

The Impact of Social Media on Youth: A Case Study of United Arab Emirates

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### **Preface**

United Arab Emirates (UAE) is one of the most connected countries in the world. 95% of the country's populace have direct access to the internet. The other important aspect regarding the social media use is that UAE has the largest users of social media. Currently, approximately, 50% of the country's population is active on the social media. One of the reasons given for the significant percentage of the population having access to the internet is that a huge number of the citizens are expatriates. Therefore, most of them utilize the social media to contact their loved ones and keep updated with the newest events happening all over the world. The utmost common social media networks are the Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram. In recent years, the number of young people who use social media networks has significantly increased. Additionally, businesses have also been involved in increasing the demand for the internet. Today, most of the business entities use the social media for marketing.

Keywords: *The Internet, Social Media, networks, Twitter, Facebook, Instagram*

## **Chapter One**

### **Introduction**

Social Media is among the current forms of media that have diverse qualities and characteristics. It has several facilities on the same channels like communication, image sharing, texting, audio and video sharing. Additional features that are present include the faster publication, Wide coverage and linking of the people globally and direct connecting with different people. It is essential to point out that social media is the cheapest and one of the fastest access to the world. Therefore, it is one of the most important facets of people of all ages. Today, the use of social media is growing day by day at a significant rate. The majority of the youth today are shifting from the TV viewership and radio listening to the usage of the social media. Hence, it is one of the powerful implements that influence the lives of the youth today. This shift has led to the question concerning the holistic effect of social media on the youth. It is indispensable to point out that social media has multi-faceted implications on the living styles. The study will provide an ongoing process that seeks to spot the specific influence of the social media in the lives of the youth. The study also emphasizes on the influence of the social media on the youthful generation, their lifestyle, their political and educational awareness, their trends, their education process, and social life.

### **Aims of the Study**

- i) To explain the effect of social media on youth's life in the United Arab Emirates.
- ii) To evaluate the manner in which youth utilize social media in United Arab Emirates.
- iii) To examine the benefits and the structure of social media preferred by the youth.
- iv) To evaluate the time the youth spend while using social media.
- v) To recommend some of the measures that will promote efficient social media use.

### **Reasons for selecting the topic**

The study provides a measure of applying the social media in the accurate route for the youth and helps improve understanding among the youth of the implication of the youth. Through the study, the youth in the United Arab Emirates will find the implication of the social media usage in their lives. It is essential to the point that the study will act as a resourceful material in influencing most of the manner in the way the youth use the social media. Social media is a potent tool that has effects on the social life of the user, impact on the way of life and groom the mentality of an individual.

### **The study hypotheses**

- i) It is probable to conclude that social media is generating alertness for the young generation by promoting the enhanced lifestyle.
- ii) It is probable to suggest that social media is a potential source of info for the youth.
- iii) It is probable to suggest that social media is an influential resource in influencing educational outcomes for the youth.
- iv) It is probable to suggest that social media influences the manner the youth in the United Arab Emirates interact with their peers.
- v) Youths in the United Arab Emirates use social media in a constructive way.

### **Statement of the Problem**

The study is designed to offer an examination of the effect of the social media on the youth with, a critical look at the youth in the United Arab Emirates. The primary focus is the influence of the social media on the different aspects of the youth's life, such as social life, political awareness, religious practices, educational goals and other societal trends.

## **Chapter Two**

### **Literature Review**

#### **Social Media**

Erdoğmuş and Cicek, (2012) point out that social media is described as a collection of various internet applications that are founded on the different perspective of the internet, and also allow the design and the swap over of the content created by the user. On the other hand, youth is described as the period of life when an individual is immature. It is a time between childhood and adulthood. The youth are the most important people in any country since the progress and development are based on their energy and enthusiasm (O'Keeffe & Clarke-Pearson, 2011). Today, social media is one of the platforms that the youth utilize to study new trends in learning, develop their writing and communication skills, to promote their cultures and religions, communicate with their peers and get involved in the growth and development of the society (Barker, 2009).

Valenzuela, Arriagada, and Scherman (2012) argue that social media has different effects on the various aspects of the citizens of United Arab Emirates. This task covers the diverse aspects of the life of youth in the country. Social media such as Facebook, Twitter, Skype, MySpace, and YouTube have been promoted as life transforming applications in all the countries in the world. These applications are also applicable to all individuals in the United Arab Emirates. Social Media is a means of linking people where they generate, distribute and swap ideas in the virtual community and the networks provided by these applications. Today, social media provides various online technologies that enable people to communicate easily and share critical information. According to Chambers (2013), social media is an evitable aspect of life for the majority of youth in the country. Social media has therefore brought far-reaching changes in the lives of youth in the United Arab Emirates. The

main intention of the study is to offer a holistic outlook of the implication of social media on youth in the United Arab Emirates.

### **Trends in the Social Media Usage in Arab World**

Currently, the usage of the social media has varied penetration in the world. Egypt has the lowest Facebook penetration in the Arab world. On the other hand, the United Arab Emirates has the highest Facebook penetration at 50% (Maamari & Zein, 2014). In recent years, there has been an enhancement in the debate on the role that social media played in the Arab uprisings that led to the fall of some the ruling regimes in the Arab world. United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Kuwait have the highest number of Facebook users. The youths in the Arab World are the leading users of social media, with over 70% of the users in the region being the youth.

### **Trends in the Social Media Usage in UAE**

According to the Maamari and Zein, (2014), the social media platforms of WhatsApp and Facebook had 97% and 89% utilization among the people. YouTube had a 73 % level of utilization among the youth in the United Arab Emirates. Additionally, the report also points out that the utilization of the social media is also significantly higher among 18 to 21-year-olds. Most of the young professionals in the United Arab Emirates are most active in LinkedIn. Most of the youth have the highest number of social media utilization (Grube, 2012). Most of the youth in the United Arab Emirates prefer to use the social media to get information about the news and social events. The report also points out that a significant number of the youth use the social media to bond with families and friends, other people and the organizations all over the world. Almost a third of those who were interviewed during the survey spent time on social media for an average of two or three hours a day. Maamari and Zein (2014), also point out that Instagram is becoming popular among the youth. However,

the downside of the social media utilization is that it significantly informs the changes the manner in which the youth perceive themselves. It has huge implications in the way the youth view themselves since they base their looks by the number of likes they receive on the photos they share in the social media (Khan, 2012).

### **Impact of Social Media on Youth**

According to Selfhout, Branje, Delsing, Ter Bogt, and Meeus (2009), social media has a diverse impact on youth's natural life in a holistic manner. In United Arab Emirates, it is easier to access the Internet now compared to a few years back. Therefore, there has been both the negative and positive impacts of the social media to the youth. Most of the people between the ages of 12 to 21 years in the United Arabs Emirates have access to technology. Therefore, most of the aspect of their lives has been influenced by the social media. It is for this reason that some people in the country have referred the youth as the 'dumbest generation, owing to their continued and heavy use of technology (Jain, Gupta & Anand, 2012). Most of the youth are impacted by what they allow to influence their lives. However, it is imperative to note that there are both negative and positive consequences of social media in the individual lives of the youth.

### **Negative implications of Social Media**

One of the negative influence of social media on young people in The United Arab Emirates is that social websites have become their main concern rather than the things that should be a priority such as education, sports, and family (Juszczuk, 2015). Therefore, most of the youth today spend most of their time scrolling down the social media, rather than utilizing their time to interact with the facets of life that improve their lives. They have prioritized the use of social media, leading to the decline in the quality of their real social lives with their parents and friends. Secondly, Undiyaundeye (2014) argues that through the social media, the youth portray themselves as someone they are not. Therefore, most of them

lead double lives. Since the manner they portray themselves is not authentic, they often fall into traps of having to establish a relationship with individuals who are not real.

Additionally, the youth also easily fall victims to cyber bullying from these social media sites and hence, lead to depression and suicidal tendencies (Jelenchick, Eickhoff & Moreno, 2013). Cyber bullying has holistic effects in the life of the youth. Individuals influenced by the social media may develop body dysmorphic disorder. According to Lenhart, Madden, Smith, and Macgill (2009), the need to have a physical appearance similar to the people they see in the social media, may lead to some of them viewing their body parts as not perfect, and hence, may need to change their physical appearance. Finally, social media is a potent temptation. The youth may be addicted to the social media and begin sidetracking their lives. It leads to the shift of the priorities. There are some incidences that parents have had to take their children to the rehabilitation centers as a result of over-indulgence to the social media (Lenhart, Purcell, Smith, & Zickuhr, 2010).

### **Positive Implications of Social Media on the Youth**

There are also various benefits of social media for the youth. Correa, Hinsley, and De Zuniga, (2010) point out that social media has over the years been used as the outlet for the thought that the youth desire to share with their peers. Therefore, social media is a platform that the youth use to express them. Social media also assist people to connect with their peers all across the world. Some of the specific ways that youth use social media to influence their lives are by keeping connections between friends when they cannot be able to physically meet. Madden et al. (2013) argue that youths can connect with each other in a variety of ways, chat and make friends. Secondly, social media also keeps the youth up to date with the things that are happening around the world. Therefore, the youth can get information on what is happening across the globe. Additionally, social media also provides the youth with a platform that they can express themselves in a way that the public would not allow them to



(Khedo, Suntoo, Elaheebocus & Mocktoolah, 2013). Therefore, social media is a platform that improves the freedom of expression. Social media also assist in developing skills. Youths have the ability to make friends from the social websites. Finally, social media also provide a fun way in which youth can interact other than seeing their friends in person.

### **Chapter Three**

#### **Study Methodology, Theoretical Approach and Problem Identified and Results**

The descriptive approach was utilized to carry out the research. A survey type of the research was used to analyze available secondary sources on the internet. The population used is the youth in the United Arab Emirates. There are various theories that qualify to support my dissertation. One of the theories that best apply is the gratification theory. When the youths use the social media, the primary goal is to ensure that they get the gratification they desire.

Most of the youth have the desire to ensure that they get satisfaction from the use of social media. Therefore, the theory was the approach used to determine the best way to achieve the dissertation objectives. The main result is that the coverage of social media in the United Arab Emirates is high. Most of the youth have access to the internet. The Twitter, Facebook and the Instagram are most preferred social media networks. Finally, the impact of the social media has both negative and positive implications. One of the main problems identified in the research was an inability of getting peer reviewed content regarding the utilization and the impact of social media in the United Arab Emirates.

#### **Conclusion**

Social media has a significant contribution to people's life. Some of the platforms provided are the Facebook, Twitter, Skype and MySpace. These platforms are essential since they assist in ensuring that the interaction between the youths is made open in the world. Social media is one of the potent tools that significantly impact the lives of youth in the

United Arab Emirates and indeed to the whole world. Since the majority of the youths were born in the digital age, most have been conditioned to believe that they cannot do without it. Most of the youth depend on it in their daily lives. However, it is critical to appreciate that the social media has both positive and negative effects in the lives of the youths.

### **Recommendations**

One of the recommendations is that the youth need to be trained in the best ways of using the social media so as to minimize the time that they spend on chatting and doing other activities that have no meaningful impact on their lives. Secondly, there is the need for the internet providers to devise mechanisms that they can filter the content that reaches the youth. It is also essential for the parents to play their role in monitoring the activities of the youth in the social platforms. Finally, there is a need to ensure that youth get trained on the legal issues regarding the utilization of the social media. Posting of malicious and reputation damaging content may lead one to jail.

### **Suggested Areas for Further Research**

Since the above study was based on the overall social media, there is the need for a study to be done on other social media sites such as Instagram or Facebook. Additionally, there is also the need for a study to be carried out to evaluate the impact of the social media on the other age groups.

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