



The Effects of Social Media on Academic Achievement

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Abstract

This study aims to explore the effects of social media on academic achievement. A descriptive methodology was employed, using a sample of 60 students. The results indicated that these platforms assist students in dialogue and discussion, facilitate communication with peers, and aid in reviewing daily lessons. However, it was observed that social media can negatively impact students' focus during study sessions. The findings also confirmed that there are no statistically significant differences in the impact of social media on academic achievement among University students based on gender. The study recommends conducting further research in diverse communities to better understand the effects of this phenomenon.

Keywords: *social media, university students, social interaction, social networks.*

Introduction

The technological revolution has created a vast new space for remote social interaction, known as the electronic environment. This was made possible by the internet and the subsequent rise of social media, which has diminished the constraints of time and space in information

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communication. Social media has significantly altered daily life and social relationships due to its widespread use (Badawi, 2015).

Technological advancements have brought about a genuine revolution and qualitative leap in communication, spreading across the globe and transcending cultural differences. This has enabled many individuals to connect and engage with one another, leading to the emergence of social media platforms, which are among the latest and most popular products of communication technology. These platforms play an important role in disseminating a new community culture that relies on modern technology, which in turn reinforces the components of civilization, especially when the media content is formulated in a way that interacts with societal needs, goals, and values (Al-Shahri, 2020).

Social media applications have become one of the most prominent means of human communication, as they engage with various aspects of individuals' lives, particularly social, political, and religious dimensions. This is attributed to their wide reach, ability to facilitate information exchange, and capability to convey messages clearly through text, voice, images, video, symbols, and gestures (Talaba, 2019).

University students are among the primary demographics using these platforms, as they are the most frequent users of social media, which significantly affects their academic performance (Al-Tayar, 2020).

Importance of the Study

The significance of this study lies in its contribution to the theoretical literature regarding technology and social media, enriching the Arab and Emirati libraries. Furthermore, it aims to draw the attention of families and educational institutions to the effects of social media and to address its negative impacts by providing solutions and recommendations to mitigate these effects on university students.

Research Problem

Social media has established its presence in traditional mass communication, making it insufficient for individuals to rely solely on newspapers and television to stay informed about global events. Instead, they can read, follow, and share news through various social media platforms, gaining

access to information and news at any time (Abd Al-Ghaffar, 2015). Social media plays a significant role in academic achievement, with numerous studies confirming its negative effects on students' performance. Thus, the current study aims to identify the effects of social media on academic achievement among a sample of students.

Objectives of the Study

1. To identify the positive effects of social media on academic achievement among students.
2. To identify the negative effects of social media on academic achievement among students.
3. To investigate whether there is an impact of social media on academic achievement among students attributable to gender differences.

Research Questions

1. What are the positive effects of social media on academic achievement among students?
2. What are the negative effects of social media on academic achievement among students?

Hypothesis

There are no statistically significant differences in the impact of social media on academic achievement among students attributed to gender differences.

Literature review

Many studies have examined the effects of social media on individuals and society. Among these, the study by Wazi and Youssef (2021) titled "Modern Technology and Its Impact on Education for Children" aimed to determine the effects of modern technology on education and its impact on families. Using a descriptive analytical method, the study concluded that technological mediums have led to weakened social relationships within families, particularly between parents and children, and have contributed to social isolation among children. It also highlighted the need for students to be aware of the dangers of social media, particularly concerning their education.

In a 2020 study by Al-Shahri, titled "The Impact of Using Electronic Social Networks on Academic Achievement," the researcher used a questionnaire with a sample of 150 students and

found that the primary reasons students use social media are to express opinions and ideas they cannot share openly in society.

Another study in 2020 by Al-Tayar investigated social networks and their impact on academic achievement among university students, focusing on Twitter. The study used a descriptive method with a sample of 2,274 students from King Saud University in Riyadh, revealing that the main negative impact of social networks was a decrease in academic performance. Similarly, Badawi (2020) examined the impact of modern social media on education, finding that excessive use of social media leads to underperformance among students and recommending the use of modern communication methods for spreading Islamic teachings, particularly through platforms like Facebook.

Theoretical Framework

Concept of Social Networks

Academic interest in social networks and virtual communities has grown since the internet became a notable informational space, successfully establishing its virtual groups and attracting millions. The internet, with its interactions, has become part of daily life for many (Awda, 2015).

The term "virtual community" is no longer surprising, as it has become widely understood and discussed among internet users. A virtual community can be defined as social gatherings formed from disparate locations worldwide, communicating through computer screens and email, sharing knowledge, and forming friendships based on common interests. Interactions mimic real-world interactions, facilitated by the internet, which has enabled these virtual formations (Masoud, 2020).

Numerous definitions of social networks exist, reflecting their novelty and the varied perspectives of scholars and researchers. Some define them as significant electronic communities offering various services that enhance communication and interaction among users, such as friendship, acquaintance, messaging, instant chatting, and creating interest-based groups or pages for sharing events and media with others (Mushri, 2012).

Features of Social Networks

Social networks possess several key features, including (Wazi & Youssef, 2021):

1. **Global Reach:** Social networks have reduced geographical barriers, allowing individuals from different parts of the world to connect easily and share opinions.
2. **Interactivity:** Users actively participate by sending, writing, and sharing content, fostering social relationships that traditional media lacks.
3. **Diversity and Multiple Uses:** These networks span all areas of life, including education, politics, media, and economics, serving as effective promotional tools.
4. **Ease of Use:** Social networks utilize symbols and images that facilitate user interaction, making them accessible to all age groups.
5. **Cost-Effectiveness:** Most social networks are free to join, requiring only internet access for use.

Characteristics of Social Networks

Social networks feature several characteristics that distinguish them from other online applications and sites, enhancing their popularity among users (Khalidi et al., 2022):

- **Self-Identification:** Users create personal profiles, allowing them to present themselves through text, images, music, and videos.
- **New Community Formation:** Social networks enable users to form friendships and share content, facilitating virtual community engagement.
- **User-Friendliness:** Their simplicity allows even those with basic internet skills to navigate and manage social media sites.
- **Free and Open Access:** Most platforms allow registration without invitations from existing members.
- **Interactivity:** Social media promotes ongoing interaction and incorporates emojis to enhance communication enjoyment.
- **Interest-Centric:** Social networks focus on common interests, offering users personalized content based on their profiles and searches (Mohammed, 2019).

Positive and Negative Aspects of Social Media

Undoubtedly, social media technologies have introduced a positive dimension to the lives of millions, prompting cultural, social, political, and economic changes in entire communities. Positive impacts include serving as a window to the world, providing platforms for diverse opinions, reducing cultural conflicts, fostering family closeness, and reviving old friendships. However, social media also has negative consequences, such as diminishing interpersonal skills, time wastage, addiction, loss of cultural identity, invasion of privacy, exaggerated friendships, and identity theft (Al-Mousa et al., 2018).

Concept of Academic Achievement

Academic achievement can be viewed as an interactive process involving three essential components: the reader, the text, and the context. It is foundational to learning and encompasses the reader's engagement with the text to construct meaning. This involves a mental representation of the subject matter and understanding relationships within the text (Joksimović et al., 2015; Agwu & Nmadu, 2023).

Importance of Academic Achievement

Academic achievement serves as the foundation for students to learn and comprehend other subjects, especially in primary education. Overcoming reading difficulties enables students to tackle challenges in understanding presented material. It plays a vital role in mastering learning skills and cultivating informed readers who retain knowledge and are capable of creativity, judgment, and evaluation (Steinmayr et al., 2014; Moore, 2019).

Objectives of Academic Achievement

Academic achievement contributes to various economic and social goals, providing students with diverse experiences through reading and fostering positive attitudes toward continuous learning and problem-solving abilities (Perger & Takács, 2016).

Methodology

The current study employs a descriptive methodology, accurately detailing the phenomenon under investigation and presenting extensive information.

Study Population and Sample

The study population consists of university students, with a simple random sample of 60 students selected for the academic year 2023/2024.

Table 1

Distribution of the Study Sample According to Personal Variables

Variable	Level	Sample Size	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	29	48%
	Female	31	52%
	Total	60	100%
Age	20 - 30 years	10	17%
	31 - 40 years	29	48%
	41 - 50 years	10	17%
	51 years and above	11	18%
	Total	60	100%
Marital Status	Single	16	27%
	Married	28	47%
	Divorced	10	17%
	Widowed	6	10%
	Total	60	100%
Family Size	Fewer than 4 members	11	18%

Table 1 shows that the sample size of male participants was 48%, while the sample size of female participants was 52%. The highest percentage of the sample distribution according to age was 48% for the age group of 31-40 years, while the lowest percentage was 17% for the age group of 20-30 years. Similarly, the highest percentage for marital status distribution was approximately 47% for married individuals, while the lowest percentage was about 10% for widowed individuals.

Additionally, the highest percentage for family size distribution was 62% for families with 5-8 members, while the lowest percentage was 7% for families with fewer than 4 members.

Study Instrument

To achieve the objectives of the current study, a questionnaire was prepared. It consisted of two parts: the first part included personal data of the study sample (gender, age, marital status, family size), and the second part comprised 10 items distributed across two axes:

Axis One: Positive effects of social media on academic achievement among students at University, including 5 items:

1. Using social media enables students to communicate with peers and review daily lessons.
2. Social media enhances students' performance and language skills.
3. It helps students learn discussion and dialogue techniques.
4. It allows students to communicate with professors after official hours.
5. It increases students' cultural level.

Axis Two: Negative effects of social media on academic achievement among University students, including 5 items:

1. Excessive use of social media leads to neglecting academic responsibilities.
2. Inability to concentrate due to excessive social media use.
3. Overuse of social media has weakened my motivation for studying.
4. Staying up late using social media has weakened my focus while studying.
5. Social media causes distractions for students regarding academic information.

Validity and Reliability

To verify the validity of the study tool, the initial version was presented to several specialists who provided feedback on its language, paragraph consistency, and alignment with the main themes. Necessary amendments were made based on their comments. The reliability of the study

instrument was verified using the internal consistency method (Cronbach's alpha) for each axis of the questionnaire. Table (2) shows the internal consistency coefficients, which were considered suitable and acceptable for the purposes of this study.

Table 2

Internal Consistency Reliability Coefficients of the Study Instrument

Instrument	Internal Consistency
Overall Tool	0.82

It is evident from Table (2) that the overall reliability coefficient of the tool reached (0.82), which is suitable and acceptable for the purposes of this study.

The response scores for the items of the current study instrument were distributed according to a five-point Likert scale, where respondents received 5 points for "Strongly Agree," 4 points for "Agree," 3 points for "Neutral," 2 points for "Disagree," and 1 point for "Strongly Disagree."

After assigning numerical values to represent respondents' attitudes from (5-1), the minimum difference was calculated as 1 (the lowest value) from the maximum value of 5, resulting in a range of 4. Consequently, the response levels were categorized as follows:

- Low (1-2.33)
- Moderate (2.34-3.67)
- High (3.68-5)

Data Presentation and Analysis

The data related to the first question: What are the positive effects of social media on the academic achievement of University students?

To answer this question, the means and standard deviations for the positive effects of social media on the academic achievement of University students were calculated.

Table 3

Items Related to the Positive Effects of Social Media on Academic Achievement of Students

Rank	Item No.	Statement	Mean	Standard Deviation	Degree
1	3	Helps students learn the art of dialogue and discussion.	4.20	0.83	High
2	4	Enables students to communicate with professors after official hours.	4.19	0.91	High

3	1	Using social media allows students to communicate with peers and review daily lessons.	3.63	1.41	Moderate
4	5	Helps increase students' level of culture.	3.47	1.32	Moderate
5	2	Using social media enhances students' performance and language skills.	3.34	1.11	Moderate
Overall Score			3.68	0.94	High

The results in Table (3) indicate that the overall mean of the positive effects of social media on the academic achievement of students is (3.68), reflecting a high level of agreement. The means of the study sample's responses ranged between (3.34-4.20). Additionally, it can be seen from the table that there are two items that received a high level of agreement: item (3), stating "Helps students learn the art of dialogue and discussion," with a mean of (4.20) and a high rating. In contrast, the other items received a moderate level of agreement, with means ranging from (3.34-3.63). The highest mean was for item (1), stating "Using social media allows students to communicate with peers and review daily lessons," with a mean of (3.63), while the lowest was for item (2), stating "Using social media enhances students' performance and language skills," with a mean of (3.34).

Data Presentation Related to the Second Question: What Are the Negative Effects of Social Media on the Academic Achievement of University Students?

To answer this question, the means and standard deviations for the negative effects of social media on the academic achievement of University students were calculated.

Table 4

Items Related to the Negative Effects of Social Media on Academic Achievement of University Students

Rank	Item No.	Statement	Mean	Standard Deviation	Degree
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1	4	Staying up late using social media leads to decreased concentration while studying.	4.32	0.86	High
2	1	Excessive use of social media leads to neglecting academic assignments.	4.23	1.16	High
3	3	Excessive use of social media has led to a decrease in my motivation to study.	3.43	1.25	Moderate
4	5	Social media causes students to be distracted from academic information.	3.40	1.34	Moderate
5	2	Inability to concentrate due to excessive use of social media.	3.12	1.14	Moderate
Overall Score			3.70	0.97	High

The results in Table (4) indicate that the overall mean of the items related to the negative effects of social media on the academic achievement of University students (3.70), reflecting a moderate level of agreement. The means of the study sample's responses ranged between (3.12-4.32). Additionally, it can be observed from the table that there are two items that received a high level of agreement: item (4), stating "Staying up late using social media leads to decreased concentration while studying," with a mean of (4.32) and a high rating. Meanwhile, the other items received a moderate level of agreement, with means ranging from (3.12-3.43). The highest mean was for item (3), stating "Excessive use of social media has led to a decrease in my motivation to study," with a mean of (3.43), while the lowest was for item (2), stating "Inability to concentrate due to excessive use of social media," with a mean of (3.12).

Presentation of Data Related to the Study Hypothesis

Hypothesis: There are no statistically significant differences in the effect of social media on the academic achievement of students attributed to gender.

To test the hypothesis, the researcher used one-way ANOVA, as shown in Table (5).

Table 5

Results of One-Way ANOVA for the Effects of Social Media on Academic Achievement by Gender

Variable	Source of Variation	Sum of Squares	Mean Squares	F Value	Significance Level
Gender	Between Groups	0.272	0.186	1.703	0.098
	Within Groups	79.40	0.329		
	Total	98.81			

From the table, it is clear that the significance level (0.098) is greater than the alpha level (0.05). Therefore, we accept the null hypothesis, indicating that there are no statistically significant differences in the effect of social media on the academic achievement of University students attributed to gender.

Discussion

Positive Effects of Social Media

The results of the study indicate that the positive effects of social media on the academic performance of University students received a high level of agreement. This reflects the clear positive impact these platforms have in enhancing communication among students. The statement that received the highest average score was related to social media's ability to assist students in learning dialogue and discussion skills. This finding is significant, as effective dialogue encourages critical thinking and helps students develop their linguistic skills.

These results align with previous studies, such as the work by Wazi and Youssef (2021), which highlighted the importance of social media in enhancing educational and social interaction among students. Interaction with peers and instructors through these platforms contributes to an overall improvement in the educational experience. In the context of Bandura's social learning theory, it is evident how social interactions can influence learning and academic behaviours.

The results also showed that social media enables students to review their daily lessons. This aspect is crucial in the information age, where these tools serve as effective means for knowledge exchange. Other studies, such as Al-Otaibi (2020), indicate that digital learning tools, including social media, enhance student engagement with academic materials, which positively reflects on their academic performance.

Negative Effects of Social Media

Conversely, the study revealed that the negative effects of social media on the academic performance of University students received a moderate level of agreement. The most prominent of these negative effects was the tendency to stay up late using social media, which leads to reduced concentration during study sessions. This result supports findings from Al-Shahri (2020), which showed that excessive use of social media adversely affects students' academic performance.

Research indicates that students who spend excessive time on these platforms often struggle with time management, adversely impacting their academic outcomes. For instance, Al-Rashed's (2019) study demonstrated that such distractions lead to attention deficits and diminished focus, which negatively impacts students' ability to complete their assignments. Thus, it is vital to raise awareness among students about how to use these platforms beneficially.

Additionally, excessive use of social media may have negative implications for mental health, including anxiety and depression. Studies show that immersion in these networks can expose students to social and psychological pressures, which in turn affect their academic performance. Therefore, increasing awareness about the risks associated with excessive social media use is an urgent necessity.

Hypothesis Regarding Gender Differences

Regarding the hypothesis of no statistically significant differences in the impact of social media on academic performance based on gender, the results indicated that both genders use these platforms almost daily. This finding aligns with Al-Tayar's (2020) research, which found minimal differences in social media usage between genders. This suggests a growing trend of equal usage among male and female students, reflecting changes in social and cultural behaviours within society.

This trend can be explained through the social and cultural framework of society, where opportunities for education and social interaction between genders are increasing. This aligns with the country's vision for education and women's empowerment, contributing to equal educational opportunities. Furthermore, it indicates that social media can serve as an effective tool for fostering collaboration between male and female students, enhancing their educational experiences.

Potential Long-term Effects

It is essential to consider the potential long-term effects of social media usage. While there are clear benefits, excessive reliance on these platforms may lead to changes in learning and social interaction styles. For instance, a generation of students may become more inclined to communicate through screens rather than face-to-face, which could impact their social skill development.

Moreover, social media usage may influence the way students receive information. While these platforms offer abundant knowledge resources, relying on content available online without scrutiny or evaluation may weaken critical thinking abilities. Therefore, it is crucial to integrate educational strategies that enhance students' capacity to analyse information effectively.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this study provides a comprehensive insight into the impact of social media on academic performance among University students. The results indicate both positive and negative effects associated with these platforms, necessitating appropriate strategies to harness the benefits while mitigating risks. Educational policies should promote the use of social media platforms as educational tools while implementing effective strategies to reduce excessive use and potential negative impacts. Furthermore, by raising awareness and educating users, we can ensure that these platforms remain beneficial in an academic context. Despite the efforts made in conducting this research, several challenges were encountered, including difficulties in accessing the sample, potential biases in responses, challenges in designing the questionnaire, fluctuations in social media usage behaviours, and time constraints. To address these issues, it is recommended to conduct awareness campaigns to educate the community about the dangers of excessive social media use, organise workshops and seminars to engage students in discussions about their usage motivations and associated risks, encourage collaborative efforts among local institutions to effectively tackle excessive social media usage, and develop educational programmes that teach students how to manage their time effectively when using social media. By addressing these challenges and implementing the recommendations, the quality and accuracy of future research can be improved, contributing to a deeper understanding of the impact of social media on academic achievement.

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