

# Unveiling the Power of Social Media among University Youth

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## ABSTRACT

Social media has enormous power. It dramatically changed how youth interact, express themselves, and engage with the world. According to the United Nations Population Fund in Egypt youth include everybody between the ages of 15-24 years old which comprises 60% of Egypt's population, social media profoundly affects university students. This paper investigates the social impact of social media on university students, identifying both positive and negative effects on their academic performance, knowledge channels, social relationships, and mental well-being. A sample consisting of 520 students who use social media and are enrolled at university was surveyed to determine the power of social media use from their perspective. By weaving together quantitative and qualitative data, it provides a comprehensive overview of social media's role in shaping university students' lives. The results revealed that 65% of the students use social media for communication, and 72.3% seek interaction with multicultural topics. Finally, further research should be conducted on the long-term effects of social media on university students in Egypt.

**Keywords:** Social Media, Youth, University Students.

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## INTRODUCTION

With the rapid development of technology, social media has become a central element of daily life for youth around the world. In Egypt, platforms such as Facebook, WhatsApp, and Instagram dominate the online space and influence the behaviors and interactions of young university students. The use of these platforms transcends traditional communication and offers opportunities and challenges (Turkle, 2015).

Numerous definitions of social media, also known as social networking sites (SNS), support this research. Social media is a set of Internet-based applications built on Web 2.0 that promote shareable, user-generated content (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). Social media provide students with access to information and learning resources, strengthen connections, and foster a sense of community (Sheldon et al., 2019). However, it can also lead to distraction, addiction, and poor academic performance. Understanding the rationale for social media use and its impact is critical in shaping policies and interventions that promote responsible online behavior among Egyptian university students.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Studies show that Egyptian youth are heavily involved in social media, with WhatsApp (96%) and Facebook (57%) being the most used platforms among university students. Students use social media for a variety of reasons, including staying connected with peers, discovering new cultures, learning, and accessing entertainment (Wafa, 2024). There are approximately 90 universities in Egypt, with 3.6 Million students, the majority of them are using social media platforms.

Positive aspects of social media include enhanced communication, access to a wealth of information, and the ability to share experiences. Social media allows students to connect across geographic boundaries, promotes cultural exchange, and creates virtual communities (social media); educational resources available through platforms such as YouTube and LinkedIn complement students' academic learning and enable them to do so (Homayoun, 2018).

However, the literature also highlights some negative effects. Excessive use of social media leads to

procrastination, lack of concentration, sleep deprivation, and decreased academic performance. Students who spend more than 6 hours daily on platforms such as TikTok and Facebook report suffering from higher levels of anxiety, depression, and loneliness. (He.& Akula, 2016).

### RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

1. To identify youth’s rationale for using social media.
2. To identify the effect of daily use of social media on the academic performance of youth
3. To identify the preferred topics for search among youth
4. To identify the impact of social media from the perspective of university students.

### METHODOLOGY

The study’s total population: is 12538 (male and female) students during the academic year of 2023-2024. A sample size of 520 students was drawn. This study used qualitative and quantitative approaches to collect data. The target group criteria are illustrated as follows; students who use social media, are enrolled in the University within the time of data collection. Youth were surveyed to determine the effect of social media use on their perceptions. The sample consisted of 260 females and 260 males. Data were collected from February to April 2024, using questionnaires through personal interviews focusing on various social media power of impact such as the frequency of social media use, the types of platforms used, and students’ opinions on the effect of social media on their academic performance.

#### Conceptual Definitions of the Study

- 1- Social Media. The method of communication where individuals produce, share, and exchange knowledge and concepts in online groups and networks. Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and YouTube are examples of social media.
- 2- University students: youth both males and females enrolled in the university during the academic year 2023-2024 between the ages of 18 to 25 years old.

#### Sampling and Data Analysis

An organized random sampling technique was used to draw the sample respondents from students who are

**Table 1.** Youth rational to use social media

Rational to use social media	Agree	%	Neutral	%	Disagree	%	Total
Involvement in, communication, interaction, and sharing	340	65%	140	26.9%	40	7.6%	520
Exposure to new cultures and different ideas	376	72.3%	108	20.7%	36	6.9%	520
Desire to learn	324	62.3%	160	30.7%	36	6.9%	520
Search for topics to read	324	62.3%	164	31.5%	32	6.15%	520
Knowledge of news in different countries	324	62.3%	140	26.9%	56	10.7 %	520

Source: Study sample

using social media. The data were collected through conducting personal interviews. After that, the interviews were transcribed verbatim within 24-48 hours. After that transcriptions were checked again for accuracy, and we read them several times to have accurate data. Moving further, each participant’s responses were observed, and further codes were generated for those responses. Out of those codes for each question, one theme was generated at the end.

#### Ethical Considerations

The confidentiality of the data was assured. Sufficient information was provided about the purpose of the study and the need to record interviews.

#### Study Sample Limitation

The study sample was drawn from fourth-grade students to increase the chance of exposure to social media channels during the academic studies. The sample consisted of 50% males and 50% females enrolled in the Faculty of Agriculture, at Ain Shams University.

### RESULTS

The results revealed that 65% of students use social media for communication and interaction. On the other hand, 72.3% seek exposure to new cultures and ideas. 73.2% of students spend daily on platforms like Facebook, significantly impacting their academic performance. Furthermore, 88.4% of students admit that social media harms their mental and physical health. Social media promotes innovation and teamwork, with 62.3% of students reporting improvement in these areas, which contributed to anxiety and depression in 41.5% of participants more than 6 hours.

#### General Discussion of Results

The first result related to the first objective: Youth’s rationale for using social media

Table No. (1) shows the reasons and motives for the use of social media by university youth, where the results revealed that 65% of youth use social media due to involvement in communication, interaction, and participation, and 72.3% of youth use it to learn about new cultures and knowledge of different ideas, 62.3% of the study sample is due to the desire to learn.

The second result related to the second objective: Identify the effect of social media daily use on the academic performance of youth. This objective was elaborated by inquiring about youth’s daily use of Social media, duration spent on social media by hour, and time allocated for social

media during the day (morning or night).

Table No. (2.1) shows the daily usage of social media among youth. The results revealed that 96% of youth use WhatsApp daily, 57% of youth use Facebook daily, and 50% of the study sample use Instagram every day.

**Table (2.1).** Youth’s daily usage of social media

Daily Usage of social media	Yes	%	No	%	Total
Facebook	300	57%	220	43%	520
WhatsApp	500	96%	20	4%	520
Telegram	200	38.4%	320	61.6%	520
Instagram	260	50%	260	50%	520
TikTok	172	33%	348	67%	520
LinkedIn	56	10.7%	464	89.3%	520
YouTube	80	15.3%	440	84.7%	520
X	40	7.7%	480	92.3%	520
Snap chat	60	11.5%	460	88.5%	520

Source: Study sample

Table (2.2) shows the duration of daily use of social media. The results revealed that youth spend more than 6 hours daily using Facebook, TikTok, and WhatsApp representing 73.2%,65.5%, and 57.8% respectively.

**Table (2.2).** Duration of daily usage of social media by youth

Duration of daily usage of social media	Less than 2h	%	4-6 h	%	More than 6h	%	Total
Facebook	40	7.6%	100	19.2%	380	73.2%	520
WhatsApp	120	23%	100	19.2%	300	57.8%	520
Telegram	320	61.5%	80	15.3%	120	23.2%	520
Instagram	160	30.7%	120	23%	240	46.3%	520
TikTok	120	23%	60	11.5%	260	65.5%	520
LinkedIn	360	69.2%	56	10.7%	104	30.1%	520
YouTube	400	76.9%	80	15.3%	40	7.8%	520
X	360	69.2%	120	23%	40	7.8%	520
Snap chat	440	84.6%	60	11.5%	20	3.9%	520

Source: Study sample

Table (2.3) shows the preferred time for youth to use social media during the day. The results revealed that youth consume time at night using TikTok representing 69.3%, while both WhatsApp and Instagram represent 61.6%. These results indicate that social media has polarized most

of the youth time. This time should have been spent with family, relaxing, and working on university assignments. On the other hand, more than 50% of university youth spent their morning time (study time) searching on LinkedIn, Facebook, and YouTube.

**Table (2.3).** Preferred time during the day for youth to use social media

Total	%	Night	%	Morning	Preferred time to use social media
520	46.2%	240	53.8%	280	Facebook
520	61.6%	320	38.4%	200	WhatsApp
520	53.9%	280	46.1%	240	Telegram
520	61.6%	320	38.4%	200	Instagram
520	69.3%	360	30.7%	160	TikTok
520	38.5%	200	61.5%	320	LinkedIn
520	50%	260	50%	260	YouTube
520	57.7%	300	42.3%	220	X
520	53.9%	280	46.1%	240	Snap chat

Source: Study sample

The third result related to the third objective: Identify the types of preferred topics by youth.

93% prefer the use of social media for pleasure, and self-learning topics represent 89%. The topics related to rumors and innovations represent 87% and 86% respectively.

Table (3) shows the types of preferred topics searched by youth using social media. The results revealed that

**Table 3.** *Types of search topics preferred by youth*

Types of search topics preferred by youth	Agree	%	Neutral	%	Disagree	%	Total
Search for educational sites	312	60%	172	33%	36	7%	520
self-learning	464	89%	0	0	56	10%	520
Personal topics	308	59%	0	0	212	40%	520
Technology and innovations	448	86%	0	0	72	13%	520
Pleasure	484	93%	0	0	36	6%	520
Social, economic, and political topics	296	56%	0	0	224	43%	520
Support innovation	260	50%	232	44%	92	7%	520
Rumors	452	87	40	11%	8	1.5%	520
Country news	332	63%	132	25%	56	10%	520

Source: Study sample

The fourth result related to the fourth objective: Identify the impact of social media from the perspective of youth. This objective was elaborated by exploring the advantages, disadvantages, and potential risks for female youth. Table (4.1) shows the advantages and disadvantages of using

social media. The results revealed that distracting student’s concentration represents 93%, acquiring new skills represents 89.4%, and affecting mental health represents 88.4%.

**Table (4.1).** *Advantages and disadvantages of using social media from the perspective of youth*

Advantages /Disadvantages of social media	Yes	%	No	%	Maybe	%	Total
mental health problems	460	88.4%	60	11.5%	0	0	520
Waste of time	504	26.9%	16	3%	0	0	520
Support Innovative ideas	276	53%	24	4.6%	218	42%	520
Support language and writing skills	328	63%	192	36.9%	0	0	520
Distract student’s concentration	484	93%	36	6.9%	0	0	520
Build teamwork ability	324	62.3%	196	37.6%	0	0	520
Acquire new skills	464	89.4%	56	10.7%	0	0	520
Validate information	300	57.6%	220	42.3%	0	0	520
Quality education	420	80.7%	100	19.2%	0	0	520
Delay of assignments	236	45.3%	128	24.6%	156	30%	520
Increased feelings of depression	216	41.5%	56	10.7%	248	47.6%	520
affect physical health	328	63%	44	8.4%	148	28.4%	520
Affect social awareness	392	75.3%	16	3%	112	21%	520
Get relevant information to the field of studies	424	82.3%	12	2.3%	80	15.3%	520

Source: Study sample

Table (4.2) shows social media risks towards females from their perspective. The results revealed that bullying and harassment represent 84.6% and 76.9% respectively.

**Table (4.2).** *Social media risk towards female youth*

Total	%	No	%	Yes	Risks for females
260	30.7	80	69.1%	180	Lessen self -worth
260	38.5%	100	61.5%	160	Increase anxiety
260	23.1%	60	76.9%	200	Harassment
260	15.4%	40	84.6%	220	Bulling

Source: Study sample

## CONCLUSION

Social media plays a dual role in university students’ lives, offering significant opportunities and potential risks. The benefits of social media can be maximized by decreasing the negative impacts. It is essential to foster responsible social media habits among youth. (Twenge,2017). By addressing the challenges associated with social media use, we can empower students to leverage these platforms for personal and academic growth.

## Recommendations

1. Universities should offer digital literacy programs to educate students on the responsible use of social media.
2. Policies should be developed to limit excessive social media use, especially during study hours.
3. Mental health support should be made available to students especially females who experience anxiety or bullying linked to social media use.

4. Further research should be conducted on the long-term effects of social media on university students in Egypt

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