

# Variations in Social Media Use and Narcissism Conduct among Students in Colleges of Education on the Copperbelt, Zambia

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**Abstract:** This study investigated the variations in social media usage with regard to Narcissism conduct among students in colleges of education. The study utilised the survey method to solicit data from a sample of five hundred and seventy-nine (579) college students who were drawn from three (3) public and three (3) private colleges of education on the Copperbelt. Bergen Social Media Addiction Scale (BSMAS) and Narcissistic Personality Inventory (NPI 12) were utilised to determine student's social media use and narcissistic behaviour. The findings indicated that Facebook and WhatsApp were the commonly used platforms and that their adoption depended upon demographic variables of gender, age, year of study and college status. *The study also finds a high degree of narcissism in students that leads to troubling levels. Therefore, the study suggests early screening, accompanied by effective counselling interventions to inculcate a sense of self-worth.*

**Keywords:** Demographic variations; Social Media; Narcissism; selfie.

## I. INTRODUCTION

Social media innovation has of late become an indistinguishable piece of a person's everyday exercises that has attracted an extensive population and has spread its reach to almost every corner of the world (Kemp, 2020). It has connected places worldwide in a way that was not previously possible, making the world's inhabitants a little closer to each other. According to Shilip and Arun-Kanti (2019), social media is a speedy and diverse medium of communication that helps exchange content, knowledge, entertainment and know-how. In this way, social media have become critical forums that have provided voices to several unheard-of and unknown individuals, including college students (Silomba et al., 2021).

The rapid development of social media has caused several profound changes in the way users adopt and use them for interaction and communication (Kapoor et al., 2017). It has led many users to have a chance of accessing multiple social media content through just a few touches.

Due to its desirability and technological advancement, the media field has witnessed the birth of several most influential platforms that have significantly changed the picture of social media usage (Raj et al., 2018). Today's social media consists of numerous social media platforms, all serving the same social networking services but a few different purposes. The

most popular and commonly known include Facebook, WhatsApp, Twitter, Snapchat, Instagram, LinkedIn and YouTube, to mention but a few (Kircaburun et al., 2018). These platforms differ from each other in terms of their unique features. Global statistics rank Facebook as the most popular social media platform, followed by YouTube. The third one is Instagram, Twitter is sixth, Pinterest is eighth, and LinkedIn is number thirteen (Kallas, 2021). These platforms show variations in users' expectations, the high pace of creativity, complexity, and use (Kircaburun et al., 2018). Such a dynamic position means that researchers must keep up to date with the current growth of social media and its usage regarding their psychological effects, Narcissism not exceptional.

Numerous studies, mainly outside Zambia, have documented several pieces of evidence on students' social media platform preferences and usage (Sharma & Shukla, 2016; Ogaji et al., 2017 & Nasirudeen et al., 2017). Consequently, these researchers have brought about varying views. For example, prior studies by Pempek et al. (2009) and recent studies by Shilip and Arun-Kanti (2019) claim Facebook to be the most popular social platform among the students. In contrast, Rautela et al. (2019) claimed WhatsApp as a platform that helps students satisfy their social desires, whereas Saleen and Mengyan (2017) advanced that students spent most of their daily time on Instagram. The three separate studies done in different countries and different years and on diverse demographic populations revealed that WhatsApp was the most widely used platform (Ahad & Lim, 2014; Akakandelwa & Walubita, 2017; Rautela et al., 2019). On the basis of these premises, the issue of why the varying adoption of social media platform is so prevalent among students in particular and why some literature contains conflicting data is worth investigating, especially in the context of Zambia.

Subsequently studies worldwide have illustrated the variation in the usage of social media by demographic factors. Some studies have shown men students to be more attracted to social media than women students, while others have dispelled the contention (Andreassen et al., 2012; Andreassen et al., 2017; Yang et al., 2018; Asiedu & Badu, 2018; Azizi et al. 2019). For instance, a research done by Bányai et al. (2017) revealed a significant difference in weekly social

media use between male and female adolescents. Similarly, Azizi et al. (2019) carried out a cross-sectional survey study to investigate the relationship between social networking addiction and students' academic performance at KUMS in Iran. The study found that mean social networking addiction was higher in male students ( $52.65 \pm 11.50$ ) than in female students ( $49.35 \pm 13.96$ ). In another related study, Ahmer and Tanzil (2018) carried a cross-section study in Karachi, Pakistan, on government and private institutions and found higher addiction levels among female students than their male counterpart. An earlier study by Correa et al. (2010) which was conducted among USA adult's social media users found a variation in the usage by age. Thus, the link between extraversion and social media use was particularly significant among the youth group, who were aged between 18 and 25 than other groups. In another related study, Nyagah & Mutisya (2019) claimed that private universities were more addicted to social media than their public universities counterparts. Equally, Andreassen et al. (2017) conducted a cross-section convenience study to examine the association between addictive uses of social media, narcissism and self-esteem. Findings reported a significant variation in social media use by age, gender and level of education.

Narcissism is a psychological personality disorder characterised by the students unrealistic, overestimating their complementary view of self in terms of physical appearance and an excessive need for admiration on social media platforms (Campbell, 1999). It is a personality trait that consists of a lavish self-concept and behaviours intended to maintain this self-concept in the face of reality. A narcissist doesn't respect other people and only spotlights what benefits that person (Campbell, 1999). In that case, Narcissists regard themselves as being exceptionally talented, remarkable and successful. The escalating prevalence of social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter and WhatsApp has offered rise to speculations that the passion of utilising these platform is related to narcissistic conducts. According to a study conducted by Strickland (2014), young adults are the most active users of social media. They are predominantly at risk of developing narcissism behaviour at a high rate (Sukhdeep et al., 2018).

Literature suggests that narcissistic behaviours are rising due to students' quest of creating content editing and posting them on media platforms (Frederick & Zhang, 2019). For instance, one investigation by Carpenter (2012) in the diary Personality and Individual Differences found that paces of narcissism and self-special conduct surge with the expanded utilisation of Facebook. Another related study by Wickel (2015), which was done at Elon University's on-campus, showed a rise in narcissism conduct among the students, possibly due to posting selfies on WhatsApp. Similarly, Sukhdeep et al. (2018) discovered that most selfie-taking college students had narcissistic symptoms. It was observed that Narcissistic characteristics had a significant relationship with the number of selfies on an average day, preference of act for selfies, edit

selfies before posting. The study further revealed that most college students had narcissistic conduct that ranged from mild to severe, showing signs of alarming level. Studies have also repeatedly shown narcissism to be present in individual addicts to social media. More significantly, with those of more companionship and with the ability to visit media platforms frequently with the intent of posting selfies, status updates and self-promotional content (Campbell, 1999; Carpenter, 2012). With such alarming evidence in other parts of the globe, there is a probability that the phenomenon could exist in Zambia. Conversely, the level of its effects cannot be justified universally or just by observation. Henceforth, research was born out of that contention. In an attempt to realise the need, three questions were raised.

1. What are the commonly used social media platforms by students?
2. Does variation exist in the use of social media by students' demographic?
3. What is the level of narcissistic conduct in social media use among students?

#### *Significant of the Study*

It is assumed that this study will increase awareness of narcissism behaviour among the students. Besides, this study's results may advocate for designing counselling programs to mitigate negative perceptions regarding selfie creation and dissemination to inculcate a sense of confidence and self-esteem among students. Finally, it is anticipated that this study will stimulate further investigations based on the current evidence.

## II. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study adopted a descriptive survey research design. Five hundred and seventy nine respondents were randomly selected from six colleges of education in the Copperbelt Province of Zambia. The questionnaire derived from Bergen Social Media Addiction Scale (BSMAS) was prepared to learn which social media platforms participants prefer and how they are utilised (Andreassen et al., 2017). Subsequently, the Narcissistic Personality Inventory (NPI 12) was used to measure the college student's narcissistic behaviour. The narcissism instrument is a shortened version of the original 40-item NPI and had the alpha reliability scores categorised as .83, .74, .80, and .90 for overall Narcissism (Raskin & Terry, 1988). The tool has been used in other social media studies and has proven to be effective (Raskin & Terry, 1988; Thiagarajan et al., 2017). Cronbach alpha for overall Narcissism in this study was .822. Data were analysed using the Statistical Package for the Social Science, Version 23. Ethical clearance was sought from the University of Zambia ethical clearance committee to conduct the study.

## III. RESULTS

### *Respondent's Demographic Characteristics*

Six hundred questionnaires were issued, out of which 579 were returned, giving a response rate of 96.5%. Table 1 presents the demographics of the respondents. Four hundred and thirty-four (74.9%) of the respondents were from public colleges, and 145 (25.1%) were from private colleges. Two hundred and ninety-two (50.4%) of the total respondents were females, and 287 (49.6%) were males. Ninety-two (15.9%) were aged 19-20 years, 327 (56.5%) were aged 21-25 years, and 160 (27.6%) were aged above 26 years. Data also indicate that 33.7% were in the first year, 34.0% were in the second year, while 32.3% were in the third year.

Table 1 : Demographic Characteristics (N= 579)

Variables	Values	Frequency	Percentage
College status	Public	434	74.9%
	Private	145	25.1%
Gender	Male	287	49.6%
	Female	292	50.4%
Age in years	19-20	92	15.9%
	21-25	327	56.5%
	Above 26	160	27.6%
Year of Study	Year One	195	33.7%
	Year Two	197	34.0%

*Most Commonly Used Social Media Platforms among Students*

This study established that all the respondents (100%) were social media users. Furthermore, Figure 1 shows that type of social media platform used by the majority of the respondents was Facebook, with a percentage of 59.2% followed by WhatsApp (34.2%) and YouTube (4.1%). The social media platforms used by the least number of the respondents were Snapchat, Twitter, LinkedIn and Instagram. When bundled together, they account for the least percentage (2.4%).

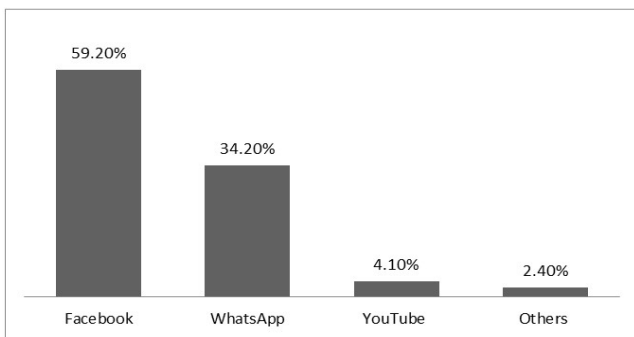


Figure 1: Common used Social Media Platform

*Variations in Social Media use*

Chi-Square tests were conducted to test the demographic valuable regarding social media usage at alpha = 0.05. The results are summarised in Table 3. All the tests were significant. Thus findings appear to suggest that the use of the social media platform was dependent upon demographic

factors. It was observed that more male students used Facebook than female students, while more female students used WhatsApp than male students ( $\chi^2= 7.056$ ;  $df= 2$ ;  $p= 0.29$ ). Furthermore, Facebook was mostly used by the students aged 21-25 years while WhatsApp was used mainly by students aged 19-20 years and students aged 26 years and above ( $\chi^2= 21.973$ ;  $df = 4$ ;  $p = 0.001$ ). Similarly, Facebook was mostly used by third-year students, while WhatsApp was mostly used by first-year students ( $\chi^2= 10.867$ ;  $df = 4$ ;  $p = 0.028$ ). Further, the analysis revealed that most students in public colleges used Facebook while most students in private colleges used WhatsApp ( $\chi^2= 9.152$ ;  $df= 2$ ;  $p = 0.010$ ).

Table 3: Demographic Valuable Test Results

Demographic variable	$\chi^2$	df	P-Value	Comment
Gender	7.056*	2	0.029	Significant;
Age	21.973*	4	0.001	Significant;
Academic year	10.867*	4	0.028	Significant;
College status	9.152*	2	0.010	Significant;

*Level of Narcissism Conducts among Students*

Respondents were asked to report on their narcissism motives centred on selfies generation and dissemination online. Figure 1, revealed that 81.3% liked commenting on peoples photos; 77.1% felt excited after posting selfies; 75.5% frequently edited their selfies; 75.3% liked responding to status updates and messages whereas 72.2% felt unhappy if they did not receive feedback from friends. Subsequently, 71.6% demanded the best response; 67.7% liked to spread rumours and fake accusations; 64.4% knew that they were good because of what their peers used to tell them; 63.2% showed off their best pictures on social media; 63.2% loved being at the centre of attention; 60.8% used to feel more capable than others whereas 58.9% felt that great thing should always be going to them.

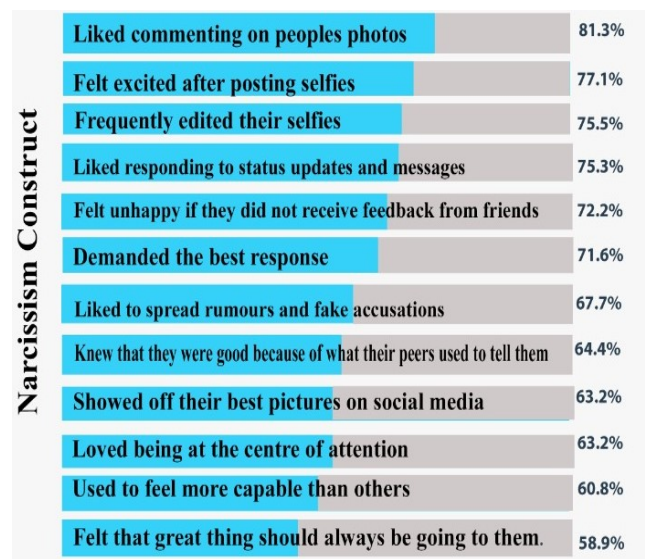


Figure 1: Level of Narcissism Conducts among Students

Narcissism among respondents was determined using twelve items (12) measured on a 1-5 Likert scale. Thus, Narcissism levels were categorised as Very high (48-60), high (36-47), Moderate (24-35), and Low (12-23). The results are summarised in Table 4, and 40.2% of the respondents scored very high level, 37.8% high level, 20.4% scored moderate level and 1.6% scored low narcissism levels. When the two classes (very high and high) are combined, this study showed that 78% of the respondents experienced high levels of narcissism behaviours.

Table 4: Level of Narcissism

Degree	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Very High	219	37.8	37.8
High	233	40.2	78.1
Moderate	118	20.4	98.4
Low	9	1.6	100.0
Total	579	100.0	

#### IV. DISCUSSION

Being one of the uncommon on the Copperbelt Zambia concerning social media utilisation and Narcissist tendencies among college students, this study brought some exciting discoveries.

Among the seven social media networks included in current research (Facebook, WhatsApp, Twitter, Snapchat, Instagram, LinkedIn & YouTube), Facebook and WhatsApp were the most commonly used platforms. Discoveries agree with Nyagah et al. (2019) findings and contradict other studies (Ahad & Lim., 2014; Meşe & Aydın, 2019). The variations incurred could be due to many platforms and their compelling contents that have occupied the media industry lately (Saleem & Mengyan, 2017). As such, users have an immense array of media material from which to choose according to their personal preferences. For example, narcissistic students who may prefer public admiration to enhance their self-identity personality may go for Facebook (Xu & Tan, 2012). Besides, those who may find fancy creating and share information, ideas and career interests may go for LinkedIn (Basak&Calisir, 2014).

Subsequently, the present study also demonstrated that variation exists in the adoption and use of social media platform by students' demographic. Precisely, discoveries indicate that more females than males were fond of using Facebook than males, while the opposite incurred on WhatsApp. Results are consonant with prior studies (Meşe& Aydın, 2019; Nyagah et al., 2019; Amani et al., 2020). In this regard, it could be indicated that men and women have different intents regarding their social media platforms, adoption and usage. Since Facebook has the role of giving students the power to share content, interact and make the world closer and more open, such variation may exist by gender. Most females are fond of posting more photos,

commenting on the likes, and checking whether their friends like their photos to a greater extent than men (Nyagah et al., 2019). Thus, it could be indicated that, unlike men, women use social media to share more individual information than men and reveal more about their respective lives. Equally, women are more vocal, expressive and willing to share. In other words, it may very well reflect that women are biologically reinforced for social networking (Theonas et al., 2007; Amani et al., 2020). Hence they strive to adopt media platforms that easily make them be seen, heard and acknowledged. Such purposes are mainly driven by the Facebook platform (Saleem & Mengyan, 2017).

Subsequently, there is more evidence in the present study suggesting that age is one of the most influential factors driving the adoption and utilisation of social media platforms. The finding may be supported by the research done by Rousseau et al. 2017 and Gwena et al. (2018), which obtained similar variations. However, the rationale behind the current study's divergences could be explained in terms of companionship searching. Students in the age range between 21-25 resorts more to searching for their future partners. This period is critical, and scholars argue that the said period is when most young students have an increased level of autonomy. They experience staying without much parental guide; hence, resorting to making intimacy relationships that sometimes results in marriages (Munsaka & Matafwali, 2013). Since Facebook is used more for interaction purposes (Nyagah et al., 2019), young students may find comfort in it as they pursue their future partners by creating and disseminating desired content through media. They may use the Facebook platform to advance their sexual fantasies and other companionships. However, more comparative studies seem to be warranted in this area for more certainty purposes, targeting other older students above 35 and below 25 years.

Besides, there was a difference in this sample based on the year of study and college status. More precisely, first-year students favoured WhatsApp over third-year students who preferred Facebook and students in public colleges preferred Facebook over their private college peers who preferred more WhatsApp. The significant disparity may be clarified based on other scholars who obtained similar results (Masthi et al., 2017; Nyagah & Mutisya, 2019). As revealed by this study, it is possible to assume that students environment also play a role in the adoption and utilisation of the media platforms. As a case in point, issues of making new friends and keeping existing ones, the stress to adjust to the new environment and academic pressure may be attributed to such variations (Nyagah & Mutisya, 2019). In particular, first-year students may see the convenience of using more WhatsApp than higher-level students. They may continuously be checking their WhatsApp to read sent lesson notes and check for the upcoming activities from lecturers. Equally, those who have stayed longer in the colleges may be already accustomed to negotiating between academic pressure and leisure, thus, becoming more drawn to Facebook, which entertains (Saleem



& Mengyan, 2017). Regarding private colleges a plausible explanation for the variation could be that most of the lecturers who offer their services in private teacher training colleges in Zambia are hired lectures that have other operation places. As such, they find it more suitable to utilise WhatsApp to connect with their prospective students and deliver instructional content, educational videos and other tasks (Al-Rahmi et al. 2014). Likewise, the students may find pleasure using WhatsApp to send feedback on their course work to lecturers and connect with their fellow students (Nyagah & Mutisya, 2019).

Besides, the current study established a high level of narcissism behaviour among the students. Remarkably, students' narcissism behaviours were based on individualistic ideologies that were deriving a sense of attaining self-uniqueness in their boastful presentation online. In conjunction with prior research, students appeared to be characterised by a lack of confidence, feeling intense and lack of empathy towards others (Andreassen et al., 2017). This may explain why their behaviour was portrayed as always trying to be ahead of others. Individuals with narcissistic personality traits believe they are unworthy of their admirers (Boursiera et al., 2020). In this case, it is an indisputable assertion that low self-esteem characterised students' personality tendencies (Andreassen et al., 2017). As such, it could be explained that to escape from low self-esteem, narcissistic students got attracted to the commonly used Facebook and WhatsApp, which appears to be a less threatening avenue to gain a need for affiliation, and confirm the sense of idealised self (Andreassen et al., 2017). Since the two platforms are considered captivity and constantly adding more compelling apps from time to time (Kircaburun et al., 2018; Meşe & Aydın, 2019), the implication could be that students' narcissism tendencies may reach alarming and disheartening levels shortly. As such, a holistic view of students with high narcissism needs to be considered.

#### V. CONCLUSION

This study has provided evidence that Facebook and WhatsApp are the commonly used social media platforms by the students and that the adoption of these platforms depends upon the demographic characteristic of gender, age, College status and year of study. Besides, a high narcissism level among the students has been established. Therefore, this study suggests early screening, accompanied by effective counselling interventions among students with high narcissistic behaviour, to inculcate a sense of self-worth.

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