

**AN ASSESSMENT OF SOCIAL NETWORKING SITES AS A SYNERGY FOR
LEARNING IN UNIVERSITIES IN KENYA**

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ABSTRACT

Social Networking Sites (SNSs) are used heavily by university students in Kenya today hence the study intends to The objectives of the study were as follows: to examine perception of students on usage of SNSs for learning; to assess ways which SNSs can be used for learning; to find out the challenges associated with using SNSs for learning; to establish the presence of infrastructure that support utilization for learning. assess the possibility of using them as a synergy for learning in universities in Kenya, the study was done in both public and private universities in Nakuru Town. According to Varinder & Priya (2012), the most common and most used SNSs in are Facebook, 2go, Twitter, Nimbuzz, LinkedIn, Google + and MySpace with Facebook being the widely most used social networking site. *Theory of Social Networks* by Granovetter & Barnes (2005) adopted for the study informs the conceptual framework. The study adopted descriptive survey research design because of the large population studied and the nature of data intended to be collected. The study was done in the 8 universities in Nakuru town with a target population of approximately 25838 students, from which 393 participants were sampled using Slovins' (2003) formula. Questionnaires with 25 structured questions were used to collect data because they allowed convenient way collecting of data. Data was analyzed using descriptive statistics with the aid of SPSS. The study established that students welcome the use of SNSs on learning in universities. Facebook and other SNSs can be used in improving learning whereby students communicate with lecturers, share academic information and hold health discussion forums. Social Networking Sites like Twitter, Facebook, Google+ and 2go are accessed through mobile phones, personal computers and cyber café to search for learning materials. Challenges students face in using SNSs for learning include complexity in their use, inadequate time allocation for SNSs activities for learning and that some of the sites are not favourable for learning environment as well as problems associated with inadequate computers/phones and reliability of internet. Based on the findings and conclusions of the study, the researcher recommends University lecturers and faculty managers to engage students through this medium so as to harness the emerging technologies like Facebook and Twitter that can vary the stimulus for learning thereby increasing the scope of learning amongst many students in the university. The study suggests that further research should be carried out on the role gender plays in social networking sites use and the new social networking sites in light of learning.