Personal Gratifications Factors Influencing the Use of WhatsApp Features among Students of Multimedia University of Kenya

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ABSTRACT: In the twenty-first century, the adoption and usage of social networking sites (SNS) are a very vital aspect of life. Nevertheless, despite significant advancements in this sector, adoption, acceptance and use of SNS has not met its maximum potential. Different countries still face challenges in identifying factors influencing acceptance, adoption and usage of SNS. The primary objective of the study therefore was to examine the influence of personal gratification factors on use of WhatsApp features among undergraduate students in Multimedia University of Kenya (MMU). Further the study investigated the influence of demographic factors on the use of WhatsApp features among MMU students. Uses and gratifications theory and expectancy-value theory served as the study's main theoretical pillars. A questionnaire was used to collect data from 379 undergraduate students in Multimedia University of Kenya. The study established that personal gratifications factors significantly influenced usage of WhatsApp features among undergraduate students of Multimedia University of Kenya. The findings point to a disconnect between available WhatsApp features and the requirements of different users of WhatsApp hence the study recommended that in order to improve the user experience, software developers should consider the consumers requirements when integrating new features or enhancing existing one.

KEYWORDS: *Personal Relationship, Personal Identity, Uses and Gratifications, WhatsApp Features*

I. INTRODUCTION

The use of apps for direct messaging such as WhatsApp, Telegram and WeChat among others has risen especially among young people owing to their synchronous and private features, which foster closeness and connection functioning in the same spectrum as personal conversations [1]. Currently, there are 4.23 billion users of instant messaging apps worldwide with WhatsApp being the most prevalent among the youth [2]. According to Deshmukh [3], 18 % and 29% of WhatsApp users in the world are between the ages of 17-25 and 26-35 respectively. The youth's most basic psychological needs include the need to connect with peers and feel acknowledged and respected and in this age of social media dominance, the youth turn to social networking sites to meet these needs [4]. Since the use of WhatsApp is prevalent among the youth, this study therefore looked into the influence of personal relationship and personal identity on use of WhatsApp features among students of Multimedia University of Kenya. In contrast to previous research, the study examined elements that are specific to WhatsApp features rather than WhatsApp as a whole, in an effort to more accurately portray the diverse nature of WhatsApp users and the service.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

UGT research has been criticized for being applied too broadly limiting its predictive power [5]. For instance, presently the influence of personal relationship and personal identity factors on people's use of particular social networking sites features (particularly WhatsApp) is not well understood as most studies have analysed satisfactions and uses of social networking sites (SNS) from a general outlook rather than a detailed analysis thus obscuring outcomes linked to specific features [6]. This study treated WhatsApp as an assortment of instruments applied in a myriad of ways to fulfil various purposes acknowledging that users select the activities or site features to ignore and those to use for a given purpose and extent [6]. By analysing the influence of personal relationship and personal identity factors on usage of specific features of WhatsApp, the study provided a more comprehensive understanding of how people use specific medium features based on personal relationship and personal identity gratifications sought and obtained.

1.2 Study Objectives

The study was guided by the following specific research objectives:

1. To examine the influence of personal relationship factors on the use of WhatsApp features among students ofMultimedia University of Kenya.

2. To examine the influence of personal identity factors on the use of WhatsApp features among students ofMultimedia University of Kenya.

3. To assess the moderating effect of demographic factors on the correlation between personal gratificationsfactors and use of WhatsApp features among students of Multimedia University of Kenya.

II. Literature Review

2.1 Theoretical Background

2.1.1 Uses and Gratifications Theory

The study was founded on uses and gratifications theory (UGT) proposed by Katz, Blumler and Gurevitch in 1974. UGT states that the selection of the media that suits an individual's needs lies with the audience who are knowledgeable about how to get those needs satisfied [7].The theory also postulates that there are gratifications obtainedby users upon usage of a medium namely: surveillance, personal relationship, personal identity and diversion [8]. Wardhani et al.,[9] proposed that the audience goes through a process of exercising judgment before using a particular medium where the selection process entails deciding on the appropriateness of the medium to meet intended gratifications. The research looked into personal relationship and personal identity given that several UGT studies have established that once obtained, personal relationship and personal identity gratifications have an influence on the continued use of the medium [10].WhatsApp via a myriad of features and settings gives its users more choices and possibilities to enjoy in satisfying their needs [11]. The uses and gratifications theory was therefore construed as an effective tool to examine the influence of personal gratifications factors on preferences portrayed in using different WhatsApp features and how individual WhatsApp features were utilised among students of Multimedia University of Kenya.

2.1.2 Expectancy-Value Theory

The study was also founded on the Expectancy-Value theory founded by Philip Palmgreen and J. D. Rayburn in 1984. Palmgreen & Rayburn hypothesised that a person's expectations, evaluations, sought-after gratifications, media exposure, and obtained gratifications are all related. The rewards received from a program, genre, or media with increased familiarity impact one's beliefs and reinforce usage patterns [12]. This theory was relevant to the study as it supported the examination of the influence of gratifications attained on the continued use of WhatsApp features.

2.2 Empirical Review

Personal relationship also referred to as social interaction is attained through connecting to the internet and communicating with others via computer accessories [10]. Personal relationship relate to affiliations and associations with others that are aimed at attaining a sense of belonging [13]. Based on the studies by Quan- Haase & Young [14], Whiting & Williams [13] and Sheldon & Newman [15], elements of personal relationship assessed in this study were: companionship (connecting with others to lessen loneliness); communication utility (promoting communication by sharing information with others) and affection (exhibiting compassion towards others).

A focus group research on the uses and gratifications of WhatsApp among North Cyprus University communicationstudents observed that unlike most friendships in the social media era that start electronically and then continue into the real world, communication via WhatsApp fosters relationships that start face-to-face.[16] Further, the focus group research by Terkan & Celebi [16] noted that most students used WhatsApp to celebrate their special days and show affection and support during others' special days and occasions as well as communicate touchy subjects that they felt could not be easily addressed in person. This research differed from the study by Terkan & Celebi [16] as it was set in Kenya and analysed the influence of personal relationship gratification on WhatsApp features and not WhatsApp in general.

The youth find it very crucial to project a positive self- image especially on social media [4] .According to Serede [4], users seeking personal identity gratifications rewards also called self-promotion aim at getting or building self-respect and confidence. Aspects of personal identity assessed in this study were: reassurance, self-esteem and value reinforcement. An analysis of a diverse group of Indian respondents including corporate workers and postgraduate students observed that Indian WhatsApp users updated their WhatsApp status to project their identity or image and to gain the favour of others [17]. This research differed from Pattusamy & Chopdar's study [17] as it analysed the influence of personal gratifications' factors on the general use of WhatsApp features among undergraduate students whose attributes differ from those working in corporates and in other levels of study.

III. METHODOLOGY

This was a quantitative study that used a questionnaire administered to 379 students out of the 7225 undergraduate students in Multimedia University of Kenya. Stratified random sampling was used in arriving at the sample proportionately distributed among the six faculties in MMU. Simple random sampling was then used to accord every person in the strata an equal chance to participate in the study [18]. A total of 323 responses translating to a favourable response rate of 85% were used for analysis [19]. Descriptive statistics were analysed using means and percentages while inferential statistics were analysed using correlational analysis and regression.

3.   Study Findings, Discussion and Analysis
3.1   Influence of Personal Relationship Factors on University Students Use of WhatsApp Features
3.1.1   Descriptive Statistics

To determine the influence of personal relationship factors on usage of WhatsApp features, the respondents were first asked to respond to a set of statements on personal relationship which were measured on a five points Likert scale and recorded using means (where 5= strongly agree, 4= agree, 3=neutral, 2=disagree and 1= strongly disagree). The resultswere as presented in Table 1 below.

Table 1 Personal Relationship Factors on WhatsApp Use

Attribute	Mean	Std. Deviation
When I can't meet people in person, I use WhatsApp to communicate withthem	4.44	.607
I use WhatsApp to facilitate communication by sharing information withothers	4.50	.402
I use WhatsApp to show affection for my family, classmates, friends andothers	4.05	.806

Source: Researcher (2024)

Most undergraduate students agreed that they used WhatsApp to show affection for others, communicate with others and to facilitate communication by sharing information with others [20,21] .Sharma & Shukla [20] stated that Jan Koum and Brian Acton founded WhatsApp Messenger to enhance communication and offer a way to distribute multimedia content quickly and easily. Kamboj & Dayal [21] also noted that compared to Facebook, instant messaging is more frequently used for expressing affection and WhatsApp has improved the youth's social ties by allowing them to stay in touch with acquaintances.

Further, the research examined how different personal relationship aspects affected the choice or use of WhatsApp features by asking the respondents their go to feature (s). The results were recorded in terms of percentage of users per feature for every personal relationship statement as tabulated.

Table 2 Personal Relationship Factors on Use of WhatsApp Features

	Voice Calls	Video Calls	Status	Profile Feature	Single Chats	Group Chats	Voice Note Feature	None
Communicate with people you can't meet in person	31.0%	17.6%	1.2%	.3%	49.8%	0%	0%	0%
Facilitate communication by sharing information withothers	13.6	4.6%	30.7%	.6%	27.6%	22.9%	0%	0%
Show affection for my family, classmates, friends and others.	18.6%	7.4%	20.1%	1.2%	38.1%	13.9%	.6%	0%

Source: Researcher (2024)

The research observed that to communicate with others most students used single chats, voice calls and video calls in that order while to share information a majority of students used WhatsApp status followed by single chats and group chats. This reinforced the findings of Mapako & Mareva [22] who argued that WhatsApp status updates are an essential tool for information sharing that people consciously use for a variety of objectives. Finally, the study revealed that the vast majority of students used single chats to show affection, followed by WhatsApp status, voice calls and group chats.

3.1.2 Inferential Statistics

To determine the strength and direction of the relationship between the use of WhatsApp features and personal relationship, the study used Karl Pearson's correlation coefficient using the coefficient of determination (R^2). The results are as presented in table 3.

Table 3 Overall Appropriateness of the Fit Model

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.652[a]	.425	.421	.60

Predictors: (Constant), Personal Relationship

Dependent Variable: Use of WhatsApp features

Source: Researcher (2024)

Table 3 reveals an R of 0.652 showing the existence of a positive linear relationship between personal relationship and the usage of WhatsApp features. The 0.425 R-square figure indicates that 42.5% of the variances in WhatsApp feature usage among Kenyan students at Multimedia University were attributed to personal relationship factors.

3.1.2.1 Multiple Linear Regression Model of Personal Relationship Factors and Use of WhatsApp Features

The study used the multiple regression model for predictive analysis to examine the influence of personal relationship factors on uses of WhatsApp features.

The regression model: $Y = α + βX + ε$ Where:
α = Constant
X = represents personal relationship factors ε = Error term
β, = represents regression coefficient

To determine the p value and coefficient for significance, a simple linear regression model was created using SPSS version 25.0. According to Kothari [23], the multiple regression model would be deemed insignificant if the p value was higher than the 0.05 significance level. The results are as presented in table 4.

Table 4 Regression Coefficients

	Unstandardized Coefficients			Standardized Coefficients		
Model		B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
1	(Constant)	0.927	.207		4.782	.000
	Personal Relationship Factors	.412	.021	.414	12.269	.000
Dependent Variable: Use of WhatsApp Features						

Predictors: (Constant), Personal Relationship

Source: Researcher (2024)

According to Table 4, the index for WhatsApp feature use among Multimedia University students in Kenya is 0.927, assuming that personal relationship factors remain unchanged. The resultant regression model was:

$Y = 0.927 + 0.412 X$

A unit change in the personal relationship factors resulted in a 0.412 increase in the use of WhatsApp features among the students of Multimedia University in Kenya. This aligns with the conclusions by Menon & Meghana [10]; Terkan & Celebi [16] and Pattusamy & Chopdar [17] who established that personal relationship factors influenced social media use.

4.2   Influence of Personal Identity Factors on University Students Use of WhatsApp Features

4.2.1   Descriptive Statistics

To determine the influence of personal identity factors on use of WhatsApp features, the respondents were first asked to respond to a set of statements on personal identity which were measured on a five points Likert scale andrecorded using means (where 5= strongly agree, 4= agree, 3=neutral, 2=disagree and 1= strongly disagree). The results were as presented in Table 5 that follows.

Table 5 Personal Identity Factors on WhatsApp Use

Attribute	Mean	Std. Deviation
I use WhatsApp to portray my views and principles	4.19	.834
WhatsApp makes me feel liked and respected	3.31	1.135
I like to see how others react to the accomplishments shared on WhatsApp	4.21	.780

Source: Researcher (2024)

Most students agreed that they use WhatsApp to portray their views and principles and they like to see how others react to the accomplishments shared on WhatsApp echoing the thoughts by Serede [4] and Greenwood [24] who argued that for the youth projecting a positive self-image and acceptanceby peers is very crucial. . However, most of the respondents were neutral about WhatsApp making them feel liked and respected and this could be alluded to the presence of social media sites like Instagram which Sheldon and Newman [15] found to be having a number of features that contribute to seeking reassurances from others.

To assess the influence of the different aspects of personal identity on the choice or use of WhatsApp features, the respondents were asked their go-to feature (s) for particular aspects of personal identity. The results were recorded in terms of the percentage of users per feature for every statement as shown in the following table.

Table 6 Personal Identity Factors on Use of WhatsApp Features

	Voice Calls	Video Calls	Status	Profile Feature	Single Chats	Group Chats	Voice Note Feature	None
Portray your views and principles	10.5%	1.2%	54.2%	0%	24.1%	4.6%	.6%	4.6%
Feel liked and respected.	8.7%	1.5%	43.0%	12.1%	20.4%	4.6%	0%	9.6%
See how others react tothe accomplishments shared onWhatsApp.	5.9%	1.2%	57.0%	4.3%	10.8%	20.7%	0%	0%

Source: Researcher (2024)

WhatsApp Status posted the highest percentages for the three statements. The study also observed that the profilefeature also enabled users to feel liked and respected though not as much as WhatsApp status and single chats. Thesefinding correspond to studies by Sung et al., [25] and Pattusamy & Chopdar [17]. According to Sung et al., [25] social media users easily express themselves through SNS that allow photo sharing clearly demonstrating that photos are more powerful than words in communication thus textual and visual networking sites have overridden SNS that are text based. Concurrently, Pattusamy & Chopdar [17] argued thatWhatsApp users post frequent status updates to express their opinions and to gain popularity and attention in their social networks.

4.2.2   Inferential Statistics

The results obtained from Karl Pearson's correlation coefficient using the coefficient of determination (R^2) are aspresented in table 7.

Table 7 Overall Appropriateness of the Fit Model

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.542ᵃ	.294	.280	.20
Predictors: (Constant), Personal Identity				
Dependent Variable: Use of WhatsApp features				

Source: Researcher (2024)

Table 7 reveals an R of 0.542 showing the existence of a positive linear relationship between personal identity and the usage of WhatsApp features. The 0.294 R-square figure indicates that 29.4% of the variances in WhatsApp feature usage among Kenyan students at Multimedia University were attributed to personal identity factors.

4.2.2.1　　Multiple Linear Regression Model of Personal Identity Factors and Use of WhatsApp Features
The study used the multiple regression model for predictive analysis to examine the influence of personal identityfactors on uses of WhatsApp features.

The regression model: $Y = \alpha + \beta X + \epsilon$ Where:
α = Constant
X = represents personal identity factors ε = Error term
β = represents regression coefficient

The results from the multiple regression model of personal identity factors and use of WhatsApp features are aspresented in table 8.

Table 8 Regression Coefficients

Unstandardized Coefficients				Standardize d Coefficients		
Model		B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
1	(Constant)	0.751	.112		4.037	.000
	Personal Identity Factors	.337	.013	.321	9.526	.000
Dependent Variable: Use of WhatsApp Features						

Predictors: (Constant), Personal Identity
Source: Researcher (2024)

According to Table 8, the index for WhatsApp feature use among Multimedia University students in Kenya is 0.927, assuming that personal identity factors remain unchanged. The resultant regression model was:

$$Y = 0.751 + 0.337\ X$$

A unit change in the personal identity factors resulted in a 0.337 increase in the use of WhatsApp features among the students of Multimedia University in Kenya. This aligns with the conclusions by Serede [4]; Sheldon & Newman [15] and Pattusamy & Chopdar [17] who established that personal identity factors influenced how the youth used social media.

4.3.　　The Moderating Effect of Demographic Factors on the Relationship between Personal Gratification Factorsand Use of WhatsApp Features among Students of Multimedia University of Kenya

4.3.1　　Descriptive Statistics
Based on extant literature, the study noted the existence of moderating variables to the effect of personal relationship and personal identity factors on the use of WhatsApp features. The moderating variables used in the study were gender, faculty and year of study. The study analysed by gender, the students' reactions to various statements on personal relationship and personal identity as indicated in the following table.

Table 9 Descriptive Statistics on Gender and Personal Gratifications Factors

Personal Gratifications Factors	Attributes	Gender	
		Male (Mean)	Female (Mean)
Personal Relationship Factors	When I can't meet people in person, I use WhatsApp to communicate with them	4.34	4.56
	I use WhatsApp to facilitate communication by sharing information withothers	4.46	4.64
	I use WhatsApp to show affection for my family, classmates, friends andothers	3.87	4.08
PersonalIdentity Factors	I use WhatsApp to portray my views and principles	4.17	4.23
	WhatsApp makes me feel liked and respected	3.27	3.37
	I like to see how others react to the accomplishments shared on WhatsApp	4.20	4.21

Source: Researcher (2024)

While there was some variation in the responses based on gender, the difference was not very significant. Females' means were higher than males' for each of the six personal gratifications statements supporting the arguments by Roy [26] and Corbu et al., [27] .Women utilise the internet more frequently than men for interpersonal communication [26] . Concurrently, Corbu et al., [27] argued that compared to men, ladies are typically more reliant on WhatsApp. Both male and female students agreed that they use WhatsApp to communicate with others, facilitate communication by sharing information, show affection, portray views and principles and see how others react to their accomplishments. However, most students were neutral on WhatsApp making them feel liked and respected.

The study also analysed the students' reactions to statements on personal identity and personal relationship by faculty as indicated in the following table.

Table 10 Descriptive Statistics on Faculty and Personal Gratifications Factors

Personal Gratifications Factors	Attributes	Faculty					
		Business	Media	CIT	Eng.	Science& Tech	Social Sci.
Personal Relationship Factors	When I can't meet people in person, I useWhatsApp to communicate with them.	4.64	4.57	4.08	4.72	4.43	4.36
	I use WhatsApp to facilitate communication by sharing information with others.	4.49	4.56	4.47	4.42	4.40	4.52
	I use WhatsApp to show affection for my family, classmates, friends and others.	3.95	3.82	4.16	4.37	3.60	3.61
Personal Identity Factors	I use WhatsApp to portray my views andprinciples.	4.16	4.26	4.16	4.11	4.16	4.35
	WhatsApp makes me feel liked and respected.	3.36	3.37	3.29	3.26	3.00	3.30
	I like to see how others react to the accomplishments shared on WhatsApp.	4.27	4.20	4.07	4.13	4.28	4.43

Source: Researcher (2024)

Students across all faculties agreed, according to the study, that they use WhatsApp to communicate with people, facilitate communication by sharing information, portray views and principles and see others reactions to the accomplishments shared. However, students across the faculties were neutral about WhatsApp making them feel liked and respected. Finally, most students in the faculty of Engineering, Communication and Information Technology, Business and Media agreed that they use WhatsApp to show affection while a majority of the students in the Faculty of Social Sciences (3.61) and Science and Technology (3.60) were neutral about using WhatsApp to show affection for others.

Finally, the study assessed the students' reactions to statements on personal gratifications by year of study as indicated in the following table.

Table 11 Descriptive Statistics on Year of Study and Personal Gratifications Factors

Personal Gratifications Factors	Attributes	Year of study				
		Year 1	Year 2	Year3	Year 4	Year 5
Personal Relationship Factors	When I can't meet people in person, Iuse WhatsApp to communicate with them	4.48	3.93	4.55	4.55	4.56
	I use WhatsApp to facilitate communication bysharing information with others	4.42	4.42	4.58	4.56	4.68
	I use WhatsApp to show affection for my family, classmates, friends and others	3.63	3.93	4.19	4.21	4.68
Personal Identity Factors	I use WhatsApp to portray my views and principles	4.11	4.34	4.13	4.21	3.67
	WhatsApp makes me feel liked andrespected.	3.29	3.26	3.34	3.35	3.67
	I like to see how others react to the accomplishments shared on WhatsApp.	4.33	4.30	4.18	4.17	4.17

Source: Researcher (2024)

Students in the different levels of study agreed that they use WhatsApp to: communicate with those they cannot meet in person, facilitate communication, portray views and principles and see how others react to the accomplishments shared on WhatsApp. Most students across the years indicated that they were neutral about WhatsApp making them feel liked and respected. The fact that year one (1) students recorded the lowest means for the statements on sharing information (4.42) and showing affection (3.63) was consistent with Zhou & Leung's [28] assertion that the majority of first-year college students experience loneliness and a lack of social connection; as a result, the study assumes that WhatsApp is a tool used by these students mostly to pass time.

4.3.2   Inferential Statistics

The incorporation of gender into the model moderated the impact of personal gratifications factors on WhatsApp usageas displayed in the following table.

Table 12 Hierarchical Regression Model of Gender and Usage of WhatsApp Features

	Model 1		Model 2	
	Beta (SE)	t (p-value)	Beta (SE)	t (p-value)
(Constant)	0.927 (0.207)	4.782 (<0.01)	1.120 (0.132)	5.5210 (<0.01)
Personal relationship	.412 (0.021)	12.269 (<0.01)	.383 (0.035)	12.0278 (<0.01)
Personal identity	.337(0.013)	9.526(<0.01)	.323(0.009)	7.3426(<0.01)
Gender			.047 (0.051)	3.9034 (0.191)
R^2	.573		.654	
F	164.923	.000^b	212.236	
Change in R^2			0.081	

Source: Researcher (2024)

The results indicate that the introduction of gender as a moderating variable resulted in an increase in R^2. Personal gratifications accounted for a 57.3% change in the use of WhatsApp features, the introduction of gender as a moderating variable resulted in an increase in the coefficient of determination by 8.1% to 65.4%. The findings show that adding gender as a moderating variable raises R^2 supporting the argument that gender brings about a difference in how people utilise and enjoy social media [10, 29].

Faculty was then introduced in the model as a moderating variable to the effect of personal gratification factors on WhatsApp usage. The results are as presented in the table that follows.

Table 13 Hierarchical Regression Model of Faculty and Usage of WhatsApp Features

	Model 1		Model 2	t (p-value)
	Beta (SE)	t (p-value)	Beta (SE)	
(Constant)	0.927 (0.207)	4.782 (<0.01)	1.107 (0.157)	6.4673 (<0.01)
Personal relationship	.412 (0.021)	12.269 (<0.01)	.402 (0.032)	10.4524 (<0.01)
Personal Identity	.337(0.013)	9.526(<0.01)	.333(0.007)	8.3254(<0.01)
Faculty/ School			.019 (0.073)	4.131 (0.654)
R^2	.573		.588	
F	164.923	.000^b	197.236	
Change in R^2			0.015	

Source: Researcher (2024)

The results indicate that the introduction of faculty as a moderating variable result in an increase in R^2. The use ofWhatsApp features changed by 57.3% due to personal gratifications factors; however, addition of faculty as a moderating variable increased the coefficient of determination by 1.5% to 58.8%.

Lastly, year of study was introduced in the model as a moderating variable to the effect of personal gratifications factors on usage of WhatsApp features. The results are presented in the following table.

Table 14 Hierarchical Regression Model of Year of Study and Usage of WhatsApp Features

	Model 1		Model 2	
				t (p-value)
	Beta (SE)	t (p-value)	Beta (SE)	
(Constant)	0.927 (0.207)	4.782 (<0.01)	1.303 (0.194)	6.5428 (<0.01)
Personal relationship	.412 (0.021)	12.269 (<0.01)	.431 (0.034)	14.1346 (<0.01)
Personal Identity	.337(0.013)	9.526(<0.01)	.321(0.004)	7.5142(<0.01)
Year of Study			.085 (0.021)	0.22 (0.549)
R^2	.573		.604	
F	164.923	.000b	186.313	
Change in R^2			0.031	

Source: Researcher (2024)

The results indicate that the introduction of year of study as a moderating variable resulted in an increase in R^2. Personal gratifications factors accounted for a 57.3% change in the use of WhatsApp features, the introduction of year of study as a moderating variable resulted in an increase in the coefficient of determination by 3.1% to 60.4%. This is in line with research conducted by Smock et al., [30] which found that the year of study influenced the use of social networking sites.

V. Conclusion

The survey found that although usage varied, undergraduate students at Multimedia University of Kenya heavily utilised WhatsApp. The study also came to the conclusion that personal relationship and personal identity influenced how university students used WhatsApp features and accounted for 57.3 % of the variations in the use of WhatsApp features.

Further, the study revealed that that the introduction of gender as a moderating variable had the strongest influence compared to the introduction of faculty and year of study. This agreed with the arguments by Menon & Meghana [10] who hypothesised that gender influences variations in uses and gratification of social media and observed that several studies imply that gender actively influences the frequency with which users use social networking sites and their usagein general.

5.1 Recommendations

The research discovered that a majority of students used WhatsApp features more for sharing information than for expressing affection or connecting with people they couldn't meet. Consequently, the study recommends that in order to completely capitalise on WhatsApp's communicative utility, WhatsApp should: allow users to download WhatsApp status directly from the app and increase the limit on the maximum number of photographs that can be shared at once as well as the limit on file sizes. Further the study discovered that using WhatsApp did not significantly increase one's chances of being liked and respected. The study therefore proposes that to improve this WhatsApp features like the profile feature should be enhanced to cater for the users' needs.

5.2 Suggestions for Further Research

Minimal extant literature exists on motivations for individual features. Future researchers can consider a more specific review of the influence of gratifications factors on individual WhatsApp features. In addition, scholars could consider exploring the usage of WhatsApp features among teenagers who in the digital age also encompass a significant marketshare of WhatsApp usage.

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