The Influence of Internet Use on Socialization among the Youth: A Case of Undergraduate Students at University of Nairobi-Main Campus

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The Influence of Internet Use on Socialization among the Youth: A Case of Undergraduate Students at University of Nairobi-Main Campus

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Abstract

Purpose: The purpose of this study was to establish the influence of internet use on socialization among undergraduate students of University of Nairobi

Methodology: The study adopted a descriptive survey design. The accessible population of the study was 15, 000 from main campus. Data was collected from a sample of 384 students from the university via use of questionnaire and an interview guide as data collection tools which contained both closed and open ended questions and encouraged the respondents to participate due to anonymity. The data collected was analyzed by use of descriptive statistics. In particular excel SPSS and frequency tables were used.

Results: The study findings indicated that internet use may not have a negative effect on socialization as indicated in literature. The findings uphold that internet users spend more time socializing with friends when compared to non-users. The forms of internet mostly used by University of Nairobi students are internet enabled cell phones followed by computer labs and cyber cafes. Internet enabled cell phones were preferred because of the portability, convenience and cost while computer labs was preferred because of accessibility and the fact that they are free. The social sites mostly used by both the undergraduate students were Facebook, electronic mail, yahoo messenger, twitter and Skype.

Unique contribution to theory, practice and policy: The study recommended that since university of Nairobi undergraduates are frequent users of the internet, the university should increase the number of computers in the computer lab. It was also recommended that the university should exploit this avenue and ensure that more educational content are passed onto the students through the internet. This will pave way for e-learning. The university may use social media to reach the students as a part of a whistle blower policy where anonymous
comments are posted, blogs and contributions on a certain issue can also be posted

Keywords: internet use, socialization, youth

1.0 INTRODUCTION

The internet is a global network connecting millions of computers that allows participants to share and exchange information. Through the Internet, services such as electronic mail (e-mail), World Wide Web (WWW), mailing lists and Usenet Newsgroups are accessible. The Internet grew out of the Advanced Research Projects Agency's Wide Area Network (then called ARPANET) established by the US Department of Defense in 1960s for collaboration in military research among business and government laboratories. Later universities and other US institutions connected to it (Timberners–Lee, 1991).

Wolpers and Mo (1997) recognized that the greater adoption and use of the Internet can be traced to the 1990s, when it became globally and freely accessible to the public. Initially the Internet was used by scientists and university professors. This explained why educational institutions have been early adopters of the Internet (Defleur & Dennis, 2002). According to Mutula (2001), in educational institutions, the Internet has become the preferred technology to improve instruction, communication between students, lecturers, students and their friends. Additionally internet has made contribution in enhancing distance education, raising productivity of both students and lecturers. Dawson (2005) added that the merits of the Internet for academic work include; currency of online information sources, accessibility to multi-media resources and information not limited by distance or time constraints.

Advanced technology always has dramatic effects on society. There is little doubt about how useful the Internet can be. Undergraduates can receive help with homework, investors can keep track of stocks, sports scores and statistics are just a click away for fans. These are but a few of the myriad ways people use the Internet. Those who do decide to begin signing on risk becoming "addicted" to the internet. Internet Addiction (IAD) was identified two years ago by Ivan Goldberg, a New York City psychiatrist who coined the term "Internet Addiction Disorder." Goldberg said IAD is not a recognized medical addiction like alcoholism, but "more like an outof-control behavior that threatens to overwhelm the addict's normal life. For instance, Facebook users world over have been posting on many occasions personal details such as birth dates, addresses and telephone numbers on the website and which has been a boon for identity fraudsters, hackers operating on social networks can easily create fake profiles and send friendship requests to unsuspecting users within their target groups. Many users have become victims of identity frauds, harassment, blackmail and lost money through various scams operated via the website. Despite these challenges the proliferation of information and communication technologies (ICT) has influenced many aspects of the lives of young people through creating new social and cultural spaces that have challenged long established ways of socialization. In this context socialization means interpersonal interaction among the undergraduate students aimed at forming friendship, meeting, and going out, hanging out, mingling, parting and getting entertained.

Studies carried out are indicative of a relationship between internet use and socialization; there are studies that find a negative relationship between internet use and socialization aspects such as physical social engagement. The use of Internet as a social and communication system has represented enormous technical and social complexity. For instance, a study by Brignall and Van Valey (2005) indicated that as individuals become more accustomed to interacting through the

Internet there will be negative consequences on their ability to communicate appropriately in face-to-face situations. On the other hand, other studies find a positive relationship between internet use and non-physical social engagement. Another study by Heitner (2002) found out that Internet communication may be especially advantageous for shy, socially anxious, or marginalized youth, enabling them to practice social skills without the risks associated with faceto-face interactions. Additionally, a study by Lenhart et al (2001) pointed that online communication may encourage more truthful exchanges. Many people report a greater willingness to share thoughts and feelings online than they would in person.

Results from the studies show that internet use promotes social engagement through online connections and reduces the frequency of face to face interactions. In contrast, various studies have found neutral results while attempting to link internet use and socialization. It is also important to note that majority of these studies were done in developed countries, however studies linking internet use and socialization may not have been carried out in Kenya. The general observation is that internet usage in Kenya is a recent phenomenon that has affected the way young people socialize. It is therefore imperative that a study be carried out to establish the linkage between internet use and socialization among undergraduates in the University of Nairobi.

1.2 Problem Statement

Evidently, Internet use has increased over the past decade. This increase may have resulted in a few challenges arising such as decreased chances of face to face, identity frauds, harassment, blackmail and lost money. Challenges notwithstanding, the internet has a myriad of benefits which include; increased levels of intellectual capacity, an overflowing wellspring of information, ease and comfort in communication, a wide range of entertainment portals, increased efficiencies in business and high interaction through web socialization. The internet may have changed the way people socialize. In as much as non-physical engagements is enjoyable, internet use nowadays may have decreased chances of face-to-face interactions and because there may be no systematic study on internet use and socialization carried out in Kenya especially among the youth, there is therefore need to establish the influence of internet use on the socialization among undergraduate students taking a case of University of Nairobi.

1.3 Research Objective

   i.   To establish the frequency of internet use among undergraduate students of University of Nairobi
  ii.   To establish the forms of internet use among undergraduate students of University of Nairobi
 iii.   To find out the purposes of internet use among undergraduate students of University of Nairobi

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Theoretical Review Dystopian (negative effects) and utopian (positive effects) perspective and approaches to internet usage

There is therefore a good reason to expect that the Internet will have a positive social impact, both in terms of its users' social integration in a network of family, friends and community and the benefits that flow from this integration. However, there is controversy in the research literature about whether use of the Internet increases or decreases users' social participation and the psychological and health benefits people generally receive from this participation. Some optimistic reports claim that using the Internet leads to the emergence of a new social circle (Robert Kraut et al., 2002; Turkle, 1997) and the development of deep and long-lasting social relationships on-line (Katelyn McKenna, Green, & Gleason, 2002) and that it augments involvement in existing communities by providing new social spaces for communication (Katz & Aspden, 1997; Wellman et al., 2001). In contrast, other analysts suggest that frequent Internet use has negative social outcomes. In these studies, frequency of Internet use was associated with increases in depression and social isolation (Kraut et al., 1998) and declines in spending time with family and friends and in attending social events (Nie et al., 2002). Most of the claims, both positive and negative, about the way Internet changes social participation are based on evidence from cross-sectional surveys, comparing individuals who have Internet access to those who do not have it, comparing heavier users of the Internet with lighter users, or comparing earlier adopters to later ones.

Current research has shown conflicting evidence about the effects of the Internet on communication and social relationships. Several arguments have been advanced concerning the impact of Internet use on social involvement. One, dating back to early concerns of anti-social effects of Internet use, is that Internet use takes time away from positive social interactions thus having a negative effect on social relationships and psychological well-being (Kraut et al., 1998; Nie et al., 2002). This argument, dubbed as the hydraulic or crowding-out effect of Internet use, had been supported by Nie and colleagues' (1998, 2000) results showing that Internet users spent significantly less time interacting face-to-face with family and friends than non-users.

Many writers have worried that the ease of Internet communication might encourage people to spend more time alone, talking online with strangers or forming superficial drive by relationships, at the expense of deeper discussion and companionship with existing friends and family (Putnam, 2000). Given the constraints of a 24-hour day, the inefficiency of online communication may cause heavy users of the Internet to maintain under-developed social relationships with their online communication partners (Parks & Roberts, 1998) or to maintain a smaller stock of relationships. A further concern is that even when conversing with close friends and family, lower quality, online conversations might displace higher quality, face-to-face and telephone ones (Cummings, Butler, & Kraut, 2002). For example, the impoverished nature of online communication can cause people to omit the social niceties that promote or maintain social relationships (Clark & Brennan, 1991; Cummings et al., 2002; Sproull & Kiesler, 1991).

In contrast, other researchers have argued that Internet use has important positive social effects on individuals (McKenna & Bargh, 2002; Katelyn, McKenna & Bargh, 2000), groups and organizations (Sproull & Kiesler, 1991), communities (Hampton & Wellman, 2001), and society

at large (Hiltz & Turoff, 1978). Much of the research literature rejects the hydraulic argument in favor of a more positive augmentation argument – a proposal that Internet-based modes of communication augment existing modes of communication, providing more facets for social interaction and expanding our ability to communicate and keep in touch (Cole & Robinson, 2002; Katz & Rice, 2002; Kestnbaum, Robinson, Neustadtl, & Alvarez, 2002).

Robinson and his colleagues (2000), for example, argue that Internet users actually spend more time socializing with family and friends when compared to non-users. They reported that compared to non-users, Internet users spent more time communicating face-to-face and over the phone and less time watching TV and sleeping. Because the Internet permits social contact across time, distance, and personal circumstances, it allows people to connect with distant as well as local family and friends, co-workers, business contacts, and strangers who share similar interests. Broad social access could increase people's social involvement, as the telephone did in an earlier time (Fischer, 1992).

Mustafa and Karen (2007) argue that the negative impact of time spent at Internet could be explained by the same theoretical assumption related to loneliness. Internet use displaces time spent with family and friends, which in turn, decreases users' sense of social affiliation with them (Kraut et al, 1998). Or else, as suggested by Coget, Yamauchi and Suman (2002), it could be that users spend their online time in less social activities, or engage in communicational activities less frequently. Such assumptions are supported by the relationship between negative (time spent and entertainment-based usage) and positive (communicational usage) associations germane to social networks with friends. Therefore, it could be indicated that Internet usage negatively impacts social involvement.

A 1999 survey of over 1000 U.S. parents revealed widespread public concern about the Internet's impact on the social adjustment of youth: almost two-thirds of respondents expressed concern that going online too often may lead children to become isolated from other people (Turow, 1999). Early research provided widely publicized, though preliminary, empirical support for the public's apprehensions. The initial reports of the Home Net study of first-time Internet users (Kraut et al., 1998) indicated that Internet use was associated with small but significant decreases in well-being and local social network size over 2 years. To explain their finding, which held mainly (if not only) for their adolescent participants, Kraut et al. speculated that adolescents' heavy usage of the Internet for online communication led them to forsake critical bonds with local friends and family for weak relations with strangers.

2.2 Empirical Review

A motive or purpose is a desire to do something, an activated state that contains both energy and direction (Deci & Ryan, 1985). Across studies, four primary motives seem to resurface-acquisition of information (i.e., researching), communication, exploration (i.e., surfing), and acquisition of commercial goods (i.e., shopping). Previous research has indicated that individuals frequently use the web to acquire information about products and services, companies, special interests, and news about the world (Korgaonkar & Wolin, 1999).

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Similarly, a total of 13 items related to Internet activities were developed for the purpose of a study by Mustafa and Karen (2007) and participants were asked to indicate how often they do such activities in Internet cafés on a 5-point like scale ranging from "1" representing "never" to "5" representing "very often". Based on the results of a principal component analysis with varimax rotation, four main patterns of activities were extracted as follows: (a) *educational and informational use* (research for class assignments, read about news and current events, and gathering general information about hobbies, medical, etc.), (b) *communication use* (sending and receiving e-mails, online chat, and participating in forums and discussion boards), (c) e*ntertainment use* (playing games, surfing for fun, listening to music, watching movies) and (d) *business* use (online shopping, online banking and paying bills). Each of these served as a separate independent variable in the study.

Among adolescents, the Internet has become indispensable for instrumental purposes such as school work and information gathering, as well as for communication purposes. The communication applications of the Internet, such as e-mail, instant messaging, blogs, and chat rooms have entrenched themselves in the lives of adolescents (Boneva, Quinn, Kraut, Kiesler, & Shklovski, 2006). Studies reveal that 25% of Internet users had formed casual online friendships and 14% had formed close friendships or even romantic relationships (Wolak, Mitchell, & Finkelhor, 2002).

Using everything from instant messaging on the Internet to text messaging on private mobile phones, teenagers have found more ways than ever to use technology and to assert their independence whilst keeping their parents .out of the loop. This is arguably related to their need to assert their individuality. It is becoming easier to communicate with people through their mobile devices than through actual face-to-face interaction. A third of those 600 million Facebook users utilize Facebook Mobile, an application that lets them jump onto Facebook on their phone and use pretty much all of the regular desktop/laptop browser functions of Facebook. There are also Twitters and their up-to-the-minute tweets. YouTube is the big player in the area of video streaming and it has been reported that there are over 200 million YouTube views occurring on mobile devices on a daily basis.

Personal computers are currently a requirement for the adoption of the Internet; however, these two technologies are very different (Gloy & Akridge, 2000). Computers are used to manipulate internal data and provide information for management decision-making purposes, while the Internet is a source of communication and external information (Lewis, 1998). The use of computers and the Internet by people in all walks of life increases day by day. The Internet plays a crucial role in access to information resources. Edward and Bruce (2002) observe that, "sources of information and other opportunities available via the Internet are increasing exponentially. This is reflected in the steady increase in the use of computers and the Internet in teaching and learning.

The probability of Internet use is expected to decline with the age of the computer operator. Older individuals are expected to be more experienced in internet use and thus value the information that can be attained from the Internet less than younger users who have less experience (Gloy & Akridge, 2000). Finally, younger internet users are likely to have had relatively more exposure to computers and the Internet and are thus more confident in their abilities to benefit from them. The

use of Internet by women over the years has increased and almost at the same level as their men counterpart. A survey by Pew Internet Project between January and June in 2005 shows that 68% of men and 66% of women in USA are online. In terms of nature of usage, younger women, especially girls have been found to be more frequent users of communication technologies for social activities such as chat and emailing (Kaare, Brandtzaeg, Heim, & Endestad, 2007). In fact some see the media, communication and information flows as defining the logic and structure of social relations, which affects almost every dimension of cultural life and activity (Hutchins, 2008).

The studies related with the internet addiction pointed out that addict adolescents interact less with peers and have incompetent relationship quality (Harman, Hansen, Cochran & Lindsey, 2005). It may be concluded according to the results of these studies that internet addiction and peer pressure are related variables. As more youth log on to the Internet, we can expect that more of their friends do too. Communication with close others is now also facilitated by applications such as instant messaging (IM), which allows users to know when friends are online and to engage in an unlimited number of real-time, private, dyadic chats.

3.0 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study adopted a descriptive survey design. The number of students that formed the population of study was 30,000 undergraduate students from all campuses. Out of the 30,000 students, the accessible population was approximately 15, 000 students drawn from main campus. A sample of 84 was drawn based on a formula. The researcher used a questionnaire for data collection. The questionnaire comprised both open and closed ended questions. A pilot study was conducted in order to establish the validity and reliability of data collection instruments. The data collected was analyzed by use of descriptive statistics. Data Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) 19.4 version for windows was used in analyzing the data. . In the study, both frequency tables and cross-tabulations were used (containing information about more than two variables).These tools are selected because of their ease of understanding and clarity in presentation.

4.0 RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

4.1 Response Rate

Out of the anticipated 384 responses, the study only managed to successfully engage 200 respondents. This represented an overall successful response rate of 52% as shown on Table 1.

Table 1: Response Rate

	Response	%Response
Successful	200	52%
Unsuccessful	184	48%

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4.2 Bio-Data Analysis

4.2.1 Age of Respondents

The study sought to find out the age response of the respondents. The findings are presented in Table 2. The majority of respondents (57%) were 19-25 years of age, 35% were 26-30 years, and 8% were 31-35 years. The finding implies that majority of the University Nairobi undergraduate students who participated in the current study were youth

Table 2: Age of Respondents

	Frequency	Percent
19-25 years	114	57%
26-30 years	70	35%
31-35 years	16	8%
Total	200	100%

4.2.2 Gender Composition of the Respondents

The study sought to find out the gender composition of the respondents. The findings are presented in Table 3. According to the study, majority of respondents (63%) were female while the rest of the respondents (37%) were male.

Table 3: Gender Composition of the Respondents

	Frequency	Percent
Male	74	37%
Female	126	63%
Total	200	100%

4.2.3 Number of peers communicating with you using the internet at any given time

The study sought to find out the number of peers communicating with each other using the internet at any given time. The findings are given in Table 4. Findings in this study indicates that majority of more than half (67%) indicated about 70% of their peers were communicating with them at any given time. This implies that peer pressure may be a factor contributing to internet use.

Table 4: Number of Peers Communicating with you using the Internet at any Given Time

	Frequency	Percent
Less than 10%	13	7%
50%	43	22%
70%	134	67%
100%	10	5%
Total	200	100%

4.2.4 Faculty of respondents

The study sought to find out the distribution of respondents across the various faculties. The findings were presented in presented as indicated in table 4.5. Study findings indicate that the majority of respondents (43%) were from the engineering department, followed by the school of

economics (18%) and school of arts (16%). The finding implies that the respondents were well distributed across the schools.

Table 5: Faculty of Respondents

	Frequency	Percent
Others	29	15%
School of Computing and Informatics	28	14%
Schools of Arts	31	16%
School of Mathematics	11	6%
School of Journalism	12	6%
School of Engineering	45	23%
School of Economics	35	18%
School of Continuing & Distance Education	9	5%
Total	200	100%

4.3 Descriptive Findings and Analysis

4.3.1 Frequency of Internet Use

This section aimed at establishing the frequency of internet use among undergraduate students from the University of Nairobi. Frequency use was measured in terms of hours per week spent in the internet, number of times of internet log on and hours of the day that respondents anticipate to find their friends online.

4.3.1.1 Hours per week spent in internet

The section sought to establish the hours per week spent in internet. The findings are presented in Table 6. A majority of respondents, exactly half (50%) spent 6-8 hours on the internet. Twenty four percent (24%) of the respondents spent over 10 hours on the internet. This brought to a total of 74% those respondents who use internet for more than 6 hours.

Table 6: Hours per Week Spent in Internet

	Frequency	Percent
2-5 hours	32	16%
6-8 hours	100	50%
more than 10 hours	48	24%
not at all	20	10%
Total	200	100%

The finding implies that University of Nairobi undergraduate students are frequent users of the internet.

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4.3.1.2 Number of Times in a Day of Internet Log On

The study sought to establish the number of times in a day of internet log on. The findings are presented in Table 7. A majority of the respondents, more than half (68%) indicated that the number of times they logged on to the internet was more than 5 times daily, 5% logged on to the internet five times in a day and 8% logged on to the internet 4 times. This brought to a total of 81% those respondents who logged on to the internet four or more time in day. The findings imply that the university of Nairobi Undergraduates students use internet frequently.

Table 7: Number of Times in a Day of Internet Log On

	Frequency	Percent
twice	16	8%
thrice	22	11%
four times	17	9%
five times	10	5%
over 5 times	135	68%
Total	200	100%

One of the interview questions attempted to understand whether undergraduate students are heavy or low users of internet. In most cases respondents indicated that they were heavy users. Most heavy users seemed to either use internet to download movies, play games or chat on Facebook. This is best described by these respondents;

> *"I consider myself a heavy user of internet because I spend a lot of time surfing the net for new movies" Respondent 7.*
>
> *"I mostly use internet since most of my friends send me their photos, jokes and the latest gossip" Respondent .12*
>
> *"I spend almost five hours a day searching for jobs on the internet" Respondent 27*

Those respondents who indicated that they were low users of internet used internet for checking mail and for downloading assignments sent by the lecturers. This was best illustrated by this comment;

> *"I don't use a lot of internet since I only need it to download assignments sent by the lecturer. Not many lecturers who prefer to send us assignments though email. Respondents 17*

The above finding therefore implied that undergraduate students are heavy users of internet for various purposes.

4.3.1.3 Hours of the Day that you anticipate to find your Friends Online

This section sought to establish the hours of the day that respondents anticipate to find their friends online. The findngs are shown in Table 8. A majority of slightly more than half of the respondents (55%) indicated that they anticipate to find their friends online in the afternoon. Meanwhile, 19% indicate evening, 17% indicated all day and 9% indicated morning hours. The finding implies that Univeristy of Nairobi undergarduate students mostly use internet in the afternoon and evenings.

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Table 8: Hours of the Day that you anticipate to find your Friends Online

	Frequency	Percent
morning hours	18	9%
all day	34	17%
afternoon	110	55%
evening	38	19%
Total	200	100%

4.3.1.4 Influence of Gender on Frequency of Internet Use

This section attempted to establish the influence of gender on frequency of internet use. The findings are presented in Table 9 and 10. Table 9 presents the mean responses of the two gender groups. Findings from this study indicate that the mean response on the number of internet hours was significantly greater for female students than male students. The finding implies that gender influences the frequency of internet use. It is important to note that in order to interpret this results, the coding of hours spent per week on the intent were coded as follows; "Less than two hours" (code 1), "2 to 5 hours" (code 2), "6 to 8 hours" (code 3) and " over 10 hours" (code 4).

Male respondents had a mean response of 2.99 which implies that they used internet for 6 to 8 hours per week. Female respondent's response (3.45) was higher implying that female respondents spent almost over 10 hours accessing internet.

Table 9: Group Statistics

	Gender	N	Mean
Hours per week spent in internet	Male	74	2.99
	Female	126	3.45

Table 10 presents the results of a two independent samples t-test. The purpose of conducting this test was to establish clear cut findings on whether gender influences internet use. The finding implies that gender influences the frequency of internet use. This finding was supported by a pvalue of 0.00 given 198 degrees of freedom (df) and a t-statistic of 3.864.

Table 10: Two Independent Samples t-test for Equality of Means

	t	df	Sig. (2tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference
Hours per week spent in internet	-3.864	198	.000	-.466	.121

4.3.1.4 Influence of Age on Frequency of Internet Use

This section attempted to establish the influence of age on frequency of internet use. The findings are presented in Table 11 and 12. Table 11 presents the mean responses of the three two gender groups. Study findings show that internet usage in terms of the number of hours spent in internet differs across various age categories. The finding implies that age influence the frequency of internet use. For instance, the mean response for students aged between 19 to 25 years was 3.49 followed by the age category of 26 to 30 years with a mean of 3.25 and 31 to 35 years with a mean response of 2.63. This implies that students aged between 19 to 25 years are more likely to spend over 10 hours on the internet as compared to students aged between 26 to 30 years and also 31 to 35 years. The finding further implies that internet usage declines with age.

Table 11: Descriptive Statistics on Influence of Age on Frequency of Internet Use

	N	Mean
19-25 years	114	3.49
26-30 years	70	3.25
31-35 years	16	2.63
Total	200	3.28

Table 12 displays the results of the Anova test. The Anova test is used to test if the mean responses a cross the three age categories are significant. The finding indicate that the mean response of the three categories differ as shown by a p value of 0.001, df of 197 and an f statistic of 7.303. The finding further implies that the finding implies that age influences the frequency of internet use.

Table 12: Anova on Influence of Age on Frequency of Internet Use

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	9.961	2	4.981	7.303	.001
Within Groups	134.359	197	.682		
Total	144.320	199			

4.3.2 Forms of Internet Use

This section attempted to establish the internet forms used by University of Nairobi Undergraduate Students. The findings are given in Table 13. Findings indicate that a majority of more than half (61%) strongly agreed that they accesed internet through internet enabled cell phones most often. Thirty six pecent (36%) agreed that they used internet eabled cell phones bringing to a total of 97% those who use strongly agreed and agreed that they internt enabled cell phones. A strong majority of 80% disagreed that they accessed internet through cyber cafes. Only 21% access agreed that they access internet through cybercafés. The study also observed that a majority of slightly more than half (53%), access the internet through the computer lab.

Nineteen percent (19%) also accessed internet through computer labs bringing to a total of 72% those who agreed and strongly agreed that they accessed internet through computer labs. The finding imply that University of Nairobi undergraduate prefer accessing internet using internet

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enabled cell phones , computer labs and through cyber cafes in that order with the most preferred being internet enabled cell phones.

Table 13: Forms of Internet Use

	Strongly agree	**Agree**	**Disagree**
I frequently access internet through internet enables cell phones	122(61%)	72(36%)	6(3%)
I frequently access internet through cyber cafes	0(0%)	41(21%)	159(80%)
I frequently access internet through computer labs	37(19%)	106(53%)	57(29%)

4.3.2.1 Reasons of Preference of Certain Internet Forms over Others

This section attempted to establish the reasons of preference of certain internet forms over others. Some of the respondents who indicated that that they used mobile phones most often also indicated that the reasons they preferred it was because it was cost convenient, internet can be accessed from using a mobile device and it had pocket friendly prices. This was best described by one of the respondents;

> *"It is convenient; internet can be accessed from anywhere using mobile devices, pocket friendly prices." Respondent 121*

In another instance, the respondents indicated that the reason for preferring a certain form of internet use and access was a because of its convenience and capabilities to chat with friends. This was demonstrated by this response;

> *"I am able to chat and express myself with my friends at a cheaper rate, see their photo, and exchange document." Respondent 24*

Accessibility was another reason why respondents preferred a certain form of internet use. Both the computer lab and the mobile are easily available and accessible. Specifically, the computer labs were open for students use most of the time and were free. The responses that best demonstrated this was;

> *"Our computer labs have fast internet and are always open for engineering students to use." Respondent 46*

> *"Easily accessible and it's free to all students". Respondent 67*

Portability and privacy was another reason respondents preferred to use certain form of internet over others. Specifically, access of internet through internet was preferred since one could surf internet, send messages and chat freely without worrying about eavesdropping. This was demonstrated by the following statements;

> *"Internet enabled cell phones is what we most use due to its availability and privacy." Respondent 78*

> *"Like internet enabled cell phone -it is easily available. Its portable you can carry it from one place to another and requires less space when operating". Respondent 132*

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4.3.3 Purpose of Internet Use

This section attempted to establish the purpose of internet use. The study investigated whether education and information use was one of the purposes of the internet. The findings were given in Table 14. A majority of more than half (62%) agreed that they used internet to gather academic materials for my course and to correspond with my lecturer. Seventy Three percent (73%) strongly agreed with the statement that they use the internet to access information from various sources all over the world while 55% were neutral (indicating that they were not sure on the response) on the statement that they use internet to find information that reflects their identity. The findings imply that University of Nairobi Undergraduate Students used the internet for education and information use. The findings agree with those of Mustafa and Karen (2007), Deci and Ryan, (1985), Stafford and Stafford, (1998) and Korgaonkar and Wolin (1999) who identified education and information use and one of the purposes of internet use.

Table 14: Purpose of Internet Use

	agree	disagree	neutral	strongly agree	strongly disagree
To gather academics materials for my course and to correspond with my lecturer	124(62%)	19(10%)	0(0%)	57(29%)	0(0%)
To access information from various source all over the world	16(8%)	21(11%)	18(9%)	145(73%)	0(0%)
To find information that reflects my identity	29(15%)	4(2%)	109(55%)	34(17%)	24(12%)

Further purposes of internet use were investigated by asking questions that demonstrate the communication purpose of internet use. The findings were given in table 4.11. A majority of respondents agreed that they used internet to contact and communicate with their friends through chat rooms and discussion lists (64%), to talk with other people on what is going on through chat rooms and discussion lists (51%), to make new friends and networks through chat rooms and discussion lists (61%) and to develop romantic relationships through chat rooms and online dating websites (32%). The findings imply that University of Nairobi Undergraduate Students used the internet for communication use. The findings agree with those of Stafford and Stafford (1998),who asserted that listed email, chat, and communicate are dominant web activities, Maignan and Lukas (1997) identified communication as a social use of the internet, and Eighmey (1997) identified an "interest in continuing communication" factor. Studies using both students (Perry, Perry, & Hosack-Curlin, 1998) and adults (Kraut et al., 1998) have also found communication as a primary use of the web.

Table 15: Purpose of Internet Use

	agree	disagree	neutral	strongly agree	strongly disagree
To contact and communicate with my friends through chat rooms and discussion lists	127(64%)	0(0%)	32(16%)	0(0%)	41(21%)
To talk with other people on what is going on through chat rooms and discussion list	101(51%)	12(6%)	46(23%)	41(21%)	0(0%)
To make new friends and networks through chat rooms and discussion lists	122(61%)	0(0%)	45(23%)	33(17%)	0(0%)
To develop romantic relationships through chat rooms and online dating websites	64(32%)	23(12%)	17(9%)	36(18%)	60(30%)

The study investigated whether entertainment use was one of the purposes of the internet. The findings are given in Table 16. A majority of respondents strongly agreed that they used internet to play online computer games (36%) in addition a majority of respondents agreed with the statement that they use internet to listen to, download audio music and video movies, while (42%) agreed with the statement that they use internet to pass time and to forget about college or any other chores in life. The findings imply that University of Nairobi Undergraduate Students used the internet for entertainment use. The findings imply with those of Eighmey's (1997) who identified the entertainment factor, by arguing that s navigating websites is a "a playful experience." The findings are also consistent with those of Korgaonkar & Wolin, (1999) and Kraut et al, (1998) who asserted that games, surfing for fun, listening to music, watching movies are elements of internet use for entertainment.

Table 16: Purpose of Internet Use

	agree	disagree	neutral	strongly agree	strongly disagree
To play online computer games	64(32%)	13(7%)	22(11%)	72(36%)	29(15%)
To listen to, download audio music and video movies	81(41%)	0(0%)	40(20%)	72(36%)	7(4%)
To pass time and to forget about 16(8%) college or any other chores in life	84(42%)	28(14%)	21(11%)	51(26%)	

The above responses were supported by answers from an interview guide. Respondents were asked to state the various reasons they logged on to the internet. The responses were grouped together using a predetermined theme;

"To download assignment sent by lecturers", *"to search for attachments and jobs"*, , 46, *" to search for the latest news"*, *" To search for the latest phones, iPods"*. All these responses were grouped into one thematic purpose of internet use known as *"informational and education purpose"*.

Some responses related to the thematic purpose of *"surfing and entertainment purpose"*. The responses which were grouped under this theme included *"To watch the latest movies", "to download ragga and reggae tunes", "to play games such as online chess game, car race, Fifa 2010 and Teken"*.

Other responses were grouped into the thematic purpose of *"communication and socialization". Some of the responses that were grouped into the them included; " to hook up with my pals", " to check posting on my Facebook wall", " to check invitations on LinkedIn, MySpace", " to share the latest gossip with my friends, " to contribute to a football debate when Manchester United are playing Arsenal or Chelsea" , " to send emails for attachments and jobs"*

5.0 DISCUSSION CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Findings

Objective one was to establish the frequency of internet use among undergraduate students of University of Nairobi. A majority of respondents spent 6-8 hours on the internet. It was further shown that a majority of the respondents indicated that the number of times they logged on to the internet was more than 5 times daily. These findings implied that University of Nairobi undergraduate students are frequent users of the internet. Findings from this study indicate that the mean response on the number of internet hours was significantly greater for female students than male students. The findings imply that gender influences the frequency of internet use. Study findings show that internet usage in terms of the number of hours spent in internet differs across various age categories. The finding further implies that age influence the frequency of internet use. It was observed that students aged between 19 to 25 years are more likely to spend over 10 hours on the internet as compared to students aged between 26 to 30 years and also 31 to 35 years. The finding further implies that internet usage declines with age.

Objective two was to establish the forms of internet use among undergraduate students of University of Nairobi. Results indicated that that a majority of the respondents used internet enabled cell phones most often. The study also observed that a majority of slightly more than half accessed the internet through the computer lab. The finding implied that University of Nairobi undergraduate preferred accessing internet using internet enabled cell phones, computer labs and through cyber cafes in that order with the most preferred being internet enabled cell phones.

Objective three was to find out the purposes of internet use among undergraduate students of University of Nairobi. Results indicated that majority of the respondents used internet to gather academic materials for their course and to correspond with my lecturer as well as finding

information that reflected their identity. The findings implied that University of Nairobi undergraduate students used the internet for education and information use. A majority also indicated that they used it for communication and entertainment purposes.

5.2 Conclusion

Based on the findings, it was conclude that the frequency of internet use by university of Nairobi university students was high. Majority of the students used the internet for 6 to 8 hours in a week. The forms of internet use mostly used by University of Nairobi Students are internet enabled cell phones, followed by computer labs and cyber cafes. Internet enabled cell phones are preferred because of the portability, convenience and cost while computer labs are preferred because of accessibility and the fact that they are free. The purposes of internet use were found to include education and information use, communication and entertainment uses. It was possible to conclude that age and gender influence the frequency of internet usage. Young students were more likely to use internet frequently compared to older students. In addition, female students were more likely to use internet frequently compared to male students.

5.3 Recommendations

The study recommended that since University of Nairobi undergraduates were frequent users of the internet, the university should increase the number of computers in the computer lab. In addition, the university should ensure that the download speeds of the internet should be enhanced to offer the students fraternity more access to internet. The university should exploit this avenue and ensure that more educational content are passed onto the students through the internet. This will pave way for e-learning. E-learning may be used by all universities to increase the intake of undergraduates as well as post graduate students. This will save the universities and the government the cost of hiring additional lecturers, and the provision of lecturing facilities such as lecture halls, tables and chairs. In addition, marketing companies may target the students in marketing campaign to popularize products such as online games, adverts placed on social media websites such as Facebook and twitter. The university may use social media to reach the students as a part of a whistle blower policy where anonymous comments are posted, blogs and contributions on a certain issue can also be posted.

5.4 Suggestions for Further Studies

The study recommends that a similar study be done for college institutions, secondary schools and other universities. This will yield comparative and expose gaps that need to be filed. Such study would help the education sector to craft a strategy for increasing the uptake of ICT and encourage the use of internet with a motive to introducing e-learning.

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