EXPLORING THE POSSIBILITY OF USING SOCIAL MEDIA AS A TEACHING AND LEARNING TOOL: A CASE OF SELECTED HIGHER LEARNING INSTITUTIONS IN DAR ES SALAAM

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Abstract

The use of social media has transformed and extensively influenced societies. It has changed the way people communicate, interact, source information, and learn. This new approach is particularly attractive to youth. These youth include students in higher learning institutions, who regard social media as a platform and space for activities not possible in the face-to-face context. However, research on how students in higher learning institutions use social media in Tanzania is limited. This study aimed at exploring students' perception regarding the use of social media as a teaching and learning tool in higher learning institutions in Tanzania. Specifically, the study determined the different social networking sites used by students, the preferred social networking sites, usage patterns of social networking sites, and perceptions on using social networking sites as a teaching and learning tool. The study employed a qualitative strategy, drawing from twenty eight in-depth interviews from three higher learning institutions. Data were analysed through content analysis and percentages. The study revealed that the majority of students possess smartphones, and most of them are WhatsApp, Facebook and Instagram subscribers. It was found that, most of them preferred WhatsApp than other social networking sites. The majority of the students opined that social networks can be used for teaching and learning purposes in higher education institutions. More results show that, students use social networking sites for social, academic and business purposes. These findings imply that, social networking sites can be adopted by lecturers, students and administrators in higher learning institutions to enhance classroom interactions and ease communication between the three groups. The study recommends that educators should work on the changing needs of students so that they can provide them with suitable technology.

Key words: *social media, social networking sites, learning tool, higher learning institutions, Tanzania*

INTRODUCTION

The internet revolution has changed the way people retrieve, share and store information in various forms regardless of the person's location. By the time internet was discovered, people used it for business purposes, rekindle friendship, gain new friends and recover the long lost relatives (Kasika, 2017). However, through the internet a number of web technologies have emerged, with social media making waves with regard to information sharing and communication. The wide nature of applications like Wikis, video streaming and other applications have a great impact on the way people communicate on a daily basis (Owusu-Acheaw & Larson, 2015). Such developments, has resulted to an increase in the internet usage around the globe. Statistics show that, by June, 2019 the number of internet users in the world was around 4.5 billion, while in Africa the number reached 5.3 million. In Tanzania, the number of internet subscribers as of December (2011) stood at 4.9 million, with a penetration rate of 11.5% (which is an increase of 10.2% in comparison to the year 2008) (Shembilu, 2013). By June, 2019 the number of internet subscribers in Tanzania reached 23 million with a penetration rate of 11.9% (Miniwatts-Marketing-Group, 2019) of which 67% of internet users engage in social media (Kasika, 2017).

Social media have become the most popular modern tools for connecting people throughout the world (Mingle & Adams, 2015; Al-Tarawneh, 2014). For instance, in Africa, there were 191 million users of such platforms in 2018. This represents an increase of 12% of active social media users compared to those in 2017. Of these media, the most popular were Facebook and WhatsApp with 172 million users across Africa (Dahir, 2018). In Tanzania social media usage as of December, 2019 stood at Facebook 32.33% active users, Twitter 19.81%, instagram 18.68%, and YouTube 9.16% (StatCounter, 2019). The highest percentage of social media users are covered by the youths, especially Higher Learning Institutions (HLIs) students worldwide. For example, in the United States 97% of

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students are active users of social media sites on a daily basis (Hadebe, Owolabi & Mlambo, 2017). The research conducted at the University of Dar es Salaam in Tanzania by Shembilu (2013) regarding the importance of social media in education showed that out of 67 students who returned questionnaires 63 (95%) used social media networks to connect with friends and 43 (63%) to share academic matters. The most popular social networking site reported by students was Facebook 64 (96%). Researchers Al-Sharqi, Hashim, and Kutbi (2015) and Mutekwe (2015) narrated that students use such media as a platform and a space for activities not possible in face to face context

Social media technologies help to facilitate and provide flexibility in communicating and sharing of resources. This is because, social media sites possess an interactive and multidimensional characteristic; that allow users, to freely and quickly share various information with family, friends and colleagues (Akbari, Eghtesad, & Simons, 2012). Such platforms may be used in the teaching and learning context. Some uses of social media in the learning context include: sharing announcements such as information on changes in timetables; group discussions; and sharing and distribution of resources like lecture notes and videos, past exams and solution to questions (Kasika, 2017). They further provide flexibility in learning, stimulate innovative ideas, and increase interpersonal relationships among students and instructors (Al-Sharqi *et al.,* 2015).

Despite the importance of social media in changing the way people communicate and interact both in and outside learning environment, its use by students in higher learning institutions in Tanzania is not clear. Therefore, this study aims at exploring the use of social media among students in HLIs in Tanzania and their perception of the use of social media as a teaching and learning tool. The study was guided by the following specific objectives

1. To identify the different social networking sites used by students in HLIs;
2. To find out social networking sites students in HLIs preferred the most;
3. To ascertain the students' usage patterns of social networking sites;
4. To discover the perceptions of students regarding using social networking sites as a teaching and learning tool in HLIs.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Defining Social Media
According to Meyliana, Hidayanto and Budiarjo (2016) social media are different online technology tools that allow people to share information and resources through the internet. Information via social media can be communicated in the form of a text, audio, video, image, podcast, and other multimedia communication. Forms of social media include Blogs, Forum/review sites, Microblog, Social Network and others (Meyliana *et al*., 2016). Recently, social networking sites (SNSs) have become popular providing young people, especially students of higher learning institutions, new ways of interacting with each other and their lecturers.

Social network sites, as defined by (Steinfield, Ellison, Lampe, & Vitak, 2012), are web-based services that permit individuals to construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system. This allows them to articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection, view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system. They provide users with the ability to view one's own list of connections, as well as others' in the system. Common types of social media sites include; Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp, Wikipedia, YouTube, LinkedIn, Viber, Twitter, Google+, and a host of others.

Application of Social media in Teaching and learning
Users of social networking sites have exhibited great creativity and adaptability in their applications of social media. These social networking sites have been used to manage relationships (connecting with family and friends) and entertainment (Hadebe, *et al*., 2017; Mutalib, Halim, & Yahaya, ND); to communicate, share pictures, video and audio, course work, as well as publishing course resources like the syllabus and handouts (Chawinga, 2017). Other uses include submission of assignments, course registration and researching (Bamigboye & Olusesan, 2017). Various uses of social media tools have proved to be beneficial in various areas including education and training. This implies

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that, educators in HLIs can make use of technological advancement to complement the traditional face to face interactions.

The review of literature shows that, social media networks can be a useful tool in supporting teaching, learning and consequently impact the learning outcomes of students. Perez, Araiza, and Deoerfer (2013) reveal that, students spend a reasonable time in social media networks. They further indicate that, 46.6% of students involved in the study were using such media more than two hours a day (Owusu-Acheaw & Larson, 2015). Students greatly recommended the use of Facebook in the teaching and learning and perceived it as an effective tool of communication that could in turn enhance learning outcomes (Perez *et al.*, 2013). In regard to this, Akbari *et al.*, (2012) found that students had positive attitudes towards ease of use of social networks in learning.

The study further found that, students had more positive attitudes towards using Facebook in learning foreign languages. The study proposed that, there is a bigger chance for students' attitude of using social networks for educational purposes due to the fact that, Facebook seems to present necessary capabilities in motivating students to learn (Al-Tarawneh, 2014). Mingle and Adams (2015) in their study found that in using social networks, students experienced improvement in their reading skills, ability to share ideas, discussing as well as sharing of examination questions among themselves.

In another study, Wolfe (2007) found that over 90% of students use social networking sites and Facebook being the most popular one. Despite the fact that the majority of students use social media, the issue of using it in classroom setting was minimally accepted by 61 out of 481 students. However, they suggested that, these tools could be useful in supporting interactions between students and teachers, among students themselves, students with faculty members, as well as being an information resource.

On the other hand, Johnston, Chen and Hauman, (2013) shows that, 93% of the students use Facebook as compared to 33% who were using Twitter in their sample. The study reveals that, students use Facebook for education purposes as 55% use it to exchange questions and answers and 47% use it to discuss classwork. The study concluded that, university students are better users of technology and have a positive perception and attitude towards social media technology. The author, suggests that, academics should adopt social networking software for their personal lives and classrooms.

Social networking is seen to support academia in the scholarly work, important, in communication between peers who can share ideas, information and informal knowledge and thus facilitate active interactions among them (Sulaiman, *et al.*, 2016). It was also revealed that, social networking sites such as Facebook can be useful tools in assisting communication, socialization, coordination, collaboration and entertainment, and therefore contribute to a better performance (Al-Tarawneh, 2014). A study by Tasir, Al-Dheleai, Harun, and Shukor (2011) revealed that, students are positively satisfied with the adoption of social media networking as an e-learning platform due to its capability to provide them with more interactive features than the currently used e-learning systems.

Although there are positive results on the usage of social media, research has also revealed some negative effects with regards to excessive use of these networks, especially when used for chatting and entertaining. The study by Mingle and Adams (2015) revealed that, students were using Facebook and WhatsApp in making friends and chatting and hence were adversely affected in their grammar and spelling, late submission of assignments, less study time and poor academic performance. These results are in line with the results of Owusu-Acheaw and Larson (2015) which indicated that, the use of social media sites affected negatively the academic performance of students. Therefore, it could be fruitful if students with mobile phones that are internet capable be encouraged to use their phones to supplement their academic purposes rather than using them just for chatting with friends and entertainments.

The review shows a mixture of observations as on one side social media are considered to be useful tools in teaching and learning if appropriately used, while on the other hand, they affect students' academic performance negatively when excessively used by students to chat and socialize. However, most of the studies were carried out in other countries apart from Tanzania, therefore this study aimed at exploring the use of social media among students in higher learning institutions in Tanzania. Specifically the study aimed at determining different social networking sites

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used by students, students' preferences, usage patterns, and perceptions on using social networking sites as a teaching and learning tool.

This study will provide an understanding on the perspective of students in HLIs in Tanzania, in relation to the usage of social media as a teaching and learning tool. The management of HLIs, teachers and other stakeholders would be able to use the findings to more effectively target students and to prioritize their technology adoption to benefit the teaching-learning process. This study contributes to the ongoing dialogue regarding social media usage for teaching and learning in HLIs.

METHODOLOGY

Research approach

This study employed an exploratory qualitative research design using in depth interviews and Focus Group Discussion as the main data collection tools. This approach was chosen primarily to obtain students' personal views regarding use of social media in teaching and learning for understanding the problem better. Furthermore, the interview method, although expensive in terms of time and effort, provided more information that would have been difficult to obtain through other data collection instruments such as a questionnaire.

Participants and ethics

Purposive sampling and snow ball techniques were used to select the research participants. Participants comprised of students pursuing Certificate, Diploma and Bachelor Degree in Business Administration, Accountancy, Procurement and Supplies Management, Information and Communication Technology, Marketing and Civil Engineering. The students were drawn from the College of Business Education (CBE) Dar es Salaam campus, Institute of Finance Management (IFM), and Dar es Salaam Institute of Technology (DIT). In this study, the sample size was determined by the data saturation criteria (Francis et al., 2010). The proposed criteria involve selecting the initial analysis sample of at least 10 interviews, then setting the stopping criteria after 10 interviews whereby further 3 successive interviews result into no more new themes. In this study, the students participated voluntarily. The consent of the participants was respected and the names of the participants were kept confidential to protect their identity

Data Collection

Data were collected through 23 face to face and 5 telephone interviews, and one FGD with 8 students. The choice of FDG is motivated by the need to encourage participants to freely air out their views without fear of being intimidated by the formality and isolation of one to one interviews (Mkumbo, 2012). Interviews and FDG were guided by the interview guide where students were asked questions such as "What type of mobile phone do you own?", "What social networking sites do you use?", and "What kind of activities do you perform?", But whenever needed, the interviewer probed further when a participant's response to a question necessitated follow-up questioning. The interviews were tape recorded and transcribed verbatim for subsequent data analysis. Interview transcriptions were written in Swahili and then text extracts to support the findings were translated back to English by a qualified translator.

Data Analysis and trustworthiness

The data were analysed qualitatively through content analysis. The analysis was done manually and followed a number of stages. At first data transcripts were read from the beginning to the end. Then, the transcripts were re-read accompanied by highlighting text that appeared to be related to, social networking sites or their usage, and writing a keyword or phrase that seemed to capture aspects of social media usage by students in HLIs. After coding six transcripts, preliminary codes were identified that were then used to code all the transcripts, including re-coding of the six transcripts used to generate the initial codes. Besides, new codes were accommodated as they were emerging. The codes were then revisited to establish the relationship with the original data set. The final codes were then arranged into emerging themes which were grouped according to the research questions. Finally, quotations were

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presented verbatim to present a true reflection of the voices of the participants. Whenever, the need arose response frequencies and percentages were generated in order to support the findings.

In order to ensure trustworthiness of the study, multiple methods and investigators were used. Two members of the research team used a pre prepared interview guide to ensure that, the same topics were discussed with research participants, where each member independently recorded and wrote the interview notes, then transcribed them verbatim. Finally the members read the transcriptions together and agreed with the codes. Member check was also used to check the accuracy of the answers. The interview transcriptions were also provided to two research participants to verify the accuracy of the content.

FINDINGS
The study aimed at determining different social media networks used by students in HLIs, their preferences, usage patterns, and the perceptions of students on using social networks as a teaching and learning tool.

Social networking Sites used by students in HLIs
Initially, researchers wanted to determine the types of phones owned by respondents. It was revealed that, among the twenty eight students, twenty four (85.7%) had smartphones. Those with smartphones were further asked to list the different social networking sites that they have subscribed to. The response frequencies for this question were generated and percentages calculated based on the total number of students who mentioned that particular social networking site. The findings show that, the most used sites by the students in selected HLIs are WhatsApp (85.7%), Facebook (52.7%), Instagram (41.6%), Snapchat (11.1%), Twitter (11.1%), Viber (8.3%), YouTube (8.3%), Imo (5.5%), LinkedIn (2.7%), and Badoo (2.7%), Waplog (2.7%). These results indicate that, students frequently use eleven social network sites of which WhatsApp is the most used social networking sites followed by Facebook and Intagram.

The preferred social networking site by students in HLIs
When students were asked on their preferred site, the majority mentioned WhatsApp supported by 25 (89.3%) interviewed students. It is surprising to see that, even students who did not indicate to be used WhattsApp in either way, still preferred it as a teaching and learning tool.

Students were asked an additional question regarding the reasons for their social networking site preferences. A number of reasons were put forward as to why WhatsApp is the most preferred social networking site. The reasons include being user friendly this is the same thing as some interviewed students narrated, "… *It is user friendly… anybody can easily use it compared to Twitter and Instagram…*"

Another reason was linked to running costs, as students mentioned that, some telephone companies provide WhatsApp bundles at a lower price. The following statements support this, "… *less costly… there are telephone companies like Hallotel, Tigo, Vodacom, and Airtel that provides low cost WhatsApp bundles…*".

Speed of communication was pointed out as another reason for preferring WhatsApp. The interviewed students revealed that, WhatsApp helps to send and receive messages instantly as narrated by some of the interviewed students, "... *when you send a message, it is instantly delivered...*" "... *allows the instant exchange of ideas in a group unlike Instagram where you just comment...*"

WhatsApp was observed to be multifunctional as compared to other social network sites subscribed by the interviewed students as supported by the statements like *"... It has many functionalities, for example voice call… instant chat… you can also track the online presence of a person….*"

Most of the interviewed respondents prefer WhatsApp because it is a place where most of the students spend much of their time and most of the information are shared, the following student's statements justify this observation "*Many student groups reside here… and most of the information is delivered in this platform…*"

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Convenience was another reason triggering students in preferring to use WhatsApp compared to other social network sites as some of the students cited *"... Information and updates are delivered via WhatsApp..."*

Issues of privacy also arose as WhatsApp provide only to a certain group of people willingly joined together for a specific purpose. During the interview, one student was satisfied with privacy issues in using WhattsApp and pointed out that, "… *You can chat only with people whom you have their numbers and your chat remains private...*"

The usage patterns of Social Networking Sites by Students in HLIs
The students interviewed were asked about the ways they use their phones their responses indicated that their phones were used for social, academic and business purposes as explained in the preceding sections.

Social use
Communication. The interviewees reported using social networking sites for social purposes, including; chatting or communicating with friends, relatives from both within and across borders, mostly by sending and receiving videos or audios and receiving information. This is confirmed by statements like, "…   *Snap chat is a means of communication with family and friends via videos, photos and chat...*" (Male, certificate), "… *You can get current issues for example, you miss a program on a TV....information in the form of politics, economy, etc.... For example, I have joined a twitter account of Barack Obama and BBC, in this case I'm getting current information…*"(Male, Bachelor degree)

Entertainment: The interviewees revealed that, they use social networking sites for entertainment such as exchanging music files, watching movies, dating as evidenced by the following statements… *To exchange songs from different artists... through YouTube all newly released songs can be obtained from online TVs like Millard Ayo TV... to watch movies and soccer... To exchange photos, videos and whatever is entertaining..." (Female, Diploma). "... Other students use social networking sites for dating..."* (Male, Bachelor degree).

Academic use
The results revealed that a great number of students interviewed use social networking sites especially WhatsApp, Facebook and YouTube for academic purposes especially to share information regarding class activities, to discuss course materials, as explained by the following interviewee; "*...through a class group you can share information such as announcements, notes… some Facebook pages offer education materials..."* (Male, Bachelor degree)*, "to share questions and answers with regard to class activities ...we use class groups to inquire about classes and lecture schedule…if a certain topic is not well understood we use this forum to discuss...*"(Male, Bachelor).

Business use
The use of technology in business cannot be underestimated as it was revealed by interviewees. Despite them being students, they have seen the importance of using social networking sites in their businesses as well. The study established that, students use social networking sites as a business tool in the following ways; to advertise products, to obtain updates of new arrivals and to be inspired. This can be regarded as a learning platform for new business startups. The following statements substantiate the results; *"... I use Instagram to find updates of new arrivals via videos and photos... there are some accounts which I'm following that consists of advertisements of cell phones..."*(Male, certificate), *"... via Instagram there lots of things you can watch, for example, inspirational videos..."*(Female, diploma)

Students' perception of using social networking sites as a teaching and learning tool
Table 1. Students' opinion on the usage of social media networking as a learning tool

Opinion	Number of students	Percentage
Yes	26	92.9
No	2	7.1
Total	**28**	**100**

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The results presented in Table 1 show that out of 28 students interviewed, 26 (92.9%) have an opinion that the social networking sites might be used as a learning tool and only two were not satisfied with the usage of social networking sites as a learning tool.

Those who agreed had the following reasons: the social networking sites ease communication, access and sharing of materials among students themselves and between students and lecturers. Such a situation, helps to extend the learning beyond the four walls of a classroom and allow every time, everywhere learning. The following interviewee's statements support the findings as two interviewees said, *"... Class group with lecturer can be used to share various issues such as challenges on coursework and questions for discussion... group communication is convenient because if one poses a question for discussion.... The question and answers are available to everyone, "...It is currently being used...lecturers post various books, notes and downloaded study videos..."* (Male, Bachelor degree)

Fifteen students out of twenty six who agreed in using social media as a learning tool, opined that, cost effectiveness, reliability of materials and class management were among the important pushes towards suggesting the use of social media as a learning tool.

Students said that, social media help to save the cost of producing hard copies of materials. This is evidenced by the statements; *"... if you don't have money to make a copy of lecture notes you can use soft copies instead.... It is less costly..."* (Male, Bachelor degree).

Class management is an important tool in effective teaching and learning as also observed in the current study that social networking sites might help lecturers in managing classes. This is evidenced by one interviewee's comment who attests that, *"... Yes, it can be used for class management... lecturers are able to manage the class beyond the four walls... they can record lectures and post to student groups.... if a student did not follow the lecture he/she can play the video for further understanding or it can serve as a reference...."* (Female, Bachelor degree).

Other students accept the use of social networking sites as they regard it important in building social cohesion, making learning fun and interesting. This is revealed by one interviewee's statement who said that; *..lecturers' and students' success depends on the relationship between them...".* According to the interviewee, social networking sites build a social relationship between a lecturer and students as one can be in touch with a lecturer digitally instead of face to face *"... build a social relationship between a lecturer and students..." (Male, Bachelor degree).*

A particular student observed that learning becomes effective when it is made interesting and funny and this can be achieved by the use of social networking sites *"... it will be excellent... it will encourage students to study hard... because learning becomes funny... it helps in easy understanding...."* (Male, Bachelor degree)

However, in both cases there were some reservations on their opinion. Those who agreed on the usage of social networking sites as a learning tool, had a view that the usage of social networking sites need to be regulated through policies and regulations for constructive usage in teaching and learning. This is evidenced by statements like, *"... Yes, but it needs to be controlled to avoid misuse...need policy and regulations...people differ in ideas, so a person might post unethical stuff, therefore, rules and regulations are important for control when SNS are adopted as learning tools..."* (Male, Bachelor degree).

One interviewee who did not agree with the use of social networking sites in teaching and learning said that, not all students are able to own smartphones with ability to access digital material and this will lead them to be excluded as well sometimes network may be a problem. The interviewee prioritize usage of e-mails to supplement social media. The following quote support the finding, *"... some students do not possess smartphones, therefore, will be excluded....network connectivity may be a problem in different areas... instead e-mail should be used, since a person can visit an internet café and download notes..."* (Male, Bachelor degree)

DISCUSSION

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The aim of the study was to explore the use of social media among students in selected HLIs in Dar-es-Salaam. Specifically, the study focused on determining different social networks used by students in HLIs, their preferences, usage patterns, and the perceptions of students on using social networks as a learning tool.

While determining the type of phones students owned, it was found that, the majority (85.7%) own smartphones. Such results are in line with Owusu-Acheaw and Larson (2015) findings. It was revealed in their study that 93.4% of the students were owning phones of which 85% of the phones had internet facilities. This means that, most of the students in higher learning institutions posses phones that allow them to subscribe in various social networking sites.

Responses on the follow up question on the different social networking sites subscribed shows that, Whatsapp, Instagram, Viber, Imo, LinkedIn, Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, Waplog and Snapchat were used by the students. It was found out that, the majority of students have subscribed to WhatsApp (85.7%), Facebook (52.7%), and Instagram (41.6%) of which the most preferred site being WhatsApp by (89.2%). Such results deviates from those of Hadebe *et al.* (2017); Bamigboye and Olusesan (2017) who found that, the majority of students preferred Facebook, followed by Twitter and WhatsApp was ranked third. The study by Johnston *et al.* (2013); Sponcil and Gitimu (2013) also found Facebook to be the most visited site by college students. This means that at the specific time the most popular site was Facebook, but recently, WhatsApp has gained popularity among the youth. The reasons put forward for student preference of WhatsApp were: easy to use, user friendly, low running cost, speed of communication, convenience, mutifunctional and privacy. However, the study underscores the importance of LinkedIn and YouTube in academic purposes.

Regarding the usage patterns of social networking sites, the study discovered that, students use these sites for social, academic and business purposes. Social uses entail chatting, uploading and downloading videos and audios, entertainment and dating. The study done by Owusu-Acheaw and Larson (2015); Hadebe *et al.* (2017) presented similar results as they established that, students in higher learning institutions used social media for communicating with family and friends (91.7%), downloading and uploading videos as well as for entertainment (59.4%). The study by Sponcil and Gitimu, (2013) found that 11.5% of the students' use social media for companionship that match with the students' use of social networking for dating in the current study.

As for academic purposes, students use social networking sites to communicate with peers and lecturers, sharing materials such as notes, e-books, watching educational documentary videos, and a platform for discussing academic works. These findings corroborate those of Chawinga (2017) who found that social media networking sites helped students to share and discuss course content, share video, images and audios. On the same issue Creighton et al., (2013) found out that, students use social media to connect with peers and faculty. They further noted that, students felt that without social media as accessing faculty could have been difficult. The current results concurred also with the study by Johnston *et al.*, (2013) who found that, 55% of the students surveyed used Facebook to contact with other students in relation to class work while 47% used it to discuss classwork.

In the current study it has been established that, students use social networking sites for business purposes. This is a new finding. This result has specifically been obtained from students undertaking business studies. This inspires them to engage in business while they are still studying and social networking sites provide them opportunities to promote their business.

Further, the study investigated on students' perception with regards to using social networking sites as a teaching and learning tool. The majority (92.9%) were positive which confirms the results of Tasir *et al.* (2011) who found that, students involved in the research highly accepted social networking tools to be a main platform of e-learning. Although in this study, students had some reservations that, for the successful implementation of social networking sites, control is required. For example, Owusu-Acheaw and Larson (2015) revealed that most of the respondents were using social networking sites to chat more than for academic purposes. This affected their academic performance adversely. Convencely, the study of Hadebe *et al.*, (2017) found that students felt that social networking sites enhanced their academic performance as they allowed them to interact and discuss more with peers. Besides, they recommended that higher learning institutions should control the time spent by students on social networking sites. Thus, such findings call for control measures in order to direct students to use social networking sites for academic

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purposes. Results also, suggest stakeholders to take an active role in orienting college students on the best use of social networking sites for their academic excellency.

CONCLUSION
The findings of this study revealed that most college students use social networking sites for various activities including academic purposes. The preferred site being WhatsApp and the majority were of the opinion that, social networking sites might be useful in teaching and learning and some of them are currently using the sites for learning. However, some students suggest for control of these sites for their effective usage. Although the findings from this study cannot be generalized to all students in HLIs in Tanzania, they are indicative of the phenomenon that is observed with student populations in other HLIs institutions. Further research with samples from other HLIs institutions including Universities would provide a clear insight into the issues of social media usage in the teaching and learning in HLIs in Tanzania.

RECOMMENDATIONS
Since technology is continuing to evolve and students need more interactive learning environment that gives them an opportunity to control their own learning, the study recommend that;
- Efforts should be made by education providers from time to time to study the needs of their students related to their learning environment in order to design relevant teaching approaches that promote better knowledge acquisition and academic attainment.
- Plans to adopt social media usage in HLIs in teaching and learning should be implemented.

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