relationships that are developed online are reshaping our methods and longevity of relationships; we have very superficial relationships thanks to FB. FB has contributed to some of the social relationships that are virtual but fake, the other social relationships that are virtual are when you take a photo and over edit it, when the photo is viewed it is liked by many online, perhaps your name and what you do is all not real including the photos online. **(Rs 1, FGD 1, 1)**

On the basis of triangulation this is evident that FB relationships are not real and most of them are there to benefit the interested party.

Laziness in interactions is also evident from frequent FB users, because of FB users have gotten too lazy with themselves, including personally grooming, where users only look smart and well-dressed when taking photos for posting but are too lazy to groom themselves

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while not posting or sharing images and videos online. User of FB and majority being young adults in universities no longer go out to meet up with their peers, they love remaining indoors as they can chat away and even send and share videos. Young adults in the universities no longer meet up for group discussion as this class group are nowadays attended online, classes are even being skipped.

Some students have gone to an extent of forming academic group discussion forums where some students won't be attending classes but will be following aggressively what is being discussed by other students. One does not have to necessarily attend classes; in fact, this inculcates laziness and a sense of irresponsibility amongst young adults. **(RS 8)**

Peer pressure made me join FB as such as it was difficult then because we used to use cyber since smart phones were not out then. I believe FB, social media and the internet has made people lazy, most students are on FB and they are on group chats, students exchange ideas through FB and FB messenger, this feature make them too lazy that they care less for proper interaction. This has killed the togetherness because there are no more physical interactions among even students belonging to class groups. The drive to do work is not there, the drive to meet up is no longer there because FB has made everything easy causing even laziness of interactions. The only positive thing I can say about FB is that you get to talk to anybody anytime in the world. **(RS 14)**

The use for PR, in as much as Facebook and the new technologies is a blessing to the new generations. It has been a conduit of creating a lazy population that spends many hours weekly on the platform **(RS 16)**

Respondent sixteen uses FB as a public relation tool and believes it has made communication easy, despite this positivity he believes FB has the capability of making people lazy. Respondent 14 Joined FB as a means of interaction due to peer pressure and thinks FB has made people lazy, killed face to face interactions which has led to lack of sharing of ideas causing lack of originality. He also believes it has affected interaction patterns among students. Majority of his views of FB are negative and the only thing positive on FB is the ability to communicate to anyone at any time.

### **Diminishing Confidentiality and Privacy**

Today on SMS privacy and confidentiality is not a possibility, this could be by choice or by force. Users sometimes are prompted by FB features and peer pressure to share their private matters including feelings with a global audience. Some users who want to remain in a private state are exposed by online friends to a global audience with just the click of a button and your privacy is gone and then you end up a victim of public critic.

There is no privacy in interactions anymore, everything is spread out to the public, for public critics, public entertainment and scrutiny, people show up their private matters including moods and feelings, in fact the post page on FB instructs to say what one is feeling. For me feelings and emotions are private matters and therefore its use has really affected interactions, in that emotions that would be shared by loved ones alone is now shared with the whole world who can even dictate without consequence for one to commit suicide even on the most of trivial matters **(FGD 2,5)**.

It is almost impossible to hide one's identity on FB, these are some of the things that lead to cyber-crimes and scary enough meetings that lead to crimes like rape, murder and many

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unresolved crimes because the perpetrator used fake identity on social media. One respondent from a FGD confessed of having a fake identity:

I am concerned with cyber security, there is some offline information and the online identity, in the online identity we struggle to maintain an image, this makes people adjust interaction methods most of the time. When I used FB back then my FB account was very active while I was in high school, you know back then I had full friends, my account was actually full. I used fake identities on FB I has a first name Chris Brian **(RS 4, FGD 1)**.

### **Emergence of Online Business Marketing**

Respondent 10 was a youth leader in the university and used FB in all his communications for the youth forums, the respondent expresses confidence in the use of FB for businesses and youth forums and claims to be the best way to reach out to majority of his constituents, he further asserts that FB has enabled him outreach even other youths in the East African community which got him fame and was noted as the top conversationalist.

When in the university I involve myself in many youth leadership programmes one of them was the social inter-university FB challenge whereby we were proposing the East Africa integration and I would post every day on FB the benefits of the integration that would include common market, monetary union, the ultimate political federation, so I used it as a platform to engage the youths and I was a top conversationalist on the platform and I got so many friends across east Africa and who today we talk and have made advances in life **(RS 10)**.

I am able to get in to platform to get good deals, I also look for job adverts, I have interests in modeling and I find myself modeling and through my own modeling, agencies have been able to notice and use me **(RS 17)**.

FB is a beautiful platform, it has enabled us interact, know so many people and also get some opportunities in life, it also has a wider view, it has however fueled some very mischievous behavior to thrive therein, thing like drug abuse, human trafficking, pornography and dating sites **(RS 6)**.

Respondent 17 uses FB for business purposes and has gotten good deals in the past. According to her FB is a place to find jobs and networks. RS 6 further supports the idea that FB opens up opportunities for people but also notes that if not used wisely FB can be a source of vices such as pornography, drug abuse and human trafficking.

Facebook has revolutionized over the years and changed from just being a platform that connects the world and build human interactions to being a multi-functional platform that supports businesses, reaching out to people concerning social dilemmas, platforms for activism, advertising and building communities with people who share in the same beliefs, value systems, opinions, passions e.t.c. **(RS 13)**



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Like respondents ten, six and seventeen, the respondent (thirteen) emphasizes that FB is a good tool for business interactions which unities human beings, she has all good things to say about FB and calls FB a “multi- functional platform” that can help reaching out to people concerning social dilemmas, platforms for activism, advertising and building communities with people who share in the same beliefs, value systems, opinions, passions.

Many users in the FGD’s were of the same opinion here is what some had to say:

I have more friends on FB than Instagram, I just put-up things we do in our company and what we do, this is like business for me, when I also want to do online shopping go to FB as more products are there, I also go there for gossip and get entertained by gossip, I have an opportunity to get different perspectives from different people and I grow just a little bit by learning something’s online. **(RS 4, FGD 1, 4)**

I only go online for professional reasons, I follow few people and most of them have meaning and content so what I get there is just what matters for me, normally I would see less notifications, posts and comments as most of my FB friends only communicate and interact on professional grounds. **(RS 3, FGD 1, 4)**

I am into interior design so I join sites that show case interior design and also for groups of people or groups purposefully designed and engage in interior designing. **(RS, 2 FGD 1)**

Today majority of political campaigns, manifestos and agendas are disseminated on SM and especially FB. This is both with the public and learning institutions including Universities. Interactions are now different in universities, before the student’s leaders would go to halls or residents and sell their manifestos and then they would hold public barazas and kamkunjis to address their supporters’ questions, this modes of interactions in campus politics have changed because of FB. Today potential leaders work in their halls with a few political advisers who then create FB pages, and prepare political rhetoric to sell to the students. The campaign is no longer a public affair and students get to interact less or meet up their leaders, sometimes the political campaigns was a place of fun and bonding but today leaders or candidates create groups and students engage on this groups online killing the whole fun that used to be there during camping interactions.

In the university leaderships, potential leadership candidates would start recruiting supporters from the FB platform, such that by the time they candidates would go physically go to meet their constituents they were already known and have an influence **(RS 3)**

### **Reconfiguration of the Public Sphere**

FB has reshaped interactions among its majority young adults in many ways, FB gives a unique opportunity for anyone registered to network, and people who are naturally anti-social have now found a place where they can express themselves. Some people are totally unable to speak in gatherings or small groups because of stage fright but FB has allowed them to express themselves even on live video clips, messages and through emojis. According to

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respondents such people who are public shy compensate for their weakness in SM including FB where they are very loud and controversial. FB has helped users overcome self-esteem issues.

The Western influence could also be a reason as to why young adults have resolved to use Facebook as a form of interaction. A typical African would value persons and friendships but this is slowly slipping out of the young adults.

Respondents have claimed that FB has caused a breakdown of human ties by affecting the normal interactions since cultural norms are being ignored while interacting. Cultural norms form a critical part of proper and meaningful interactions and when they are ignored humans living in a community are socially broken down.

FB's power to influence people's behavior, has drastically reshaped interaction patterns of users. We are now influenced so much by FB that we even change our dressing, our manner of speech, our personalities and the list is endless. Cultural orientation is reshaped and people no longer following cultural norms while in communities. We are critically getting rid of who we are or what we are and our interactions are consequently affected, however globalization aspect gets to benefit **(RS 19)**.

The respondent had no positive things to say about FB unlike other respondents she dwells on the negatives of interactions caused by FB effects on cultural norms. She claims that frequent users of FB ignore the cultural norms while interacting and this breaks down the social ties of people living in a community. Despite all that the respondent feels that FB is a good way of communication and it has revolutionized the global village.

FB is a global phenomenon, it has allowed its users to overcome limitations of time and space, people can embrace diversity and learn to be tolerant in their views because of the exposure they get from sharing experiences globally. Young adults can meet up online on a global scale, share views, interests and studies depending on their needs.

Social media at large has enabled students interact in academic circles as they can easily discuss matters academic, they can argue and exchange references and share different views of different scholars in a friendly and instantaneous manner. Most of those people who are there collect samples and want to know more about something, when they ask on FB, FB people are free and always ready to assist, people online are brutally honest and can critique and situation with varying evidences **(RS6)**.

FB has become good news in this global village we live in today, we are able to network with anyone anytime and in real time, this is working well for global interactions.

With FB I am now able to interact with my many friends in the diaspora, I am able to keep tabs with what's new, including movies, fashion and trends, FB interaction has made me sort of an idol among my friends as I always appear exposed and informed. However, these trends coming from the diaspora has made some students misbehave and ape a western lifestyle which get them in a lot of trouble, eg. drugs, online dating, slaying, pornography etc. The dangers of the global networks are that we end up isolating ourselves from our real

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world and throwing away our culture and religion which keep us on check **(RS 9)**

Both respondent 6 and 9 argue for the benefits of FB for causing globalization which to them is a good thing for improvement of interactions and therefore improving human lives, they state people are able to get better networks and help their various community because of FB's power to cause interactivity in a global scale.

Majority of the young adults who frequently use social media have come to trust it as a credible source of information, a place of learning, teaching or looking for counseling or advice services.

Facebook (FB) has become like the new free consultancy and counseling sites for its users, we no longer go to pastors or parents, elders and even counselors when we have trouble but now young adults and even teenagers interact on FB to sort out their troubles, the true opinion now lies on FB. **(RS, 8)**

Facebook (FB) is also a place of over information; materials online are too overwhelming that it even becomes difficult to pick what is genuine from what is fake. Anyone can publish and post content without any form of gate keeping and this could mislead a majority of readers.

From discussions it is clear that Facebook (FB) is a top agenda setter among young adults, apart from it being trendy FB is responsible for setting the stage on what is important and needs to be discussed by the youths, sometimes there could be some very pressing matters in a community but when FB discussions are on the agenda remains on FB and not what could be important and urgent for the community.

There seems to be a more personalized 'touch' to interactions. In conversations, Facebook more often referred to as FB, while walking on Campus Street the conversations always seem to revolve over what was on the comrades FB page as everyone is deep buried in their smartphones reacting to the campus page posts. This discussion forms an agenda for a whole day's interactions among students. When you would ask one about their thoughts on the online agenda, a common phrase engulfs the atmosphere; 'I'll get back to you on FB, check on FB I responded comprehensively, etc **(RS 5)**

So young persons in universities form groups on the basis of their interests, so guys with a common interest will be lost in their world discussing something intriguing that happened or is trending on Facebook **(RS 8)**

Facebook (FB) is mostly used for show offs, people use it to showcase their glossy lifestyles, their travels clothes and connection. When FB is continually used for purposes to showcase lifestyle it eventually leads to impression management of the user. Users use it to express certain opinions and take issue with those with contrary opinions, this leads to a user developing a certain aura about them because of the stands they take online. The online posts have gone a long way in influencing the way students change their lives and interact Today as I speak most students in the university have the smart phones which they claim they use for research but the reality is that 80% in my opinion use it for social media purposes and especially FB for showcasing and reinventing their lifestyles. **(RS 4)**

Some year back I used to use Facebook (FB) to showcase myself I would use it to show off some of my fancy travels, ideas and even experiences. I used FB to also share with friends the good things that are happening in my life, I have never expressed my bad days nor sad emotions. People are no longer real; people want to fake everything and because

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everything is fake they have to keep a distance from their friends for fear that they may realize what they are faking. We alienate our real and close friends for online relationships and when we face difficulties in life, we take on the axe and kill someone because we are emotionally imbalanced. The university social halls are empty; people are emotionally unstable and quick to anger because they have no problem-solving skills do to over reliance of FB interaction. **(RS 21)**

Respondents assert that due to the pressure for impression management fake comradeship occurs and these relationships consequently became unreal.

When we finish campus, we will be unable to network and make it in life because we lost much needed friendships while in campus. Many of the romantic relationships in campus do not last much because they are built on sand and not on solid rock. Students pick lovers, and especially us girls' pickup boys that are popular, bad boys who are famous for all the wrong things. No wonder we end up being victims of sexual abuse, defilement rape and even domestic violence. **(RS 21)**

Respondent 21 used to use Facebook (FB) as a channel for bragging and showing of but currently his use of social media network has declined. He believes that FB has reduced face to face interactions and students no longer talk to each other and the relationships that exist are fake he goes on to blame Facebook for a lot of negative things which include sexual abuse domestic violence, defilement and rape.

Another respondent from FGD 2 had this to say:

Majority of young adults in universities use FB as a means of seeking attention, they use it to get publicity, FB is the place students get a lot of likes and get noticed, this is a place they show off their lifestyle, new cloths boyfriends and their travels, they show off how classy they are and how the roll in the university **(RS 3)**.

### **Weakened face to face interactions**

There is an argument that FB has drastically weakened physical interactions among those young adults usually in close proximity, it is observed by majority of respondents that many times you will find students buried in their smart phones and not caring to even share pleasantries and greetings.

Today when you want to reach out to people you have to get their attention online, young people don't meet up to share their experiences in campus, they are accustomed to following the discussions online and ignore their close friends. Within institutions of higher learning young adults cannot network among themselves and this breaks social ties making students experience lonely and frustrating. Young adults in campus are more depressed and frustrated today than in the times when we had no social media. Cases of suicide and depression are order of the day since real help cannot be gotten online **(RS 5)**.

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I joined Facebook because of societal and peer pressure. My friends kept asking me why I am not on Facebook so I decided to give it a go. I stopped commenting and responding to posts because I became more aware of the dangers of social media and even reduced my number of followers. Suicide rates have increased because youths no longer communicate with each other. Youths have become addicted to their smart phones and no longer have time to socialize. They have become obsessed with the number of followers and the number of likes one has. Students living in one room do not know or understand each other because they spend ninety-nine percent of their time outside class on their phones. Young adults with actual physical friends are rare to come by because a large number of their friends are online. Students in universities lack empathy because they rarely see the world outside their phones. Facebook has a lot of benefits when used correctly and should think before joining the app and before posting anything on the app **(RS 15)**.

Yes. It has reshaped interaction patterns in that before it was launched there was more face-to-face communication and in the case of long-distance people would use SMS which was quite boring but Facebook has made interactions livelier as it introduced use of images in chats and the use of emojis which brighten up conversations **(RS 18)**.

Respondent 18 confirms that indeed FB has drastically weekend FTF communication on a growing scale since its inception, she praises SM for overtaking the old and boring text messages to now the innovation of images, videos instantaneous chats and the very trendy emojis.

Through the downplaying of the need and essence of physical interaction, young adults are lost in social media platforms Facebook being one of them, they lack the very basic skills of interaction when on a one-on-one session, this has led to a generation that seems confused and out of order. This illustrates the impact of Facebook on interactions among young adults in university **(RS 14)**.

Respondent fifteen joined FB due to peer pressure but is no longer active after realizing the dangers of FB. According to him suicide rates have gone up due to lack of communication among students, although, it is beneficial when used correctly. The respondent sees a lot of negative things about FB. Respondent fourteen further asserts that due to lack of physical interactions younger generation seems confused.

With online platform I have meaningful interaction with friends and family, liking their photos, commenting, chatting and staking them, I am always at per with all their movements and they also know all about me online **(RS 12)**.

Young people find it easier to communicate online than FTF this makes the whole interaction process change in manner of style and quality. The online platform has made it easier for interaction and communication and it has given an opportunity for introverts communicate and sort out their esteem issues.



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Esteem problems are taken care of by FB and introverts have resulted in talking too much and sometimes with this ability they destroy relationships. I find that FB features including the messenger is working well and superseding the face-to-face communication which is now backward **(RS 12)**.

The respondent 12 argues against FB reshaping interactions in a negative way, she argues that all online interactions are modern and admired by young adults, she argues against the claims of respondent five that FB has caused an error of lonely frustrated youths and respondent fifteen who claims that online interactions have distanced people who are always in close proximity. The respondent further asserts that FB has given a unique opportunity to introverts to express themselves but worries that this opportunity may become a problem because the introverts may sometimes over express themselves and destroy relationships.

Facebook (FB) is shaping interactions in a bad way when friends can no longer communicate for more than ten minutes. It gets too boring when friends fail to talk and sharing ideas, this is totally breaking human relationships at a high rate **(RS 10)**.

In the University FB is a preferred means of interaction. For example, when we closed campus and returned home, the person in charge of accommodation in the university posted on THE REAL COMRADES in FB, that booking would start at 3pm and all students should remain vigilant, apparently, I did not receive the news because I was not online but luckily my friend was and she alerted me on the eleventh to go online and book **(RS 10)**.

According to the respondent Facebook (FB) has weekend social bonds among young adults to the extent that friends cannot hold a physical conversation more than ten minutes, he claims that FTF interactions are a thing of the past, that today even the university senior administration is reaching out to students on very critical matters through FB. This means that FB has been overrated and makes users further alienated on physical interactions. From his arguments FB is a preferred mode of communication among young adults but the respondent also had issues with the negative things that can happen on FB.

I joined Facebook because of societal and peer pressure. My friends kept asking me why I am not on Facebook so I decided to give it a go. I however lost interest in Facebook after about a year and moved on to other social media sites such as Instagram and Snapchat since they became more interesting than Facebook. Currently I only use Facebook to view advertisements and news sites such as BET or E Online in order to be more aware. I stopped commenting and responding to posts because I became more aware of the dangers of social media and even reduced my number of followers **(RS 2)**.

It's not really changing because of the introduction of other social media sites that are trendier robust and interesting, the entry for example of WhatsApp has dwindled the use of FB. Because if you go to campus a time like now, people cannot spend an entire without using WhatsApp severally but students can take days and sometimes even weeks before logging on FB. WhatsApp is

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giving that platform for better interaction and engagement between students than FB ever did (**RS 11**)

Respondent two joined Facebook (FB) due to peer pressure but is no longer active after realizing that there are other friendlier and better SM sites than FB. The respondent particularly calls out for snapchat and Instagram which he prefers over FB. This same argument was earlier captured by other respondents claiming that FB is outdated and preferred by those from the “villages,” the uneducated and backward in the community. According to him therefore FB has not reshaped interaction patters because it is no longer influential or preferred over the other SMS. The same views of respondent two that FB does not reshape interaction patterns of young adults is supported by respondent eleven, only that respondent eleven seems to favor WhatsApp over Instagram and snapchat in reshaping interactions of young adults.

I also use it to store my memories in form of pictures because it allows you can access your account anywhere in the case that you lose your phone. You can retrieve your old pictures online interaction by Facebook users leads to decrease in offline. Interactions and this is so because FB the company is so innovative that we feel like we are missing nothing close to FTF communication. It is important to note that social media builds morale for individuals and also boosts self-esteem. When used wisely one can find good friendships as well as grow oneself as individuals (**RS 21**).

Respondent twenty-one uses FB as a storage media to store photographs and other forms of media. Such photos and stories can be shared with other users thereby making FTF interaction less likely as people do not have to meet to share past memories. From the respondent constantly improved innovative features on FB further alienates face to face communication.

The creation of online FB groups has worked negatively in maintaining physical interactions, groups are noted to be very particular and members of group are intolerant to people in different groups. This online groups occasionally meet and ensure they keep their circles closed not entertaining outsiders. This groups carry the very same nature of behavior outside the groups and do not engage members of different groups on off line interaction just as it is online.

The online messages are cooked and sometimes hateful and opposing groups cannot see eye to eye because of the vile propagated online, groups in campus have been known to be so distance and sometimes even violent, ones a group posts a hate message it is easily copied and understood by other groups as hateful (**RS 6**).

The respondent believes that Facebook (FB) has reshaped interactions amongst young adults by being a catalyst of disengaging face to face interaction through online group formations. The respondent just like majority of the respondents had some negative things to say about FB with some of them being quite gross. Today with the entry of social media in the country we see fewer patient students, violence and extremisms, that we cannot recall happening in

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the 90s.

Respondents argue that they have enlisted themselves in groups and they identify themselves in groups, these very groups they join have group thinking habit that eventually influence individual characters and personality. Young adults take to the group norms that can sometimes lead someone blindly in to trouble.

Today through such sites as Facebook (FB) students are lured into secret groups and they can no longer meet and share ideas about ideologies, so when the interaction is destroyed students are left out in the hands of extremist sycophants. Most university students identify themselves in groups, in terms of social status, in terms of economic status and social behaviors, this includes sexual orientation that is catalyzed by FB. These groupings are catalyzed by FB and this affects the interaction patterns of the students, students thereby fall in deferent groups and individuals falling in similar groups know each other and interact only among themselves but those in different groups also cluster themselves and avoid engagement with those in different groups.

Respondent fourteen further affirms the dangers of online groups stated by respondent six, they claim that groups are working to not only discourage young people from interacting but by further separating them in groups belonging to certain social status, economic status and even sexual orientations.

Facebook (FB) has had influences on use of language to the extent that now interactions offline and online are being affected. It influences the use of language, the language of interaction has greatly been affected, lectures are complaining of poor language use among students who are observed to be adapting the grammatically wrong diction in to academic writings.

Information sourcing and entertainment are mentioned as some of the aspects of interactions that are being adjusted by social media. Interaction occurs at levels of sourcing information and entertainment because this are some of the needs of young adults and sometimes the subjects for their various interactions at personal and group levels. Some respondents have mentioned that they no longer rely on major media outlets for news because they get everything on FB, that there is no need to wait for the 7pm or 9pm news since everything is online available 24 hours and that there is no gate keeping on FB news. They also mention that whenever they are bored, they just tune to their smart phones and open various profiles where they get the most thrilling entertainment impossible to get anywhere else other than on FB.

Today, I use Facebook basically to get informed of the daily occurrences. I spend a great deal of time following News Pages and news online, am happy because there is no gate keeping and I get even the gory images of news that would others be censored on TV. (RS 19) For the four years I have interacted with young adults in the university during my undergraduate program, I refute the suggestion that Facebook has in any way changed their interaction patterns. I do not think that social media (Facebook) interaction has become a new form of preferred interactions among young adults in universities because there are other more competitive SMS like WhatsApp, however with social media face to face communication is slowly being eliminated. I use FB to notify different groups of the meetings in university, we had peace union programme I was the secretary general, I would notify them of the activities

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such as public engagement. I use FB also for information sourcing. **(FGD 1, 10).**

Respondent 19 uses FB to get information on daily occurrence, he believes it has not changed interaction patterns and has not become a new form of interaction because sites like WhatsApp are more preferred for interactions than FB. He is also of the opinion that FB is eliminating face to face social ties.

Facebook is a good and bad thing. It's good for entertainment, getting information, sharing your ideas but too much of it can be addictive and make you lose touch with the real world **(RS 13).**

The respondent (thirteen) is of the opinion that FB has grown into a multifunctional platform, good for information sourcing and sharing ideas. However, she's is also of the opinion that FB is a two-way thing good for entertainment but can be addictive if not used properly.

## **Discussions**

According to Drago "Little by little, technology has become an integral part of the way that people communicate with one another and has increasingly taken the place of face-to-face communication (Drago, 2015).

This study indicates that young adults in universities are influenced by SNS to use interpersonal communication less. The study shows that SNS is removing the necessity for interpersonal communication thereby decreasing social bonds and weakening interpersonal communication skills. This is supported by a statement from Brody, who posited that technology is not a good substitute for personal interaction (Brody, 2015).

The entry of smart phone has negatively impacted interpersonal communication; the study shows that young adults are buried in their smart phone using SM and in most cases FB in particular. Res Rainie and Zickuhr reflect on this matter, stating: "Smartphones have become a necessity in the lives of many Americans affecting how users and non-users alike approach basic social norms and etiquette (Rainie & Zickuhr, 2015).

The study shows that as users spend more and more time on SNS for interactions they consequently reduce the amount of time they spend communicating face- to- face. Peer pressure to interact on FB also contributes to reducing trust and weakening of F-T-F interactions, the study findings show that those who are not able to interact on FB are consequently alienated and feel not being part of the campus life, they therefore join the bandwagon of interacting online for fear of being isolated. A study by Przybylski and Weinstein indicated that mobile phones inhibited the development of interpersonal closeness and trust, impair users' human functions such as empathy and intimacy thereby diminishing connectivity, quality of the relationships and communication (Przybylski & Weinstein, 2013).

FGD and interview respondent's ideas resonates that conflicts are now common and harder to resolve, online interactions do not allow participants an opportunity to read body language that helps in reinforcing communication, on the FB platform people say whatever they wish without fear of consequence, attacks are common and grounds for trust are almost impossible. Face to Face interactions can help resolve conflicts; rather, young adults by engaging in face-to-face interactions are better placed to resolve conflicts. This finding relates to Alsop who postulates that millennials who spend more time using online communication lack valuable skills occurring on face-to-face interactions that can help users

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listen attentively, speak well and read other people's expression and body language (Alsop, 2008).

Study findings that SNS addiction can be a cause of lack of conflict management skills is supported by a research conducted by the National Center for Policy Analysis (NCPA, 2013), where employers complained about young adult's inability of both speaking and writing. Huhman, further posited that a clear characteristic of generation Y is the overall lack of emotional intelligence. Huhman, argues that achieving emotional intelligence begins with developing listening skills. Research by scholars and the study finding therefore agree that skills and abilities that are lacking among young adults can be tied back to low interpersonal communication skills that is a result of overuse or SNS for interaction purposes (Huhman, 2006).

Some arguments in the present study are not in agreement that FB weakens F-T-F interactions, this line of thinking is supported study by Hynan, Murray, and Goldbart, who claims that members of generation Y see SM as a positive means of enriching friendship and self- representation, the study further states that SM interactions can be very instrumental in preserving and supporting long- distance relationships. This is supported by discussions in both FGD where respondents agree that SNS interactions sometimes support Face-to face interactions by helping users affected by distance to constantly keep in touch consequently preserving interactions that were otherwise in threat of collapsing (Hynan, Murray, & Goldbart, 2014).

The study finding shows that Facebook (FB) creates an opportunity of making new friends and new connections, FB is highly regarded for its strength and ability to create wider than ever possible networks. This line of argument is supported by Joo et al, that FB interactions are good for encouraging long distance relationships and helps people remain in touch (Joo & Teng, 2017).

The study findings show that with the entry of SM there is no longer privacy and confidentiality as a matter of choice or force. The nature of FB and peer pressure forces the users to share their private matters including their feelings to a global audience. Research shows that SNS encourage users to expose and reveal personal information with a promise of better experience if they do so (Luo, Liu, Liu, & Fan, 2009).

The study finding shows that FB is a top agenda setter for discussions among young adults in the university, FB sets stage for what is important and what is not important for discussion. FB interactions may sometimes disregard what is critical and important in a community and incline towards what is trendy. This finding is supported by Holcomb, Gottfried, & Mitchell, SNS users set agenda for other users by being the source of information. The scholars posit that news distribution and news filtering are most common interactions that happen on SNS, they assert that SNS set salience of issues deciding what to share with other users (Gottfried & Shearer, 2016).

## **Conclusions**

From discussions it is clear that FB is a top agenda setter among young adults, apart from it being trendy FB is responsible for setting the stage for what is important and needs to be discussed by the youths, sometimes there could be some very pressing matters in a community but when FB discussions are on something else the agenda remains on FB and not what could be important and urgent for the community.

The atmosphere of laziness has cropped to the point that classes are being skipped, group discussions are shared online and this would have instead been good place for bonding.



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The study finding establishes that young adults are over reliant on accessibility of information from SNS that can sometimes are not credible and cause challenges in learning and retaining information.

Young adults in universities are not willing to go into troubles of researching; they are glued to SNS while studying thus reducing concentration which has direct impact on academic performance. FB becomes an obstacle between students and academics, research shows that today's students spend most time messaging on phone or engaging on SNS such as FB at moments when they should be doing academic tasks (Junco, 2012).

Facebook (FB) has reshaped interaction patterns by creating a people who are no longer original, young adults in universities have lost their identities and are always on the lookout for what is trending and work tirelessly to always redefine themselves. Participants in the interviews and FGD agree that the element of copying is now defining interactions in universities.

Participants in the study claim that since majority of the students are on the lookout on what celebrities portray as ideal, they then fake to look and act like those celebrities. In the process of faking an ideal lifestyle, students end up tired and confused and in the long run destroy relationships with those in their surroundings. Respondents assert "the bottom-line is Facebook has robbed the beauty and essence of originality among us in the universities".

The study also shows that when students fake, they avoid interactions with those close to them, they then acquire more virtual friends and lose out on the real friends, as a result such young adults are unable to get help with in crisis situation or when faced by life's challenges. From FGD 1 & 2, participants, the cause of depression, violence and even suicide among young adults in universities are frustrations linked to too much faking or social comparison that occurs in FB. The study shows that FB has changed manner of interactions, students today value online friends than those close to them, students trade their values to what is portrayed as ideal by celebrities.

The study shows that SNS is becoming part of our society and consequently changing our norms, culture and way of life which includes manners of interaction that then affects our social bonds.

Study findings shows that the frequent use of SNS including FB alters user's language use both in the online and offline status thereby affecting interactions of young adults. According to the present study, the language of interaction has been affected, issues of poor language use among students are mentioned as occurring not only in academic writing but on day-to-day interactions.

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The authors declare that they have no competing interests.

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