

ARTICLE

EVALUATING USE AND ATTITUDES TOWARDS SOCIAL MEDIA NETWORKING FOR UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

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ABSTRACT

Background: The purpose of this study was to evaluate use and attitudes towards social media networking in University of Qom, Iran. **Methods:** A descriptive and analytical research method was utilized. The Statistical population included all students from which a sample of 330 was selected from 3200 students of Qom University through stratified random sampling. The data collection instrument was use and attitudes social media networking questionnaire adopted from Rosen, et al. (2013). Face and content validity of the questionnaire confirmed by experts and its reliability was estimated 0.91 through Cronbach's alpha coefficient. Usage social media networking were 11 dimensions and attitudes social media networking were 4 dimensions. **Results:** The findings showed that usage social media networking and its dimensions (smartphone usage, general social media usage, Media Sharing and text messaging) mean scores were higher than average level. The two dimensions of attitudes social media networking were higher than average level while the lowest mean is related to negative attitudes toward technology. Significant differences were also observed regarding demographic variables. **Conclusions.** University students participate in various social media activities on a daily basis, there are growing concerns about the potential negative impacts of social media on students' social wellbeing.

INTRODUCTION

Social networks give persons the opportunity to re-connect with old friends and to make new ones. They are ideal platforms for trade ideas, information sharing, and several other actions. Social networks make it possible for users to stay abreast of the latest global and local developments, and share in activities of their choice [1].

Politicians, numerous world leaders and celebrities today are always in touch with their audience through social networking on social media for example tweeter, Instagram and Facebook [2]. Professionals use social media sites to improve their career and business prospects. One can learn about additional cultures and societies by linking with people in those nation-states [3]. Drawbacks to the use of social networks have been outlined to include addiction, cybercrimes and harassments, decline in productivity. Several introverts and socially reclusive users place too much emphasis on virtual interaction, and ignore the real world outside [4]. Social media has been defined in several methods. As stated by studies and work by Kietzmann et al., (2011), Social Media are extremely and exceedingly interactive platforms, which apply and engage the mobile devices and other web based technologies to facilitate persons, groups and communities in developing, co-creating, sharing, transform and discuss the content produced by the user [5]. In practice, social media refers to specific platforms through which individuals communicate, for example discussion forums, blogs, wikis, social networks, and multi-media sites, being some of the most popular Facebook, MySpace, LinkedIn, Google +, Flickr, Twitter, and YouTube [6].

Social media arrive a variety of forms with social networking sites, microblogs, blogs, chat platforms, open source mapping, and photo and video sharing. Generally, social media can be defined as "applications, services, and systems that permit users to create, remix, and share content." [7]. Social media usage refers to "the multiplicity of activities persons may participate in online" [8].

There is evidence that individuals differ in both their internet based social-networking experiences and their motivations for using social networks. For example, although many individuals report positive relations of Face book use [9], Social media are a source of news that is often recommended by trusted friends and acquaintances. Social media constitute a space of expression and deliberation [10]. When expressing themselves and/or discussing with others, people process relevant information and messages more deeply and become more likely to be influenced [11]. According to Fournier et al., (2013) relationships between social media and harmful alcohol use can be described by social norms theory, which posits that individual behavior is influenced by the perceived behavior of others regardless of the accuracy of such perceptions; exactly, inflated perceptions of risk behaviors increase personal risk taking [12].

Alwagait et al. (2015), all indicating that the academic performance of the students was not affected by the use of social media [13]. The researchers were positive on the effect the use of social media by the students as they can conversation information on the platforms that can increase their academic performance. Some other studies but indicated that the use of social media had negative effect on the academic performance of students [14, 15].

Youths have high levels of social need and desires and they actively interact with their environment. These connections and relationships can result in positive or negative changes in the behavior of the persons that could have corresponding impact on the academic performance [16]. Also, engagement with social media sites has increased dramatically among young people and young adults recently [17]. Thus, the

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question comes up “To what purpose and why do young people, especially college students, use the social network sites?” One of the answers to this question is that the students who reside far from their friends can stay in touch with them through the social network sites [18]. It has been shown that youth who are typically students use social media for a number of reasons. Now numerous social media platforms target the youths and researchers have studied the effect of social media on the youths who are also students and the outcome of such studies are variable [19]. Ogaji et al., (2016) were found out that Pharmacy students used social media very well to communicate with real and virtual friends but not so much for academic improvement. Majority of the students use Facebook and Twitter for less than 30 min daily but spent longer time on WhatsApp and YouTube applications [20]. Thus, the aim of this study was to examine the use and attitudes towards social media networking at Qom University. In this research, the scores of undergraduates on the main factors such as usage dimensions (Smartphone Usage, General Social Media Usage, Internet Searching, E-Mailing, Media Sharing, Text Messaging, Video Gaming, Online Friendships, Facebook Friendships, Phone Calling and TV Viewing) and the attitudes dimensions (Positive attitudes toward technology, Anxiety of being without technology or dependence of technology, Negative attitudes toward technology and Preference for task switching).

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The present study employs a questionnaire survey approach to collect data for testing and research Question. Variables in the questionnaire comprise background information, use and attitudes social media networking in higher education. The population for the study is 3200 students of Qom University. This study uses a stratified random sampling method to select 330 students. The authors distribute 330 questionnaires and ask for the questionnaires to be completed by faculty students. Of the 303 returned questionnaires, 10 are incomplete. The residual 303 valid and complete questionnaires are intended for the quantitative analysis. Data were composed by one questionnaire:

Following the distinction of previous researches [21], which is an originally designed for adults. the present study adopts Use social media networking Scale with development of a 11 subscales: Smartphone Usage (9 items), General Social Media Usage (9 items), Internet Searching (4 items), E-Mailing (4 items), Media Sharing (4 items), Text Messaging (4 items), Video Gaming (3 items), Online Friendships (2 items), Facebook Friendships (2 items), Phone Calling (2 items) and TV Viewing (2 items). The attitudes dimension includes four sub-scales: Positive attitudes toward technology (6 items), Anxiety of being without technology or dependence of technology (3 items), Negative attitudes toward technology (3 items) and Preference for task switching (4 items). All variables require ten-point Likert style responses ranging from “Never” to “All the time”.

Reliability coefficient of questionnaires were estimated through Cronach's alpha coefficient in Usage and attitudes social media networking Scale (0.88 for Smartphone Usage, 0.83 for General Social Media Usage, 0.89 for Internet Searching, 0.81 for E-Mailing, 0.85 for Media Sharing, 0.90 for Text Messaging, 0.83 for Video Gaming, 0.89 for Online Friendships, 0.81 for Facebook Friendships, 0.84 for Phone Calling, 0.82 for TV Viewing, 0.86 for Positive attitudes toward technology, 0.84 for Anxiety of being without technology or dependence of technology, 0.89 for Negative attitudes toward technology and 0.86 for Preference for task switching. To verify the questionnaires validity face and content method and authority opinions were utilized. To show the differences Usage and attitudes social media networking among students, t-test, Fisher test, MANOVA were employed. A multiple comparison post hoc test with least significant difference (LSD) was used to determine which course types were significantly different from the others.

RESULTS

Most respondents (87.4%) aged 19 to 22 years; the participants included 60.9% female and 39.1% male. The number of Social Sciences students was 61% and those whose domain was Engineering Sciences were 39%. The number of the students studying at the first grade was 31% and those studying at the fourth grade were 69%. [Table 1] regarding the three dimensions of usage social media networking Qom University the highest mean smartphone usage (M=6.90), while the lowest mean is related to online friendships (M=3.41).

Table 1: Usage social media networking dimensions mean, standard deviation Qom University ($\bar{X} = 5$, $df = 302$)

Indicators	S	SK	\bar{X}_d	toB	P	
Usage social media						
Smartphone Usage	6.90	0.51	0.42	0.01	1.32	0.000
General Social Media Usage	6.32	0.58	0.49	0.07	1.43	0.000
Internet Searching	4.01	1.11	0.74	1.32	9.43	0.000
E-Mailing	4.15	1.06	0.77	1.38	9.13	0.005
Media Sharing	6.02	0.63	0.51	0.09	1.56	0.000
Text Messaging	5.58	0.71	0.63	0.12	1.90	0.000

Video Gaming	4.54	0.84	0.79	1.41	9.84	0.000
Online Friendships	3.41	1.02	0.96	1.46	11.36	0.004
Facebook Friendships	3.54	1.39	0.93	1.59	12.09	0.001
Phone Calling	4.12	1.13	0.69	1.28	9.53	0.000
TV Viewing	4.18	1.08	0.85	0.82	9.63	0.005
Total	5.73	0.65	0.53	0.10	1.83	0.000

In this research, the scores of undergraduates on the main factors such as and the attitudes dimensions (Positive attitudes toward technology, Anxiety of being without technology or dependence of technology, Negative attitudes toward technology and Preference for task switching.

[Table 2] regarding the two dimensions of attitudes social media networking Qom University the highest positive attitudes toward technology (M=5.45), while the lowest mean is related to negative attitudes toward technology (M=2.90).

Table 2: Attitudes social media networking dimensions mean, standard deviation Qom University ($\bar{X} = 5$ df= 302)

Indicators Attitudes social media	S	SK	\bar{X}_d	tob	P	
Positive attitudes toward technology	5.45	0.65	0.61	0.15	1.45	0.003
Anxiety of being without technology	5.14	0.73	0.78	0.65	1.85	0.005
Negative attitudes toward technology	2.90	1.59	1.06	1.10	15.24	0.001
Preference for task switching	4.29	0.80	0.90	0.79	8.63	0.002
Total	5.36	0.87	0.77	0.62	1.47	0.000

According to finding of multivariate analysis (MANOVA) showed that observed F at confidence level of $p \leq 0.01$ for usage and attitudes social media networking dimensions according to demographic characteristics is significant. Eta square for age is not significant. But Eta square for course type, sex and grade is significant [Table 3].

Table 3: Paired comparison of Mean Differences and standard deviation of usage and attitudes social media networking dimensions

Usage and attitudes social media networking dimensions		Demographic Variables	Mean Difference s	Sig
General Social Media Usage	course Type	Social Sciences and Engineering Sciences	0.8641	0.000
Positive attitudes toward technology	course Type	Social Sciences and Engineering Sciences	0.6322	0.001
Video Gaming	Sex	male and female	0.4935	0.004
Smartphone Usage	grade	fourth grade and first grade	0.5482	0.000

According to finding of [Table 3], LSD test results identified that general social media usage and positive attitudes toward technology in social sciences was more than engineering sciences. LSD test results identified that video gaming according to sex students with male were more than those with female and so, smartphone usage according to grade students with fourth grade were more than those with first grade.

DISCUSSION

Such as part of the development of online social networks, social media (e.g., Facebook, Twitter or Instagram) have become an all-pervasive factor in the way we relate to others. These media allow people to connect with nearly anyone, anywhere, at any time. The fundamental driving force in this expansion of joining and interaction is the burgeoning development of various mobile social media applications. The interactive capabilities of social media make functional building blocks for individuals, communities or organizations to hold conversations, share ideas, form relationships, interest groups, and to grow their presence, reputation and identity [5].

Research results showed that in Qom University that usage social media networking and the four dimensions (smartphone usage, general social media usage, Media Sharing and text messaging) mean

scores were higher than average level. Also, the findings showed the seven dimensions of usage social media networking (Internet Searching, E-Mailing, Video Gaming, Online Friendships, Facebook Friendships, Phone Calling and TV Viewing) were lower than average level while the lowest mean is related to Online Friendships. Results of this study are almost compatible with studies that showed that all indicating that the academic performance of the students was not affected by the use of social media and this finding seems to support the statement made by The researchers were positive on the effect the use of social media by the students as they can exchange information on the platforms that can enhance their academic performance [13]. Some other studies however indicated that the use of social media had negative effect on the academic performance of students [14, 15].

Also, Research results showed that in Qom University that attitudes social media networking and the two dimensions (Positive attitudes toward technology, Anxiety of being without technology or dependence of technology) mean scores were higher than average level. On the other hand, the findings showed the two dimensions of attitudes social media networking (Negative attitudes toward technology, Preference for task switching) were lower than average level while the lowest mean is related to Negative attitudes toward technology. Finally, significant differences were observed between usage and attitudes social media networking dimensions and its dimensions regarding demographic variables. Results of this study are almost compatible with studies that showed that youths have high levels of social need and desires and they actively interact with their environment. Ogaji et al., (2016) were found out that Pharmacy students used social media very well to communicate with real and virtual friends but not so much for academic improvement. Majority of the students use Facebook and Twitter for less than 30 min daily but spent longer time on WhatsApp and YouTube applications [20]. Youths have high levels of social need and desires and they actively interact with their environment. These connections and relationships can result in positive or negative changes in the behavior of the persons that could have corresponding impact on the academic performance [16].

These interactions and relationships can result in positive or negative changes in the behavior of the individuals that could have corresponding impact on the academic performance. It has been shown that youth who are mostly students use social media for a number of reasons.

CONCLUSION

Our findings indicated that usage social media networking and its dimensions (smartphone usage, general social media usage, Media Sharing and text messaging) mean scores were higher than average level and two dimensions of attitudes social media networking were higher than average level while the lowest mean is related to negative attitudes toward technology. So, one of the factors that influence human behavior is social norms. Socialization has been identified to have a compelling influence on human behavior. Technology has been identified as a key modifier of human behavior today. The advent of computer and internet has changed so much about human behavior.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

There is no conflict of interest.

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