

The extensive use of social media by Arab university students (gratifications, impact, and risks)

Hunida Gindil Abu Backer^{a,*}, Ibaa Awad^b

^a Department of Mass Communication, College of Art and Science, Abu Dhabi University, United Arab Emirates

^b Dep of Audio-visual Production, College of Communication and Media, King Abdul Aziz University, Jeddah, Saudi Arabia

ARTICLE INFO

Keywords:

Social media

Gratifications

Impact

Risk

Arab University students

ABSTRACT

This study investigated the effects of extensive social media use on Arab university students, focusing on gratification, impact, and risk. An online survey was conducted with 536 students from three universities in the UAE, Saudi Arabia, and Egypt. The results showed that 68% of the students used social media for more than 60 h per week. While 81% of the students acknowledged the lack of credibility and 77% recognized social media's tendency to ignore important issues, they continued to use it extensively for entertainment (95%), global cultural exposure (94%), and sharing thoughts (94%). Researchers found a moderate negative correlation (-0.47 , $p = 0.007$) between the number of daily hours spent on social media and the level of satisfaction attained. According to this study, excessive use reduces attention to local and global issues, while exposing users to misinformation risks. Despite awareness of these negative consequences, students remain heavily engaged because of perceived benefits such as freedom of expression and networking opportunities. This study recommends implementing awareness and educational campaigns in Arab universities to promote an understanding of the risks associated with excessive reliance on social media. Additionally, it suggests that relevant ministries in developing countries should initiate projects to channel youth energy into productive fields, supporting activities that help students achieve their goals, while contributing positively to societal development.

1. Introduction

Social media is one of the largest workstations in the world that it has ever seen. These are interactive Web 2.0, applications that run on the Internet. User-generated posts or comments, digital photos or videos, and data generated through online interactions constitute the lifeblood of social media [6]. In recent years, social media has become a primary source of information, communication, entertainment, and user learning [21]. Through social media platforms, Arab youth have achieved desires previously considered dreams, such as freedom of expression and the ability to interact anonymously with limited surveillance. In addition, social media platforms make it simple to reach friends and share posts, allowing users to upvote or report content.

Social media gives us the freedom template, so the 2019–2024 priority of the European Commission entails that Europe should make good use of technology and science in an open democratic social society (Kouroupis & Vagianos, 2021). In contrast, all segments of society are excessively using communication technologies to satisfy desires and needs. It is with this growing dilemma of expanded applications of

media technology that scientists, decision-makers, and even civil society organizations engage with today, drawn to these subjects by their admiration and welcome of the services they facilitate for consumers and the profits they yield to media producers [1].

Thus, according to Joshi Kouroupis and Vagianos [11], young people's obsession with virtual use and lack of actual interaction with societal events have brought up several issues and challenges. This obsession led to intensive use, whereby individuals increased their daily usage hours to reach saturation and satisfaction. In the same context, an ISTAT report revealed that in 2019, 85.8% of Italian adolescents aged 11–17 regularly used smartphones, and over 72% accessed the Internet via smartphones [3]. Many studies (e.g., [16,12,15,20]) have indicated social media's benefits and gratifications to its users. With these benefits and gratification, users often need to gain control over the amount used, which may lead to excessive social media use. However, a limitation of previous research in this area is the lack of a rating system for university students' satisfaction with the extensive use of social media, and its associated effects and risks, particularly in Arab countries.

The analysis reveals that distinct patterns in social media use,

* Corresponding author.

E-mail addresses: hunida.ahmadoun@adu.ac.ae (H.G. Abu Backer), iaawd@kau.edu.sa (I. Awad).

<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.entcom.2025.100926>

Received 11 August 2024; Received in revised form 26 December 2024; Accepted 23 January 2025

Available online 28 January 2025

1875-9521/© 2025 The Author(s). Published by Elsevier B.V. This is an open access article under the CC BY-NC license (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>).

gratification, and perceived risks differ across gender, age, and academic discipline among Arab university students. Data on gratifications sought by male and female students and their concerns about privacy disclosure differ. Younger students are more active than new platforms, and their academic background affects their perception of risk regarding the platforms they are more inclined to use. Overall knowledge of these differences may be useful in target awareness campaigns to maximize their effectiveness for one demographic or another. Based on the above, this study addresses the central question: What are the satisfaction levels that university students derive from their extensive use of social media and what are the associated effects and risks? We also compared the benefits of using social media.

More precisely, the target group identified in this work is Arab university students—one of the communities that experienced the popularization of social media in the context of Arab states. In Arab societies, when conventional methods of engagement with the public are restricted, other forms are provided through social media platforms. As a result, having Arab university students is a beneficial approach toward viewing social media in a different light, where gratifications meet various risks peculiar to this cultural context. The rest of the paper is structured as follows. Section 2 provides a literature review, which includes a discussion of gratifications and risks in Subsection 2.1. Subsection 2.2 reviews the problem and objective of the paper, while subsection 2.3 concludes with the hypotheses. The third section focuses exclusively on the methodology. Section 4 deals with the discussion, section 5 includes the conclusion, and finally, the study implications are discussed.

2. Literature review

2.1. Gratifications and risks

The importance of studying social media has increased in the current revolution of communication, considering the current global technology boom. Social media dominates the communication landscape, signaling a core change in how people relate to and share information. Research has demonstrated that an individual cannot meet all his biological and psychological requirements in isolation from other people; social interaction is essential for meeting these needs. Media dependency theory postulates that audiences need social media as a source of information or for the expression of feelings in situations where there are very few options. This dependency corresponds to the conclusions regarding the psychological satisfaction of students and their perceived risks. As with social identity theory, social media is described as how it strengthens the identities that are integral in group associations or cultural representation. Such frameworks could be used to explain the underlying reasons for the use of social media as well as the reasons for the changes in satisfaction noted above.

The two schools of thought have always disagreed over whether social media is better or worse for users in terms of time loss, efficiency degradation, positive contribution violations, health issues, ethical and psychological problems, and poor time management [4]. By contrast, social media has imposed a virtual reality that gives rise to phenomena that are dangerous to societies and their youth. These include fake news, fake news sharing, privacy invasions, and e-blackmail. It is dissimilar to the real world that we were in before the impact of such technologies in terms of scale, communication, social recognition, and practice.

Similarly, in a society where students consume stories depending on what is fed into their social media feeds, qualification has become the least deal provided that one attains wealth and fame from it. We see trends where everyone gets uptakes for the most worthless content, that is, snapshots of human life, dancing to music, among other inconsequential items. Therefore, excessive use of social media poses a significant risk to the future of countries and societies. Trends such as these can reduce the values perceived in science, skills, and qualifications. So, in all, social media has changed many aspects of our lives, from the way of

forming and holding social relationships to the way of discovering, accessing, and sharing information over the internet. Social media has modified educational practices and changed our ways of teaching and learning [26].

It is worthwhile to focus on university students for this study, since they represent a treasured resource of a nation and develop into a force that shapes immediate and future outcomes in the modern communication boom. Understanding university students' satisfaction, defined as achieving goals or relieving motives and, in psychoanalytic terms, as a state of alertness and relief from tension, is essential for comprehending their roles in society [2].

The various uses of social media among Arab university students have attracted considerable attention from scholars for the achievements, consequences, and dangers gotten from the use of social media. There has been an increase in interest in this phenomenon, the different aspects of which have been investigated in recent studies. For example, Kircaburun et al. [24] examined the prevalence of problematic SMI among university students and found that personality traits and motives for using SMI should be explored, as it is important to determine the risks involved. Similarly, Al-Menayes [22] conducted an extensive, detailed quantitative study of university students' social media usage in Kuwait and offered essential information regarding users' conduct and results. Apart from these studies, other current research has focused on the effects of recent social media apps, such as TikTok and Instagram, on academic achievement.

Zhang et al. [25] focused on the correlation between the frequency of SNS usage and students' academic outcomes regarding the usage of social media at home and in groups, as well as the time spent bonding with family and learning in groups, and the moderating role of mental health was identified. In the same study, Badr et al. [23] tested the mediating effect of perceived usefulness, entertainment, and social media usage in the context of information quality and students' academic performance, which demonstrated the cross-sectional nature of these factors. In addition, Alshwiah and Alaulamie (2022) discussed the relationship between social network site involvement and students' performance and attitude in Saudi Arabia and found that high social network site involvement was negatively related to GPA, but students with high social network site use had a positive attitude towards using said site for classwork. This can also be seen when gauging the effectiveness of social media in enhancing students' learning; while the results showed that 77% of students were 'often' 'often' 'always' 'always,' or occasionally distracted by social media, there is evidence to argue that the same social media platforms can support student education in equal measures.

2.2. Statement of the problem

Although social media offers greater satisfaction and opportunities, it also entails numerous risks [13]. Hence, the research challenge entails identifying the satisfaction attained, and evaluating the impact and potential hazards associated with the extensive utilization of social media among Arab university students. This research examines the relationship between satisfaction levels and the frequency of social media usage, and how this affects university students' engagement with societal events and issues. This study focuses on the dangers related to higher satisfaction levels, highlighting the critical role that young individuals play in society's progress and personal development.

This study surveyed students from three prominent Arab colleges, specifically the United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, and Egypt, which have the highest prevalence of social media usage. The poll observed and examined students' viewpoints from these three universities: the Media Department of the Faculty of Arts in the United Arab Emirates and the School of Information at King Abdul Aziz University in Saudi Arabia. Department of Media, Faculty of Arts, Tanta University. Analysis of Transformations and Influences and Communication Interaction primarily examines student social interaction, specifically focusing on

understanding its effects and potential hazards. This study enhances our understanding of these connections, focusing on student contentment and societal obligations, and formulates more efficient approaches to tackle this phenomenon.

2.3. The objectives

The primary objective of this study is to evaluate the gratifications and risks associated with extensive social media use among Arab university students. The secondary goals include examining the impact of social media on students' academic and social behaviors, identifying gaps in digital literacy, and proposing educational strategies to enhance responsible usage. This approach highlights the specific contributions of this research to the understanding of the effects of social media on student development.

2.4. The hypotheses

There was a statistically significant correlation between university students' intensive use of social media and their need for gratification.

3. Methodology

The study methodology involves the following points:

3.1. Study approach

This study relied on a quantitative research philosophy based on the descriptive analytical approach, which focuses on organized scientific analysis and interpretation, formulating hypotheses, and testing them by identifying the relevant variables, conditions, and prevailing relationships to create a realistic picture of the phenomenon; collect relevant data, facts, and observations; classify and arrange them; and draw conclusions and generalizations that enhance and support the reality under study.

The research employed a descriptive analytical research technique because of its efficacy as a method for analyzing data aspects of social media usage and its effect on students' satisfaction and performance. An electronic survey method was used to obtain information on students' behavior and attitudes, which aligns with the goals of the study on social media gratifications and risks. This method is best suited for Arab university students in an environment in which computers play an enormous role in conveying interactive Ness.

The survey used an electronic method of data collection that sought to capture the students' social media relevance and disposition. This approach meant efficient and relevant data collection with reference to the objectives of the study on gratifications and risks on social media. These variables were assessed using a standardized self-administered questionnaire, which minimized the need for further probing.

3.2. Study population and Sample

Students from three Arab universities participated in the study: the College of Arts at Abu Dhabi University, College of Information at King Abdulaziz University, and College of Arts at Tanta University. Three universities were selected because of their expertise in the media field and their direct relevance to the subject of this study. The study was based on 200 final-year students at the College of Media, Abu Dhabi University; 250 media graduates from King Abdulaziz University; and 200 media graduates from Tanta University. The questionnaire was distributed to the participants. The participants were purposefully selected, particularly media students from selected universities in the Arab SAR. This approach was chosen to guide participants to have proper exposure to social media and provide data that would correspond to the present research subject of media consumption among university students. This seemed strategic for obtaining meaningful data in

consideration of the outlined research objectives.

The study utilized a purposeful sampling approach, selecting media students from three universities in the UAE, Saudi Arabia, and Egypt. This method was chosen over random sampling to ensure that participants had substantial social media experience, aligning closely with the research objectives. While random sampling was considered, it was deemed less effective for this study because it might have included participants with limited exposure to social media. Therefore, purposeful sampling was determined to be optimal for capturing data relevant to the study's target population. The electronic questionnaire received responses from 187 students from Abu Dhabi University, 203 students from King Abdulaziz University, and 146 students from Tanta University, resulting in acceptable response rates of 93.5%, 81.2%, and 73%, respectively, for the universities under study, thereby confirming the study's reliability and validity. The study shows that many students were highly active and dependent on social media for more than 60 h per week. Entertainment was the most dominant form of gratification (95%), followed by cultural exposure (94%). Despite this, students had elevated levels of risk awareness, such as the risk of receiving misinformation (81%), and they remained highly engaged because of the social and networking aspects of the sites.

The study sample may reflect the characteristics of the population. The size and selection method determine whether this sample is representative of the study population. Two researchers selected the sample from university students, and a professor from Egyptian University collaborated and oversaw the distribution of the electronic questionnaire.

3.3. Internal validity and consistency

A panel of 15 experts from the fields of art, media, education, and psychology evaluated the questionnaire in relation to the submitted sample. Consequently, they fully considered their suggestions and amendments. In the next stage, there was unanimous agreement on the clarity of the criteria and their immediate applicability to the research question. A panel of 15 experts in art, media, education, and psychology were selected based on their academic qualifications and experience in survey-based research. Each expert independently reviewed the questionnaire for clarity, relevance, and alignment with research objectives. Their feedback led to specific refinements that enhanced the validity and reliability of the tool, confirming its suitability for the study. Cronbach's alpha confirmed the tool's statistical stability, and the study demonstrated a truth reliability factor of 0.68 and a reliability factor of 0.86. These significant values demonstrate that the instrument was extremely stable and suitable for the purposes of this study. In addition, the data collection method aims to maintain consistency, which refers to "the survey score that an individual obtains at a particular moment in time."

3.4. Data collection

This study identified the questionnaire as the primary research tool. To confirm the relationship between achieving satisfaction and the extensive use of social media, as well as the extent of its impact on Arab university students' interaction with societal events and issues through social media, the researchers identified the data and information needed to be collected from the field, following a precise description of the research problem. One of the basic tools used in research to collect information from students is a questionnaire containing a series of questions or data to collect qualitative data. The survey questions were developed through a structured approach, integrating questions adapted from prior studies with new questions specifically designed for this study. The adapted questions ensured alignment with validated frameworks in social media research, while the newly developed questions addressed unique aspects of Arab university students' social media use, capturing nuances in gratifications, impacts, and risks.

3.5. Statistical processing of data

We used Cronbach's alpha test to measure the consistency and accuracy of the study identification content, the procedures and methods of statistical analysis (repeats and percentages, weighted averages of calculation, standard deviation, ranking), and other statistical methods. The researcher reviewed the questionnaire to confirm its completeness and relevance to data entry. Statistical processing of the data revealed the following.

3.5.1. Distribution of university students according to their affiliation with the colleges under study

Table 1 shows the distribution of student numbers. These findings suggest that a large proportion of students used social media keenly; 68% of the students were social media active for more than 60 h a week. Amusement and learning about cultures are the main benefits, while dangers such as receiving fake news are still issues for 81% of learners. Such a heavy usage pattern points to the proposition that students' actual social media utility entails considerable benefits and risks over which students must weigh.

This study focused on how Arab youth use social media extensively to achieve satisfaction, and how this affects their social relationships and interest in community growth. 37.8 Of the students surveyed, 37.8% participated in the College of Media at King Abdulaziz University, 34.9% from the College of Arts and Sciences, Department of Media, and 27.2% from the College of Arts, Department of Media, University of Tanta. The researchers focused on media students because of their familiarity with the study's language and the fact that the topic aligned with their interests.

3.5.2. Intensive Weekly social media usage among university Students: A Comprehensive analysis

Table 2 shows the number of students who participated on social media platforms throughout the week. It should be noted that 22% of the participants used these platforms moderately. The researchers observed that a significant portion of these students balance their studies with private or government jobs, along with family obligations, as some are married and have children, which means that they are occupied with work hours or family duties. The data revealed that most surveyed students used social media platforms for less than 20h per week, as shown in Fig. 1. This highlights the strong connection between Arab youth and digital platforms, which significantly affects the interests of university students. The students fully integrated social media into their daily lives, as evidenced by their continuous engagement. Notably, the highest usage rates indicated excessive use, as students seem inseparable from their mobile devices, which serve as the primary gateway to social media platforms.

60—79	154	29%
More than 101	208	39%

3.5.2.1. Diverse preferences in social media platforms among university Students: An analysis of popularity and engagement. Table 3 presents the relative distribution of the preference levels for different social media

Table 1
Distribution of University Students by College Affiliation in the Study.

College	Frequency	Percentage
Abu Dhabi University, College of Arts and Sciences – Department of Media	187	34.9
King Abdulaziz University, College of Media	203	37.8
University of Tanta, College of Arts – Department of Media	146	27.2
Total	536	100%

Source: Study Questionnaire.

Table 2

Distribution of frequency of social media use in hours per week.

Hours per week	Frequency	Percentage
Less than 20	32	6%
20—39	117	22%
40—59	25	5%
60—79	154	29%
More than 101	208	39%
Total	536	100%

Source: Study Questionnaire.

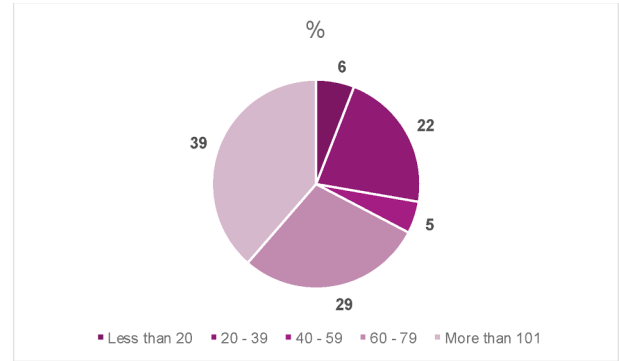


Fig. 1. Distribution of frequency of social media use in hours per week.

Table 3

University students' preferred media of communication.

No.	Media	Frequency	Percentage
1	Tick Tock	536	100
2	Instagram	536	100
3	WhatsApp	536	100
4	Snap Chat	525	98
5	Facebook	523	98
6	YouTube	536	100
7	X	123	23
8	LinkedIn	100	19
9	Telegram	103	19

Source: Study Questionnaire.

platforms among the surveyed students. All students used TikTok, Instagram, WhatsApp, and YouTube, while Snapchat and Facebook ranked second, with a significantly higher consensus rate of 97%. In contrast, LinkedIn and Telegram had relatively low percentages. These results highlight the diversity in students' social media preferences and usage across the surveyed individuals, underscoring the importance of understanding and addressing specific platform dynamics in digital communication and research practices. Additionally, the relatively low percentages of platforms such as LinkedIn and Telegram underscore the nuanced needs college students seek to meet.

Using Cronbach's alpha to assess reliability.

Cronbach's alpha measures an instrument's reliability by assessing the extent to which its items show variance or covariance in relation to the total variance. "A high correlation between the items indicated that the instrument was reliable. As shown in Table 4, the alpha coefficient for the 24 items is 0.811, indicating a relatively acceptable level of internal consistency. In most social science research, a reliability

Table 4
Reliability Statistics.

Cronbach's Alpha	0.811
No of Items	24

Source: Study Questionnaire.

coefficient of 0.70 or above is considered acceptable.

Table 5 provides an interpretation of the responses on a five-point Likert scale with ranges corresponding to different levels of agreement. Respondents scoring between 1.0 and 1.7 are categorized as “strongly disagree,” while those scoring between 4.3 and 5.0 are categorized as “strongly agree.” Intermediate ranges represent varying degrees of disagreement, neutrality, and agreement, allowing for a nuanced understanding of the participants’ attitudes and opinions.

4. The results

The study successfully achieved its goals by analyzing the conclusions and patterns found in the data mentioned previously.

Objective (1): To assess the benefits and drawbacks of widespread social media use.

This study examined the impact of widespread social media use (Table 6). This table shows the results of a survey comprising 13 questions designed to assess the positive and negative consequences of heavy social media engagement. Responses were collected using a five-point Likert scale ranging from “strongly agree” to “strongly disagree,” showing a diverse range of views on various statements. Outliers were also a problem here: some students had greater social media usage than others, and some students were quite satisfied or dissatisfied. Such patterns indicate the variability of motives and perceived risk levels within the sample and reveal distinctive subject populations. These findings highlight the need to map awareness messages and strategies based on user needs and the usage of social media platforms. Tables 7 and 8.

A noteworthy observation is that a considerable proportion of students strongly agreed with the notion that social media frequently magnifies insignificant societal problems (64%), allows individuals to achieve their renown without meeting the necessary requirements (63%), and tends to overlook important societal issues and events (55%). Additionally, most students (54%) noted that social media content specifically focuses on children and teenagers, highlighting shallow subjects. By contrast, a smaller proportion of students expressed disagreement with statements concerning the impartial and equitable representation of subjects on social media (27%) and the necessity for content providers to have confirmed scientific experience and skills (21%).

Based on the findings shown in Table 6, this study asserts that university students view social media as a medium that enables them to gain popularity, expand their global influence, and surpass regional and cultural limitations. They agree that attracting a worldwide audience is generally accomplished by spreading shallow content. Furthermore, the study’s findings confirm the low focus on ethical and professional standards when preparing content for circulation on social media. Students also emphasize that content production skills are not necessary and call for increased regulatory oversight, which in turn contributes to the abundance of non-essential content. Although students are aware of the lack of truth and credibility on social media, they rely on these platforms as sources of information about societal issues. Students were also aware that social media tended to ignore local and national issues. The heavy use of social media by university students has led to their detachment from national and local issues.

Objective (2): Analyzing the Gratifications Achieved by University

Students through Their Use of Social Media. The research objectives, which are crucial for understanding and exploring the role of social media in university students’ lives, are presented in Table A panel of 15 experts from the fields of art, media, education, and psychology evaluated the questionnaire in relation to the submitted sample. Consequently, they fully considered their suggestions and amendments. In the next stage, there was unanimous agreement on the clarity of the criteria and their immediate applicability to the research question. A panel of 15 experts in art, media, education, and psychology were selected based on their academic qualifications and experience in survey-based research. Each expert independently reviewed the questionnaire for clarity, relevance, and alignment with research objectives. Their feedback led to specific refinements that enhanced the validity and reliability of the tool, confirming its suitability for the study. Cronbach’s alpha confirmed the tool’s statistical stability, and the study demonstrated a truth reliability factor of 0.68 and a reliability factor of 0.86. These significant values demonstrate that the instrument was extremely stable and suitable for the purposes of this study. In addition, the data collection method aims to maintain consistency, which refers to “the survey score that an individual obtains at a particular moment in time.”

7. This table presents the results of students’ social media use, including an opinion poll consisting of 11 questions aimed at measuring university students’ satisfaction with their social media use. These results confirmed that social media has facilitated new forms of satisfaction among university students, such as overcoming communication barriers, enhancing networking opportunities, and strengthening friendships across various platforms. While the students acknowledged the potential risks, they expressed satisfaction with their ability to access these benefits. In addition, this research highlights a trend among young people towards creating content that generates financial returns, a shift away from traditional employment and business projects. This movement could lead to social isolation and societal shortcomings, thereby negatively affecting economic and social development.

4.1. Hypothesis testing outcomes

University students will be categorized based on their association with the colleges being examined.

- 1) There was a statistically significant, albeit small, positive association ($r = 0.168$, $p < 0.05$) between the frequency of social media usage per week and the presence of both positive and negative aspects.
- 2) There was a very weak positive correlation (0.104 , $p < 0.05$) between the number of days per week of social media usage and the satisfaction university students achieved through social media use.
- 3) According to their affiliation with the colleges under study, there were no statistically significant differences (0.426) in the satisfaction university students achieved using social media.
- 4) There was a moderately significant negative correlation (-0.47 , $p = 0.007$) between the number of hours university students spent using social media per day and the satisfaction they achieved through their use of social media. This result reaffirms the ineffectiveness of intensive usage in achieving satisfaction and serves as a cautionary note for users to be mindful of their social media habits.

This analysis is further expanded to provide findings on factors that may influence satisfaction, such as the platform used (Instagram, TikTok) and the content being used (entertainment, educational, and news). The results also show which platforms are more strongly connected with dissatisfaction, which points to subtle differences in how content and platform decisions may influence student satisfaction. Awareness of these factors provides a finer perspective on how social media influences consumers’ negative orientations.

Table 5
Interpretation of the Five-Point Likert Scale Results.

Result	Range
Strongly disagree	1.0–1.7
disagree	1.8–2.5
Neutrally	2.6–3.3
Agree	3.4–4.2
Strongly Agree	4.3–5.00

Table 6

Verifying the positives and negatives resulting from the extensive use of social media.

No	Question	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Mean	STD	Rank	Result
		N %								
1	Social media materials provide essential information and data.	14	67	81	172	202	3.9	1.1	8	Agree
2	Through social media, you can learn about the most critical global issues.	3 37	13 94	15 57	32 112	37 236	3.7	1.3	9	Agree
3	I found a fair and honest treatment of the topics at hand through social media materials.	7 53	17 135	11 129	21 101	44 118	3.2	1.3	13	Neutral
4	Social media materials focus on superficial content to attract young people and teens.	10 0	25 26	24 79	19 147	22 284	4.3	0.9	4	Strongly Agree
5	There are ethical constraints that limit the appearance of information on social media.	0 47	4 111	15 105	27 142	54 131	3.4	1.3	10	Neutral
6	Social media has made fame easy for anyone who wants it without any conditions.	9 5	21 16	20 59	26 124	24 332	4.4	0.9	3	Strongly Agree
7	Social media focuses more on crime issues.	1 6	3 43	11 128	23 106	62 253	4	1	7	Agree
8	Social media materials focus on amplifying some fringe topics in society.	1 0	8 3	24 64	20 131	47 338	4.5	0.7	1	Strongly Agree
9	Social media material ignores some critical issues and events in society.	0 5	1 26	12 93	24 123	63 289	4.2	1	6	Agree
10	Social media news items lack accuracy and credibility	1 5	5 17	17 78	23 157	54 279	4.3	0.9	5	Strongly Agree
11	The social media content creator must have documented academic experience and skills.	1 62	3 112	15 92	29 103	52 167	3.4	1.4	11	Agree
12	Social media materials reinforce the content creator's local cultural identity values.	12 83	21 99	17 88	19 122	31 142	3.3	1.4	12	Neutral
13	Social media has facilitated communication with unknown people.	16 0	18 9	16 71	23 96	27 360	4.5	0.8	2	Strongly Agree
	Total	0	2	13	18	67		3.9	1.1	

Source: Study Questionnaire.

5. Discussion

First, the study aimed to evaluate the positives and negatives resulting from the heavy use of social media through 13 questions directed at the media students at Abu Dhabi University. The results confirmed that the students were fully aware of the negative consequences of relying on social media as a primary source of information. They are also aware of the extent to which social media platforms provide simple and trivial topics, and often ignore important topics and events in favor of superficial content to attract young people and teenagers. Despite their awareness of the negative consequences of excessive use of social media platforms, they do not hesitate to indulge in them and accept what these platforms offer. Ali's (2018) study, which found that 18% of the study sample had average confidence in news and information published on social media platforms, is consistent with this result. Moreover, most study participants believe that social media platforms threaten national security.

The current study identifies and even confirms many positive versus negative relationships among university students, which is consistent with Al-Shahri's (2020) study, as the use of social media has a positive impact on social relationships, increasing opportunities to communicate with friends and enhancing social cohesion. On the other hand, notable adverse effects include excessive social media use negatively affecting other life activities and prolonged hours spent browsing social media, leading to feelings of isolation and reduced direct social interaction with

family members. These findings align with Al-Gamal and Al-Karam [7] findings, which concurred that negative aspects extend beyond family relationships and affect student values. The negative influence of social media platforms on student values encompasses cultural, religious, personal, ethical and social values.

In addition, prolonged usage of social media is likely to create poor interpersonal relations, sedate constructive social interactions, and make it challenging for students to develop interpersonal networks; hence, they prefer virtual over real-life interpersonal communication. Academically, dependence on social networks influences focus, time, and enthusiasm, thus affecting the outcome and learning approach among students. These risks underline the importance of balancing media use, which might promote students' social and academic achievements.

Furthermore, Chen and Xiao [5] underscored students' inclination towards independence and conformity, while highlighting the development of certain self-images and emotions through social media, which may not always be positive.

Gamal [8] confirmed the existence of a correlational relationship between the frequency of exposure to humorous videos on TikTok and its impact on the social lives of Egyptian youth. This result is in line with research by Hamed [9], which highlights how these technologies have caused the emergence of various values and behaviors that directly affect the nature of family relationships. This impact is manifested in the widening generation gap between parents and children, owing to the

Table 7

Gratifications achieved by university students with their use of social media.

No	Question	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Mean	STD	Rank	Result
		N %								
1	Entertainment	0	5	19	150	362	4.6	0.6	1	Strongly Agree
2	To be acquainted with global cultures.	0	1	4	28	67	4.6	0.61	2	Strongly Agree
		0	6	24	151	355				
3	to share thoughts and hobbies.	0	1	5	28	66	4.5	0.59	3	Strongly Agree
		0	0	30	169	337				
4	To be free from quality restrictions and accuracy standards	0	0	6	31	63	4.3	0.88	8	Strongly Agree
		0	28	77	173	258				
5	Freedom from censorship	0	5	14	32	48	4	1.09	11	Agree
		10	52	90	140	249				
6	Breaking the feeling of loneliness and boredom.	2	10	17	26	46	4.4	0.86	6	Strongly Agree
		6	17	45	156	312				
7	Independence	1	3	8	29	59	4.2	0.85	9	Agree
		6	25	90	142	273				
8	Creation of friends and groups without restrictions.	1	5	17	26	51	4.4	0.85	5	Strongly Agree
		8	7	62	159	300				
9	Keeping up with the daily trend	2	1	11	30	56	4.4	0.86	7	Strongly Agree
		8	10	56	160	302				
10	Keeping pace with modernity	2	2	10	30	56	4.5	0.79	4	Strongly Agree
		8	3	44	159	322				
11	To achieve financial revenue.	2	1	8	29	60	4.1	1.06	10	Agree
		17	28	94	147	250				
		3	5	18	27	47				
	Total						4.36	0.82		Strongly Agree

Source: Study Questionnaire.

Table 8

Correlation matrix of social media use and student gratifications across selected Arab Universities.

		Abu Dhabi University,	Media King Abdulaziz University Mean $\pm$ S. DNo.	University of Tanta	significant
1	Examining the pros and cons resulting from the extensive use of social media	3.9 $\pm$ 0.5 187	3.9 $\pm$ 0.5 203	4.0 $\pm$ 0.5 146	0.804
2	The gratifications that a university student achieves through his use of social media	4.4 $\pm$ 0.6 187	4.4 $\pm$ 0.6 203	4.3 $\pm$ 0.6 146	0.426

**Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed) *Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Source: Study Questionnaire.

lack of a culture of mutual dialogue within the family and the immersion of all members of society in using these modern media platforms.

Elsayed (2021) focused on the negative impact of social media on adolescents' social identity, specifically regarding "achievement postponement, closure, and dispersion." This result is in line with Saha and Guha [17] findings on the Impact of Social Media Use on University

Students. This study concludes that social media is a primary source through which individuals can easily access updated information and conveniently access an online global knowledge bank.

Hwang and Kim [10] emphasize that social media provides a participatory media environment based on interactive Web 2.0, which makes it an effective tool for mobilizing people to participate in social movements. It is worth noting that this study focused on virtual interaction through media, whereas the study discussed here focused on physical interaction. However, the findings of Farhat [6] did not align with those of a previous study. This study indicates a positive impact of social media use. Social media platforms significantly enhance youth's sense of community, foster their engagement with various local issues, and seek solutions within legal and scientific frameworks. This was particularly evident in cases of solidarity and support during illnesses, hardships, and celebrations. These platforms, particularly Facebook, facilitated the exchange of perspectives and ideas among the youth, uniting their efforts towards developing their community.

In conclusion, Skour [19] emphasizes that while there are many advantages to using social media, there are also many disadvantages, and the risks increase as usage increases. During their use of Facebook, certain beliefs spread among users, translating into daily behaviors, particularly regarding their responsiveness to the requirements of customs, traditions, and social norms as one dimension of cultural identity. Conversely, the opposite is true, suggesting a complex interplay between social media use and cultural identity.

Second, the study examined the satisfaction university students achieved through social media. The study presented a set of 11 questions aimed at measuring the satisfaction university students achieved through their use of social media at Abu Dhabi University. The results indicated that university students feel delighted and find it difficult to detach themselves from these platforms, as they represent a window

through which they interact with the world. They express their opinions, communicate, obtain information suitable for their generation, feel a sense of freedom, and escape pressure. Moreover, they can use this usage to achieve financial returns or to promote their projects, lives, achievements, or anything that can attract views and generate substantial profits, regardless of how unconventional or non-academic the content may be, if it attracts views.

Compared to traditional media, many respondents did not use these platforms, such as print newspapers, which declined due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Because of the pandemic, students turned to these platforms and became overly attached. Maziou Mosharrafa et al. [14] confirmed that these platforms facilitate acquaintances and exchanges among communities and cultures worldwide. Similarly, Skour [19] found that while using Facebook, certain beliefs spread among users, which translated into behaviors they adopted in their daily lives, particularly in their responsiveness to the requirements of customs, traditions, and social norms as one dimension of cultural identity. Additionally, a study by Shayan [18] emphasized social media users' positive role and utilization. Despite limited Internet access and the spread of misinformation, this study found that Facebook played an essential role in civic activism in Afghanistan. However, as indicated by several studies, risks become apparent and increase with intensive usage, which dominates students' time and energy. This leads them to neglect aspects of life, social interactions, and familial and societal responsibilities to pursue further usage.

Mosharrafa et al. (2024) found that social media plays a positive mediating role in the mental health between social media addiction and academic performance. This study aligns with the notion that social media platforms are essential for the well-being of university students because of their various benefits such as accessing information, connecting with individuals, and receiving messages. The results emphasize the difficulty of proposing interventions to break the relationship between students and these platforms as students consider them essential companions wherever they may be.

6. Conclusion

This study focused on the potential effects of extensive social media use on Arab university students and analyzed the effects of that place. This study indicates that the extensive use of social media reduces attention to local and global issues and exposes them to false information and social dispersion risks in exchange for low freedom and control. The two researchers used the survey curriculum for field study and obtained several significant results, including the following: there are multiple fingerprints for university students to use social media intensively. These means represent an essential source for achieving desires that all other means cannot. This underscores the theory of use and satisfaction hypothesis, which emphasizes reliance on communication for users' desires to achieve several fingerprints.

Additionally, university students have a growing desire to use social media to achieve fame, reach universality, and break down geographical and value barriers. They agree that pillar content enjoys global viewing and attention and generates satisfaction from freedom from constraints and traditions. This study may confirm young people's shift towards a content industry that yields a material dividend from adversity and business activity, constituting societal isolation and deficiencies that may affect economic and societal development. The freedom to produce content on social media is considered a double-edged weapon. The lack of professional constraints may increase the likelihood of exposure to risks and threats, with a prevailing belief among young people that social media has enabled university students to satiate previously unaccounted for by breaking the barriers of communication, acquaintances, and friendships made easily through means. (They realize its dangers but are satisfied with its easy access.).

The results that most need to be studied are those of a large proportion of young people who rely on social media to judge the issues and

events around them. At the same time, they believe that they lack accuracy and credibility and tend to ignore local and national issues. This emphasizes the decline in Arab youth's interest in critical international issues affecting the stability of states today and in the future. Based on the findings of this study:

7. Study recommendations

Emphasis must be placed on setting up the strategies of volunteer and income-generating groups as far as the basic tactics of community uplift are concerned, with a focus on the promotion of social competencies among youth and channeling energies for constructive result-oriented goals. These initiatives should consider the process of skill acquisition and ensure decent income for university students. Arab universities should implement awareness, guidance, and educational programs to educate students about the potential risks associated with relying solely on social media. It is crucial to discuss the potential threats that social media poses to youth priorities and agendas, while acknowledging the lack of official organizations that provide a platform for youth to express their opinions on national issues and concerns. will, therefore, contribute to the development of countries and simultaneously offer university students promising areas for development and financial freedom.

8. Study implications

Therefore, Ministries of Youth and Social Affairs in Third World countries should implement projects that encourage youths to focus their energies on various fields and provide support for these activities, thereby assisting students in achieving their material goals. In particular, we should consistently engage young people in awareness campaigns regarding the importance of volunteer work, even when they are involved in supporting state programmes. In addition, the Ministry of Higher Education should guide universities to establish community development programs and activities, periodically conduct research, explore topics of interest to society, and initiate community sensitization and education campaigns. This guarantees that university students dedicate their leisure time to activities that positively contribute to the country's progress.

Universities should establish formal and strict modules and information education activities, such as workshop discussions of the opportunities and issues of social networks for health and academic concentration in studying and working processes for students. Further, it is possible for the Ministry of Higher Education to contribute to the spread of these practices by providing financing for educational campaigns, as well as the dissemination of materials for well-being programs and responsible social interactions utilizing social networks. These interventions are intended to enhance a healthy academic and social climate for children.

This study highlights the need for Ministries of Youth and Social Affairs in developing countries to adopt projects that channel youth energies into various fields, supporting these initiatives to achieve material aspirations. Continuous awareness campaigns should educate youth on the importance of volunteer efforts in community development, whereas the Ministry of Higher Education should guide universities in creating programs that address societal issues and implement awareness campaigns. Additionally, it is crucial to promote an understanding of the risks associated with excessive social media use, address the dangers of dominance over youth aspirations, and establish formal mechanisms for youth participation in national issues. Universities should also implement guidance programs to align students' plans with their development goals, incorporate media literacy courses to enhance critical thinking, and promote stronger cultural identity formation to balance the global influence of social media.

9. Study limitations and future direction

In conclusion, this study has several limitations: the study was conducted on media students at universities in the UAE, KSA, and Egypt and explored how their interaction with societal events is influenced by excessive use of social media. A survey was carried out between 8th March and 20th June of 2024, and it was carried out to notice the relationship between the two—usage and the levels of satisfaction. However, a few of these strategies have limitations. First, generalization of results from online surveys may lead to sampling bias due to low representation of participants with poor internet network or low technological aptitude. Second, culture and taste may differ among the respondents, which may be because different groups in the Arab student population may perceive and respond to the survey questions and their social media usage differently.

To overcome these limitations, further research should utilize mixed-method research designs and extend participants' cultural diversity. Furthermore, combining both online and offline methods of data collection is suggested, increasing the cultural diversity of participants originating from different Arab countries, and more long-term studies to assess data trends over time are also suggested. Engaging more local institutions to adopt the survey instruments and pilot tests to assess the distinct cultural nuances to inquire about will enhance the tenability of the examination. Additionally, future research should involve interdisciplinary, cross-sectional, and longitudinal designs with different age groups and cultures to increase the generalizability of the findings. Efforts should also be made to engage social media influencers and institutions to enhance the usefulness of social media in society.

CRedit authorship contribution statement

Hunida Gindil Abu Backer: . **Ibaa Awad:** Writing – review & editing, Writing – original draft, Visualization, Validation.

Declaration of competing interest

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

Data availability

Data will be made available on request.

References

- [1] K. Aichour, Sociopsychological approaches to the use of social media in higher education: Facebook as a case study, *Arab J. Media and Childhood Culture* 2 (5) (2019) 123–154.
- [2] A.B.E.B.M. Akkad, F.A.S. Al-Taqtatqa, The reality of social media networks' use and its effect on social isolation and gratifications for Deaf Girls in Secondary Stage, *Arab J. Disabi. Giftedness Sci.* 6 (21) (2022) 1–30.
- [3] E. Bozzola, G. Spina, R. Agostiniani, S. Barni, R. Russo, E. Scarpato, A. Di Mauro, A. V. Di Stefano, C. Caruso, G. Corsello, The use of social media in children and adolescents: Scoping review on the potential risks, *Int. J. Environ. Res. Public Health* 19 (16) (2022) 9960.
- [4] A.R. Chandio, S.A. Hussain, M. Ali, I.A. Brohi, Analyzing the implications of Social media usage on the university students in Pakistan: An Empirical Investigation, *International Journal of Academic Multidisciplinary Research (IJAMR)* 5 (6) (2021) 247–254.
- [5] Chen, M., & Xiao, X. (2022). The effect of social media on the development of students' affective variables. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 13, 1010766. Elsayed, W. (2021). The negative effects of social media on the social identity of adolescents from the perspective of social work. *Heliyon*, 7(2).
- [6] N. Farhat, Facebook's Impact on Social Affiliation Among Young People, *Al-Nasiriya* 13 (2) (2022) 114–142.
- [7] S.S. Al-Gamal, M. Al-Karam, The negative effects of using social media on a number of values: field study on students of Istiqlal University in Jericho, *Social Affairs Journal* 37 (145) (2020) 39–76.
- [8] Gamal, R. (2024). The use of satirical videos on social networking sites (TikTok) and their impact on the social values of Egyptian youth. *Journal of Aswan Faculty of Arts*, 15(1), 603–660.
- [9] S.H.S.H. Hamed, Social media and its reflections on the family alienation for Egyptian youth " Field study on a sample of university youth.", *Journal of Research of the Faculty of Arts, Menoufia University* 34 (134.4) (2023) 91–139.
- [10] H. Hwang, K. Kim, Social media as a tool for social movements: The effect of social media use and social capital on intention to participate in social movements, *Int. J. Consum. Stud.* 39 (5) (2015) 478–488.
- [11] D.K. Joshi Kouroupis, D. Vagianos, Freedom of expression and digital rights in social media: Challenges and risks, *Journal of Data Protection & Privacy* 4 (3) (2021) 294–302.
- [12] L. Leung, User-generated content on the Internet: An examination of gratifications, civic engagement, and psychological empowerment, *New Media Soc.* 11 (8) (2009) 1327–1347.
- [13] S. Livingstone, Taking risky opportunities in youthful content creation: Teenagers use social networking sites for intimacy, privacy, and self-expression, *New Media Soc.* 10 (3) (2008) 393–411.
- [14] Maziou Mosharrafa, R. Al, Akther, T., & Siddique, F. K. (2024). Impact of social media usage on academic performance of university students: Mediating role of mental health under a cross-sectional study in Bangladesh. *Health Science Reports*, 7(1), 1788.
- [15] A. Nadkarni, S.G. Hofmann, Why do people use Facebook? *Pers. Individ. Differ.* 52 (3) (2012) 243–249.
- [16] Z. Papacharissi, A.M. Rubin, Predictors of Internet use, *J. Broadcast. Electron. Media* 44 (2) (2000) 175–196.
- [17] S.R. Saha, A.K. Guha, Impact of social media use on university students, *International Journal of Statistics and Applications* 9 (1) (2019) 36–43.
- [18] Z. Shayan, Social network sites and civic activism: Facebook in Afghanistan, *European Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences* 1 (2019) 110–128.
- [19] I. Skour, Cultural Diversity and Its Reflection on the Algerian Language on Social Media Sites: A Survey Study on a Sample of Algerian Youth Users of the Facebook Site, *ASJP* 3 (11) (2021) 86–109.
- [20] C. Yang, B.B. Brown, Motives for using Facebook, patterns of Facebook activities, and late adolescents' social adjustment to college, *J. Youth Adolesc.* 42 (2013) 403–416.
- [21] E. Youssef, M. Al Malek, Investigating the impact of social media platforms use among children on formal and informal learning: From the uses and gratifications theory perspective—*Journal of Infrastructure, Policy, and Development* 8 (1) (2023) 3026.
- [22] J.J. Al-Menayes, Social media usage, engagement, and addiction as predictors of academic performance, *International Journal of Psychological Studies* 7 (4) (2015) 86–94, <https://doi.org/10.5539/ijps.v7n4p86>.
- [23] A.M.M. Badr, B.S. Al-Abdi, M. Rfeqallah, R. Kasim, F.A.M. Ali, Information quality and students' academic performance: The mediating roles of perceived usefulness, entertainment and social media usage, *Smart Learning, Environments* 11 (2024) Article 45, <https://doi.org/10.1186/s40561-024-00329-2>.
- [24] K. Kircaburun, S. Alhabash, Ş.B. Tosuntaş, M.D. Griffiths, Uses and gratifications of problematic social media use among university students: A simultaneous examination of the big five of personality traits, social media platforms, and social media use motives, *Int. J. Ment. Heal. Addict.* 18 (3) (2020) 525–547, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11469-018-9940-6>.
- [25] X. Zhang, J. Abbas, M.F. Shahzad, A. Shankar, S. Ercisli, D.C. Dobhal, Association between social media use and students' academic performance through family bonding and collective learning: The moderating role of mental well-being, *Educ. Inf. Technol.* 29 (2024) 14059–14089, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10639-023-12407-y>.
- [26] Grudz, A., Paulin, D., & Haythornthwaite, C. (2016). Analyzing social media and learning through content and social network analysis: A faceted methodological approach. *J. Learn. Anal.*, 3(3), 46–71.