

Chapter 6

Perceptions of Social Media Impact on Social Behavior of Students: A Comparison Between Students and Faculty

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ABSTRACT

Social media has become pervasive, impacting the social fabric and culture of our society. This study investigates differences and similarities between students' and faculty's perceptions of social media impact on social behavior of students. Data were collected using a specially designed survey. The sample size was 2605 students and 507 faculty of different genders and ages. Research outcome indicates that students and faculty are familiar with and are immersed in social media use. The findings support the advantages of social media use on students' social behavior and do not indicate any obvious disadvantages. The findings of the study include identification of dominant group perceptions pertaining to advantages and disadvantages of social media use on social behavior of students. Common concerns of the two groups pertaining to students include physical inactivity, social introversion, exposure to bullying and domination attitudes; and mental dullness. These findings can help discern possible issues relating to use of social media affecting social behavior.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Social media has become pervasive, impacting the social fabric of our society and changing the nature of social relationships. It has revolutionized the way we communicate, interact and socialize. New technologies help facilitate and provide flexibility in communicating and sharing of resources. This new approach to consuming and creating information is in particular attractive to youths as a platform and space for activities not possible in the face-to-face context (Lee, Chen, Li & Lin, 2015). However, excessive use of social media tools by college students has led to debate over whether or not it has changed the very shape and structure of students' social behavior and academic practices, and has thus caused leading educators to redefine their understanding of interpersonal communication and study dynamics (Junco, Merson & Salter, 2010). As such, it is pertinent to seek the views of faculty pertaining to use of social media by students.

Students use social media tools for many purposes such as access to information, group discussion, resource sharing and entertainment (Wang, Chen & Liang, 2011). This has generated speculation on their use and related positive and negative implications, in both the short and long terms. As several studies demonstrate, social media virtual communities interaction could have positive and negative effects on students. They can provide flexibility in learning, stimulate innovative ideas, and increase interpersonal relationships among students and faculty. These tools, however, can have negative impacts on students as they might distract their attention from the learning process, reduce their physical social interaction and make them potentially addictive.

Although many studies have investigated the impact of social media on college students' social behavior, few have focused on Saudi Arabia. Hence, this study should contribute valuable findings. Its purpose is to explore the impact of social media on students at King Abdulaziz University (KAU). This quantitative study also focuses on the common factors affecting KAU students' and faculty's preferences and perceptions of the impact of social media on social behavior. Research questionnaires were designed to determine the factors that may have affected students and faculty. Through analysis of the data, the study attempts to detect the positive and negative impacts and identify key themes, trends or perceptions that can be used as a foundation for more in-depth research.

The main contribution of the study lies in identifying differences and similarities on students' and faculty's usage, preferences and perceptions of social media on social behavior of students, which can help in discerning positive and negative factors. Given the present limitation of available data on students' and faculty's use of social media, the data gathered provide valuable source of information, as they offer a deeper insight into the academic community's association with the new media.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

In a survey done by Bagget and Williams (2012), students agree that social media is a means to connect between individuals and is used as a way to sharing interest. These are useful tools for communication and education, and are a means to keep in touch with people professionally. They provide an opportunity for networking in any profession. With time constraints and demanding class schedules, social media provide an opportunity to multitask because students do not want to spend time creating multiple individual messages. They commonly use Facebook, watch television or a video, talk, email friends and family, and write papers or conduct research all at the same time.

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