

**IMPACT OF SOCIAL NETWORKING SITES ON INTERPERSONAL
RELATIONSHIPS AMONG TEENAGERS.A CASE STUDY OF MULANGO
ZONE, KITUI CENTRAL SUB-COUNTY, KITUI COUNTY**

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ABSTRACT

The growth of social networking sites (SNSs) is rising among teen age students in Secondary Schools in Kenya. The most common social networking sites include Face book, Twitter, MySpace, 2go, Whats app, and LinkedIn among others. This paper examined if these social networking sites have any impact on interpersonal relationships among teenagers who most scholars argue that they are the most frequent users of the sites. It was guided by three main objectives i) To explore the extent of teenagers' exposure to SNSs. ii) To determine the nature/patterns of teenagers' interactions on SNSs and (iii) To determine the impact of SNSs usage on teenagers offline and online interpersonal relationships.

It also looked into different scholars' views on the impact of social networking on interpersonal relationships among teenagers. It has looked at the term social capital and its relationships with social networking sites; online communication has also been discussed in light to its effect on interpersonal communication.

A descriptive survey design was used which included administering of questionnaires and focus group discussions as research instruments. The research site was Mulango Zone, Kitui Central Sub-County, Kitui County where students in boarding schools were sampled because they have access to social networking sites while at home.

Simple random sampling technique was used to select 250 respondents for the research. The selected students were from a population of students aged between 13-18 years of age. The 250 students were selected from five boarding secondary schools each with a sample of 50 students. The researcher analyzed the collected data by the use of computer software called SPSS. The study found out that SNSs have an impact on interpersonal relationships among teenagers; they mostly improved their relationships among one another thus bridging and bonding social capital. Teenagers prefer interacting via SNSs and they cannot imagine a world without SNSs since they have become part of their everyday activity. The study found that, although the SNSs have helped improve relationships among close teenagers as friends, they have also made the teenagers not to be able to build interpersonal relationships among other friends who are not close to them. They have inhibited the teenagers from being able to express themselves face to face especially to the members of the opposite sex. They are spending a lot of time on their mobile phones accessing the SNSs at the expense of going out to find friends to interact with face to face

