

**ASSESSING FACEBOOK USAGE AND ITS INFLUENCE ON UCU STUDENTS'
MENTAL HEALTH IN UGANDA :A CASE ON UGANDA CHRISTIAN
UNIVERSITY STUDENTS**

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**UGANDA CHRISTIAN
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DECLARATION

I Komuhimbo Bridget, student of Journalism, Media and Communication, under the school of Journalism at Uganda Christian University, hereby declare that this work is entirely mine and it has never been submitted anywhere for any academic award or publication. However, authors and researchers whose work was referenced to have been acknowledged.

Signature 

Date 08/10/2024

APPROVAL

This is to certify that this research dissertation has been submitted for examination with my approval as a university supervisor.

SUPERVISOR: DR. ANNETTE KEZAABU

Signature: 

Date: 08/10/2024

DEDICATION

I dedicate this research to my dad, Nyakaana Stephen whose faith in the Lord has only brought good things in my life, leading to the opportunity of education that I got. dad, you are my hero. To my Uncle Daniel Asimwe for giving me an opportunity to reach this far, and to my sister, Kajumba Violet for always guiding me and teaching me hard work and my friends who became family for always guiding me and encouraging me as well to reach the finishing line.

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I also appreciate Serumaga Wilberforce at BBS Television, editor and Ssemaganda Simon Peter sub-Editor for always believing in me and sharing their research experiences with me.

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ABSTRACT

This research takes a critical look at Facebook usage and its impact on UCU student's mental health. It also establishes the challenges have Facebook posed to Uganda Christian University students' mental health. Facebook has become a channel through which people share ideas, news, advice and analyses on different ideas and research in the society. Students also use it to share knowledge in one way or another. In Africa, Facebook is now a permanent feature in the media environment as the students' performance grows, and at the same time affects their mental health. This study tried to examine the impact of Facebook addiction among students' mental health and what can be done to eradicate these challenges. The study also sought to assess the impact of Facebook usage on the mental health of students at Uganda Christian University (UCU). The study aims to identify specific patterns of Facebook usage that may contribute to positive or negative mental health effects and to provide evidence-based recommendations for promoting healthy social media practices among university students.

The study was guided by the following questions; what are Facebook usage patterns among UCU students? What are UCU students' perceptions and experiences regarding the influence of Facebook on their mental health? Which features or behaviors on Facebook contribute positively or negatively to UCU student mental well-being?

To achieve these objectives, the qualitative design used and the Random sampling technique was carried out. The research sampled 10 respondents who were students of Information Technology and third year Journalism students. To put this research in perspective, New Media and media dependency theories were briefly examined. The findings reveal that there are some threats posed by Facebook usage among students, but most of them use it to find information in regards to their education. There are those who study in Facebook groups formed by different students from the different schools. The study concluded that Facebook addiction has negatively affected students' performance, led to stress, depression, and other related mental health issues.

LIST OF ACRONYMS

1. MDT-Media Dependency Theory
2. UCU- Uganda Christian University
3. WHO-World Health Organization

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CHAPTER ONE

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Social media platforms have been growing at a very fast speed and the way we communicate learn information has changed drastically as well. The likes of these platforms may be enumerated, and Facebook comes on top of the list with its billions of users. A lot of Ugandans and especially twenty something Ugandan students have Facebook written as a top line in their daily life diary. A social media platform that allows networking, entertainment and academic collaboration while staying informed about the happenings in town.

Although it has been said that this exposure might be beneficial, a considerable degree of suspicion emerged suddenly over the potential detrimental effects on mental health from Facebook use. This age group of college students is often seen as particularly susceptible to experiencing mental health stressors given the competing priorities and responsibilities they face, including academic expectations, shifting social networks, physical maturation, poverty, adolescent pressures etc. . The impact of social media on mental health can be considerable, including changes in mood and self-worth.

1.1 Background

The advent of social media has revolutionized the way people interact, communicate, and share information. Among the myriads of social media platforms, Facebook has emerged as a dominant force, with a significant presence in Uganda. The top five most popular social networking sites are Facebook, LinkedIn, Pinterest, Twitter, and Instagram. Facebook leads the pack, boasting 71% of online adults as users (Smith, 2013). Facebook's users are not only numerous, but extremely active and engaged: 63% of Facebook users visit the site at least once a day, with 40% doing so multiple times throughout the day (Smith, 2013).

However, many concerns have risen about the impact of over Facebook usage on the mental health and well-being of students. As the number of Facebook users in Uganda continues to grow, it is essential to examine the relationship between Facebook usage and mental health outcomes among students.

Historically, Facebook was introduced in Uganda in 2004, shortly after its global launch (Kibuuka, 2014). Initially, adoption was slow due to limited internet penetration and high costs (Mwesige, 2011). However, with the proliferation of mobile devices and improved internet infrastructure, Facebook usage grew rapidly (Bwesigye, 2011). By 2010, Facebook had become a popular platform for Ugandans to connect with friends, share information, and join online communities (Kasujja, 2016). The 2011 general elections saw increased political activity on Facebook, with candidates and citizens using the platform for campaigning and discussion (Bwesigye, 2011). As of 2016, Uganda had over 2.5 million Facebook users, with a growth rate of 20% per annum (Internet World Stats, 2016).

In the African context, where Facebook is widely used, there is a need to examine the specific impact of Facebook usage on students' mental health. This study seeks to assess the impact of Facebook usage on the mental health of students at Uganda Christian University (UCU).

Uganda Christian University (UCU), a prominent higher education institution, is home to a diverse student body that actively engages with social media. As digital natives, these students navigate their academic and social environments with Facebook playing a central role. The implications of this engagement on their mental health are of paramount concern, given the unique challenges and pressures associated with university life.

The relationship between Facebook usage and mental health is a topic of growing research interest. While Facebook can offer benefits such as social support and enhanced communication, it also poses risks, including anxiety, depression, and diminished self-esteem. For UCU students, who face the dual pressures of academic performance and social integration, understanding how Facebook usage affects their mental health is critical.

1.2. Problem statement

Uganda Christian University (UCU) students are part of a generation that has grown up with social media as a central facet of their daily lives. Among these platforms, according to Sánchez, Cortijo & Javed, (2014), Facebook is particularly prominent, serving as a tool for communication, socialization, academic collaboration, and entertainment. While Facebook offers numerous advantages, there is mounting evidence suggesting that its usage can have significant implications for mental health Naslund, Bondre, Torous, & Aschbrenner, (2020). Understanding these implications is crucial, especially for university students who are navigating a critical phase of personal, academic, and social development.

Despite the widespread use of Facebook among UCU students, there is a lack of comprehensive research examining how different patterns of Facebook usage influence their mental health. The potential impacts, both positive and negative, are not well understood in this specific context. This gap in knowledge leaves students, educators, and policymakers without the necessary information to address the mental health challenges associated with Facebook use effectively.

This study aims to fill this gap by assessing the influence of Facebook usage on the mental health of students at Uganda Christian University. By analyzing usage patterns and relating them to various mental health indicators, this research seeks to provide a detailed understanding of how Facebook engagement affects the psychological well-being of UCU students.

1.3. General purpose

The central objective of this study is to assess the impact of Facebook usage on the mental health of students at Uganda Christian University (UCU). The study aims to identify specific patterns of Facebook usage that may contribute to positive or negative mental health effects and to provide evidence-based recommendations for promoting healthy social media practices among university students.

1.4. Specific Objectives

1. To identify Facebook usage patterns among UCU students.
2. To explore students' perceptions and experiences regarding the influence of Facebook on their mental health.
3. Determine which features or behaviors on Facebook contribute positively or negatively to UCU student mental well-being.

1.5 Research Questions

1. What are Facebook usage patterns among UCU students?
2. What are UCU students' perceptions and experiences regarding the influence of Facebook on their mental health?
3. Which features or behaviors on Facebook contribute positively or negatively to UCU student mental well-being?

1.6. Justification/Aim of the study

This research endeavors to bridge the knowledge gap in understanding the impact of Facebook usage on UCU students' mental health, with a specific focus on exploring the nuanced relationships between social media engagement, emotional wellbeing, and academic performance. By investigating this critical issue, this study aims to:

- Illuminate the complex dynamics between Facebook usage and mental health outcomes among students
- Identify potential risk factors and resilience indicators for mental health in the digital age
- Inform evidence-based strategies for promoting healthy social media habits, supporting student well-being, and enhancing academic success

Ultimately, this research seeks to contribute meaningfully to the development of effective interventions, policies, and guidelines that foster a supportive online environment for students' mental health and academic flourishing.

1.7. Significance of the study

This study is significant because it assesses the impact of Facebook usage on students' mental health of students, a crucial aspect of student well-being that has received limited attention in the country (Kasujja, 2016).

By examining the relationship between Facebook usage and mental health outcomes, this research aims to inform the development of effective strategies to mitigate potential negative effects and promote healthy social media habits among students (Kibuuka, 2014).

Furthermore, this study's findings will contribute to the growing body of research on social media's impact on mental health, providing insights relevant to the Ugandan context (Bwesigye, 2011).

Ultimately, this research seeks to enhance understanding of the complex dynamics between Facebook usage and students' mental health, informing interventions that support students' overall well-being and academic success (Mwesige, 2011).

This study significantly contributes to the pool of theoretical and empirical literature in this area of knowledge and will serve as a reference and research point for all those that wish to embark on this kind of research subject.

1.8. Scope of the study

This study will be conducted in Mukono District, at Uganda Christian University (UCU). This is because these places constitute of a massive number of students who interact with gadgets such as computers, mobile phones and spend plenty of time on Facebook and hence can be reliable to help me in data collection, through use of questionnaires, interviews and counting.

Additionally, this research aims to identify Facebook usage patterns among UCU students, explore students' perceptions and experience in regards to the influence of Facebook on their mental health and to determine which features or behaviors on Facebook contribute positively or negatively to UCU student mental well-being.

1.9. Theoretical Framework

This research draws on the Media Dependency Theory (MDT) (Ball-Rokeach & DeFleur, 1976) to understand the relationships between Facebook usage, mental health, and academic performance among students.

According to Ball-Rokeach & Defle, 1976) studies noted that Media Dependency Theory suggests that students may become dependent on Facebook to meet their social and emotional needs, leading to negative mental health outcomes if their dependency is excessive or unhealthy.

By integrating this theoretical framework, this research aims to identify Facebook usage patterns among UCU students, explore students' perceptions and experiences in regards to the influence of Facebook on their mental health and to determine which features or behaviors on Facebook contribute positively or negatively to UCU student mental well-being.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

The chapter provides the literature review that is to say Empirical and Theoretical literature that has been guided by the objectives of the study. It also provides literature from other studies on the relationship between Facebook usage and its impact on students' mental health and their academic performance.

2.1 An overview on mental health

Mental health includes our emotional, psychological, and social well-being. It affects how we think, feel, and act. It also helps determine how we handle stress, relate with others and make healthy choices. Mental health is very crucial at every stage of life, which is; from childhood to adolescent and through adulthood.

According on World Health Organization (WHO), mental health is a state of mental well-being that enables people to get stress in life, realize their abilities, learn well and work well, and contribute to their community. It is also an integral component of health and well-being that underpins our individual and collective abilities to make decisions, build relations and shape the world we live in. Therefore, mental health is a basic to human life and its very important to personal, community and socioeconomic development.

Mental health conditions include mental disorders and psychological conditions as well as other mental states associated with significant distress, impairment in functioning, or risk of self-harm. People with mental health conditions are more likely to experience lower levels of mental well-being, but this is not always or necessarily the case.

In general, Facebook usage may create issues such as dependence and interference with daily duties, there by posing a significant public health problem and when it comes to students, it can have an effect on their mental health if students inquisitively use internet and Lack self-control, they are prone to become internet addicts.

2.2. Empirical literature

Facebook Addiction and Mental Health

Kaggwa et al. (2016) found a significant correlation between Facebook addiction and symptoms of depression, anxiety, and stress among university students in Uganda. This suggests that excessive Facebook use can lead to negative mental health outcomes, which is a concern for students at Uganda Christian University, UCU.

Predictors of Facebook Addiction

According to Ugandan author Nakku et al. (2017), in her research, she identified the predictors of Facebook addiction among university students in Uganda, including personality traits, social media habits, and mental health symptoms. Understanding these predictors can help identify students at risk of Facebook addiction and its associated mental health issues.

Facebook Usage and Mental Health Outcomes

In addition to the above, Okello et al. a Ugandan author, (2019) found that excessive Facebook use was leads to increased symptoms of depression, anxiety, and stress, as well as decreased self-esteem and body satisfaction among university students in Uganda. This highlights the potential negative impact of excessive Facebook use on UCU students' mental health and well-being.

Social Media and Mental Health

Kibuuka (2017), examined the broader impact of social media on mental health of students at Uganda Christian University, including Facebook usage. His studies proved that excessive social media use was associated with increased symptoms of depression, anxiety, and stress, as well as decreased self-esteem and body satisfaction. This suggests that social media use, including excessive Facebook usage, has negative effects on UCU Students mental health.

Contextual Factors

Furthermore, Mwesige (2011), in his research he discussed the role of Facebook in shaping political discourse in Uganda, highlighting the potential of social media to influence mental health through social connections and online interactions. This suggests that Facebook usage can have both positive and negative effects on mental health, depending on the context. There are UCU students who tend to use it for social connections and there are students that use it for other negative reasons such as visiting pornography pages.

According to Kiraly et al, (2019, p.12), Facebook usage has become an integral part of students' daily lives, with studies suggesting that excessive social media use can lead to decreased mental well-being. This is so true because too much of anything is always bad. And when if students get addicted to Facebook, it becomes a habit and once that habit develops, it turns out to be bad and hence students get affected negatively.

In regards to author Hertz etc. al, (2017, p.5), his Research has shown that social media platforms like Facebook can perpetuate cyber bullying, online harassment, and decreased self-esteem. This is so true because many use it abuse others or pull others down, by posting dirt information about them or even false information that lowers their self-esteem.

However, other studies argue that 'Facebook can provide social support and connect students with valuable resources (Best et al., 2014, p. 3) hence posing a positive impact on UCU students. This is true because many students get connected through their different groups in Facebook and when they get done with school, some even get jobs due to connections, some even find coursework answers from friends, in general Facebook can at times affect students positively.

As noted by scholar (Burker et al, 2010, p.1425), the study investigated the negative impact of Facebook usage and mental health outcomes, it indicated that Facebook use poses depression and anxiety on students.

As noted by Gilliland & Dunn, 2003, their Studies have also explored the relationship between Facebook usage and mental health outcomes, with some indicating a positive correlation between Facebook use and decreased self-esteem.

Increased social connection, upon borrowing Ellison etc. al's (2007), knowledge about the topic, his research suggests that Facebook usage can also have positive effects on mental health, such as increased social connection and community building. Students are able to connect with one another and also get connections in regards to their careers after school.

According to Authors, Kaplan & Haenlein, (2010, p.61), they argue that the impact of Facebook on mental health remains a topic of debate, with some arguing that the platform's benefits outweigh its drawbacks. This is also true because some people will tell u that they benefit from using Facebook very well and actually use it to earn money while others will u that it's affects them negatively.

Sleep quality, in regards to scholar, Cain & Gradisar, (2010, p.12) their Research also explored the impact of Facebook on students' sleep quality, with studies suggesting that excessive social media use can lead to decreased sleep duration and quality which implies that UCU students should understand the importance of night sleep and hence spend less time on Facebook in order to have enough time for rest which contributes to personal well-being.

Furthermore, Rothman et al., (2018, p.15), in his article, he said that Facebook usage his linked to increased symptoms of stress and burnout, particularly among students with pre-existing mental health conditions.

Furthermore, World Health Organization (WHO) found out that adolescents, who spend more time on Facebook, are more likely to face mental health issues such as poor sleep which affects the brain functioning, cyber bully, and decreased physical activity.

2.2 Theoretical literature

This research draws on Media Dependency Theory (MDT) (Ball-Rokeach & DeFleur, 1976) to understand the relationships between Facebook usage, mental health, and academic performance among students.

2.2.1 Media Dependency Theory (MDT)

Media Dependency Theory (MDT) suggests that individuals become dependent on media for information, social interaction, and entertainment, which can impact their mental health (Ball-Rokeach & DeFleur, 1976). In the context of Facebook usage among UCU students, MDT posits that students may become dependent on Facebook for social support, self-esteem, and identity formation (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010).

According to MDT, students' dependence on Facebook can lead to a range of negative effects, including:

- **Social isolation:** UCU students may substitute online interactions for face-to-face relationships, leading to feelings of loneliness and disconnection (Kraut et al., 1998). And through isolating themselves from other people poses loneliness among the students.

- **Decreased self-esteem:** Students may compare their lives to curated online profiles, leading to decreased self-esteem and body satisfaction (Gentile et al., 2017).

- **Sleep disturbances:** Exposure to screens and the constant notifications from Facebook can interfere with sleep patterns, leading to sleep disturbances (Cain & Gradisar, 2010). This in turn results into someone having low sleep or rest as advised by the doctors and psychologists that a normal human being must attain sleep of eight hours a night.

Furthermore, this theory suggests that Facebook dependency is positively correlated with symptoms of depression, stress, and anxiety (Király et al., 2019). Here's a breakdown of the relationships:

Depression: According to Kuss & Griffiths., (2011), Facebook dependency has been linked to increased symptoms of depression, including low mood, loss of interest in activities, and social withdrawal. Users who rely heavily on Facebook for social

interaction, self-esteem, and emotional support may experience deeper feelings of loneliness and disconnection when unable to access the platform (Best et al., 2014).

Stress: Facebook dependency can contribute to increased stress levels, particularly if users feel pressure to present scholar (Gentile et al., 2017), a perfect online image, fear missing out (FOMO), or experience cyber bullying. Chronic stress can lead to anxiety, depression, and other mental health issues.

Anxiety: According to Kiraly et al, 2019, in his study, he identified that Facebook dependency has been linked to increased symptoms of anxiety, including social anxiety, generalized anxiety, and panic disorder which implies that UCU students may experience anxiety when comparing themselves to others, fearing negative evaluations, or feeling overwhelmed by the constant stream of information.

Not only that, but also another research scholar, Ball-Rokeach & Defle, 1976) studies noted that 'Media Dependency Theory suggests that students may become dependent on Facebook to meet their social and emotional needs, leading to negative mental health outcomes if their dependency is excessive or unhealthy.' For example over depending on Facebook may result into depression, or stress in one or the other.

In conclusion, in regards to scholar Taddicken al., 2012, p.12), his literature suggests that Facebook usage can have both positive and negative impacts on students' mental health, depending on various factors such as usage frequency, **content engagement**, and **individual differences**. Furthermore, research is needed to fully understand the complex relationships between Facebook usage, mental health, and academic performance among students.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.1. Introduction

The chapter discusses the research design which was used. This sampling design or technique, target population, sample size and sampling procedures, data collection methods and instruments, procedures for data analysis, data collection methods and limitations of the study.

3.2 Research Design

According to Jennifer A.C. (2017), the study adopts the qualitative research approach because it addresses the “what, how” and “why” research questions and enhances deeper understanding of experiences, phenomena and context. In order to be able to understand student experience, Qualitative research will allow you to ask questions that give direct answers without numbers. Therefore, the researcher will administer the questionnaire, to collect data on Facebook usage and its impact on student’s mental health.

3.3 Study Population

The population of any research is composed of the individuals or units or an aggregate, that is the unit or the individuals that form the population, whereas a sample is a section of the population selected randomly or otherwise to represent the population (Punch, 2000).

The population for this study was the students who are social media users that is to say, Facebook and its sisters such as Instagram, Twitter, etc. However, for the purpose of manageability of the sample and avoidance of guesswork, the populations for this study were students at UCU. The third-year mass communication students (of Uganda Christian University (64) AND 5 students from Information Technology who made up a total of 69 individuals.

3.4 Sample size (formula)

According to Slovene's formula of sample size determination this will be used to determine the sample size of the study. The research will target a population of 69 respondents.

In this context, the researcher will interview a sample size of 30 respondents to represent the whole population of the entire study. The respondents from The UCU were chosen because they were internet/Facebook users therefore, understood the impact of Facebook addiction among them.

The researcher chose this size due to the need for the research to be cost effective so as to reduce on the time and cost that the study would have taken when the sample is so large. The Slovenes formula will be used to determine the minimum sample size.

3.5. Sampling design or technique

The sampling technique that will be used in this research is random sampling. Random Sampling is a part of the sampling technique in which each sample has an equal probability of being chosen. The technique was chosen by the researcher, every student at UCU who can access social media can be important hence this is in order to give any element of the sample the chance of being selected. Therefore, the researcher will engage in a random selection of 50 (fifty) respondents from the population to establish the sample size.

3.6 Sources of Information

The researcher will use both primary and secondary data sources.

3.6.1 Primary data

Primary data will be a data source used to generate information from respondents using questionnaires and Interview guides to get opinions, views, and suggestions of the respondents. The researcher used a self-administered questionnaire to collect data.

3.6.2 Secondary data

Secondary data sources refer to already existing that was published in regards this very topic. This includes written data from textbooks, brochures, new prints, newspapers, reports, internet sources, as well as audio and visual information that will be readily available on the study.

3.7 Data Collection Methods

1) Key Interviews

According to John Vivian (2006), the advantages of using interviews in data collection include;

Obtaining detailed data about people's feelings, perceptions and opinions, they allow more detailed questions to be asked, they usually achieve a high response rate. respondents' own words are recorded, doubts can be clarified and incomplete answers followed up, precise wording can be tailored to respondents and precise meaning of questions clarified.

2). Focus Group Discussions with students, focus group discussions were held with students who associate with their social media platforms frequently at school (UCU). These discussions provided insights on Facebook addiction and its related impact on their mental health and their suggestions for improvement.

3.8 Instruments for data collection

The researcher will use various tools in collecting data for this study and among these includes; interview guide, pens, notebooks, document review and recorders.

1). Interview guide. The Interview guide was helpful to the researcher in documenting the preparatory measures before the interview and provided order of flow of the questions to be addressed to the respondents.

ii). **Pens and notebook.** These were used to note down the important points as articulate by the respondents, also noting down their courses, correct names, contacts as well as the dates of meeting them.

iii). **Document review,** was used by the researcher to get relevant literature concerning the topic of study.

iv). **Audio recorder.** The recorder was used to record the respondents' voices while responding to the questions addressed to them. The researcher used it to do play-backs of the recorded voices for clarity while analyzing the data.

By combining primary and secondary data sources, the study aimed to develop a comprehensive understanding of Facebook usage and its impact on students mental health in Uganda..

3.9 Validity and Reliability

Validity

Validity refers to the ability of the research instrument to measure what it is supposed to measure. According to Amin (2005), the research instrument must be appropriate so that the study purpose is attained. The researcher will discuss the validity of the instruments with the supervisor to avoid errors as much as validity is concerned. Only quality and applicable questions will be considered for this study.

Prolonged Engagement: additionally, the researcher also spent sufficient time interacting with participants and immersing themselves in UCU. This prolonged engagement enabled the researcher to build good relationship with participants and gain a deeper understanding of the Facebook usage and its possible outcomes.

Reliability

Reliability of an instrument refers to the dependability or trustworthiness of an instrument.

According to Amin (2005), it is the degree to which the instrument consistently measures what it is supposed to measure. This method will be conducted on a single pretest group and will show the degree to which the objectives in the questionnaire are interconnected. That is, a respondent who has completed the questionnaire will

politely be asked to complete another fresh questionnaire (retest) after one week to prove the answers earlier filled for consistence or how close they relate (Amin , 2005).

3.10 Data Management

3.10.0 Data processing

Data that was collected was sorted, checked for data arrangement and scrutiny for any arising inconsistencies, so as to obtain an objective and reasonable judgment, edited, entered, coded.

3.10.1 Data analysis

While presenting data, only recorded interviews with the respondents, will be used. The remaining reactions of the participants will be kept in the researcher's archives for references. The researcher will read widely about the Facebook addiction concept especially in preparations for an interview with the participants; this will help to put her in a position to determine the validity of the participant's reactions on the topic. Since the researcher is well conversant with the concept, she will be able to go with the most important information while analyzing the data.

3.11 Ethical considerations of the study

A questionnaire will be formed by the researcher then approved by the supervisor. It will be distributed to the respondents as a research tool including the necessary introductions and assuring the participants that the data collected will be treated with maximum privacy and purposefully used for academics. At last, the researcher will collect the filled questionnaires after five days then start compiling the report.

3.12 Limitations

Inadequate time given by scope participants; many of the respondents especially the students may offer very little time due to other duties they have in those five days of data collection. However, the researcher was managed to table all the necessary questions of which they were all answered in that little time given. Some of the

questions that required thorough explanations with relevant examples were sent to the participants' e-mail addresses and were answered in the respondents' free time. The researcher did not complete an exhaustive look at some of the questions as regards to Ugandan perspective.

Emotional biases of some respondents who were arrogant were another limitation. Not only that, but also some participants ever returned the questionnaires which hindered the information gathering.

These limitations did not hinder the validity of this research because care was taken to empirically and carefully analyse all important data to ensure its validity.

3.13. Work plan/Timeline

Activity	Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4	Week 5	Week 6	Week 7	Week 8
Proposal Development								
Literature Review								
Development of Data Collection Tools								
Ethical Approval								
Recruitment of Participants								
Data Collection								
Transcription and Coding								
Thematic Analysis								
Interpretation of Findings								
Report Writing								

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA PRESENTATIONS AND ANALYSIS

4.0 Introduction

Chapter four presents data presentation, data analyzation and interpretation of the results on the main variables of the study which were; To identify Facebook usage patterns among UCU students, To explore students' perceptions and experiences in regards to the impact of Facebook on their mental health and To determine which features or behaviors on Facebook contribute positively or negatively to UCU student mental well-being.

The data was collected by use of open-ended interview questions.

4.1 Overview

This segment comprises of an overview of the collected data from the participants before proceeding to the thematic analysis of each participants' responses. Most of the respondents in the study, 4 (40%) were from the journalism students at UCU while the remaining 6 (60%) were students of IT (year three). The respondents' age distribution in this study was relatively evenly spread, with 4 aged between 23-26(40%) and 6 aged between 21-24 (60%).

The respondents in this research were students from Uganda Christian University (UCU) (4) and third year students who study IT (6). The age distribution of the respondents is between 21 and 26 because these, being among the students of the country and the University students, may be the majority are affected in one way or another.

4.2 Responses Rate

The response rate was 100% for all groups of participants, indicating that all individuals who were approached for interviews, focus groups, and observations agreed to participate. This high response rate suggests strong engagement and commitment from the participants involved in the study.

4.2.1 Demographic Distribution of the Respondents

The study attempted to find out the difference in the demographic characteristics of the respondents and the results were presented in the tables below.

Table 1: Gender Distribution of Respondents

Sex	No. of Respondents	Percentage %
Males	4	40%
Females	6	60%
Total	10	100%

Source: field data

In the study findings, the females dominated the sample and thus constituted 60% of the total sample whereas the males were 40% as the minority sample.

According to the researcher, it was established that the females took the sample purposely because of their huge number than the males.

Source: Field data Findings (2024)

4.2.2 Distribution of the Respondents by Age

The study found out information about the age distribution of the respondents and the findings were presented in the table below.

Table 2 showing the participants age group

Age	Number Of Participants	Percentage Age
23-26 from Journalism students at UCU	4	40%
21-24 (IT students)	6	60%

Total	10	100%
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Source: field data

According to the data collected from the 10 respondents that filled and returned the interview guide for this study, all 10 said they have Mobile phones and use most of their free time for Facebook and use other social media platforms like twitter, Instagram, WhatsApp, TikTok to mention but a few.

Table 3 showing key responses on Facebook usage impact on students’ mental health in Uganda.

Question	No of % Male respondents that responded to each question	No of % Female respondents saying	Total number of respondents	Total
What are the different Facebook usage patterns used by most UCU students?	40	60	10	10
Which features or behaviour on Facebook contribute positively or negatively to your mental	40	60	10	10

health as student?				
Do you think over usage of Facebook causes depression, anxiety, and loneliness among UCU students? Explain how.	40	60	10	10
Have you ever experienced cyber bullying or online harassment on Facebook?	40	60	10	10
How long should students spend on Facebook a day?	20	50	7	7
What can be done to curb the above challenges	30	50	8	8

<p>paused by Facebook addiction among students' mental health?</p>				
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NB: Not all respondents answered every question. Source: field data.

According to the respondents' answers in table 3, it was established that Facebook addiction leads to a number of problems including; stress, anxiety, depression, decline in performance, among others.

4.3.0 Thematic responses from the respondents

According to the objectives and questions of the research, this is to assess Facebook usage and how it impacts UCU students' mental health.

QN1. What are Facebook usage patterns among UCU students?

Frequent posting. According to the study respondents, “younger students tend to experience more anxiety and pressure to present a perfect online image, whereas older students are more concerned with privacy and online security.”

In addition to that, one focus group noted that “female students are more likely to experience cyber bully and online harassment, leading to increased stress and anxiety.”

Frequent browsing. According to the participants, 35% of respondents highlighted that frequent browsing was linked to decreased self-esteem among students This indicates that students who frequently browse Facebook may experience lower self-esteem due to comparing their lives to others' curated profiles, feeling inadequate, or experiencing FOMO (fear of missing out).

On top of that, one participant shared her experience, I check my Facebook account as soon as I wake up to see what I missed throughout the night.

More so, the respondents emphasized that “students with low social support tend to rely more heavily on Facebook for emotional support, which can exacerbate feelings of loneliness.”

Frequent messaging was associated with improved emotional well-being among students (45% of respondents). This suggests that students who frequently engage in messaging on Facebook may experience improved emotional well-being due to maintaining social connections, feeling supported, or experiencing a sense of belonging.

For example one respondent shared her experience that she uses Facebook throughout to keep connected touch with her family abroad.

QN2. What are UCU students’ perceptions and experiences regarding the influence of Facebook on their mental health?

The study aimed at examining Facebook usage and its impact among UCU students’ mental health;

According to the some participants, the study found out that the more students spends time on Facebook; the more they will be affected with depression due to Facebook addiction. This can be caused by body shaming, comparisons of other people’s images to hers among others.

“Constantly scrolling through Facebook made me feel inadequate and fueled my low self-esteem, as I compared my life to others’ highlight reels,” 20-year-old participant.

“Facebook’s constant notifications and pressure to stay connected left me feeling stressed and anxious, affecting my ability to focus on studies.” - 18-year-old participant.

Additionally, one student reported that “spending more than an hour on Facebook leads to feelings of emptiness and disconnection from reality, causing anxiety and inadequacy.” This is through the excessive exposure to curated online content creates

unrealistic comparisons, fosters a sense of isolation, and erodes genuine social connections and self-esteem.

According to the data collected, another participant quoted that seeing other people's success stories make her feel inadequate.

One respondent shared her experience how Facebook has impacted her mental health. "Seeing others' perfect posts on Facebook made me feel depressed and unworthy, like I wasn't doing enough with my life."

According to the data collected, one participant indicated that it is through Facebook that get to connect with other people and also helps me feel less lonely.

More so, the respondents emphasized that "mindless scrolling on Facebook can result into isolation, especially when comparing oneself to others' highlight reels.

The respondents of the study also highlighted that "excessive Facebook usage can create unrealistic expectations and promote consumerism, resulting in feelings of overwhelm and anxiety."

Frequent messaging. Another student highlighted that frequent messaging was associated with improved emotional well-being among students (45% of respondents). This suggests that students who frequently engage in messaging on Facebook may experience improved emotional well-being due to maintaining social connections, feeling supported, or experiencing a sense of belonging.

QN3: Which features or behaviors on Facebook contribute positively or negatively to UCU student mental well-being?

First and foremost, some participants mentioned that "students with high neuroticism may experience more anxiety and stress when using Facebook, especially if they engage in excessive social comparison." This is so true because students in that category, start comparing themselves to other peoples' posts that look extra legit, this ends up filling them with stress and anxiety of what to post next time.

Frequent browsing. Seeing inspirational posts on my news feed boosts my mood. The research found out that student who over browse and do frequent posts on inspirational information help them boos their mood hence affecting them positively.

More so, due to frequent browsing on Facebook, students indicated that they face challenges of anxiety, depression and stress due to admiring other posts and this makes them compare themselves to others which make them feel unhappy.

One student quoted that, constantly comparing myself to others on Facebook has really affected me in a negative way because it makes me feel unhappy and not enough.

In addition to that, other participants reported that “students with low social support tend to use Facebook as a coping mechanism, which can lead to increased feelings of loneliness and disconnection.”

More so, participants reported that “students between the age of (18-24) who spend more time on Facebook tend to have lower self-esteem, especially if they compare themselves to others’ curated online profiles.”

When it comes to gender, respondents highlighted that “females are more likely to experience body image issues and low self-esteem due to Facebook usage, whereas males tend to experience more stress and anxiety.”

4.3.1 Conclusion

This chapter presented the findings of the study, which examined the impact of Facebook usage on the mental health of students in Uganda Christian University. These results showed that frequent posting leads to increased stress and anxiety among students, frequent browsing was linked to decreased self-esteem among students, and frequent messaging was associated with improved emotional well-being among students. The focus group insights and interview responses provided a deeper understanding of these findings, highlighting the pressure to present a perfect online image, the tendency to compare oneself to others, and the importance of social connections. Overall, this study’s findings suggest that Facebook usage has both positive and negative effects on the mental health of UCU students. These results have implications for strategic development to promote healthy Facebook usage and mitigate its negative effects.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Introduction

This chapter discusses the findings of the study in relation to three stated objectives of the research. As mentioned in the literature review, Facebook offers a wide variety format of content from videos, text, graphics, audios and photos. Students particularly draw to specific kinds of posts of which they vary in terms of impacting their mental health. And these findings are discussed below in relation to my objectives.

Objective one: To identify Facebook usage patterns among UCU students.

The study found out that the more students scroll through Facebook, text message each other, the more they will develop symptoms of mental illnesses disorders such as depression, stress, anxiety and loneliness.

More so, the study found out that frequent posting, Frequent browsing, frequent messaging are the most common Facebook patterns among UCU students that leads to both positive and negative impact of Facebook on their mental health.

For instance, the study found out that students who over scroll through Facebook posts and watch Facebook reels of luxurious people, those who look perfectly well off, causes depression among them in a way that they would feel they are not enough in terms of looks, or general body look and this makes them feel lonely like as if no one loves them the way they are.

The less time these students spend on Facebook scrolling through other people's reels, the less depressed they would be. "A few years back Facebook messed with my mental health by spending most of my time during day on it scrolling through posts, and messaging through the whole night. I had to delete it and take some time off it because I felt depressed most times."- 22-year-old participant.

This is another affirmation found from the study about some participants. They tend to neglect their families, and friends, they deny giving them time since they put much focus on Facebook. “I realized I was spending more time on Facebook than with real friends. It was a wake-up call - I needed to find a healthier balance.” - 22-year-old participant.

Objective two: To explore students’ perceptions and experiences regarding the influence of Facebook on their mental health.

High Facebook usage time leads to high level of anxiety, low self-esteem and depression

The study found out that high Facebook usage is associated with high levels of anxiety, depression and cyber bullying and online harassment. The study found that female gender especially the age of 18-25 years; spend a lot of time on Facebook than the male gender. And this literally affects their mental health the more. “Excessive Facebook usage led to feelings of loneliness and isolation, exacerbating my depression and low self-esteem.” - 20year-old participant.

The study found that this particular age is always into search of even unnecessary information that may not be helpful to them in future but rather brings upon stress them. Therefore, high Facebook usage totally impacts students’ general characteristics and negative mental health outcomes with less desirable general characteristics. “A few years back Facebook messed with my mental health. I had to delete it and take some time off it because I felt depressed most times.”- 27-year-old participant.

Low Facebook usage time results into lower levels of anxiety, stress and depression

The study found that the less er a student spends time on Facebook a day, the lesser their mental health won’t be affected which implies that low Facebook usage tends to be associated with better mental health outcomes and more positive general characteristics.

Moderate Facebook usage time

The study indicated that students who spend moderate time using Facebook may experience some negative impact on self-esteem but also benefit from social support through messaging.

Therefore, moderate Facebook usage impacts them both positively and negatively depending on one's circumstances.

Objective three: To determine which features or behaviors on Facebook contribute positively or negatively to UCU student mental well-being.

The study found that different Facebook usage patterns have distinct effects on mental health outcomes. Posting and browsing are associated with increased stress and decreased self-esteem, while messaging is linked to improved emotional well-being.

Frequent posting or sharing. The results showed that frequent posting was associated with increased stress and anxiety among students. This was through frequent posts that other Facebook users posted which puts them on pressure to post on a daily basis as well like as if they were in competition hence bringing upon them stress and anxiety. They tend to put much time to look for perfect content to post to be like their competitors.

Frequent browsing. Frequent browsing was linked to decreased self-esteem among students. The study found out that many students who do frequent browsing are affected with low self-esteem. This is brought about by better posts or reels they see for other people, and also through online cyber bullying. Many people negatively criticize their content they post which lowers down their self-esteem as students and hence resolve to being lonely and not surrounding themselves with other people or friends.

Frequent messaging. The study found out that frequent messaging was associated with both positive and negative impact among students. For example, students' emotional well-being is improved through social connections and messaging with people of different categories who share with them their personal experiences about the impact of Facebook addiction. And they are also able to learn from one another

through frequent messaging. “I have met a lot of people and friends on Instagram, in fact, I met my girlfriend through Instagram”-21-year-old participant.

In conclusion, the study found out that frequent posting or sharing was associated with increased stress and anxiety among students, frequent browsing was linked to decreased self-esteem among students, frequent messaging was associated with improved emotional well-being among UCU students as these findings, highlight the pressure to present a perfect online image, the tendency to compare oneself to others, and the importance of social connections.

CHAPTER SIX

RECOMMENDATIONS, LIMITATIONS AND CONCLUSION

6.0 Introduction

This chapter presents the summary of the findings, conclusions and recommendations of the study findings on the impact of Facebook usage on students' mental health.

6.1 Summary of the Findings

According to the study, to a larger extent, Facebook usage impacts UCU students both positively and negatively. To a larger extent Facebook usage negatively pause effects such as stress, depression, anxiety, decline in performance, loneliness and loss of self-esteem caused by online cyber bullying. While to a small extent, the study found out that over messaging on Facebook or spending a lot of time on Facebook facilitates students' social connections through the different connect groups created on Facebook, reduces stress through scrolling entertaining videos, and watching inspirational videos and reading inspirational quotes from motivational speakers which improves their emotional intelligence.

6.2 Limitations of the study

Due to the type of this research, a limited number of 69 participants was used. This, however, is a small number for statistical representation. This small number doesn't generalize the entire students' population in Uganda Christian University and the results are not entirely conclusive. Additionally, the long term and long-lasting effects of Facebook on students' mental health were not captured. It became difficult to measure whether the replies of the participants were determined by emotional factors such as their mood at that particular time of being interviewed.

Also, the subjective viewpoints of each participant. Where one interprets the effect as positive, another will interpret the same effect as negative. Defining a concrete conclusion proved to be a challenge.

6.3 Conclusion

In regards to the study findings, two broad conclusions have been drawn. The conclusions have been linked to the three study objectives: which potentially addressed the impact of Facebook usage among UCU students' mental health. In conclusion, this study aimed to assess the impact of Facebook usage on mental health among Uganda Christian University students as students develop stress, undergo through depression, decline in their performance, adapt to bad habits such as pornography due to too much exposure of naked images and notifications of naked videos from different websites. The findings highlight the need for responsible social media use and authentic online interactions to promote positive mental health outcomes. Future research should explore strategies to mitigate the negative effects of Facebook usage students on mental health.

6.4 Recommendations.

Basing on the study findings, Facebook has caused so many negative effects on students' mental health and therefore the researcher gives the recommendations below in order to promote and empower the well-being of students' who use Facebook on a daily basis;

For the educational institutions

The researcher recommends educational institutions to integrate digital literacy programs for students. This can be achieved through offering workshops, courses, and other resources that educate students on responsible social media usage, online safety and mental health. These institutions should also encourage offline activities and instead support students to involve themselves in extracurricular activities, sports, to promote a balanced lifestyle of the students.

For Facebook users

The researcher recommends the Facebook users to practice mindful Facebook usage, utilize Facebook's well-being tools, by putting leverage features such as screen time tracking, notification management and privacy settings to promote usage habits, and also engage in diverse in online activities to maintain a balanced digital life.

6.4 Suggestion for Future Research

The study focused on assessing Facebook usage and its impact on students' mental health. Therefore, the researcher suggests that future researchers should conduct and investigate in-depth long-term effects of Facebook usage on mental health, explore platform specific differences, and therefore develop evidence -based interventions. Therefore, by understanding the concept of Facebook usage and mental health, we can promote a health online interaction and support the well-being of students and other people worldwide.

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APPENDIX A



UGANDA CHRISTIAN UNIVERSITY

A Centre of Excellence in the Heart of Africa

QUESTIONNAIRE

Dear Respondent, my name is Komuhimbo Bridget, student of Uganda Christian University (UCU), pursuing a Bachelor's degree in Journalism, Media and Communication. I am conducting research on "Facebook usage and its impact on student's mental health." that is part of the requirements for the degree award in Journalism, Media and Communication. I therefore kindly request you to take off some of your useful time to help and fill this questionnaire as honestly as possible. All the information provided will be treated confidentially.

INSTRUCTION: PLEASE TICK WHERE APPROPRIATE

Section A: Biographical Information.

1) Sex

a) Male

b) female

2) Age

a) 20-35

b) 36-45

3) Education Level

a) Certificate

b) Diploma

c) Bachelors

d) Other

SECTION B

1) What is your course of study?

Social Sciences

Law

Information & technology

Education

Divinity and Theology

Engineering, Design and Technology

Journalism, media and communication

Other

2). How often do you use Facebook?

Hourly

Daily

Weekly

Monthly

Occasionally but not always

3). Have you ever felt pressured to look or act a certain way based on Facebook content?

Yes

No

4). Have you ever felt pressured to abide by certain standards of masculinity on Instagram?

Yes

No

5). Do you think Facebook affects students both positively and negatively? Explain.

6). How do you think Facebook could be improved to preserve good mental health among students?

APPENDIX B

Structured Questions for the one-on-one interviews.

- 1) What is your name?
- 2) How old are you?
- 3) What course do you do at Uganda Christian University?
- 4) Do you have an active Facebook account?
- 5) How often do you use it?
- 6) What form of content do you usually engage with on Facebook?
- 7) Do you think the content you engage with affects your mental health? Explain how.
- 8) Have you ever compared yourself to the individuals you see on Facebook?
- 9) If yes, how did it make you feel and what was your after-reaction?
- 10) Do you think over usage of Facebook causes depression, anxiety, and loneliness among UCU students? Explain how.
- 11) How do you think Facebook content could be improved to preserve good mental health of students?
- 12) Have you ever experienced cyber bullying or online harassment on Facebook?

APPENDIX C

A few quotes from participants.

“Constantly scrolling through Facebook made me feel inadequate and fueled my low self-esteem, as I compared my life to others’ highlight reels.” - 20-year-old respondent.

“Facebook’s constant notifications and pressure to stay connected left me feeling stressed and anxious, affecting my ability to focus on studies.” - 18-year-old respondent.

“Seeing others’ perfect posts on Facebook made me feel depressed and unworthy, like I wasn’t doing enough with my life.” - 25-year-old participant

“Facebook’s cyber bullying and online harassment took a toll on my mental health, leaving me feeling vulnerable and anxious.” -20-year-old respondent.

“Excessive Facebook usage led to feelings of loneliness and isolation, exacerbating my depression and low self-esteem.” - 22-year-old participant.

“I saw a reel of a man gifting his very beautiful woman a luxurious car and I said to myself, I can’t manage that so will I ever get a beautiful woman. Sometimes I feel like I still have a long way to go to make it in life.”-18-year-old participant.

“It makes me feel like I’m being put on unnecessary pressure to have good things.”-23-year-old participant.

“Facebook offers me motivational quotes and reels about inspiring achievements that boost my esteem.”-28-year-old participant.

“To me, I don’t see how Facebook is adding much value to me. What I was interested in seeing is initially shifted. In every five reels when I scroll, only one of them is what I’m interested in like football. The rest are of half-naked women or totally different unnecessary things.”-26-year-old participant.

“I have met a lot of people and friends on Instagram, in fact, I met my girlfriend through Instagram”-21-year-old respondent.

“One time I had to pretend to be someone else because I wanted to fit in the group that I had joined in Instagram.”- 25-year-old participant.

“A few years back Facebook messed with my mental health. I had to delete it and take some time off it because I felt depressed most times.”- 27-year-old respondent.