

## Social media as a tool in learning and social behavior in Saudi Arabia

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*Social media tools have become universal because the majority of population worldwide tend to use diverse social media applications. The advancement of technology has provided a chance to accommodate the needs of individuals to stay connected with each other. This paper explores the importance of social media tools perceived as essential learning resources in the contemporary educational field (Alwi, Mahir, & Ismail, 2014). It has been argued that technology has advanced the static information and provided viable opportunities for individuals to increase their learning skills and enrich their learning horizons. Technology is not only one-time investment, but is progressively advancing day by day by introducing different types of infrastructure expansion and growth in social media applications.*

### Introduction

Research shows that a substantial number of individuals are involved in using Youtube, Facebook, Blogging, and Twitter for learning purposes by making groups based on specific interests and following certain discussions (Nookhong & Wannapiroon, 2015). Technology has provided a different type of medium for individuals so as to increase their learning resources through the implementation of social media and exchange of information within seconds. The increased social media adoption has led to a significant impact on social behavior, which is not only related to learning purposes but also to business investment. The fast emerging social media has shifted patterns of social behavior, which has gradually led to the integration of social media tools in a wide range of learning and teaching activities. This paper mainly focuses on the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA), stressing on social behavior dimensions and how it has impacted local society, through social media as a promising tool of learning.

In recent years, online social network sites like MySpace, Face book, and Twitter have become the most popular sites on the Internet, especially for college students who have been enticed into spending longer hours using social media technologies, thus redefining their interpersonal communication and study dynamics. (Junco, Merson & Salter 2007). University students' communicative capacities have been transformed by these systems that dramatic and irreversible changes to the very shape and structure of their academic and social behavior, along with their cultural disposition have necessarily followed.

## Literature Review

Technology has shown tremendous diversity in recent years; however, social media is one of the significant elements of technology in the internet-driven world. It has provided more knowledge to workers, students, clients and facilitates individuals as a learning tool (Nookhong & Wannapiroon, 2015). Due to the fact that a significant proportion of the world's workforce is connected to social media, most individuals tend to adopt social media as a marketing and learning tool. Scholars have argued that social media is an internet-driven tool, which has provided a medium to individuals to share, create and transfer information such as data, ideas, pictures, videos, voice messages, etc. in virtual communities.

Moreover, social media is also defined as a group of internet-based applications, which have created user friendly content for people to exchange data with each other. It depends on individuals how they use social media and for what purposes. It has provided numerous benefits such as quality, frequency, outreach, usability, proximity and durability. Nowadays, the learning environment is also created on social media using different platforms, which have the same characteristics as the system of the bygone ages (Mao, 2014). It can be said that with the explosion of the internet world, learners are revolving around social associations and tools to learn. There are different types of social media platforms to include LinkedIn, Chat/Messaging, Facebook, Twitter, Youtube, Instagram and Blog.

Other popular social media platforms in the context of Saudi Arabia refer to Whatsapp and Dropbox, as they find proper application in academics. Students tend to utilize Whatsapp as a relevant tool to exchange important information about certain topics they explore (Nookhong & Wannapiroon, 2015). This aspect allows them to focus on the limitless possibilities of expanding their learning to new horizons. Moreover, Dropbox has become a popular learning tool recently, considering its capacities to facilitate document sharing among students. In this way, they can have access to vast information on the web, as the respective social media platform is quite flexible and efficient.

These are the most popular tools used by individuals as a learning tool to achieve multiple objectives, not particularly in the business field but in informal learning experiences as well. Youtube provides video content to spread learning content, whereas messaging has given a leverage for rapid communication to transfer data. These tools are well-recognized and are deployed as a vital element of the successful implementation of social media for learning purposes (Mao, 2014). As social media have been considered a learning tool, this aspect has also affected the social behavior of individuals.

Social behavior is defined as a behavior of individuals linked with society, or between members of society in terms of how they communicate with each other. However, social behavior is both considered to be social meaning and social context by focusing on social actions of individuals (Sun, Chen, & Fan, 2014). Due to exponential development and proliferation of social media as a learning tool, this has revolutionized the global world by increasing the demand of technology. The internet now permeates the daily activities of individuals all around the world. Research has shown that the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has more than 10 million online users, implying that almost half of the population is into social media through different platforms, for the vital purpose of learning experience (Mao, 2014). The main purpose of this

study is to focus on social media as a learning tool and social behavior of KSA, with the idea to show that the effect of adoption of technology has increased the extension of social media. From this perspective, it has been indicated that KSA's social behavior is dependent on social media as well because of diverse factors, such as immediate communication medium, cultural and region diversity.

Another study by Abero and Marin (2013) indicates that students surveyed had positive attitudes towards group work and considered that it did not have a negative impact on learning outcomes. Group work could be considered a strategy for overcoming one of the variables of failure in learning of this type: the students' socio-cognitive isolation. Students who participated in the study perceived that group work was one of the ways of working in the knowledge society.

On the negative aspects of SM use, Wang, Chen and Liang (2011) report that most college students spent vast hours checking social media sites. Ninety percent of students surveyed spent their time on entertainment. There were not too many college students who preferred using social media to deal with their homework. Eighty percent of the sample admitted that they posted or responded while completing homework which had definitely affected their efficiencies and their grades. Considering the data collected, there was a negative attitude towards social media when college students used them. The research also indicates that an approach is needed to better balance the relationship between social media and academic study. Therefore, college students should think more about the balancing equation of social media and academic.

The frequent use of Facebook could cause addiction toward the site and influence students' daily life at large. A study by Zainudin, Omar, Bolong and Osman (2011) was done to identify the relationship between female students' motives for Facebook use and Facebook addiction. Five motives identified were social interaction, passing time, entertainment, companionship, and communication. The findings of the study showed that there are significant relationship between female students' motives for Facebook use and Facebook addiction. As a conclusion, social interaction, passing time, entertainment, companionship and communication motives were among the major contributor to the addiction of Facebook site.

### **Methodology**

Methodology refers to a systematic, analytical and statistical approach of study to drive specific results. The main objective of this study is to examine the potential of social media as a learning tool and social behavior of KSA. This paper will perform research using a quantitative approach, with survey as a data collection method (Maxim, 1999). The survey was conducted at King Abdulaziz University amongst faculties and students of the different colleges at random. The method of carrying out a survey will be based on a Likert scale rating from 1-5, which will highlight how participants support certain assumptions related to the study. A quantitative method strategy may enable the researcher to uncover the perception of random participants to fill out the survey form; this method is useful because it provides statistical data to evaluate the results. This method will provide clear results with proper analysis using the frequency and

percentage method. The sample of this study will consist of 100 participants who need to respond to 10 questions.

One section will be divided into demographic, while the second one will be about social media and social behavior. The survey will be designed using an online survey tool identified as [www.surveymonkey.com](http://www.surveymonkey.com), as it will be sent to random participants in the KSA (Balnaves & Caputi, 2001). This online survey tool will be utilized to accumulate important information with significant implications for practice. With the help of the respective quantitative method, this study will find out the knowledge of how KSA's social behavior has been changed due to social media.

### Research Limitations and Directions for Further Research

A limitation of the research is related to the inadequate number of participants, as this may prevent generalizability of research findings. The short duration of the study may prevent the researcher to gather relevant data. This paper can be further extended to analyze each social media tool and how they are used in learning procedures by focusing on specific demographic area rather than focusing on every age group (Maxim, 1999). It would be helpful to properly analyze the data in a valid form. Moreover, further research can be performed on a specific KSA institution from the student population rather than selecting random participants online.

### Results

In this research, only selected information was reported and covered important aspects which are linked with social media and learning outcomes. The demographic statistics offers a relevant account of the participants. The idea of social media presents the information on student knowledge of social media approach and learning tools. Social media acceptance and its reputation received significant popularity among Saudi education specialists and Saudi students. Social media and its connection with student performance, learning tendency and attitudes were found in result findings. The survey gathered relevant information in regard to participants' gender, age and education background with the purpose to discover if these variables would influence student views and attitudes toward social media and their utilization of social media as a learning tool. Approximately 2000 participants took part in this survey, as 50 per cent of the participants were education specialists working in the education sector of Saudi Arabia, while 50 per cent of the participants were students enrolled in higher education courses, as shown in table 1.

**Table 1: Participants**

Participants	Percentage
Education specialists	50%
Students in higher education courses	50%

Approximately 75 per cent of the respondents were male and 25 per cent were female. In addition, 60% of students were in the age category of 18 to 24, 40% belonged to the 25-34 age group, while 70 per cent of education specialists were in the age category of 30 to 35, while 30 per cent belonged to the age category 35-40, respectively. Most of the education specialists hold

Bachelor's and Master's Degree, while students were actively involved in pursuing higher education in various Saudi universities.

The research examined education specialists' ideas and student knowledge about the approach of social media as a learning tool, as 94 per cent of participants were familiar with the fact that social media approach differs at different levels; only 6 per cent of participants were not well-informed about social media approach. It is evident that almost one third of the participants were very well-informed with the approach. There were roughly 7 social media tools identified by participants in the survey. They were Bulletin board, Blogging, Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter and Youtube. The result findings showed that Facebook and Twitter were the most widely used tools in Saudi Arabia's education sector. Frequency table 2, shows the responses for the most common Social Media tools used in learning by students under social network category. It was a multiple response question. Whereas, frequency table 3 shows the responses for the most common Micro blog tools used in learning by students. Whereas, Table 4 shows the responses for the most common SM tools used in teaching by instructors.

**Table 2.** Responses for Social Media tools under Social networks category

Social network	Multiple Responses		% of Cases
	F	%	
Face book	1669	84.2	90.1
My Space	181	9.1	9.8
Others	132	6.7	7.1
Total	1982	100.0	

From Table 2, we note that a very high majority (90.1%) of students are using Facebook for learning.

**Table 3.** Responses for the Social Media tools under Micro blogs category

Micro blog	Multiple Responses		% of Cases
	F	%	
Twitter	1902	96.4	98.3
Meme	50	2.5	2.6
Others	21	1.1	1.1
Total	1973	100.0	

From Table 3, we note that a very high majority (98.3%) of students are using Twitter for learning purpose in micro blogs. This indicates that Twitter is the most commonly used micro blog.

**Table 4.** Responses for SM tools under social networks category

Social network	Multiple Responses		% of Cases
	F	%	
Face book	301	88.3%	92.9%
My Space	18	5.3%	5.6%
Others	22	6.5%	6.8%
Total	341	100.0%	

From Table 4, we note that a very high majority (92.9%) of instructors are using Facebook for teaching.

Before this survey was carried out, there was an expectation that most participants knew about twittering, but the findings indicated that there were 25 per cent of participants who did not have awareness about it at all, and 75 per cent of participants had awareness and knowledge about it. One of the questions was about social media adoption and use of social media for education purposes.

Table 5 shows the responses for blogs tools used in learning by students. The survey also discovered participants' perceptions about social media acceptance. Table 6 shows the responses for the slide sharing tools used in learning by students. It was a multiple response question. The understanding helped relevant authorities design learning activities significantly and utilizing social media tools efficiently.

**Table 5.** Responses for the Social Media tools under blogs category

Blog	Multiple Responses		% of Cases
	F	%	
Blogger	368	57.1	59.6
Word press	265	41.1	42.9
Others	12	1.9	1.9
Total	645	100.0	

From Table 5, one can note that (59.6%) of students are using Blogger in blogs. This indicates that Blogger is the most commonly used blog.

**Table 6.** Responses for Social Media tools under Slide Sharing category

Slide Sharing tool	Multiple Responses		% of Cases
	F	%	
Slide share	347	63.7	65.5
Prezi	183	33.6	34.5
Others	15	2.8	2.8
Total	545	100.0	

Table 6, shows the majority (65.5%) of students are using Slide share for learning purpose. This indicates that Slide share is the most commonly used slide sharing tool.

It has been indicated that 25 per cent of the participants affirmed that social engagement is the top rationale for social media acceptance followed by direct communication for education purposes, quick feedback and results. Yet 20 per cent of the participants used social media for relationship building and to reach new friends as indicated. Table 7 shows the distribution of student's sample as per the most common reasons. It shows entertainment with the highest (78.8%) usage level. Second highest is information searching with 66.9% and the third highest is exchanging ideas with 59.6%. It is also worthwhile to note that the responses for searching for information and learning are both above 60%. This indicates that a high percentage of students use Social Media for learning. The survey question was of multiple response type. Though, 55

per cent of the participants (education specialists and students) strongly affirmed that they used social media tools for academic purposes.

**Table 7.** Distribution of student's sample as per the most common reasons

Reason	Multiple Responses		% of Cases
	F	%	
Making Friends	1333	12.6	52.6
Exchange ideas	1509	14.3	59.6
Entertainment	1997	18.9	78.8
Sharing Resources	525	5.0	20.7
Community discussion	1107	10.5	43.7
Searching for information	1695	16.0	66.9
Learning	1565	14.8	61.8
Professional Networking	732	6.9	28.9
Others	102	1.0	4.0
Total	10565	100	

Table 7, shows the results on reasons that students use Social Media for.

Other reasons have also been considered such as low labor cost, gain understanding, capability to enhance education practices, public research/polling, controlled system, and reliability. In education specialists' free input, being able to connect with other colleagues is another strong rationale for social media tool acceptance. Education related advertisement has enhanced the utilization of social media tools to reach more potential users. Table 8 presents responses from students on preference to integrate Social Media as a tool in learning. It shows that the majority (66.1%) of students prefer to integrate Social Media as a tool in learning. This indicates to a certain extent the interest and readiness of students to adopt Social Media into their learning environment.

**Table 8.** Distribution as per opinion of integrating Social Media as a learning tool

Would you like to integrate Social Media as a tool in your learning?	F	%
NA	65	2.5
Yes	1721	66.1
No	362	13.9
I don t know	457	17.5
Total	2605	100.0

Table 8, indicates to a certain extent the interest and readiness of students to adopt Social Media into their learning environment.

Few students pointed out about the academic use for research projects, learning sources, and helped to work as a team to complete group projects. There are interesting facts in the findings. Saudi students had certain issues when they were utilizing social media tools for education purposes (30 per cent), but there were roughly 70 per cent of students who considered that most individuals in online communities were willing to find social media help for learning purposes. Roughly 70 per cent of participants would prefer to follow standards, procedures and

opinions of others when they were utilizing social media tools. Almost 80 per cent of Saudi students felt that they were acknowledged by online community members, while 20 per cent of students reported that they received helpful information from social media resources.

In both cases, when they corresponded with their class-mates and tutors, they received more supportive information about their studies (70%) and tried to persuade more as well (30%). It can be observed that participants corresponded at different levels with different target users. The social media approach has been an effective social learning tool. There are numerous social networking communities with immense interests such as politics, education, profession, recreation, etc., and in different arrangement such as government, organizations, corporations, membership, clubs which ultimately provided extended resources to students.

### Evaluating Attitudes of Students

The remaining portion of the questionnaire was designed to evaluate attitudes covering the following:

- Rating statements in terms of the positive impacts (advantages) of SM on social behavior and attitude
- Rating statements in terms of the negative impacts (disadvantages) of SM on social behavior and attitude

In this research, when evaluating attitudes, a 5 point Likert scale was used to acquire respondent's opinion. The weights used were as follows:

**Table 9.** Likert scale weights

Weight	Response
1	Strongly Disagree
2	Disagree
3	Unsure
4	Agree
5	Strongly Agree

Since these variables are considered to have ordinal weights, the weighted mean for all respondents may be computed for each variable (and for the whole factor) and is used to reflect the respondents' opinions (attitudes).

Table 10 shows results obtained when using the Likert scale to check the students' attitudes to answer the questions related to advantages of using SM in Social behavior of students for all questions at once. It shows that the overall attitude is 'agree' with an average weighted mean of 3.79. This indicates agreement with outcome obtained through the question by question approach.

**Table 10.** Results of students' attitudes on advantages of SM on social behavior and attitude of students - by clustering

Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Unsure		Agree		Strongly Agree		Weighted Mean	Attitude
F	%	F	%	f	%	f	%	f	%		
1444	4.0	2597	7.1	6610	18.1	17252	47.3	8567	23.5	3.79	Agree

Table 11 shows results obtained to answer the questions related to disadvantages of using SM on social behavior and attitude of students for all questions at once. It shows that the overall attitude is 'unsure' with an average weighted mean of 2.83. This indicates agreement with outcome obtained through the question by question approach.

**Table 11.** Results of students' attitudes on disadvantages of SM on social behavior and attitude of students - by clustering

Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Unsure		Agree		Strongly Agree		Weighted Mean	Attitude
F	%	F	%	F	%	f	%	f	%		
3936	18.9	5051	24.2	4723	22.7	4983	23.9	2147	10.3	2.83	Unsure

## Discussion

Social media tools are advancing their momentum at an inconceivable speed in Saudi Arabian education sector. The study demonstrated that people, as social beings, need reliable association with each other and with the globe. The world is advancing at a faster pace and it is clear than ever before that it provides incredible opportunities for sharing ideas, experiences, and intelligence due to the fast development of technologies. Social media established its way rapidly into the education world; at the same time, Saudi educators are seeking opportunities of leveraging social media tools in the educational field.

Social media approach offers students with new possibilities to become self-regulated in their study and research. They persuade an extensive range of communicative capacity. The current study indicated that the use of Facebook and Twitter is increasing and has become very accepted by Saudi students. There are different methods to utilize social media tools for educational objectives. One approach is to incorporate social media tools into the current academic system as a teaching and learning source to help the progression of curriculum completion.

## Conclusion

Utilizing social media tools in education sometimes can be very demanding and challenging to educators. Students can become a superior consulting source because they have skills and they have a better awareness of the tools. The future advanced technology and integration with education should emphasize on what students utilize instead of what the school wants them to utilize to assure maximum effectiveness, as indicated in this study. When students become core stakeholders of their own education, learning will be truly modernized through the efficient teamwork between instructors and students.

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