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Impact of Social Media Usage on the Reading Culture among Students: A case of Jangwani Secondary School in Dar es Salaam

Angella Michael

Masters Student, Faculty of Arts, Social Sciences and Mass Communication, The Open University of Tanzania (OUT), Dar es Salaam, The United Republic of Tanzania

&

Henry L. Mambo

Senior Lecturer and Head of Department of Media and Library Studies, the Open University of Tanzania (OUT). Dar es Salaam, The United Republic of Tanzania.

*Correspondence: angellamichael69@gmail.com

Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to present the study that was conducted to assess the "impact of Social Media usage on the Reading Culture among secondary school students in Tanzania". Specifically, the study wanted to find out the relationship between social media and reading habits in order to measure the extent to which students were affected either positively or negatively. The population was school teachers and students of Jangwani Secondary. The study used an explanatory research design whereas a sample of 66 respondents was selected from Jangwani Secondary. Simple random sampling was used to select respondents. Data were collected through questionnaires and the IBM SPSS version of 2019 was used to analyze data thereafter data were presented using tables, graphs, and frequency. Based on the findings, all 66 (100%) were using social media, and 36 (55%) out of 66 were using social media as a tool for academic materials searching and current news and information. Eventually, according to the findings 66 (100%) respondents used social media, 36 (55%) respondents were using social media to search academic materials and current information and news affairs, and 60 (91%) respondents were using Facebook, Instagram. and Tik Tok. Furthermore, 32 (49%) respondents were spending 4-8 hours on social media. Based on the findings, it is argued that social media have a positive impact on students, especially in increasing reading habits and academic performance because of the easy accessibility of academic materials. Therefore, this paper recommends that there should be proper ways of making school students use social media positively, especially with the aim of increasing the reading culture.

Keywords: *S*ocial Media, Social Media Usage, Reading Culture, Secondary Students

1. Introduction

In recent years social media have been a corner stone among the people of different ages, since its inception in 1996. Social media have managed to penetrate half of the 7.7 billion people in the world. Further, social media platforms almost tripled total user base in the last decade, from 970 in 2010 to 4.48 billion users in 2021 (Backlinko, 2021).

The number of social media users in Tanzania is increasing since 2023 when there was equivalent to 7.4 percent of the total population. Also, data indicate that there were 4.90 million users aged 18 and above using social media in Tanzania at the start of 2023, which is equivalent to 14.8 percent of the total population (Data Report, 2023). Social media have heavily stimulated online learning, providing a stimulating learning environment for students to access academic content, and increasing access to audiovisual materials and other academic topics offers (Ndenego & Joseph, 2022). These are cyber-bullying, exposure to inappropriate content, reduced study time, online dating, and sexual solicitation, especially with strangers and people of different ages (House of Representatives, 2019).

According to Alfred & Haidari (2014), the social media situation among secondary students in Tanzania is determined by the environment of a particular school. There is an increased use of social media among secondary school students since both positive and negative use of social media among the students was exposed.

Alice, Collins, Constanze & Matthis (2014), found that social media usage in Tanzania is dominated by youths and the most preferred site is Facebook. For instance in Dar es Salaam and Mtwara, most youths use social media for socialization including chatting and making new friends, information searching as well as playing computer games.

Some people do use social media to barter ideas, perceptions as well as personal information in terms of pictures and videos (Loving & Ochoa, 2010). The thorough use of social media is probably a causative agent of the decrease or increase of reading culture because reading is one of the better ways of obtaining information and knowledge. According to Oloyede (2005), reading is a behavior that is manifested with no conscious exertion on the part of the learner. Students seek information in different ways as some are reading materials from libraries. Frankwell (2014). Secondary students face many challenges and setbacks in using the library including a lack of current and up-to-date reading materials, restricted hours, a lack of sitting facilities, and a lack of book copies. According to the BBC report (2018), Tanzania reached the highest level of book reading in 1980s when people were reading books as a means of obtaining materials and information.

According to Data Reportal (2023), youths are the ones who use social media mostly because of easy accessibility of supportive devices such as smartphones, tablets as well as computers. Therefore, the authors intended to know what impact these social media sites bring to students in relation to reading habits. However, Ndenengo & Joseph (2022) argue that social media provide an exciting learning platform where students can access academic materials such as audio-visual materials and enhance learning but most of these students have no balance between social media time and doing other school works.

Poor time management of using social media may result in cyber-bullying, exposure to unsuitable and illegal content, sleep deprivation, devoting lesser or no time to studies as well as communication with unknown people, especially strangers whch may lead to a sexual solicitation from them (Ndenengo & Joseph, 2022).

In searching for the impact of social media use on reading culture among Secondary School students, researchers were guided by the following questions;
   i.   What is the impact of social media usage among secondary students at Jangwani Secondary School?
   ii. What do students at Jangwani Secondary School use social media for?
   iii. How often do students at Jangwani Secondary School use social media?
   iv. What is the relationship between reading and social media usage among students at Jangwani Secondary School

Therefore, the study aimed at measuring the relationship between social media usage and the increase or decrease of reading culture among secondary school students since a better assessment will be helpful in improving the policies of government to increase or uplift student's desire and culture to read through the use of social media.

2.   Background of the Study
According to the Literacy Centre (2014), reading culture began in 4000 BC with the Sumerian pictographs as it was easy to decode since it was simply pictures of objects and activities. Although verbal communication started earlier, still there was a need for establishing a reading culture for people and to communicate more formally. Reading became one of the important means of acquiring new information since most of the materials and information are shared from books and other written materials.

Since its inception in 1994, social media has become addictive to users to the extent that it disrupts other important behaviors in people's minds. Nearly 53% of Britons who use mobile phones do so, according to a study conducted by the UK Post Office aimed at assessing the potential for anxiety disorders due to excessive mobile phone use. They say they worry about losing their phones when they are out. Bivin, Mathew, Thulasi and Philip (2013) in their survey that involved medical students, found that of the 547 males, 23% of students were classified as monophobia, and 64% of students had monophobia. They established further that there was a risk of developing an addiction to smartphones since nearly 77% of students check their mobile phones more than 35 times in a day.

Middle school and college students use social media for a variety of purposes, but mostly for non-academic purposes such as chatting each other and sharing social items (Abdalla, Manjur & Raisa, 2021). Yu, et al., (2010) argue that social media influences the daily lives of students in their relationships with social workers. Despite the use and importance of social media, there is still an undressed issue in academia in terms of its impact on reading culture, especially in the Tanzanian context.

The use of social media is not a problem at all; but the study is posing the question that aims to assess whether social media use is increasing or decreasing reading culture among the students by referring secondary students from Jangwani Secondary in Dar es Salaam. Therefore, answers to such questions are going to be used to improve the use of national and international social media, especially for academic purposes in secondary schools specifically to motivate reading culture among students.

3.   Literature Review
The study had to review other authors' works, starting with a theoretical framework followed by reviews from other authors'' works as a strategy to know what has been covered and observe the gap in between.

Media Ecology Theory was used in this study; the theory developed by is Marshall McLuhan. He developed the concept of media ecology in 1964 as he examined how media and communication technologies shape human perception, culture, and social interactions. His ideas have a significant impact on the fields of communication, cultural studies, and media theory.

Media ecology is the study of how media and communication processes affect one's perceptions, emotions and values, with a focus on media studies (Parameswaran, 2008). The theory is criticized as some scholars argue that it tends to exhibit technological determinism, the belief that technology is the primary driver of social change. Critics argue that this perspective overlooks the role of social, cultural, economic, and political factors in shaping media and society.

It was helpful in the accomplishment of this study since the theory helped the researchers to understand how media technologies and their environments shape and influence human perception, cognition, and behavior. In the digital era, where media consumption is ubiquitous, understanding the effects of social media on individuals and society is crucial for making informed decisions about media use and its consequences

It focuses on identifying the relationships between technology and members of a particular culture. In media ecology theory, social media has changed society and the public is more likely to rely on these communication technologies. McLuhan felt it was nearly impossible to find a company that could be influenced by the media. McLuhan noted that media use in education is not only about the increased number of information seekers for learning purposes rather than the crisis that can be created.

Information ecologies represent the procedures, goals, and values of communities that are supported by technologies. Information ecologies are places where people use tools and help each other in information activities through social relationships (Williamson, 2005). Information literacy is regarded here as knowledge, skills and efficient information practices in human information behavior. Educators all over the world developed learning strategies for students with respect to the recognition of information needs, development of information strategies, use of information sources, and building of pathways for gaining knowledge. The most important standards of information literacy include standards for students' learning for schools (AASL & AECT, 1998). Therefore, the theory that helps to ensure that research leads to consistent results will support further research, thereby improving students' social lives, especially with regard to reading habits.

4. Research Methodology

The study was conducted quantitatively because of its nature; therefore quantitative research approach was the best choice to support the completion of this study since it aided the researchers to get in-depth information about a particular topic.

In seeking of in-depth information that would be useful in accomplishing the study, explanatory research design was implied, since it is conducted when not enough is known about an ill-defined phenomenon or problem (Saunders et al., 2007). It does not aim to provide definitive answers to research questions, but only deepens the research topic to varying degrees. His theme was, therefore, to address emerging problems for which little or no research has been done (Brown, 2006). Even in extreme cases, explanatory research lays the foundation for more meaningful research, driving early study design, sampling methods, and data collection methods (Singh, 2007).
Rwegoshora (2006) defines population as the people with characteristics which the researcher wants to study within the context of a certain problem. In this research, the populations were the students and teachers from Jangwani Secondary School because that is the area where the study was conducted. Therefore, the sample size for this study was determined using simple random sampling whereby everyone had an equal chance of being selected. The target area for this study was the city of Dar es Salaam, because the case study was Jangwani Secondary School and because the school is one of the oldest schools in Dar es Salaam. Further, the school has supportive facilities that enable students to use social media thus the school has the experience in dealing with social media usage among the students.

The sample size for this study was simple random sampling whereby everyone had a chance to be selected using the Rule of Thumb formula which states: **(N ≥ 50+8M) Whereby** N = sample size, M = number of study independent variables (Stott, 1986). Therefore, the study had three independent variables which are social media usage, reading habit and the dependent is school students. Therefore: **N ≥ 50 + 8 * 2 = 66**. Based on the rule of thumb calculation, the sample size was 66 that include students and teachers. Since the school is single sex therefore for the case of students' gender only female students were included in the study. Teachers and matrons that make the total number of fifteen were also included.

In the process of data collection, questionnaires were employed since the study was typical quantitative and questionnaires were suitable for the study. The socio-economic and demographic characteristics of the study population played an important role in choosing data collection methods (Kothari, 2006). The selection of this method was based on study design which is a descriptive study design that calls for detailed information on a specific topic. Warner (1965) developed a data collection procedure known as Randomized Response (RR) which is claimed that it allows researchers to obtain sensitive and authoritative information while protecting and ensuring the privacy of respondents? Relative Risk (RR) or risk ratio is the ratio of the probability of an outcome in an exposed group to the probability of an outcome in an unexposed group. Together with risk differences and odds ratios, relative risk measures the relationship between exposure and outcome. This method promotes collaboration among respondents and reduces motivation to misstate one's attitude.

Warner (1965) also produced a rapidly growing body of research on alternative techniques for identifying appropriate RR schemes for estimating population proportions. Data analysis consists of actions and methods performed on data that help explain facts, identify patterns, develop explanations, and test hypotheses. This includes data quality assurance, statistical data analysis, modeling, and interpretation of results. Statistical Package for Social Sciences. IBM SPSS (2019 version) was used to present quantitative analysis by calculating results and presenting them in counts and percentages using charts, graphs and tables

5. Research Findings

The presentation of findings of this study was supported by answered questionnaires from among respondents, who were 66 in number; of whom 51 were students and 15 were teachers and matrons. Based on the nature of the school that is single sex, only female students were available. Therefore, this part provided information to explain the data which was then presented in tables, charts, graphs and explanations.

Social Media Usage
According to the findings, all the students who were 51 (100%) in number agreed that they used social media of whom 30 (59%) respondents indicated that they used social networks for searching information, nine (18%) respondents said they used social media for socialization or chatting, eight (16%) said they used social media to look for new friends, while the rest four (8%) said others. When asked the most preferred sites and social media sites, 49 (96%) out of 51 respondents mentioned Facebook, Instagram and Tik Tok as their favorite social media sites while the rest mentioned WhatsApp, Twitter and Snapchat in their answers. In time spending, according to the findings, out of 51 respondents 18 (35%) said they spent less than an hour, 30 (59%) said they spent 1-4 hours while the rest three (6%) said they spent 4-8 hours on social media sites or applications, no one mentioned a day and above.

Impact of Social Media towards Reading Habit
From all student respondents who responded to the question, 45 (88%) said social media had positive impacts, three (6%) said it had negatively impacted them while the other three (6%) respondents said it was moderate. According to the findings, more than 91% of the respondents said social media usage increased their reading habit, while others said it has nether increased nor decreased their culture of reading. However, 25 (49%) respondents admitted that they were disturbed by notifications, 15 (29%) said pop ups ads, 9 (18%) mentioned desire to do other things as a
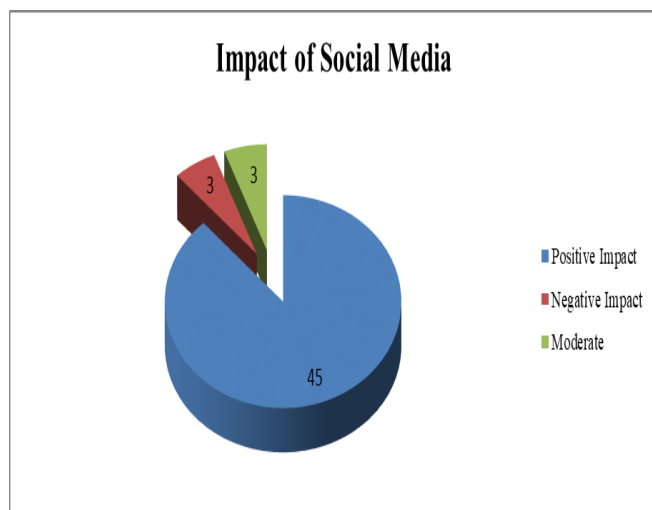
challenge to them while two (4%) said others.

Figure 1: Impact of Social Media towards Reading Habit
Source: Field Data, 2022

**The Frequency of Social Media Usage among the Students**
The question was posed to 15 respondents including teachers and matrons aimed at knowing how often the students use social media, for they are the ones who control and manage the use of social media among their students. Out of 15 respondents 13 (87%) said they use according to the time table after religious sessions in the evening while the rest two (13%) said they sometimes use social media conveniently especially when they are outside the school.

Difference between Reading Hard Copies versus Soft Copies
Students had different views on the particular subject since some of them said reading hard copies were better because e-books needed internet connection while hard copies were accessible without internet. Others said it was easy to read via online since with the internet, one can access more books than in hard copies. There were others who said reading soft copies was a little bit challenging for instance when using devices such as phones and tablets there were some disturbances one could face like incoming calls, notifications for texts as well as pop ups ads. Therefore reading hard and soft copies had challenges.

Furthermore, most students suggested that reading should be via social media. However, some of them suggested that there should be a strong reading commitment in order for the students to focus on studying. Few respondents said both reading via social media and hard copies should be applied because some contexts require a student to read hard and soft copies concurrently.

Also, 18 (27%) respondents said policies on advertising should be improved, 21 (32%) said age restriction should be considered in improvements, 14 (21%) respondents said limitation in time spending should be improved while the rest 13 (20%) said nothing had to be improved.
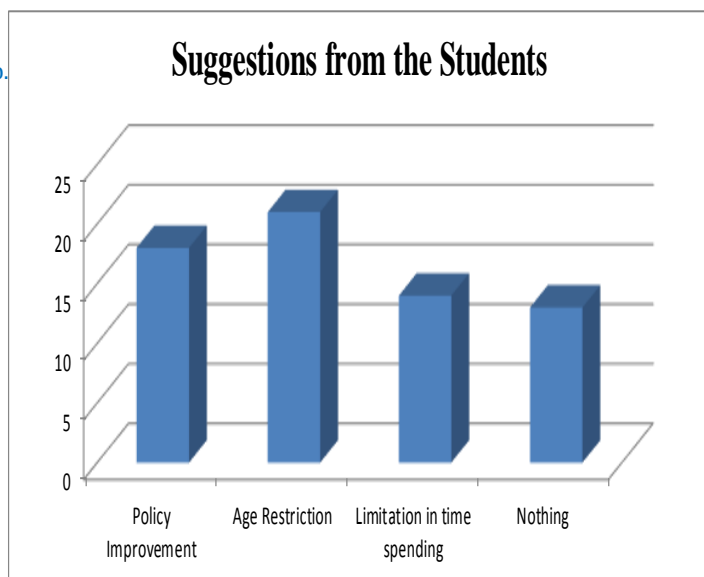
The figure below illustrates.
Figure 2: Suggestions from the Students

Source: Field Data, 2022

The researcher's objective was to get student's opinion on what should be improved in social media usage to motivate reading habits among students. Most students suggested that some motivations should be made in reading habits via social media. However, some respondents suggested that there should be strong reading commitments on the side of students to focus on studying or reading through electronic devices. Few respondents said both reading via social media and hard copies should be implemented since some contexts need a student to read both hard and soft copies at per.

The Impact of Social Media Usage among the Students
According to the findings, social media usage have positively impacted on the students' reading habits since most of them agreed that social media simplify the accessibility of books especially e-books and it was easy to find them compared to hard copies that someone must have it physically or he/she must attend to the library. For instance, from the findings, 66 students who were asked if social media usage had any impact on their habit of reading books, 73% of them said, "Yes" social media usage had increased their reading habit.

McLuhan (1964), in The Theory of Media Ecology, argues that social media is transforming society and that the public is becoming more dependent on this communication technologies. According to him, it was almost impossible to find a society influenced by the media. Along with the development of society, the technology has also developed. The public has been influenced by both books and the social media since the first book was published online. Media Ecology Development, Process, Search, Media Rules of Inversion - shows how technology affects the development of communication.

According to Junco, et al. (2011) & Magde et al. (2009) active use of social media improves students reading habits and academic performance. On the other hand, Shabir, et al.,(2014) and Rubis et al. (2012) found no significant association between social media use and academic performance. However, some studies have shown no relationship between these two variables, but the results showed that social media use had a positive impact on the reading habits of students at Jangwani Secondary School.

The Uses of Social Media among the Students
According to the findings, most students were using social media as a tool for information searching that was equally proportional to the reading activities. For instance, 55% of the total respondents said they were using social media to look for information and few

others mentioned socialization as one of their main reason for their social media usage. AASL & AECT (2020) Information literacy is viewed as knowledge, skills and efficient information practices in human information behavior. According to AASL & AECT (2020), educators around the world are developing learning strategies for their students related to identifying information needs, developing information strategies, leveraging information sources, and building pathways to knowledge acquisition.

Muhammad, et al. (2020) showed that social media has positive impact on reading culture, addition of general knowledge, easily access information, and keep in touch with other friends. However, his distractions during the study period were identified as adverse effects. Social media use also negatively affected reading behavior as more time was spent chatting with friends than reading (Shehu & Shehu, 2014).

The Frequency of Social Media Usage
From the results, 49% of all the respondents who attempted the questionnaires said they spent four to eight hours surfing in social media, that is to say the students dedicate most of their prime time is using social media. The most important thing is to make good timetable for them so that they will be using the timetable for benefits, especially for books reading in order to increase reading habit among them. Laura (2021) mentioned why students use social media. She said the most frequently cited reasons for social media usage were; to stay up to date, while others said it was interesting.

Given these answers, most of these students are likely addicted to social media for normal reasons. They found a correlation between time spent on social media and reading habits, with frequent social media use leading to lower reading habits. The study recommends encouraging faculty and staff to spend less time on social media sites and instead devote more time and energy to educational purposes (Owusu-Acheaw, 2016).

From the findings, Jangwani students seem to spend much time surfing social media. In connection to the previous results, it seems that most students use social media for reading purposes and less for socialization and others.

The Relationship between Reading Culture and Social Media usage
From the findings, social media usage and reading habits caused each other interchangeably since students had been using social media to access books and other informative materials. For instance, in the question that wanted students to explain whether social media had positive or negative impact on their reading habit, 78% of the total respondents said they helped them positively in adding reading habit. Reviewing the literature, Boateng & Amankwaa (2016) found that social media influences teachers, students, and other stakeholders to unite with each other to advocate and emphasize the construction of knowledge in the classroom.

McLoughlin & Lee (2007) argue that the positive use of social media platforms, impacts individuals by bringing diversity to different groups of people, including Google Plus hence it is of advantageous.

6.   Conclusion and Recommendations
Based on the objectives and questions of this study, social media usage and reading culture are inseparable as they are causing each other. Social media use is very important to school students, especially in facilitating information searching in order to increase reading culture which is vital in improving individual learning capacity among the students hence increasing academic performance. Also, from the findings, social media is very important in aiding students to obtain different materials, especially academic ones.

The study concludes that social media usage should be handled with care, thus teachers and matrons/patrons at schools, parents, and other people that are responsible for guidance. Further, policymakers should consider social media sites as one of the important tools that are supportive and suggestive in increasing reading culture among students. Government should also provide important facilities such as tables, computers as well as smart phones in all schools in order to make the use of social media easy and useful.

As policymakers consider social media sites as one of the important tools that are supportive and suggestive in increasing reading culture among the students, they have to come up with the proper means of facilitating students in using social media in a constructive and positive way hence enhancing academic progression among them.

Development in education goes with the advancement of science and technology; the ministry responsible for education has the role to consider the changes brought by technological advancement when creating syllabuses and educational policies in Tanzania's educational systems. Electronic devices have to be used by secondary students in their studies since social media seem to be helpful in increasing reading habits among the students and also teachers can use them to create social ground for the betterment of students' academic performances.

Parents and teachers are the ones who take care of students at home and in academic institutions respectively; thus, they are the ones to take control over the social media usage of their children. They have to make sure that the students adhere to the regulations on social media usage. Therefore, students will be using social media positively in relation to the increase in reading habits among students, hence better academic performances.

Since the TCRA is the authority that controls and regulates all the communications in the country, it has the role to make sure all the sites that have some elements of nudity materials are uprooted. In social media, there are some sites or applications that allow actions such as cyber bullying, discrimination and other unwanted materials; therefore, TCRA has to facilitate safe ground for students to dwell in searching information and other academic staff. This study has covered only an area of secondary schools with reference of Jangwani Secondary; but there are so many other academic institutions that have to be covered in order to come up with the impact of social media in other academic arenas, thus it is recommended that other studies should be conducted and focus on other youths related areas thereafter it will be easy to measure the results.

This study assessed the impact of social media usage on reading culture among students with special reference to Jangwani secondary school. Different studies from other researchers should be carried out in order to measure to what extent the relationship between social media usage and the increase/decrease of reading habits has to be improved since it will be helpful even to policymakers and other stakeholders.

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Authors' Biographies
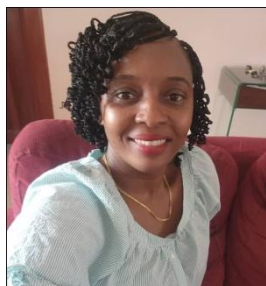
ANGELLA MICHAEL was born in 1979 at Midizini, Kigamboni District in Dar es Salaam region Tanzania. She has a degree in Mass Communication from the Tumaini University Dar es Salaam College (TUDARCO) in 2017. She is a senior Journalist and expert in Communication over 17 years in Journalism and Broadcasting and five years in Public Relations.

She has worked in various organizations in Tanzania such as the National Broadcast, Tanzania Broadcasting Corporation, mainly focusing on journalistic works, broadcasting and communications. Her areas of interest include; Journalism, especifically in news anchoring, programs announcing and public relations and communications. Apart from her daily activities she is also a recognized influencer of balanced diet and regular body exercises through social media as a way to fight against Non-Communicable Diseases (NCDs).

Currently, **Angella Michael** is a permanent employee as public relations officer at the Tanzania Institute of Education (TET).

DR. HENRY L. MAMBO is a Ph.D holder and researcher. He has a BA degree in Public Administration and International Relations (Hons) from the University of Dar es Salaam (1986-89). He has a Masters degree in Management, Library Science from the University of Wales-United Kingdom (1990-92). He completed his PhD studies from the University of Natal—Pietermaritzburg (1994-1998). Later he started working as Librarian at the University of Dar es Salaam (1989—2000). From 2001—2009, he worked as an expert of Information, Education and Communication at the President's Office Public Service Management. He is also a former Chief Executive Officer of the Tanzania Public Service College TPSC (2010—2017).

Currently, he is a Senior Lecturer, Senior Librarian and a Head of Department of Media and Library Studies, Faculty of Arts and Social Science at The Open University of Tanzania (since 2017 to date).