Factors Influencing Social NetworksUsageAmong University Students: A Case of Mzumbe University, Morogoro,Tanzania

ABSTRACT: The integration of the social networks in educational practices may bring increased student engagement and may promote collaboration and lead to improved learning outcomes. However, previous studies have primarily focused on the impact of social networks on the academic performance, neglecting to explore the factors influencing social networks usage among university students in Tanzania.This study evaluates factors influencing social networks usage among university students in Tanzania, providing insights for educators, policymakers, and students to enhance its productive application, by informing policy making, curriculum design, and training programs in Tanzanian higher learning institutions.Usinga descriptive research design and a mixed research approach, data were collected through questionnaires and interviews from a randomly selected sample of 122 undergraduate students in human resource management at Mzumbe University, while valid responses were 100. Quantitative data were analysed using descriptive statistics, while qualitative data were analysed through thematic analysis. The study revealed university students in Tanzania, particularly at Mzumbe University, are motivated using social networks by several factors, including education, interaction, information, and refreshments. It was also noted that 66% of university students use social networks as a tool or instrument to remove stress and boredom on a daily basis, while others use them to pass time. Based on the findings, it is recommended that universities in Tanzania should encourage their students to properly use social networks to increase leadership skills, build networks to socialise with different groups of people, and interact with people of the same profession to share professionalism and Professional opportunities. Universities also should incorporate social networking tools in academic practices using official sites where students can meet and share educational content apart from holding discussions; in this way, the students will still be connected with social networks for the appropriate academic purposes without the risk of the nonessential applications.

Keywords: Social,Network, Social Network, and University student.

1. Introduction

Social networks have been a very vital part of modern communication, providing connecting platforms where people share ideas and information with ease over long distances (Coyle et al., 2008; Dilunga, 2019). Social networks have been extremely popular among university students as a means of keeping up relationships, obtaining academic materials, and information (Steven, 2013). Sharing, collaboration, and interactions among students in online communities are allowed on the social media sites Facebook, WhatsApp, Instagram, and YouTube. The same networks afford possibilities of self-expression, entertainment, and professional networking (Wood, 2004; Sohail and Nabaz, 2019). Despite the potential of such benefits, there is concern about how various factors influence the extent and nature of using social networks among university students.

Globally, rapid strides in the technology of the internet have dramatically rearranged communication and social interaction (Steven, 2013). In countries like the United States and China, social networks have proved to be powerful tools in the creation of novelty and stimulus to economic growth (Jack Ma, 1994; Ru et al., 2023). In addition, the diffusion of platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok has brought about a world where free information flows across the borders. Social networks have been integrated into professional

networking, e-commerce, and education; they, therefore, offer opportunities for both individuals and businesses (Chen &Bryer, 2012; Ma et al., 2024). On the other hand, such platforms pose several challenges: information overloads, privacy issues, and potential misuses that all require critical examination in order to harvest the benefits and minimise the risks (Jack Ma 1994; Dilunga, 2019).

The increasing availability of the internet and the affordability of smartphones have fostered the growth of social networks in Africa (Donath and Boyd 2004; Dilunga, 2019). With millions of youths joining every day, social media platforms like WhatsApp and Facebook have become very important means of communication, education, and socialisation among youths (Chen &Bryer, 2012; Sivakumar, 2020). Social networks open up ways for African university students to get access to educational content, take part in virtual discussions, and look for professional opportunities (Wood, 2004; Talaue et al., 2018). But other challenges, such as lack of appropriate infrastructure, high costs of using the Internet, and inadequate digital literacy, are significant barriers to their effective use (Donath & Boyd, 2004; Moshi et al., 2018). This brings into focus the real need for context-specific studies addressing the unique dynamics of the usage of social networks on this continent.

There is immense growth in the use of social networks in Tanzania, especially among university students. A few of the leading platforms, including WhatsApp, Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok, govern the digital landscape and indeed prove useful for academic collaborations, social engagements, and entertainment (James 2014; Mweroro, 2018). Social networks enable Tanzanian students to share study materials, communicate with both their peers and lecturers, or seek possible employment opportunities (Stephen, 2013). However, unequal access to the technology, high costs of the internet, and possible academic distractions are some of the major challenges (Donath & Boyd, 2004; Dilunga, 2019). Understanding the factors that influence social network usage in Tanzania will therefore help in developing strategies to maximise their use while addressing associated risks.

Identifying what drives university students to use social networks is the most fundamental challenge. While on one hand, social networks open many educational and self-developmental opportunities, the excessive or uncontrolled use tends to cause distractions with a lack of academic focus and eventual addiction (Stephen, 2013). And even though the universities have engaged in multiple initiatives encouraging digital literacy in using the social media, challenges are still rife. For example, lack of access to technology in rural areas or economic limitations may prevent fair access to social networks, while for those students with access, overindulgence in the same networks can lead to a kind of academic neglect (James, 2014).

The problem persists, with many instituting awareness campaigns and digital literacy programs. Most students still lack the knowledge or guidance to effectively use social networks for their academic and professional benefit (Kazienko et al., 2010; Mweroro, 2018). Understanding the factors influencing the use of social networks among university students will go a long way in designing appropriate measures to harvest its benefits while minimising the associated risks. This study aims at investigating these factors in the Tanzanian setting, hence providing insight on how best to maximise the use of social networks for academic and personal development.

Previous studies have examined the general impact of social networks on education and social interactions. For instance, Talaue et al. (2018) highlighted the historical evolution of social networks, while Chen and Bryer (2012) and Dilunga (2019) focused on their

educational applications. However, there is limited research that specifically investigates the drivers of social network usage among university students in Tanzania, particularly considering socioeconomic, demographic, and technological factors. This presents a knowledge gap that warrants further exploration.

This study aims to establish the factors that influence the usage of social networks by university students in Tanzania. The identification of important drivers will help understand how these platforms can be integrated in ways useful to both academic and social environments. These findings will provide insights valuable to educators, policymakers, and students for the design of strategies that will enhance the productive use of social networks while addressing associated challenges.

2. Literature Review
2.1 Theoretical Review

This study was guided by social network theory and uses and gratification theory. Social Network Theory (SNT) was first propounded by the sociologist J. A. Barnes in 1954 and further propounded by other scholars, among whom are Barry Wellman and Stanley Milgram. The theory assumes that individuals or entities are linked with each other through social relationships; these links have consequences for behaviours, information flow, and sharing of resources (Boyd & Ellison, 2008). It postulates that the structure and dynamics of a network, such as the strength, frequency, and quality of ties, play a critical role in shaping interactions and outcomes in a group or community.

There are several factors affecting the use of social networks among universities in Tanzania, which can be explored using the SNT. First and foremost is access to technology, as universities with more advanced technological infrastructure are more likely to engage students, faculty, and staff in social networks (Coyle et al., 2008). Second, institutional support apparently matters, as universities that provide training, resources, and incentives for the use of social networks will see more engagement (Boyd, 2007). The level of social capital existing in academic communities, defined as trust and reciprocity, modulates how students, faculty, and staff interact with one another through social networks. It also reveals that cultural factors, acceptance of digital communication tools, and willingness to share information and collaborate play a big role in network centrality and the way information flows through a university; institutions with more central or influential actors are likely to see greater social network use (Boyd, 2007). Lastly, it is the engagement by students and faculty with social networks driven by their interests, goals, and perceived value that directly influences the degree of use in educational settings (Enriquez, 2010).

Strengths of SNT: It explains how relationships influence behaviours and information flows through a network, thereby making it possible to take a much more nuanced view of precisely what happens at universities about informal channels of communication; hence, networks are valuable in knowledge sharing and collaboration (Barnes, 1954). However, one of the weaknesses of the theory is its over-reliance on the assumption that all relationships are equal. Such an assumption may overlook complexities pertaining to power dynamics and hierarchies, as well as the unequal access to network opportunities of various actors in the university environment (Barnes, 1954). Another criticism of SNT is that it totally neglects cultural and environmental factors that could impact network formation and interaction.

This theory is so relevant to the study of social network use among Tanzanian universities, as it provides a structured approach through which the various factors, such as institutional

policies, technology access, and social capital, shape the usage patterns of social networks in academic settings. Justified in this context, despite its limitations, SNT provides a broad framework for analysing the nature of relationships between various stakeholders in a university and the flow of information through networks, which is central to the study's focus on understanding social network dynamics in Tanzanian universities. Based on the above argument, the strengths of explaining relationship structures, including the ability to adapt for consideration of unique challenges and opportunities within the Tanzanian academic environment, outweigh the weaknesses.

Moreover, as stated, the study is guided by Uses and Gratification Theory. The Uses andGratification Theory (UGT) was developed by Elihu Katz, Jay Blumler, and Michael Gurevitch in the early 1970s. The theory assumes that users actively seek out specific media to fulfil various needs. Thus, the theory points out the active nature of the audience as opposed to the view of media audiences as passively receiving messages. Important assumptions of the UGT are that media use is a goal-oriented activity, users are conscious of their needs, and media consumption is driven by a particular motive for either entertainment, information, or social connection.

The UGT relate to social interaction, wherein people use media to connect with others and maintain social bonds; information seeking, wherein one uses media for the purpose of achieving news, guidance, and understanding to help in decision-making; and pass time, wherein media provides a means of killing boredom or to fill up leisure time (Froget et al., 2013).Moreover, it posits that social media can be used for entertainment, wherein media is consumed purely for amusement and pleasure; relaxation, wherein media soothes the individual from natural pressures; and communicatory utility, representing the utility dimension of media: how it engages social interaction, and convenience utility, or the ability to access information easily, services, or entertainment(Anita, et al., 2013; Froget et al., 2013).

UGT is especially applicable to explaining current media consumption, especially in the digital age. With more people increasingly using social media, news websites, streaming services, and other online platforms, there is an increasing need to explain the motivation underlying such choices. That is why the theory becomes so important in explaining the different kinds of needs for using such media, hence leading to concrete applications in designing educational platforms or marketing strategies that shall best meet user needs. Knowing this motivation helps in creating compelling user-centric media experiences.

2.2   *Empirical Review*

Oniboken (2012) conducted a study on the factors that motivate university students to use social networks. The findings indicate students are attracted by feeling proud, staying in close contact with classmates, and entertainment purposes. Oniboken (2012) understands what factors motivate students using social networks where respondents had to express their own views. Reasons were to stay in contact with friends, family, and the university; the second group stated social networks acted as human needs for relatedness, pleasure, popularity, security, competence, and entertainment (play games) when they were too tired of reading, listen to music if they were tired, and see funny videos; and the third group, some participants stated social network sites were to gain attention from other people by sharing my feelings and thoughts. Therefore, social networks exist due to human beings needs to socialise with others in order to thrive (Coyle & Vaughn, 2008). A study by James (2014) on

4

behavioural addiction volume 3(4) expressed how university students misuse time on SN. The researcher (ibid) reveals the time spent on application on SN as follows: students use 94.6 minutes to read text per day, 48.5 minutes to peruse emails, 36.6 waste on Facebook, 26.9 minutes used to listen to music, and 34.4 minutes spent on finding social media. It means that in every day, students waste 4 hrs. This result of research it portrays some element of the truth on total time wastage in a single day to social network users. Students use social networks for academic purposes such as downloading different written materials that facilitate collaborative behaviour and knowledge sharing, class assignments, and research works. Reference materials from data from e-books, articles, and video presentations to enhance performance (Boyd, 2012). Also, students use SN, such as WhatsApp, as a means of providing announcements to students through their class representative, which develops into more interaction with their lectures or supervisor (Ibid). To be in touch/close with classmates or families motivates university students to use SN and to keep up to date with things going on at university (Stephen, 2013). Also, human beings need to socialise with others to maintain relationships or get their basic needs met (Coyle & Vaughn, 2008). Furthermore, students also use SN as entertainment. The process of engaging in fun and entertainment activities was described in different ways by participants, for example, to play games when they are too tired of reading, listen to music if they're tired, and to see funny videos (Coyle & Vaughn, 2008). Sohail and Nabaz (2019) investigated the impact of social media and understudy execution in France. The study concluded with the study of the positive and negative influence of social media. The positive effect includes easy passage of information, completion of homework & assignments, and finally it encourages the academic exercise and facilitates with others. The negative effect includes that the students get dependent on it, their performance has decreased with the more use of social media, and finally it is a distracting element. Ru et al. (2023) determined whether or not the use of social media influences students' academic performance in China. In this study, descriptive analysis was used as the methodology. This study's necessary data was collected using a technique known as "simple random sampling." After collecting the data, they were analysed with the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS), and the resulting frequencies and percentages were displayed in tables. According to the study's findings, students' use of social media has no adverse effect on their overall academic performance. Social media platforms are potent tools that can significantly enhance academic performance. However, students should rely on something other than it as their sole source of information. Ma, et al. (2024), investigated the influence of social media on the academic performance of a Bachelor of Science in Office Administration. The researchers used frequency count and percentage distribution. The study found that students' exposure to social media affects their academic performance, and it influenced them positively and negatively as neutral to the results from the data gathered. This study found that most respondents had an 80-90 GWA, with 69.97% coming from public schools. Facebook was the most used social media, with 98.3% of respondents spending 1-5 hours using it. The findings revealed that social media is moderately influenced in terms of communication and social skills, while time management is poorly influenced. This suggests that their academic performance is unaffected even if students spend too much time using social media. The findings also stated that students who spend more time on social media do not necessarily mean they perform poorly in their academic activities. Sivakumar (2020) examined the effects of social media on the academic performances of students in Cuddalore District, Ghana. The study revealed that, in spite of public views concerning the misuse of social media among students in the society, most of the school students were interested in using social media positively for their academic purposes. This indicates that the social media impacts the academic performance of the students. Therefore, social media contributes to improving the academic performance of the students. However, results of ANOVA

showed that there are significant differences between academic achievement and the impact of social media among students. Teacher educators and students can use social media as a teaching and learning tool to ease and improve the learning process. Talaue et al. (2018) assessed the impact of social media on the academic performance of selected college students in Saudi Arabia. In this article, the authors raise the actual impact of daily communication of youth in social media. Summing up, social networks become an integral part of the students' full lives, taking up most of their free time. Undoubtedly, in social networks, there are also things useful for the development of the students. In addition, communication with peers through social networks can help a student socialise, find new friends, and discuss with them issues related to studies. Furthermore, students also use SN as entertainment. The process of engaging in fun and entertainment activities was described in different ways by participants, for example, to play games when they are too tired of reading, listen to music if they're tired, and to see funny videos.Thus, it can be concluded that social media have a dual impact on student achievement, and it is necessary to approach adolescents' use of social networks with ultimate responsibility. Dilunga (2019) investigated the influence of using social media networks on students' academic performance at the University of Dodoma. Specifically, the study was geared to investigate the extent to which the university students have knowledge on the use of social media in academic activities, examine the impacts of the use of social media on students' academic performance, and identify the strategies for enhancing the use of social media on students' academic performance. The findings of the study revealed that the use of social media networks by students can lead to both positive and negative effects depending on the users. The positive effects include accessing reading materials, getting updated information, and sharing ideas and materials; communication; saving time; and solving questions, as well as using such media as teaching aids to motivate learning. On the other hand, the negative effects include financial cost, wastage of time, addiction and health problems, moral distortion and laziness, marginalisation, lack of knowledge, and network problems. The study suggests strategies for enhancing the use of social media networks for students' academic performance include providing proper education, reducing costs, establishing internet infrastructures, and giving students enough assignments. Moshi et al. (2018) examined the influence of social media on learning behaviour among secondary school students in Moshi Municipality in Tanzania. Qualitative data findings showed that the accessibility of social media influences the learning behaviour of secondary students, wasting learning time among the students, poor class attendance, and potential frauds among students. It also confirmed that poor parenting influences the learning behaviour of students. The research concludes that both teachers and parents should collaborate in monitoring the behaviour of their students. Mweroro (2018) assessed social networking sites on students' performance in higher learning education in Tanzania. The study findings showed thatsocial networking sites are not only used intentionally for communication but can also be used for other purposes such as education and entertainment, whereby the majority of respondents spent every time per day on social networking sites and frequently accessed social networking sites through mobile data, hence enriching engagement and enhancing collaboration among students, staff, and teachers. Results obtained show that social networking sites affect students' academic performance positively and negatively, but the positive effects outweigh the negative effects.

3. Methodology
3.1 Research Design

Kothari (2004) defines research design as the process that constitutes the blueprint for the collection, measurement, and analysis of data. Msabila and Nalaila (2013) define research design as a plan or roadmap for conducting a study. Both authors had the same content;

6

therefore, research design is a detailed and outlined method of how an investigation is taking place in the study to find out the reality. It typically includes how data are collected, what instruments were employed, how the instruments were used, and the intended means for analysing data that had been collected. It is a logical and systematic plan prepared for directing a research study that specifies the objectives of the study, the methodology, and the techniques to be adopted for achieving the objectives (Krishnaswami, 2013).

This study was guided by a case study design. According to Bromley (1986), a case study design is a systematic inquiry into an event or a set of related events that aims to describe and explain the phenomenon of interest where multiple sources of evidence are used from documentation, archival records, interviews, direct observations, and participants. It is an in-depth, comprehensive study of a person, a social group, an episode, a process, a situation, a program, a community, an institution, or any other social unit (Krishnaswami, 2013). In this study, the researcher used case study design because it is appropriate to the study to explore in-depth and comprehensive study of a person or student (Chrishnaswami, 2013).

3.2   *Population of the Study*

Population refers to all the items under the field of inquiry (Kothari, 2004). Target populations can be defined as a group of individuals, objects, or items from which samples are taken for measurement (Ibid 2004). Mzumbe University, specific school of Public Administration in the Department of HRM, third year, had a total population of 176 who are available to the university. The researcher focuses much on students of Mzumbe University and chooses SOPAM-BHRM3 so as to get the information on the factors influencing the use of social networks among university students. The reasons to select this population are approachable, observable, and easy to manage users of social networks in daily academic sessions or socialisation.

3.3   *Sample size and Sampling Procedure*

3.3.1   *Sample Size*

According to Jamal and Kamuzora (2008), sample size is the exact item, list, or number that is selected from the population to constitute a sample, which is what we call sample size. It is the process of selecting a few cases out of some large grouping or population for study (Thomas, 2001). Where suggest using a large sample size to enable generalising findings. The study likely uses the sample size comprised of at least 121 respondents with a margin of error of 5%, a reasonable level of accuracy in the estimation of the population parameters is ensured, striking a good balance between precision and feasibility, given the population under study (176) is relatively small.

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e^2)}$$

Whereby,

n is sample size

N is study population (176)

e is marginal error (0.05)

$$n = \frac{176}{1 + 176(0.05^2)}$$

The sample is 122.222≈ 122 sample.

3.3.2   Sampling Technique

This study will employ both probabilistic and non-probabilistic sampling techniques, whereby simple random sampling procedures and judgemental sampling will be used, respectively. The study selected 122 respondents randomly from the Mzumbe University specific school of Public Administration in the department of HRM third-year students. In this case, the researcher obtained a list of 176 HRM third-year students from the School of Public Administration at Mzumbe University and then wrote the names of these students on pieces of paper, cut them into small pieces, and mixed them. Afterward, someone was asked to randomly select 122 pieces of paper from the 176 papers for the collection of quantitative data through questionnaires.

In the judgemental sampling technique, the study selected students from HRM third year purposively/judgementally for the interview method of data collection on the factors influencing use of social networks among university students. The study arranged face-to-face interviews with HRM third-year students at Mzumbe University through class representatives.

3.4   Data Collection Methods

3.4.1   Questionnaire

The researcher designed and distributed questionnaires to HRM third-year students, who could fill them out on their own time but within the given period via email. The completed questionnaires were sent back to the researcher to allow individuals to maintain anonymity. Closed-ended types of questions were formulated and used to get rich insight into the factors influencing the use of social networks among university students. However, the researcher applied a self-administered questionnaire as the only way to obtain self-reports on people's opinions, attitudes, beliefs, and values because only trustworthy samples received questionnaires, which helped to more effectively and efficiently address the study issues that are posed.

3.4.2   Interview

The study also employed an in-depth interview method via phone to evaluate factors influencing use of social networks among university students. The interviews were conducted one-on-one using a predefined list of questions or a set of interest areas with HRM third-year students around Mzumbe University. The study involved 22 respondents, as a qualitative design is not a major research design, and 20–30 respondents are required when a qualitative design is a major research design, as recommended by Babbie (2010).

3.5   Data Analysis Techniques

3.5.1 Qualitative Data Analysis

The qualitative data was analysed using thematic analysis, which involved identifying themes within the data gathered from the interviews. The researcher interpreted the meaning in the dataset and wrote a report presenting the findings of the thematic analysis. The report included a description of the research process, the identified themes, illustrative quotes or excerpts from the data, and an interpretation of what the themes mean about the research questions on the factors influencing the use of social networks among university students.

3.5.2 Quantitative Data Analysis

The data is a group of random symbols that represent quantitative actions or objectives (User manual 2011). Analysis refers to the computation of certainty measure along with searching for patterns of relationships that exist among data groups (Thomas, 2001). The data collected were quantitative from the respondents, and they were analysed using the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) software. Before analysis, the data were tallied, coded, and classified. Data were then analysed using descriptive statistics withfrequency and percentage distributions presented in table and chart (Krishnaswami, 2013).

4. Results and Discussion

The study sought to identify factors that are contributing to the widespread use of social networks among students. The study used an online questionnaire and phone interview as a method to get the relevant information concerning the objective. It should be noted that the researcher started by asking respondents as to whether they are familiar with the term social networks together with examples of social networks (Table 1).

Table 1: Factors Influencing Use of Social Networks Among Universities Students

Factors	No of respondents	% of respondents
Education	07	7%
Interaction	01	01%
Information	24	24%
Refreshment	01	01%
All the above	67	67%
Total	100	100%

Sources: SPSS Output (2024)

From the findings (Table 1), the study revealed that education is one of the factors for university students to use social networks. Students who used social networks for education were 07 (7%) of the total respondents, who said SN helped them on searching school materials. University students argue that social networks help them in finding materials. For instance, one respondent said, *"Just now I am doing my research on everything I get into networks like http://scholar.mzumbe.ac.tz or YouTube."*.

Interaction, who use it as a means for interaction 01 (1%) of students are connected from one university to another, where they can share materials and exchange ideas on academic issues. Information: Respondents who used it as a means of getting information were 24 (24%) of the total respondents, and other students went so far as to say that these networks simplify

every moment they get breaking news anywhere, and they are informed. One among the respondents said,

> *.… On my side SN is my life where I have business I get to advertise and I used to learn entrepreneurship programs I don't listening neither Radio nor TV so I get informed via SN and I search a lot of school materials because we are in e-libraries for stance this moment I am doing research every assistance for academic is from supervisor and social men…*(Key informants, 2024)

Another factor contributing to the widespread use of these social networks by users is that the study revealed that 01 (1%) of the sample like to refresh minds, tell jokes, make fun, play games, and watch interesting movies. Education, interaction, information, and refreshment: this group was named as those who use all the above items listed, 67 (67%) of the total respondents who were 100. It means all items motivate them. This study and its findings support the report of Shah et al. (2001), who did a study on the effect of SN on over 1000 student' users at Whittemore School of Business and Economics. The study conducted again with the University of New Hampshire agrees and believes that current college students grew up in the technology era, and SN is now just a part of a student's daily routine (ibid). Students use SN for social connections, entertainment, education, and professional reasons. Similarly, the study by Dilunga (2019) who revealed that the use of social media networks by students can lead to accessreading materials, getting updated information, and sharing ideas and materials; communication; saving time; and solving questions, as well as using such media as teaching aids to motivate learning.

Also, the study supported by Oniboken's (2012) thesis on factors that motivate university students to use SN. The findings indicate that students are attracted by being proud of, staying in close contact with classmates, and for entertainment purposes. Conducted research to know what factors motivate for using SN; each participant was asked to give one reason for using an SN. Three types of reason were given; the main reason given by most participants for using social-networking sites was to stay in contact with friends, family, and the university. This is supported by study of Mweroro (2018) whonoted thatsocial networking sites are not only used intentionally for communication but can also be used for other purposes such as education and entertainment, whereby the majority of respondents spent every time per day on social networking sites and frequently accessed social networking sites through mobile data, hence enriching engagement and enhancing collaboration among students, staff, and teachers.
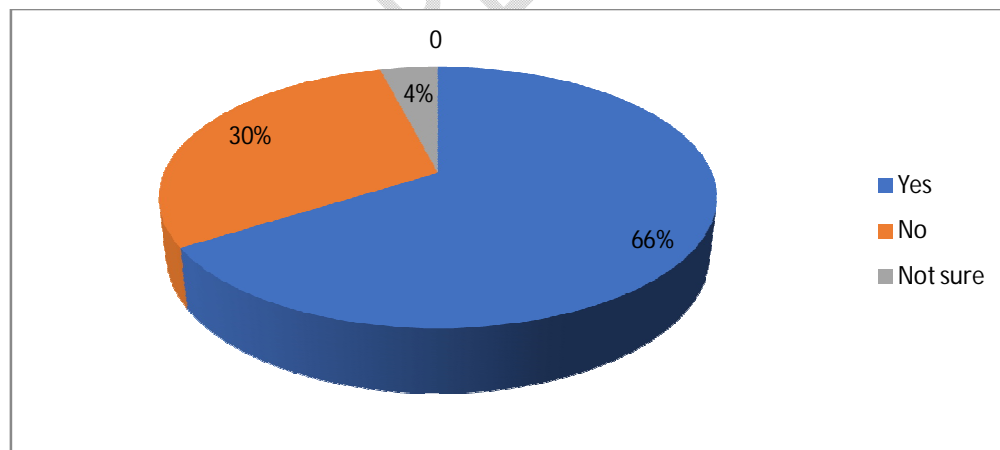
The presented results are also supported by the social network theory, which states that access to technology is one of the factors influencing use of social networks, as universities with more advanced technological infrastructure are more likely to engage students, faculty, and staff in social networks (Coyle et al., 2008). Second, institutional support apparently matters, as universities that provide training, resources, and incentives for the use of social networks will see more engagement (Boyd, 2007). The level of social capital existing in academic communities, defined as trust and reciprocity, modulates how students, faculty, and staff interact with one another through social networks. It also reveals that cultural factors, acceptance of digital communication tools, and willingness to share information and collaborate play a big role in network centrality and the way information flows through a university; institutions with more central or influential actors are likely to see greater social network use (Boyd, 2007). Lastly, it is the engagement by students and faculty with social

networks driven by their interests, goals, and perceived value that directly influences the degree of use in educational settings (Enriquez, 2010).

Moreover, the study wanted to know if students do use social networks as a tool to remove boredom or stress by chatting with friends or classmates. The study aims to know factors contribute wide spread of university students using social networks. The study revealed that those states Yes, they do. 66 (66%) out of 100 respondents were used as a sample, and those students who replied No were 30 (30%) of the sample of the existing respondents out of 100, and the last group tested, they said they were Not sure, were 04 (4%) of the number of students who responded.

The meaning of the findings is that university students use social networks as a tool or instrument to remove stress and boredom on their daily basis, where others call it "killing time on social networks". This study reflects the study done by Stephen (2013) on his thesis, perceived effects of social networks, where students replied they passed time in social networks when they were bored or tired. The aim of the researcher was to know if students have specific time on browsing SN and if they have time to rest after being tired, but 66% of respondents said yes. Similarly, the study by Talaue et al. (2018) noted that social networks become an integral part of the students' full lives, taking up most of their free time. Undoubtedly, in social networks, there are also things useful for the development of the students. In addition, communication with peers through social networks can help a student socialise, find new friends, and discuss with them issues related to studies. Furthermore, students also use social networks as entertainment. The process of engaging in fun and entertainment activities was described in different ways by participants, for example, to play games when they are too tired of reading, listen to music if they're tired, and to see funny videos.

Fig 1: Pie chart showing ideas and feelings on SN sites to remove stress/boredom

Source:SPSS output (2024)

The presented results are also supported by theUses and Gratification Theory, which posits that social media might be used for social interaction, wherein people use media to connect with others and maintain social bonds; information seeking, wherein one uses media for the purpose of achieving news, guidance, and

understanding to help in decision-making; and pass time, wherein media provides a means of killing boredom or filling up leisure time (Froget et al., 2013). Moreover, it posits that social media can be used for entertainment, wherein media is consumed purely for amusement and pleasure; relaxation, wherein media soothes the individual from natural pressures; and communicatory utility, representing the utility dimension of media: how it engages social interaction, and convenience utility, or the ability to access information easily, services, or entertainment (Anita et al., 2013; Froget et al., 2013).

5.   Conclusion and Recommendation

The study concludes that education, interaction, information, and refreshment are major factors influencing the use of social networks among university students. The findings indicate that students are attracted by being proud of, staying in close contact with classmates, and for entertainment purposes. Cultural factors Acceptance of digital communication tools and willingness to share information and collaborate play a big role in network centrality and the way information flows through a university; institutions with more central or influential actors are likely to see greater social network use. The engagement by students and faculty with social networks is driven by their interests, goals, and perceived value that directly influences the degree of use in educational settings. The study is also encouraged to use social networks for the aim of reducing stress and boredom.

Certainly, based on the findings, it is recommended that universities in Tanzania should encourage their students to properly use social networks to increase leadership skills, build networks to socialise with different groups of people, and interact with people of the same profession to share professionalism and profession opportunities. Universities also should incorporate social networking tools in academic practices using official sites where students can meet and share educational content apart from holding discussions; in this way, the students will still be connected with social networks for the appropriate academic purposes without the risk of the nonessential applications.

Ethical Approval and consent

The Mzumbe University Research Ethics and Publication Committee granted ethical clearance for the study, while the Mzumbe University authority granted permission. Employees were given consent before data collection, with the right to withdraw at any time. The collected data was used solely for the study, and they were informed of their rights during consenting. Confidentiality was observed on all information whereby it was used for academic purposes, and anonymity was considered on all personal respondents' information.

Disclaimer (Artificial intelligence)

Author(s) hereby declare that NO generative AI technologies such as Large Language Models (ChatGPT, COPILOT, etc.) and text-to-image generators have been used during the writing or editing of this manuscript.

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