University Students' Ease of Accessing Information on Social Networking Sites Used in Communicating Drugs and Substance Abuse: An Assessment of Laikipia University in Kenya

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Abstract: *Empirical data indicate that access to reliable information can be effective in the fight against Drugs and Substance Abuse (DSA) among young populations such as undergraduate students. This can alleviate cases of insufficient communication that have been linked to the high prevalence of DSA, especially in different public universities in Kenya. Correspondingly, communication experts assert that using audience-preferred platforms is crucial for achieving desired outcomes, as it enhances access. While most universities use Social Networking Sites (SNSs) to communicate with students who prefer these platforms, research on the accessibility of information, particularly regarding DSA, is limited. Thus, this study while focusing on Laikipia University as a representative of other public universities in the country, used the tenets of the Uses and Gratifications Theory and an institution-based cross-sectional convergent mixed methods design to examine the university students' ease of accessing information posted on the various SNSs. The results showed that while students can access information through free campus Wi-Fi, many are unaware of how to search for DSA-related topics. Additionally, the lack of hyperlinks on content posted on the SNSs limits access to multiple sites. The administration's inconsistent posting and feedback further hinder students' access to the information.*

Keywords: *Drugs and substance abuse, Accessibility, Social networking sites, University, Kenya*

1. INTRODUCTION

The term 'accessibility' in the context of social media and Social Networking Sites (SNSs) communication refers to the ability of audiences to identify, access and engage with content on various platforms used in the dissemination of information (Pereira et al., 2021; Barton et al., 2015). This classification is necessitated by the fact that as SNSs continue to gain prominence as key platforms of communication, communicators are also earnestly incorporating these platforms in their communication strategies. Also, given that a majority of populations the world over, including young people, are ardently using these SNSs for majority of their communication needs (Wamuyu, 2020; Bozkurt et al., 2017), there is need to consider the correlation between accessibility and effective communication when using these platforms to communicate with these populations.

In line with this, Singal et al. (2014) assert that an effective communication is one where content providers identify the target population and recommend the ideal communication approach to fill identified gaps, while the population in turn accepts and easily accesses the content on their preferred communication platforms. There is therefore need to assess the effectiveness of communication approaches put in place by the universities, aimed at creating awareness and promoting knowledge, attitudes and practices relating to substance use among their students. This may in turn provide significant insights needed to mitigate substance use (Ronoh, 2014)

Although there is a plethora of SNSs. available and being used by audiences, there has been few investigations into how access to these platforms contribute to the promotion of desired knowledge, attitude, and ideal practices especially for young people who are the main users of these media (Steinberg et al., 2018; Feroz et. al., 2021). And, while academic institutions have recently adopted SNSs, research on their strategic use for communicating with students about issues like DSA to encourage social and behavioral change is limited (Kutu & Kutu, 2022).

Correspondingly, the success of a communication strategy incorporating SNSs is largely dependent on how and why the targeted audiences access these SNS in the first place (Bozkurt et al., 2017). This can be influenced by various factors including: availability and popularity of the SNSs among the audiences that may influence which ones they access; compatibility of the devices used by the audiences in accessing the SNSs which may promote or hinder accessibility to content in various formats; the availability of (or lack of) internet to access the online SNSs or download content may promote or hinder access to the content; and the audience's content preference may increase their inclination towards certain content and avoidance of others (Sharov et al., 2021; Bozkurt et al., 2017; Apuke & Tunca, 2022). Similarly, Mese and Aydin (2019) found that university students' experience of each SNS influences which ones they opt to access. Sharov et al.'s study (2021), also established university students' preference for these sites as being influenced by the availability, affordance, basic technological know-how of their usage, plus the popularity of the sites among their peers.

Conversely, the increasing adoption of SNSs in health education has been attributed to their ability to overcome physical barriers that traditionally impeded access to healthcare support and resources (Stellefson et al., 2020). The prevalence of SNSs accessible on mobile devices has made health information readily available, enabling users to conveniently access and consume relevant health-related content whenever the need arises. In accordance with this, the Strategic Communication Framework for Effective Communication by WHO (2017) advises that audiences tend to rely on their ability to access the information they need to protect and improve their health. Hence, communicators need to identify the right mix of available communication channels (including those preferred by their target audiences) and map their capacities to reach their target audiences.

To this end, statistics by Statcounter (n.d) indicate that the most popular SNSs in Kenya are Facebook, YouTube, Twitter/X, Pinterest, Instagram, and LinkedIn. Similarly, Statista (n.d) reported that the most used SNSs in Kenya as of the first quarter of 2023 were WhatsApp, Facebook, Instagram, TikTok and Twitter/X. Conversely, according to online sites' (Datareportal, n.d) report on the state of digital use in Kenya as of 2023, among the 17.86 million population that accessed the internet, 10.55 million accessed SNSs. In the same report (Datareportal, n.d), 44.3 percent of Kenyan's SNS users are female, while 55.7 percent were male. The leading SNS Facebook had 9.25 million users of which 43.7 percent were female and 56.3 percent were male. YouTube, which was the second most accessed SNS in Kenya, had 9.44 million users, of which 42.9 percent were female and 57.1 percent were male. Instagram had 2.20 million users in Kenya in early 2023, with 47.4 percent of this population comprising female and 52.6 percent male. These statistics support previous research that show how gender disparity impacts on accessibility to online communication (Sharov et al., 2021; Knight-McCord et al., 2016). The study by Knight-McCord et al. (2016) highlighted the differences between how female and male access information through mobile technology, although in their findings more female students used Twitter/X and Instagram as opposed to male students who used Facebook. Conversely, Sharov et al. (2021) confirmed the existing differences between how female and male access information through mobile technology, with the male youth having higher social media use compared to females.

In the African context, this disparity has been attributed to several factors including: lack of funds to buy smartphones and data for internet; cultural upbringing where females are cultured to shy from technology, leading to technophobia; and lack of safe public spaces where women can safely use ICT (Davaki, 2018). Davaki's report (2018) also revealed that the existing difference in digital competence between students (the capacity to acquire, process and communicate digital information) is influenced by socio-cultural background, cultural capital, and academic orientation. These findings imply that communicators need to establish how these disparities manifest among their target audiences and thereafter plan on how to fix them.

How audiences access their preferred SNS is also affected by the gadgets they use which may or may not enable them. In this regard, university students have been shown to prefer using mobile devices such as smartphones, tablets, and laptops to connect to and access SNS (Bozkurt et al., 2017; Apuke & Tunca, 2022). Kharono et al. (2022) further established that 48 percent of Kenyan youth under the age of 25 have access to smartphones, with 90 percent of those with smartphones using them to access social media. These findings compare to the findings by Sharov et al. (2021) that also confirmed that 96 percent of the students in their study used their smartphones to access various SNSs. Some of the factors they cited as enabling accessibility to SNSs included the fact that the students used smartphones,

availability of internet via Wi-fi or cell phone operators and the reduction in time spent on other activities that allowed them extra time to go online.

Nonetheless, research (Apuke &Tunca, 2022) has shown that some of the challenges faced by university students in accessing SNSs range from their lack of interest in joining the SNSs; privacy issues; lack of time; inaccessibility to the internet, inability to distinguish between official and pseudo accounts, and lack of efficient internet facilities on their campus. To address these issues, various measures have been suggested, such as educating users on the value and how to actively engage online, and providing resources to access online content such as free Wi-Fi within campus. These can further enhance the overall user experience and promote equal accessibility (Apuke & Tunca, 2022; Sharov et al., 2021).

Apuke and Tunca's findings (2022) also suggest that when organisations decide to incorporate SNSs in their communication strategies, they need to create awareness of the platforms they intend to incorporate or have incorporate in their communication. This may help tackle misinformation that audiences may be exposed to from 'pseudo' accounts (Kim & Gil de Zúñiga, 2021). Evidence from other scholars (Pasieka et al., 2021) show that online audiences may be prompted to search for, believe and share information from SNSs they consider to be official, without verifying the accuracy of the information. In a university setup, this is an important area to consider because if the students access information on unofficial sites, they may be prone to misleading information from pseudo accounts. Misinformation can amplify a society's knowledge gap when they cannot access credible information (Peenycook et al., 2020). One way of ensuring credibility is by having the universities' official sites accredited and verified by the specific SNS's management.

Pereira et al. (2021) in their study underscore the importance of continuous valuations to confirm that content and platforms are easily accessible and user-friendly for the intended audience. This can be done through a combination of user feedback, functional testing, and automated tools. This multifaceted approach ensures that both the technical aspects and user experiences and perceptions regarding accessibility are thoroughly evaluated. Accessibility evaluations also help in identifying the barriers and limitations faced by targeted audiences, providing valuable insights into their experiences and perceptions of the overall communication experience (Sharov et al., 2021). These results can thereafter be used in enhancing communication to achieve intended objectives.

1.1. Theoretical Framework

This study was guided by the tenets of the Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT) as advanced by Katz et al. (1974). The theory posits that media users are actively choosing specific media and media content according to their needs, desires, and other gratifications (Pierce, 2009). In the current digital mediascape, the theory has been beneficial in analysing and predicting how audiences choose, access and use different digital communication platforms (Ruggiero, 2000; Carolyn, 2002; Papacharissi & Rubin, 2000; Godlewski & Perse, 2010).

One tenet of the theory posits that audiences' social, economic, and environmental circumstances influences how and why they choose to access specific media. In line with this, university students have been shown to be in a unique environment where their communication choices are determined by their peers, economic abilities, and availability of communication gadgets (Ragusa, 2017). It is therefore important to establish from the onset of any communication with them how these factors may affect the success of the communication process. For instance, in a university setup, technology such as smart devices or internet services, can enable or hinder students from accessing online platforms (Kharono et al., 2022). Thus, this tenet guided the study in exploring how the students' social, economic, and environmental circumstances influence their choice and usage of SNSs.

The theory also advances that media users are actively choosing and accessing media and media content based on psychological and technical factors. These include their awareness of the existence of the communication platforms, such as the SNSs, and their technological knowledge on how to access and use the SNSs (Wang, 2014). In this study, this tenet was used in establishing how these factors influence the student' choice and access to the various SNSs used by the university to communicate with them about DSA.

2. METHODOLOGY

2.1. Research Design

This study used an institutional based cross-sectional convergent mixed methods design, involving a survey and Online Focus Group Discussions (OFGD). The cross-sectional method allowed for the description and analysis of the study sample, while the convergent mixed methods enabled the concurrent collection of qualitative and quantitative data, their analyse and corelation (Creswell, 2009).

2.2. Study Area

Laikipia University was the study area. Being one of the public universities in Kenya grappling with DSA among its undergraduate students just like all other public universities, the institution has established a guidance and counselling services unit that coordinates the provision of counselling services to the students in line with their academic affairs, vocational training, personal life, and social behaviour (related to, among others, DSA). As part of their communication approach, the institution also manages various social media accounts on different SNSs including Facebook, Twitter/X, and Instagram. These are regularly updated with information related to various activities affecting the university, the students, and partners.

Like other public universities in the country, the institution also implements a drugs and alcohol prevention policy. Hence it was purposively chosen because it presents an ideal environment that can be used to assess the communication approaches that have been factored in the policy, their implementation and how these have been effective in creating awareness and promoting desired knowledge, attitude and practices relating to DSA.

The sample from the university was therefore considered a representative of the other public universities in Kenya because the Kenya Universities and Colleges Central Placement Services (KUCCPS) used in the country ensures that students are picked competitively from the same pool for placement to public universities without special considerations. This placement process ensures that the population characteristics of public universities in Kenya are the same.

2.3. Study Population

The study population was the first year and second year undergraduate students. Studies have proven that for majority of students in this cohort, the campus life introduces them to social pressures which make them susceptible to DSA (Midford, 2009; Musyoka et al., 2020; Certain et al., 2009). The approximate number of this population (Laikipia University) based on the Kenya Universities and Colleges Central Placement Service (2021) statistics was 2338 for first year students and 1777 for second year students.

2.4. Sampling Procedure and Sample

The study used stratified sampling technique to sample was the students, with the four (4) academic schools in the university used as the strata. In calculating the proposed sample for each stratum, Cochran's (1977) formula recommended for large populations was used as follows:

Sample size $(n_0) = \dfrac{(Z_{1-\frac{\alpha}{2}})2(p)(q)}{(d)2}$

Where $z1 - \dfrac{\alpha}{2} = 1.92$ $Z_1 - \dfrac{\alpha}{2} = 1.645$ (from Z tables)

and:

p = 0.50

q = 1 − p = 0.05

d = 0.10

$n_o = \dfrac{(1.645)^2 \, (0.50)(0.50)}{0.10^2} = 67.65$

(a) For Sample 1 (1st year students), where N=2338 $n = \dfrac{n0}{1+\frac{n0-1}{N}}$

$$n = \frac{n_0}{1+\frac{n0-1}{N}}$$

$$n = \frac{67.65}{1+\frac{66.65}{2338}} \quad \frac{\frac{245}{244}}{1+\frac{244}{1777}} = \frac{\frac{244}{1.1373}}{1.1373} \frac{67.65}{1.02} = \textbf{66.3 students}$$

When divided into 4 equal strata, then each of the $n_{i=\frac{nN_i}{N}}$ was 16.5 which is approximately **17 units per stratum**.

(b) For Sample 2 (2nd year students), where N=1777

$$n = \frac{n_0}{1+\frac{n0-1}{N}}$$

$$n = \frac{67.65}{1+\frac{66.65}{1777}} \quad \frac{\frac{245}{244}}{1+\frac{244}{1288}} = \frac{67.65}{1.0375} \frac{\frac{244}{1.189}}{1.189} = \textbf{65.2 students}$$

When divided into 4 equal strata, then each of the $n_{i=\frac{nN_i}{N}}$ was 16.3 which is approximately **16 units per stratum.**

The OFGD participants were selected from each of the four academic schools in the university, with two participants (1female and 1 male) selected from each school. Thus, each OFGD had 8 participants.

2.5. Data Collection and Analysis

For the survey, an online self-administered questionnaire was used to get data on the students' knowledge of the university's official pages on the SNSs, and the students' ability to access information on DSA on the various SNSs. The OFGDs were used to collect data on the students' ease of accessing information relating to DSA on the various SNSs. The two OFGDs (one for the first-year students and another for the second-year students) were conducted synchronously using 'google-meet' online app.

2.6. Data Analysis

The Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS version 21.0) was used in analysing the quantitative data from the online self-administered questionnaire. The qualitative data from the OFGDs was analysed using inductive content analysis methods (Palys & Atchison, 2014). This enabled the analysis and elucidation of the inherent meaning of the participants' responses for inference making and correlation with the quantitative data. The analysis was guided by the tenets of the UGT and postulations by previous scholarly works.

2.7. Ethical Considerations

Permission to carry out the research was obtained from the board of post graduate studies of Laikipia University and ethical clearance was done by the Laikipia University Institutional Scientific Ethical Review Committee (LU-ISERC). A research permit was then sought from the National Commission for Science, Technology, and Innovation (NACOSTI). Research ethics observed in the study included informed consent, confidentiality, objectivity and honesty in data handling and storage. All the participants took part in this study voluntarily and without any coercion, inducement or deception and were also free to opt out of the research, if they so wished.

3. STUDY FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

3.1. Students' Knowledge and Appreciation of SNSs Operated by the University

Previous research has established that when audiences are aware of an organisation's official SNSs and social media accounts, they may be more inclined to access and engage with content on those sites (Pasieka et al., 2021). Other studies posit that university students are hindered from fully accessing and using SNSs because of mistrust and poor digital literacy on how to safeguard themselves from malicious and misleading content from pseudo accounts on SNSs (Apuke & Tunca, 2022). Universities therefore need to create awareness of their official SNSs so as to build trust on their students (Hinsley, 2021; Apuke & Tunca, 2022). Thus, in the case of the university being studied, it can be postulated that for the students to access information from the University on its official SNSs, they need to first know and

acknowledge the existence of these sites. Figure 1 illustrates how many students are aware of the official SNSs managed by the University.

Are you aware of the official accounts on Social Networking Sites, managed by Laikipia university?
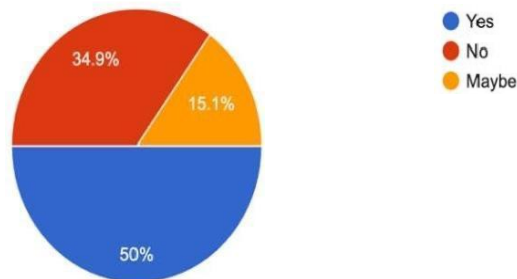

Fig. 1. *General Knowledge of SNSs accounts managed by Laikipia University*

According to the results in figure 1, among the surveyed students, 73 (50%) were aware of the official accounts managed by the university on various SNSs, while 22 (15.1%) were uncertain and 51 (34.9%) were totally unaware of the accounts. These results point to the possibility of the students who are uncertain or unaware of the university's official accounts on the SNSs following unofficial or pseudo accounts. Considering that pseudo accounts can influence people's views or cause confusion among content consumers by spreading misinformation and rumours (Kim & Gil de Zúñiga, 2021; Pasieka et al., 2021; Hinsley, 2021), the University should create awareness of the official SNSs accounts it actively manages.

3.2. Students' Ability to Access Information on Drugs and Substance Use

In regard to searching for content online, various studies have established that SNS users can sometimes encounter difficulties in accessing relevant information from the platforms they search on (Pereira et al., 2021; Seidel et al., 2023). This is often determined by the user's digital health literacy levels. Digital health literacy refers to a user's ability to seek, find, understand, and appraise health information from online sources and later be able to use the knowledge to inform health-related decisions and actions (Seidel et al., 2023). Digital health illiteracy therefore means that the user may not be able to know how and what to look for in relation to a specific topic. This study therefore sought to find out whether the students who searched for information on DSA on the SNSs were able to access the information. The results are shown on Figure 2

Have you been able to access information on drugs and substance use/abuse on any of the social networking sites accounts managed by Laikipia university?
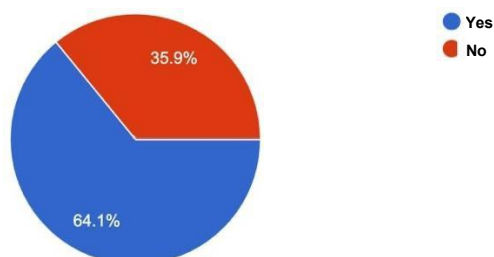

Fig. 2. *Number of students who have accessed information on DSA on the SNSs.*

The findings in figure 2 shows that 64 percent of the students have been able to access information on DSA, while 35 percent have not. This finding corroborates the postulations by Pereira et al. (2021) and Seidel et al. (2023) that online users, including SNSs users, can search for content and not be able to

get the correct content. This can be attributed to them not knowing the official SNS to search from, or due to digital health illiteracy. Digital health illiteracy also means that a student searching for information on DSA may not know what to search for or how to search for the information from the SNSs. This point was supported by the following responses by some of the OFGD participant when asked whether they had searched and accessed information on DSA:

Excerpt 1

.....but I think drugs is just drugs, the information is the same. (OFGD participant 16).

Excerpt 2

I have never really thought of different ways to search for information on drugs. (OFGD participant 15).

The above responses (Excerpts 1 & 2) imply that the students may be using generic prompts or search words when looking for information on DSA, yet as various documents and scholarly articles specific, there are specific topic under the banner of DSA such as: types of drugs and substances; effects of drugs and substances; prevention and avoidance; guidance and counselling (World Drug Report, 2018). Available information can be classified under these topics for easier accessibility, depending on a student's information need at a specific time. A point of reference is how the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA) has demarcated these topics on their website (nida.nih.gov) while providing hyperlinks to their accounts on various SNSs for those interested in accessing the information on these sites

3.3. Students' Overall Ease of Accessing Content on the Snss Operated by the University

The parameters for evaluating the students' overall ease of accessing the content posted by the university on the SNSs were accessible images and videos with hyperlinks; accepting feedback; physical/technical accessibility and availability of content as advanced by Pereira et al. (2021). These parameters were ideal for a study such as this one because they present a standardised and practical method of measuring the accessibility features across different platforms which content creators, in this case the University administration, can use to assess whether the content they share are easily accessible to their target audience. This is especially factual bearing in mind Pereira et al.'s (2021) definition of accessible content as being the ability of audiences, to access and engage with content on various platforms used in the dissemination of information.

It is equally essential to adopt these parameters because as Pereira et al. (2021) and Sharov et al. (2021) advise, it is important for content creators and communicators to continuously evaluate the accessibility of their content on the various SNSs. Using these standardised parameters can provide valuable insights by enabling the identification and reduction of the barriers that users face in accessing content online. Thus, table 1 highlights the summarised responses of the OFGD participants regarding the accessibility of both the SNSs and content therein.

Table 1. Accessibility of communication platforms and content

	Accessibility parameters	Summary of Responses from the OFGDs
1.	Accessible images and videos with hyperlinks	Images are only used on Facebook, Twitter/X, and Instagram. They are accessible but no hyperlinks provided for cross-platform accessibility.
2.	Accepting feedback and responses	Not on the official sites and not by university officials, instead, it is fellow students who will respond to a comment.
3.	Technical/Physical accessibility	Internet/Wi-Fi is available for 1st years who reside on campus. Not easily available for the other groups residing outside campus.
4.	Availability of content	The university administration don't post regularly; they don't post all information; and they prefer physical sites like notice boards.

Source: Researcher, 2023

The responses captured on table 1 point to varied results for overall accessibility of the content posted by the University on the SNSs. For instance, as a perimeter for measuring accessibility, accessible images and video content should have embedded in them hyperlinks for continued access and engagement with the content on other SNSs. In the case of content posted in the university's official accounts, embedding hyperlinks would assist in providing a connection between the SNSs, so that the students can continue interacting with the content or access the content in their preferred SNSs besides

the one they came across the content in. Accordingly, when the students were asked whether they have encountered hyperlinks when accessing DSA content posted by the university, they stated as follows:

Excerpt 3

I have never seen that in the posts either on Facebook or Twitter/X (OFGD participant 15).

Excerpt 4

I only access the content on each of the sites when I visit them separately. For example, if I go to Twitter/X, I will see the content there without knowing that it was posted on Facebook (OFGD participant 16).

Excerpt 5

When I want to share what I've seen on Facebook, I sometimes screenshot and share on WhatsApp. I don't share the link (OFGD participant 13).

The responses (Excerpts 3, 4 & 5) indicate that the University needs to improve on providing hyperlinks connecting the content they post on the various platforms, so as to improve on visibility and accessibility of the content. This practice can also help the students become aware of the University's official accounts on various SNSs.

Regarding the availability of content as a determinant of accessibility, scholars such as Mutsikiwa et al. (2021) posit that SNS users are more inclined to access specific sites when they perceive the information as being readily available and of quality. Quality in this case refers to the accuracy, reliability, relevance, and completeness of the information posted. Thus, when the OFGD participants were asked to comment on the availability of DSA content posted by the university on the various SNSs, some of the participants made the following remarks:

Excerpt 6

They rarely post on Facebook and when you ask some question, they don't reply. Then you don't get enough information on Facebook. (OFGD participant 5).

Excerpt 7

I've seen Facebook, Twitter/X, Instagram, but they don't really post things there. (OFGD participant 8).

Excerpt 8

I know of Instagram; I also know of Twitter/X and Facebook. But most of the time they don't post anything, they stay for a while without posting. (OFGD participant 6).

Excerpt 9

…another issue is the Instagram, I think the last post was in 2017, I've never seen anything there. (OFGD participant 11).

These answers (Excerpts 6, 7, 8 & 9) emphasise the fact that the content posted on the University's accounts may be considered unavailable by the students, putting into question the quality and relevancy of the information, especially when it is not updated. The end result to this would be the student losing interest in accessing the sites, thereby losing out on getting the information posted on the sites. Recommendations have been put forth on the frequency by which content should be posted. This is determined by the characteristics of the target audience and the type of content they prefer to engage with based on the affordances of their preferred SNSs. For instance, it is recommended that on Facebook, posts should be updated once a day or 5 times a week. On YouTube, content can be posted every one or two weeks; on Twitter/X at least three times per day and on Instagram one or two posts a day (Houlahan, 2017). These guidelines can be adopted by the University when scheduling how to post content on their accounts on the various SNSs.

Another determinant of accessibility on SNSs is the ability of the platform to enable users provide feedback and timely responses on their experiences (Mutsikiwa et al., 2021; Pereira et al., 2021). In this regard, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR, 2020), document recommends

ideal considerations for feedback and response mechanisms on SNSs. These should include multiple two-way channels tailored to the different needs, preferences, and capacities of the target audience. They also ought to incorporate confidentiality safeguards, established timelines, responsibilities, and methods for acknowledging, assessing, referring, and responding to feedback. In regard to this, the following responses by some of the OFGD participants capture their perception of how they felt the university performed in relation to allowing them to engage with the content through comments and feedback:

Excerpt 10

Personally, I've never tried but I normally see them responding when other people (students) respond. But most of the time they just pass information, so they rarely respond especially in the official groups. Now, there are other groups that are managed by the student officials, there is where you'll get replies especially on Twitter/X. (OFGD participant 1).

Excerpt 11

Most times you'll find that in case someone asks a question it is not the officials who will respond. You'll find that maybe it is just fellow students who will respond. Response is not good in Facebook. But on other pages, it is okay. But on Facebook, no. (OFGD participant 4).

Excerpt 12

They rarely post on Facebook and when you ask some question, they don't reply. Then you don't get enough information on Facebook. (OFGD participant 5).

These sentiments (Excerpts 10, 11 & 12) imply that the university is not regular in uploading content onto some of the SNSs and also in responding to questions asked by the audiences, who are the students. The sentiments can be interrelated with Mutsikwa et al.'s findings (2021) that SNS users will consider content as trustworthy when the content is from credible sources, and untrustworthy when its only user-generated content such as comments and retweets, that is available on the specific SNS account. Hence, the fact that some of the OFGD participants indicate that they do not get response from the administration but from fellow students, may lead to them avoiding those sites and information therein, as established by Mutsikiwa et al. (2021). It is therefore a responsibility of the university's administration to come up with workable timelines and methods of responding to relevant comments on their official accounts on the SNSs.

Physical accessibility as an indicator of accessibility in SNSs refers to the ability of users to access the sites either through availability of internet services or gadgets (Gleason et al., 2020). Although some studies show that internet penetration and the subsequent use of internet services has significantly increased among young people in the country (Pew Research, 2018: Poushter, 2023), there are other studies that suggest inequalities between those who own internet enabled gadgets and those who do not, plus difference between those who can access internet and those who cannot. For instance, the study by Kharono et al. (2022) established that many young people in urban areas owned smart phones and were avid users of internet compared to their age mates in rural areas. He attributed this to the availability of free internet services via Wi-Fi in public place for the urban dwellers. Accordingly, when the students were asked whether they were able to access the content physically and technically, they responded as follows:

Excerpt 13

The issue about network coverage I think it is only limited to 1st years because the wi-fi hotspots are within campus and most of the 2nd years to the 4th years stay outside the campus. Wi-fi is not accessible to those people who are staying outside campus. (OFGD participant 2).

Excerpt 14

For my case, I stay within campus, so there is internet connection all the time. And I have enabled notifications, so in case of any event, there is an update. (OFGD participant 1).

The above responses (Excerpts 13 & 14) indicate that there is free wi-fi internet services within the campus. This means that it is easier for the students to access online sites, including SNSs, while within the wi-fi hotspot range (a hotspot refers to a physical location where people can connect to a wi-fi

network using a device like smartphone or laptop). Consequently, it can be deduced that the students who reside in campus are able to access internet and online communication sites because of the availability of free Wi-Fi coverage in campus. However, this may not be the case for students residing outside campus. This in turn means that the students without access to Wi-Fi or internet services may have to depend on their fellow students to pass information to them. This is a scenario that can hinder effective communication due to possibilities in misinformation or disinformation from these sources.

In spite of the above responses, among the OFGD participants were those who acknowledged the existence of free wi-fi internet within the campus but bemoaned the fact that it was slow.

Excerpt 15

There are some designated spots in the university where we can get free wi-fi. And there are some places where it doesn't reach, so you find the places where there is free wi-fi congested and the signal becomes very slow. (OFGD participant 3).

Excerpt 16

The wi-fi is not really that strong, I find that some spots, like the study area, is not that strong that you can use to maybe open the Instagram, Twitter/X. (OFGD participant 8).

Excerpt 17

I live in the hostels of the school, and you'll find that in some hostels there is wi-fi and there are those that don't have. So, you'll find that sometimes some people will post on their status that they've seen something maybe on YouTube. So, you'll also go there to check it out only after seeing their status post (OFGD participant 10).

Given that some of the participants (Excerpts 15 & 16) complain about the internet being slow also means they may not be able to easily access some of the data intensive SNSs. The amount of data and internet speed a SNS will need is determined by the type of content ascribed for the SNS such as images and videos that consume more data to view or download. Text and image-based sites like Facebook and WhatsApp can work with slow internet connection of 5MPS, while video-centred sites like YouTube and Instagram need between 10MPS to 100MPS. (Holslin, 2023). Some of the students (Excerpt 17) also reported that internet access is limited outside campus and as such, they prioritise when and how they communicate online. Borrowing from the study by Gleason et al. (2020), the administration can therefore consider incorporating SNSs that use less data such as WhatsApp and Facebook, to communicate with the students. These applications have been found to be accessible even with slow internet connections.

4. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study established that the students are adherent users of various SNSs which they visit in search of information, including on DSA. Majority of the students are aware of some of the SNSs where the university manage official pages. The students' ease of accessing these pages are either enabled by the free Wi-Fi internet services available within campus or hindered by lack of internet services outside campus. They cannot access content across multiple SNSs due to lack of hyperlinks on the content posted by the University, who are also not consistent in posting content on the SNSs and providing feedback to comments posted by the students.

It is therefore recommended that the university administration needs to create awareness of the institution's official accounts and consider having the pages certified or verified in line with the requirements of each SNS to make them trustworthy. To curb digital illiteracy that may be a contributing factor to some of the students not knowing where and what to search for in regard to DSA, the University can consider classifying the information available on the website under subtopics like: types of drugs and substances; effects of drugs and substances; prevention and avoidance; guidance and counselling (World Drug Report, 2018). On the subtopics, hyperlinks can be included directing the users to various SNSs for students who may want to access the information on other platforms and at their convenience. The institution can also endeavour to provide resources to access online content such as free and fast Wi-Fi internet within campus.

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