

Abstract

Social Media has been embraced by students and learning institutions in many parts of the world for communication and learning. Thus, there was a need to establish how social media impacts learning activities in a developing world university context. This study used the learning theory of connectivism and the socio-cultural theory of human learning to establish; whether the use of social media facilitated in learner engagement, empowerment and academic performance. Specifically, the study sought to find out whether there was a positive relationship between learner engagement and academic performance. There was a positive relationship between learner empowerment and academic performance; and one research question: examined ways in which social media enhanced learning and academic performance. A total of 475 students from certificate, diploma and undergraduate programmes from a private university in Kenya, filled a survey with open and closed ended questions between February and May 2018. The closed-ended questions were analysed using SPSS version 20 and the open-ended questions were analysed using content analysis. Results revealed that students actively used social media with these platforms being highly used: WhatsApp, Facebook, Google and You Tube. The learners attributed using social media for learning purposes due to its attributes and the rich information that it contains. Learner engagement and learner empowerment influenced positively academic performance. There is need for universities to design policies and engage in ways of teaching that encourage students to use social media sites for learning purposes.