

Social Media Usage among University Students in Palestine: Motivation, Prospects and Challenges

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Abstract

Students' perceptions, motives and challenges for utilizing social media platforms at Hebron University, Palestine will be the focus of this study. The study is conducted during the first semester of 2018/2019 academic year with a sample of 186 students (62 males and 124 females) from eight colleges of the university. The researchers structured a questionnaire from previous studies and distributed it to the participants. The results revealed that Facebook is the most popular platform among students (87.6 % of the sample have a Facebook account). Furthermore, the results indicated that knowledge-sharing is a beneficial aspect of social media as shown by students' perceptions (62.4% of the sample are involved in groups dedicated to academic objectives). Students stressed that discussing and connecting with friends is an important motive for using social media platforms. While social media is widely used among students at Hebron University, they highlighted slow internet connection as the central challenge for a more effective exploitation of online platforms. The study underlines the significance of the social media platforms for learning purposes and subsequently recommends further development and integration of these platforms in the education system.

Keywords: Social media, Hebron University students, motivation, attitudes

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استخدام وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي بين طلاب جامعة الخليل في فلسطين: الدوافع والتوقعات والتحديات

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ملخص

تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى معرفة منظور الطلاب ودوافعهم والتحديات التي تواجههم في استخدام منصات وسائل التواصل الاجتماعية في جامعة الخليل، فلسطين. اشتملت على عينة تكونت من 186 طالب (62 من الذكور و 124 من الإناث) من ثماني كليات في الجامعة. قام الباحثون ببناء استبانة وتوزيعها على المشاركين خلال الفصل الدراسي الأول من عام 2018/2019. أوضحت النتائج أن الفيسبوك هو المنصة الأكثر شعبية بين الطلاب (87.6% من العينة لديهم حساب فيسبوك). وعلاوة على ذلك، أشارت النتائج إلى أن تبادل المعرفة هو جانب مفيد للغاية لوسائل التواصل الاجتماعية. كما أظهرت الدراسة أن 62.4% من العينة يشاركون في مجموعات مخصصة للأهداف الأكاديمية. أكد الطلاب أن المناقشة والتواصل مع الأصدقاء هو دافع مهم لاستخدام منصات التواصل الاجتماعية. مع أن وسائل الاتصال الاجتماعية على نطاق واسع بين الطلاب في جامعة الخليل، إلا أنهم سلطوا الضوء على بعض التحديات التي تواجههم مثل الاتصال البطيء بالإنترنت الذي بدوره يمنع الاستخدام الأكثر فعالية لمنصات الإنترنت. وفي الختام أكدت الدراسة على أهمية منصات وسائل الاتصال الاجتماعية لأغراض التعلم، وأخيراً خلصت الدراسة إلى جملة من التوصيات لأحداث مزيد من التطوير والتكامل لمنصات التواصل الاجتماعية في نظام التعليم.

الكلمات المفتاحية: شبكات التواصل الاجتماعي، طلبة جامعة الخليل، الدوافع.

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Introduction

The Industrial Revolution changed the way of living for so many communities all over the planet. Land ownership, familial relationships, wealth distribution and social hierarchy were a few examples to that change. By the end of the twentieth century the tremendous impact of the internet sent shock waves all over the globe. The internet, as part of the technological revolution impacted people's lives in so many aspects. For instance, one of the offspring of the internet is social media which, for certain, changed our stream of consciousness, thinking, and living. It is imperative that this heavy handed guest and sometimes intruder manipulated us to the point of saturation. No human being is immune from the influence and impact of social media. Be it a farmer, a security personnel, a captain of a ship, a pilot of an air plane, a normal citizen, a physician, a scientist or a students; all of us were part of this closed circuit. The educational system was very agile can be influenced by so many changes in society. Many educators and decision makers and even students took the initiative to use social media as part of the courses for improving the educational system and its outcomes. For example, Hebron University students are one of the groups that felt that social media is very vital the educational process and social relationships. Surfing social media sites has become an imperative task that students have to carry out daily or rather hourly to search for academic sources, knowledge or social relations and friendships.

It stated that humans are social creatures who can not live alone in normal circumstances. As a result social interaction, communication and civil societies are fundamental elements in people lives. Humans live in interdependent traditional social groups of "of friends living within a city, or a group of college classmates who remain in frequent contact socially" (Clemons 2009: 46). Although traditional social groupings are the dominant place for human interaction, the emergence and rapid evolution of Social Networking Sites (SNSs) in the 1990s have promoted and facilitated the communication among individuals beyond traditional ways of interaction. In the 21st century, more effective and interactive SNSs coupled with technological advancement and spread with the internet have ushered noteworthy changes in the structure of social relations, allowing people to connect with a larger social pool beyond the limitations of the spatial boundaries. SNSs is defined as "Individual webpage which enables online relationships building by collecting useful information and sharing it with specific or unspecific people" (Kwon and Wen 2010: 245). They provide opportunities for people to express themselves and make connections with

others. Therefore, SNSs such as Facebook, MySpace and Instagram have become the most visited websites which create virtual communities for their users. For example, groups of people who share common practices and interests create virtual communities and communicate regularly for through a common location and for a certain period of time (Ridings, Gefen, & Arinze, 2002, Gwena, Chinyamurindi & Marange, 2018). In other words, the virtual space extended further diversified communities.

In particular, this study focuses on the educational sector to examine the role of SNSs platforms play in education, facilitate learning and teaching, and form learning communities. The wide-ranging use of the internet and SNSs has been central to the emerge of modern and social platforms that have changed the traditional social life, especially for university students. Nowadays, students are increasingly aware of the advantages of using these platforms in their social as well as educational life. This study tackles the following questions: What is the role of social media in establishing positive values among Hebron University students? What motivates Hebron University students to use social media? What are the challenges that involved in students' use of social media?

This research aims to investigate the reasons that motivate Hebron University student to use Social Networking Sites (SNSs). The findings will have invaluable informative value for teaching staff at Hebron University in particular, and to the Palestinian Ministry of Education and Higher Education in general, for it helps them to understand how students interact and use social media. This enhances methods of teaching by raising their knowledge of the effects of social media for pedagogical purposes.

Social media networks can also contribute to students' academic success, who can benefit tremendously in the learning process in finding new research material and attending online classes as stated in (Farrah & Abu-Dawood, 2018; Al-Khaddam & Al-Rawashdah, 2018). Raynor (2009) lucidly emphasizes the influential role of social media at the academic setting as it is making academic circles easier to meet and share knowledge and access information at a cost-effective price. Using social media provides multiple opportunities for teaching and learning virtually as an alternative to, or even complementary method for face-to-face learning. Social media helps students to acquire valuable knowledge through online interaction. Academic institutions should take advantage of social media to provide an effective, supportive and positive learning platform. Nowadays, social

media very accessible to extract data for research because it shares people's insights and experiences which are required content for academic research.

The study is divided in five sections. The first section presents the theoretical framework by exploring the constructivist ideas regarding learning and education. It considers learning as an interactive social process in which identity and social context motivate learners' use of social media to connect and interact with others. Moreover, the methodology section is divided into two subject sections: the first provides an overview of available literature and studies on the subject of the SNSs role in education. It shows that communication, finding new information, entertainment, and effectiveness of SNSs are the main factors behind their use by students. While the other subsection elaborates on the design of this study. Furthermore, the results of the statistical analysis of the collected data. In addition, there is the discussion which shows the importance of avoiding over-or-underestimating the effects of social media in education. The fifth section provides concluding remarks and recommendations.

1. Theoretical Framework

Constructivism deals with the construction of knowledge where personal observations, investigations, experiences, cultural factors and identities play a major role in the production of and interaction with knowledge (Abuzahra, Farrah, Zalloum, 2016). People create their own representations of social events, subject and object in ways that influence their perceptions and understandings of themselves and how they relate to and interact with others. According to the constructivist thought, knowledge and meaning are constituted intersubjectively (i.e., through the interaction between people) within a particular social context (Moses and Knutsen, 2012). Drawing on constructivist perspective, learners' identity and social context are central to the learning process, meaning-constitution and social interaction.

The social constructivist theory focuses on the meaning-making process, based on the social and cultural environment of individuals and their motivations for constructing knowledge which is immanent to the learner. As Vygotsky argues, "learning is a necessary and universal aspect of the process of developing culturally organized, specifically human psychological function" (Vygostry 1978, p. 90). Individuals provide meaning to objects through social interaction with each other within a social context (Farrah, 2011; Gredler, 1997; Prawat & Floden, 1994).

The leading philosopher on learning theories Dewey (1916), underlines the significance of social context for learning. As he puts it, “every individual has grown up, and always must grow up, in a social medium, His [sic] responses grow intelligent, or gain meaning, simply because he lives and acts in a medium of accepted meanings and values” (Dewey, 1916, p. 344). Though the context that Dewey was writing from a different context and undoubtedly other than the digital age which brought learning and human interaction into the virtual realm of the internet and social media, the social and intersubjective feature of learning remains the same.

Contemporary social media applications and platforms such as Facebook, Google, Instagram, and Twitter offer innovative prospects for new modes of social interaction among individuals beyond the traditional spatial and temporal limitations. Students use of social media and other digital tools and gadgets in learning is nearly unavoidable; it has even become to be taken for granted.

In sum, the constructivist view of learning and education underlines the interactive social nature of learning and education as a social process in which identity and context motivate learners’ use of social media for educational needs and to connect and interact with others.

Literature Review

As evidenced in a number of studies there are a number of reasons for using social media. Some users use it for academic purposes and others use it for pleasure. Several researchers have conducted various studies to explore the motives behind the use of Social Networking Sites (SNSs). For example, Jung, Youn and McClung (2007) presented six reasons for the use of Cyworld in Korea which include: self-expression, passing time, entertainment, professional advancement, communicating with others, and embracing new trends. Another study that examined individuals’ use of social sites in the United States, identified the main reasons for using social media such as MySpace and Facebook to meet new friends and solicit new information (Raacke, et al. 2008).

Students use social networks because it facilitates their educational and learning processes and take into consideration their learning styles and preferences (Capece & Campisi, 2013). Definitely, social media offers innovative opportunities for learners to be involved in online classrooms that stimulate the expansion of their skills and knowledge (Blaschke, 2014).

For instance, students rely on SNSs to search for information based on their academic interests (*Manjunatha*, 2013). Lee and Ma in their study (2012) found that looking for information is connected with the users' intent to share news on these online platforms. On the other hand, other users employ social sites to search other issues such as health related information (Tse, Bridges and Srinivasan, 2015). International students often use social networks to learn more about their new environment (Gwena, et al, 2018). Huang et al. (2007) conducted a study on extended technology acceptance and found that perceived enjoyment has impacts on students' intention to use technology.

As Lin and Lu (2011) pointed out, perceived entertainment and utility have direct and indirect impacts on the "continued intention to use" social networks. Likewise, Lee and Choin (2012) reported that entertainment (e.g., playing online games) through social networks (SNG) raise the students' intention to use social networks. The social media focus on the maintenance of relationships between people (Hippner & Wilds, 2005). Indeed, social interaction is one of the key motives that positively affect commenting on Facebook friends' posts (Smock et al. 2011). Social networking sites, according to Murray and Waller (2007) are virtual places where people can meet and interact with each other to discuss certain themes or just for entertainment. Furthermore, communicative interaction through SNSs is more cost-effective in comparison to conventional means and ensures that users remain connected with former colleagues, friends, family members, acquaintances (Özad, 2012).

Sutherland et al. (2018) examined university student's social media use and its influence on offline engagement. Their sample consisted of 106 undergraduate students (66% female and 33% male). A descriptive and analytical survey, that included certain questions about the different engagements in students' educational communities, was used to collect data. The results showed that 82% of students rarely use social media to engage offline with their educational environment, whereas fourth-year students were the most preferably to use offline engagement (66.7%). Moreover, the study reported that 52.8% of the university students were aware of the importance of social media to engage with their academic communities.

Hussain (2012) examined the trend, reasons and challenges of using social media among 600 university students at Faculty of Education of the Islamia University of Bahawalpur, Pakistan. He found that the participants used social media for exchanging academic activities, developing social

networks throughout the world, and sharing their learning experiences with their colleagues. He observed that the study that social media played a vital role in encouraging collaboration and connection to build virtual communities worldwide. The researcher found that students faced challenges in using social media such as bandwidth of internet and electricity break down/ load shedding.

Sandra and Nizam (2016) examined how social media impacted students' academic performance. The data was collected using a survey questionnaire that consists of a Likert scale with 42 items and included 102 students at the Ericson College. This study found that colleges and universities in Malaysia teach their students to use social media platforms for educational purposes. The outcomes were positive and enhanced students' academic performance.

Salvation and Adzherudelin (2014) examined the influence of social network sites upon academic performance of Malaysian students. They found that students prefer the use of social media, especially Facebook and Twitter in their academic discussions.

Hamid et al. (2013) examined social media usage among university 504 students in Malaysia. The results showed that the highest use of social media is for communication (95.6%), seeking information (87.9%), keeping in touch (82.5%), entertainment (76.5%), and doing their tasks (71.9%). Another study was conducted by Helles and Mahdi (2010) to examine the role of media in establishing social awareness of Palestinian youth Azhar University. The sample consisted of 219 students. The study found that social media plays a solid role in establishing the social awareness of young Palestinian students and its percentage was 92.7%.

Recently, Al-Khaddam and Al-Rawashdah (2018) investigated use of social media networks by students at University of Jordan students and the role these networks play in formulating students' values. They found that the main motivation for students to use social media is to get introduced the opinions of others in the various issues in the community they live in. additionally, they reported that 68.4% use social media to create new friendships.

Many researchers (Al-Khaddam & Al-Rawashdah, 2018; Helles & Mahdi, 2010; Hamid et al, 2013) agree that the main motivations behind social media use include searching and sharing information search, maintaining relationship and meeting new people, connecting with people worldwide and entertainment. This literature shows that connectivity,

communication, facilitation of learning, finding new information and knowledge, entertainment, cost-effectiveness are the main reasons motivating students to use social media in their learning.

Challenges of using Social Media:

Most of the studies that discussed the benefits of social media reported some challenges that encounter students (Al-Khaddam and Al-Rawashdah, 2018; Al-Shehri, 2013; Farrah & Abu-Dawood, 2018; Hussain (2012). For example, Hussain (2012) reported that his participants encountered challenges like some physical problems and leakage of privacy. Additionally, they faced problems like electricity failure and low bandwidth of the internet. Al-Shehri (2013). Found that that using Twitter and Facebook have some negative effects like minimizing family interaction. similarly, Al-Khaddam and Al-Rawashdah (2018) found that social media contributes to weakening family ties.

With these themes in mind, the researchers in this study attempt to answer the following **Research Questions:**

- RQ1: What are the benefits of Social Media in establishing positive values among Hebron University students?
- RQ2: What motivates Hebron University students to use social media?
- RQ3: What are challenges involved in using social media among HU students?

Methodology

This section describes the design of the study, the participants' characteristics, the instruments, and procedure.

Participants

The study was conducted in the fall semester of 2018/2019 at Hebron University colleges. Participants were 186 students of different faculties whom they were asked to answer the questionnaire. 124 (66.7%) of the students were females and 62 (33.3%) were males. The sample included a diverse body of students from different departments at Hebron University. It included 18 students from Islamic Studies, 25 from the College of Arts, 12 from Science and Technology, 32 from the Nursing College, 11 from

Agricultural College, 19 of Business and Administration, 35 from Pharmacy and Medical Sciences, 19 from Law and Political Sciences, and 15 from Education faculty at Hebron University. The Sample includes students from the different stages at their studies. It covered 49 (freshmen/women), 60 sophomores, 31 juniors, and 46 seniors.

Table (1) Demographic data

	Frequency		Percentage
	Gender	Female	66.7%
	Male	33.35%	62
	Total	100.0%	186
Year of Study	Freshmen	26.3%	49
	Sophomore	32.3%	60
	Junior	16.7%	31
	Senior	24.7%	46
	Total	100.0%	186
College	Islamic Studies	9.7%	18
	Arts	13.4%	25
	Science and Technology	6.5%	12
	Agriculture	17.2%	32
	Business & Administration	5.9%	11
	Pharmacy & medical Sciences	10.2%	19
	Nursing	18.8%	35
	Law & Political Science	10.2%	19
	Education	8.1%	15
	Total	100.0%	186

Table (1) illustrates the demographic data of the questionnaire. It shows that most of the participants were females (66.7%) and (33.3%) were males which give an insight into the population of Hebron University in Palestine. The majority of the students were sophomores (32.3%), (26.3%) were freshmen, (16.7%) were juniors, and the rest of them were seniors. It also shows that the majority of the participants were of Pharmacy and Medical Sciences' faculty (18.8%), the College of Arts students comes after that

(13.4%), and the rest of the respondents were of other faculties as appeared in the table.

Instruments:

The study was conducted during the first semester of 2018/2019 at Hebron University. A questionnaire was adopted for data collection in order to find the students' perceptions toward the use of social media (See appendix A).

The questionnaire had two sections. The first section is used to collect the demographic data of the students such as gender, year of study, and college. The second section consisted of 5-points Likert scale to figure out the students' agreements and disagreements to the items of the questionnaire. This section included 67-items about benefits, motives, and challenges toward using social media sites by Hebron University students.

Those items were ordered to achieve and measure the intended results of the study. It was conducted in both English and Arabic languages, English for students who know English and Arabic for whom they don't know English. The questionnaire was developed depending on three main articles:

1. Motives and Patterns of University Students Use of Social Media Networks (Sociological Study on University of Jordan Students) by Alkhaddam, Al-Rawashdah (2018).
2. Social media usage among university students in Malaysia Table 2: Purpose of Using Social Media Purpose by Hamid et al. (2013).
3. The engagement of social media technologies by undergraduate informatics students for academic purpose in Malaysia by Lim et al, (2014).

Administration of the questionnaire

A 67-item questionnaire was distributed to 186 students of different levels at Hebron University during the first semester 2018/2019 academic year in order to find out the students' attitudes towards using social media. The questionnaire was purposefully distributed during lectures of eight faculties. It was conducted at Nursing, Science and Technology, Pharmacy and Medical Sciences, Education, Business and Administration, Law and Political Sciences, Agriculture, and Arts colleges. The number of the conducted questionnaires was 186. Cornbrash's Alpha Coefficient was (0.92) which indicates that the questionnaire has an excellent degree of

reliability. To examine the validity of the study tool, the questionnaire was adjusted by experts at the Faculty of Arts and Education to adapt the current research.

Data Analysis

The researchers analysed the collected data statistically by using the SPSS program (Statistical Package for the Social Science) version 22. They run descriptive analyses (frequency, percentage, means and standard deviation).

Results and discussion

This part presents the results of the two sections in the questionnaire.

Table (2) Frequency of using social media for academic purposes.

Frequency of using social media for academic purposes	Never	2.6%	5
	Daily	61.3%	114
	Weekly	29.5%	55
	Monthly	6.4%	12
	Total	100%	186

Table (2) shows the students frequent use of social media for academic purposes. 61.3% of the participants use it daily which reveals the significance of SM and technology to students' academic performance. Only five participants don't use SM for academic goals.

Table (3) Do you belong to any Facebook group dedicated to academic subjects?

Do you belong to any Facebook group dedicated to academic objectives?	Yes	62.4	116
	No	37.6	70
	Total	100.0	186

Table (3) indicates that 62.4% of the participants belong to academic Facebook groups, while 37.6% of them don't belong to such a group.

Table (4) Social media accounts

Facebook	Yes	87.6	162
	No	12.4	23
LinkedIn	Yes	6.5	12
	No	93.5	174
Twitter	Yes	20.4	38
	No	79.6	148
WhatsApp	Yes	73.1	136
	No	26.9	50
Instagram	Yes	72.0	52
	No	72.0	134
Snapchat	Yes	51.6	96
	No	48.4	90
Research Gate	Yes	5.9	11
	No	94.1	175
Academia	Yes	9.7	18
	No	90.3	168

Table (4) shows the most used accounts by HU students. It indicates that (87.6%) of the students use Facebook which is the most popular social platform among the students followed by WhatsApp (73.1%) and Instagram (72.0%), while ResearchGate (5.9%) is the least used site among the students.

Results of Section Two of the Questionnaire

Results related to research question number one

RQ1: What are the benefits of Social Media in establishing positive values among Hebron University students?

To answer this question, the researchers calculated descriptive statistics (means and standard deviations) for the questionnaire items. Table 5 shows the results a descending order of agreement with the items of the questionnaire.

No	A. Benefits of Social Media (SM) Role of (SM) networks in establishing positive values for students of Hebron University	Means	SDs
5	SM enable information / knowledge sharing.	3.91	.974
9	SM facilitate communication among friends/families.	3.89	1.157
11	SM help students to keep in touch with friends.	3.89	.969
6	SM enable cooperative and collaborative work.	3.62	.945
1	SM support innovative teaching methods.	3.61	.946
12	SM enlarge social relationships through following the news of others on the network and keeping in touch.	3.58	1.122
13	SM encourage participation in cultural events such as seminars, lectures, cultural festivals through invitation on the network.	3.55	1.018
14	SM raise awareness regarding social, health and other types of deficits & risks.	3.52	.970
10	SM enhance and strengthen the existing friendships.	3.44	1.225
4	SM improve student's participation.	3.43	1.084
2	SM support peer-to-peer learning.	3.41	1.043
16	SM raise social and political awareness.	3.35	1.051
8	SM help students to keep in touch with their instructors.	3.34	1.199
18	SM encourage participation in charitable events to serve community.	3.34	1.119
15	SM facilitate decision making through consultations and polls on the network.	3.33	.984

No	A. Benefits of Social Media (SM) Role of (SM) networks in establishing positive values for students of Hebron University	Means	SDs
7	SM support the creation of personal learning environment.	3.23	1.078
3	SM enhance student motivation.	3.20	1.110
19	SM enhance self-confidence.	3.09	1.014
20	SM alleviate psychological stress through participating personal problems with	2.93	1.188
21	SM remove psychological barriers.	2.91	1.218
17	SM strengthen family ties.	2.81	1.235

Table 5 presents the benefits of social media (Role of SM networks in establishing positive values for students at Hebron University). The items of the table are ordered according to the higher means. It is clear from the table that the main motivational reasons behind using social media are knowledge sharing, communication with friends, cooperative and collaborative work. Accordingly, item 5 (Social media enable information/knowledge sharing) got the highest mean (3.91) which indicates the benefits of social media to look for information in order to help students' development of knowledge. Item 5 is followed by items 9,11, and 6 (Social media facilitates communication among friends/families), (SM helps students to keep in touch with friends) and (SM enables cooperative and collaborative work) which indicates HU students' use of social media.

Most of the other items got moderate rating where the participants considered reflective social media as a source for maintaining social relationships, encouraging participation in cultural events, raising political, social and health awareness, building self-confidence and enhancing motivation. Accordingly, the participants considered social media as useful tools for their study. However, there was a low rating granted to items 21 and 17 (Social media reduces psychological barriers) and (Strengthens family ties) received the lowest means (M=2.91) and (M= 2.81) which indicates that social media weakened the ties among family members because they are busy with their social life. Additionally, social media does not necessarily means reduction of psychological barriers.

RQ2: What motivates Hebron University students to use social media?

To answer this question, the researchers calculated descriptive statistics (means and standard deviations) for the questionnaire items. Table 6 shows the results a descending order of agreement with the items of the questionnaire.

Table (6) Means and Standard deviations for motives of students' use of Social media

No	My usage and access Social Media (SM) (motives of student usage of SM)	Means	SDs
15	I use SM to chat/keep in touch with friends.	3.80	1.062
23	I use SM for downloading materials.	3.80	1.038
17	I use SM to find information.	3.79	1.045
16	I use SM For entertainment.	3.77	1.124
22	I use SM for instant messaging & e-mailing.	3.68	1.045
13	I use SM to watch education videos/ listen to educational audios, etc.).	3.67	1.088
7	I use SM because I can find answers to my questions.	3.62	1.059
18	I use SM to share my opinion.	3.51	1.066
4	I use SM to improve my language skills.	3.50	1.086
12	I access social media websites during lectures when we are asked by our instructor.	3.47	1.061
8	I use SM to discuss courses with other students.	3.45	1.226
20	I use SM to get because it is free.	3.43	1.166
28	I use SM to see the profiles of family and friends.	3.42	1.084
19	I use SM to share photos and videos.	3.39	1.121
3	I use SM To improve my communication skills.	3.39	1.056
5	I use SM to join online classes.	3.387	1.148
21	I use SM to pass time.	3.30	1.254
6	I use SM to join groups and conversations.	3.295	1.187
25	I use SM to play online games.	3.284	1.347
29	I use SM to escape psychological pressures.	3.28	1.225
30	I use SM when I am not feeling well.	3.24	1.324

No	My usage and access Social Media (SM) (motives of student usage of SM)	Means	SDs
10	I use SM to interact with my instructors.	3.23	1.202
9	I use SM to improve my computer skills.	3.20	1.230
1	I use SM to complete assignments.	3.17	1.296
24	I use SM to read online newspapers.	3.11	1.283
2	I use SM to get new friends.	3.05	1.202
14	I use SM to know what other people are doing and what's going on.	3.04	1.218
27	I use SM for online shopping.	2.94	1.307
26	I use SM for internet payment and banking (fees payment).	2.80	1.214
11	I access social media websites during lectures without the instructor's knowledge.	2.71	1.350

Table (6) is ordered according to the highest means. The table indicates the actual use of social media by Hebron University students.

It is clear from the table that the main motivational reasons behind using social media are keeping chatting and keeping touch with friends, looking for and sharing information, entertainment and communication with others. The highest mean (M=3.80) was for item 15 of using social media to chat with friends, (M=3.80) was for downloading (documents, books, and journals, etc.), and (M=3.79) was to look for information. While the use of social media for entertainment obtained (M=3.77).

The lowest mean (M=2.7) was obtained to item 11 (I access social media websites during lectures without the instructor's knowledge) which provides a good indicator for HU students. It seems that a few number of HU students use social media for shopping (M=2.94), internet payment and banking (M=2.80).

RQ3: What are challenges involved in using social media among HU students?

To answer this question, the researchers calculated descriptive statistics (means and standard deviations) for the questionnaire items. Table 7 shows the results a descending order of agreement with the items of the questionnaire.

Table (6) Means and Standard deviations for challenges that face students in using Social media

No	A. Problems of (SM) networks (Descending Means)	Means	SDs
1	Slow internet connection.	4.06	1.288
6	SM reduce the direct interaction with family.	3.66	1.238
13	SM increase isolation and separation.	3.65	1.208
15	I feel distracted from study due to my use of SM.	3.62	1.297
14	SM tend to spread unreliable information.	3.61	1.198
8	SM is used to gossip and backbiting.	3.58	1.313
12	SM cause social problems between individual from the opposite gender.	3.51	1.239
11	SM waste time on subjects and games.	3.50	1.257
2	Certain internet applications are blocked.	3.50	1.226
7	SM contributes to ignoring social ties.	3.43	1.255
16	I procrastinate my assignments because of being busy in SM.	3.41	1.293
5	SM violate privacy.	3.34	1.332
3	All activities are monitored.	3.33	1.237
9	SM offend others through negative comments.	3.31	1.328
10	SM exchange inappropriate images, movies.	3.23	1.409
4	SM accounts are hacked.	3.102	1.262

Table (7) presents the problems involved in students' usage of social media among Hebron University students. It is ordered according to the highest means.

Most of the participants indicate that slow internet connection (M= 4.06) is the main problem of using social media at the University followed by its effects in reducing their direct interaction with family (M=3.66). They also agreed that social media distracted them from their

study (M=3.62). Item 4 (Social media accounts are hacked/stolen) obtained the lowest mean (3.10). Students don't see hacking accounts as a problem for dealing with social media. They also give neutral attitude towards exchanging inappropriate images and movies (M=3.23) in comparison to other problems.

Discussion

This research reviewed the attitudes of students at Hebron University towards the use of social media based on a sample of 186 students. The results indicate that Facebook, WhatsApp, and Instagram are the most popular and utilised social media platforms among students. However, LinkedIn and ResearchGate are the least used.

In consistent terms with the constructivist view of knowledge production and learning, most students believe that social media play a great role in sharing knowledge and information, communicating, and keeping in touch with friends and colleagues. This is concurring with the finding existing literature which confirms the positive contribution of social media to enhance students' learning and academic performance (Al-Khaddam & Al-Rawashdah, 2018; Farrah & Abu-Dawood, 2018; Hamid et al., 2013; Helles & Mahdi, 2010; Hussain, 2012; Salvation & Adzherudelin, 2014; Sandra & Nizam, 2016). In particular, social media helps students to stay connected with their peers, raise their educational, political and social awareness, access new sources of knowledge and exchange learning material such as lectures, notes, and announcements (Raut & Patil, 2016). While acknowledging the advantages of social media platforms, one must not underestimate their downsides. Social media may lead to negative effects such as procrastination of assignments, lack of privacy, and distraction (Lederer, 2012; Alloway, 2013; Heffner & Tara, 2016). Other scholars dismiss the impact of social media on students' academic performance (El-Badawy & Hashem, 2015).

Without falling into the traps of over-or-underestimating the effects of social media in education, the results of this study show the benefits and disadvantages of social media platforms in education from students perspective and experience. At Hebron University, students utilise social media for multiple purposes, mainly for connectivity (chatting), entertainment, and searching and accessing knowledge. Indeed, this correlates with the results of Hussain (2012) who found that 92% of the respondents use social media to seek knowledge and entertainment. Similar studies (Sheldon 2008; Raacke and Bond-Raacke 2008; Hamid et al. 2013)

suggest that communication and keeping in touch with others as the major reasons which motivate students' use of social media.

Finally, one of the findings of this study is that the participants encounter certain challenges when using social media. The results reveal that a slow internet connection at Hebron University is a major challenge facing students regarding the usage of social media platforms. This is in line with a number of studies that reported challenges and issues with the use of social media (Al-Khaddam & Al-Rawashdah, 2018; Farrah & Abu-Dawood, 2018). Additionally, social media platforms have wider negative impacts on the social life of the students. Overuse of these platforms, as results indicate, is destructive, diminishes direct interaction between students and their families and social surrounding (Al-Khaddam & Al-Rawashdah, 2018, Hussain (2012). In the long run, this may increase students' sense of isolation and impair their confidence and social performance in real situations that require face-to-face interaction.

Conclusion

This study investigated Hebron University students' attitudes toward the use of social media platforms for academic purposes and the role of these platforms in establishing positive values. The analysis suggests that students share a positive attitude towards the usefulness of social media platforms in improving their academic performance. Students motivated their use of these platforms by underlying their educational utility as a powerful source of information. It also reveals the problems that face students through their use of social media like slow internet connection in university, reducing direct interaction with others and increasing isolation.

Based on the evidence gathered from the analysis, this study makes three main recommendations. First, the speed of internet connection at Hebron University should be strengthened to contribute to a more efficient use of social media in learning and teaching. Second, it is essential to find innovative ways to incorporate social media platforms into teaching and learning to maximize students' learning opportunities and even transcend geographical restrictions. This especially important in the case of Palestine where university students' ability to access their classes is often curtailed due to the Israeli occupation and closures. Last but not least, it is essential to offer professional training for students to enable an effective use of social media in education and without jeopardising their privacy and social life.

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