

Internet and Social Media Habits Among Basrah University Students

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Abstract. Background: Social media is an internet communication medium that has become essential to our daily lives. It makes it possible for individuals to create web content, communicate, and share data. The purpose of this essay is to illustrate how social media affects a sample of Iraqi university students' academic achievement, social interactions, and mental health. Patients and methods: A questionnaire was used to gather data from 430 Iraqi students from various colleges who participated in the study. Results: The cell phone was the most popular device (95.9%) for social media viewing, and the majority of the sample (98.4%) reported using social media currently. According to the study, social media can affect academic achievement and social interaction in both positive and negative ways. The majority of participants (60.7%) and (21.6%) agreed and strongly agreed that social media use is enhancing interpersonal connections and information sharing. Nonetheless, 30.9% of respondents strongly agreed that social media might cause them to spend less time with friends and family. In terms of academic performance, the majority of the sample (44.5%) strongly agreed that using social media could cause them to waste time that could be spent studying, and 26.8% strongly agreed that it diverted their attention. Among those pupils, over half (53.4%) agreed and strongly agreed that social media negatively impacts their overall academic performance. Conclusion: The study found that university students' academic performance, social interactions, and mental health are all significantly impacted by social media, and that raising awareness among them is crucial to reducing excessive and harmful usage of the platform.

Highlights:

1. Academic Distraction: 53.4% say social media hurts their studies.
2. Mixed Social Impact: Boosts communication but cuts family time.
3. Need for Awareness: Students must manage usage to protect well-being

Keywords: University Students, Academic Performance, Mental Health, Social Relationships , Social Media

Introduction

Social media platforms have taken up a very large space in modern families. This can generally refer to the great development of the Internet that has greatly changed the traditional way of working within community life. Cinema, television, and computers were used for some time, where they changed rapidly, and were replaced by smaller screens such as mobile phones, tablets, laptops, iPads, and others, which are increasingly being worked on at present [1].

However, it is still unknown what percentage of Turkish students use Facebook for social interaction, everyday tasks, or educational objectives, even if the social media platform has "exploded beyond its roots" in recent years. Furthermore, it's critical to comprehend how, why, and how much students use online social networking sites; yet, there isn't much research on their use and users in Turkey [2].

Even while Facebook use has grown quickly and is currently quite popular in Turkey, very little academic study has been done on usage profiles, how much time students spend on Facebook each day, how many friends they have, and why they use the platform [3]. Internet usage data show that by the end of June 2010, there were 35 million internet users in Turkey, or about 45% of the total population. This represents an increase of nearly 25 million users in the first half of 2010. Turkey now has a 45% internet penetration rate, ranking twelfth out of the top 20 countries in terms of internet usage [4]. These days, everyone is drawn to the most well-known Social Network Sites (SNS), including Facebook. Every day, the user has climbed by 1.6 billion. Mark Zuckerberg created Facebook in February 2004 and served as its CEO, overseeing its marketing plans and creative direction. Facebook was utilized in 27 countries worldwide and gained widespread recognition after a 2007 study named "Social Network Sites (SNS): Definition, history, and scholarship" took into account the growth of circulation in Facebook's popularity [5] [6]. We all know this saying, but not everyone is aware of how powerful social media has become. Social media provides an unfettered flow of information that empowers everyone online to expand their knowledge base. There is no denying that social media has a significant influence on our culture, economy, and worldview in the modern period. Social media is a brand-new platform that allows individuals to connect, relate to, and mobilize for a cause, share ideas, ask for and provide advice, and more. Social media has facilitated decentralized communication [7]

[8]. As statistics reveal that people spend an average of two hours a day on various social media applications, exchanging pictures and messages, updating their status, tweeting, liking, and commenting on numerous updated socially shared items, the growing number of social media users is spending an increasing amount of time on social network groups [9]. Researchers are starting to look into how students' lives are affected psychologically by social media use. According to Chukwuere and Chukwuere (2017), social media platforms are the most significant source of mood changes because, even when a person is using them passively and seemingly for no particular reason, they may eventually notice a change in their mood as a result of the type of content they are viewing. Consequently, social media networks make it simple to spread both pleasant and bad emotions throughout the populace [10].

The new media has become out of control, decentralized and countries cannot control it. It is proven that Arab political regimes have been able to impose their control over the media, and have even exploited these means to serve their purposes to monitor individuals and change their directions to what is in line with their goals and purposes. Students are using social media at high levels, which has impacted their study time, caused them to use poor language and misspell words when interacting on social media, and distracted them from their academics [11]. Therefore, through establishing online communities, social media significantly contributes to promoting and facilitating today's academic education process [12]. According to several studies, social media is used for a variety of purposes, such as establishing new friendships, keeping in touch with loved ones, and starting discussions about particular topics. Others also use social media for leisure, including watching films, playing online games, and staying up to date with emerging technologies [13]. Across all educational levels, the use of the internet in classrooms is growing globally. Technology integration can range from the basic use of email for student-teacher correspondence to offering entire courses online using a variety of software programs [14]. Researchers are growing more interested in examining the various potential uses of social media applications as a learning tool due to the quick rise in social media popularity [15]. This makes it possible for it to find a vast amount of information while using search sites, whether at home or work, to look up any topic. There are many benefits and drawbacks to the enormous advancement

that the World Wide Web has brought about. Like other inventions, the Internet has drawbacks [16].

Materials and Methods

This cross-sectional study, which had 430 participants who were all students, was carried out at the University of Basra's Bab Al-Zubair Campus. The participants were drawn from eight colleges on the campus.

1. Setting of the Study

This study, which began in November 2024 and ended in April 2025, was conducted at the University of Basrah's Bab Al-Zubair Campus.

2. The Sample of the Study

In order to assess their understanding of how social media and the internet affect their performance, 430 participants—all students, male and female—were included.

3. Study Instrument

To gather data, a closed-ended questionnaire was employed. There are two sections to the questionnaire. Age, gender, marital status, stage, residence, and the number of years of internet use are among the six questions in the first section that pertain to the sample's sociodemographic characteristics. Twenty questions in the second section of the survey address various issues that internet use may bring about as well as potential advantages [17]. The data analysis employed a standardized 3-point Likert scale with the following options: agree, disagree, and maybe. After 430 participants read and completed the previously completed questionnaire, the researchers gathered the completed forms and assessed each one based on the average of the responses [18].

4. Statistical Data Analysis

SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Sciences) version 26 was used for the analysis, and frequency and percentage were used to express the data. The mean of the scores was used to determine the degree of significance [19].

Table 1. 3 The Format of a Typical Three Level Likert Item, For Example, Could Be

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Good	Intermediate	Acceptable
3	2	1

We use three (3) three-point Likert Scale, which ranges from 1 to 3, as shown in the next section.

Table 2. Three (3) Point Likert Scale

Assessment			
Likert Scale	Interval	Difference	Evaluation
1	1-1.67	0.67	Acceptable
2	1.67-2.34	0.67	Intermediate
3	2.34-3	0.67	Good

Results

1. Result of the Study

Table 3. Socio-Demographic Features of Study Sample (n=430)

Variable	Category	frequency	Percentage
Age	Less age	186	43%
	More age	244	57%
	Total	430	100%
Sex	Male	139	32%
	Female	291	68%
	Total	430	100%
social	Single	400	93%
	Married	30	7%
	Total	430	100%
Place of living	City center	172	40%
	Village	258	60%
	Total	430	100%
Stage of college	First	139	32%
	Second	131	30%
	Third	91	21%
	Fourth	69	17%

	Total	430	100%
Collage	Education for girls	37	8%
	Management and economic	176	41%
	Low collage	17	4%
	Dentist	9	2%
	Manners	63	14%
	Fine arts	19	4%
	Nurse collage	101	23%
	Al-Zahra Medical	8	1%
	Total	430	100%
Years of internet use	Less use	314	72%
	More use	117	27%
	Total	430	100%

The table presents the socio-demographic characteristics of the study sample, which consists of 430 participants. Based on the data, the majority of participants (57%) belong to the older age group, while 43% are in the younger category. In terms of gender distribution, females make up 68% of the sample, whereas males constitute 32%. Regarding marital status, most participants (93%) are single, while only 7% are married [20]. When looking at the place of residence, 60% of the participants live in villages, while 40% reside in city centers. In terms of academic level, the highest percentage of students are in their first (32%) and second (30%) years, followed by third-year (21%) and fourth-year (17%) students. Regarding college specialization, the most common field among participants is management and economics (41%), followed by nursing (23%), and other fields such as literature, girls' education, dentistry, fine arts, and Al-Zahra Medical College. Finally, the data indicate that 72% of participants have limited internet usage, while 27% report higher usage. These findings suggest that the majority of the sample consists of young, single females from rural areas, with a significant preference for studying management and economics and relatively low internet usage[21].

2. Results of the Effect of the Internet and Social Media on Student Performance of Basrah University, Bab-AL Zubair Campus

Table 4. Frequency and Percent According to Evaluation Levels

Assessment	Mean Score	Frequency	Percent
Positive	1 - 1.66	55	13%
Moderate	1.67 0 - 2.33	318	74%
Negative	2.34 - 3	57	13%
Total		430	100%

The table shows student performance evaluations at Basrah University's Bab-AL Zubair campus, categorized into positive, moderate, and negative levels. Most students (74%) fall into the moderate category, indicating average impact from the internet and social media. Positive and negative evaluations each account for 13%, highlighting a split between students who 24 benefit and those adversely affected. This reflects the dual-edged nature of technology in academics [22].

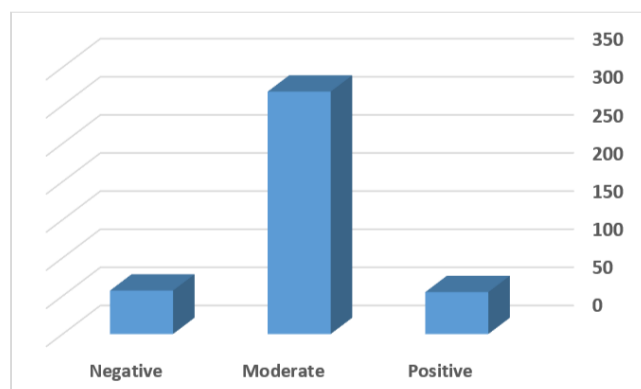


Figure 1. Evaluation Chart of the Impact of the Internet and Social Media on Student Performance

The majority of children with anemia (males and females) live in middle-income families. The current study found that 50% and 42.86 % of males and females, respectively, live in middle-income families.

Table 3. Sample Size and Mean Score for Overall Assessment

Statistics	N	Mean score	Assessment
Sample	430	2.10	Moderate

The table provides a summary of the overall assessment of student performance at Basrah University's Bab-AlZubair campus. The sample size consists of 430 students, with a mean score of 2.10. This mean score falls within the moderate assessment range, indicating that the overall impact of internet and social media use on student performance is average. The data suggests that while there are variations in individual experiences, the general trend points to a moderate influence of these technologies on academic outcomes. This aligns with previous findings that most students experience a balanced effect, neither significantly positive nor negative, from their use of the internet and social media [23].

Table 4. Percentage of the Obstacles according to Demographic Variable

Variable	category	Positive		Moderate		Negative		Total	
		F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
Age	21 and less	33	13.2%	201	80.4%	16	6.4%	250	100%
	More than 21	22	12.2%	117	65.0%	41	22.8%	180	100%
Sex	Male	18	12.77%	111	78.72%	12	8.51%	141	100%
	Female	37	12.80%	207	71.63%	45	15.57%	289	100%
social	Single	51	12.7%	296	73.8%	54	13.5%	401	100%
	married	4	13.8%	22	75.9%	3	10.3%	29	100%
Place of living	City center	25	15.1%	121	72.9%	20	12.0%	166	100%
	Village	30	11.4%	197	74.6%	37	14.0%	264	100%
Stage of college	First	20	14.5%	101	73.2%	17	12.3%	138	100%
	Second	19	14.4%	100	75.8%	13	9.8%	132	100%
	Third	10	10.2%	71	72.4%	17	17.3%	98	100%
	Fourth	6	9.7%	46	74.2%	10	16.1%	62	100%
Collage	Education for girls	4	10.5%	25	65.8%	9	23.7%	38	100%
	Management and economic	26	15.2%	130	76.4%	14	8.23%	170	100%
	Low collage	1	5.5%	14	77.7%	3	16.6%	18	100%
	dentist	0	0.0%	8	88.9%	1	11.1%	9	100%

	Arts	9	14.8%	43	70.5%	9	14.8%	61	100%
	Beautiful arts	0	0.0%	17	97.6%	1	2.4%	18	100%
	Nurse collage	15	14.0%	72	67.3%	20	18.7%	107	100%
	Al-Zahra Medical	0	0.0%	9	100%	0	0.0%	9	100%
Years of internet use	Less than 10	30	13.8%	162	74.7%	25	11.5%	217	100%
	More than 10	25	12.1%	156	75.7%	25	12.1%	206	100%

The table presents the percentage distribution of obstacles students face based on demographic variables, categorized into positive, moderate, and negative experiences. Younger students (21 and below) report a slightly higher percentage of positive experiences (13.2%) compared to older students (12.2%), with both groups having similar negative experiences (6.4% and 6.6%). Males and females show nearly identical positive experiences (12.8%), but females report slightly more negative experiences (15.57%) than males (15.51%).

Single students experience slightly more positive outcomes (12.8%) than married students (10%), while married students face significantly more negative obstacles (30%). City residents report more positive experiences (15.1%) than village residents (11.4%), while village students encounter more moderate obstacles (76.5%).

Regarding academic levels, first-year students report the highest percentage of positive experiences (14.5%), whereas fourth-year students face the most negative obstacles (23.7%). Faculty differences are also notable, with Management and Economics students having the highest positive experiences (15.2%), while Education for Girls students report the lowest (10.5%). Nursing students mostly experience moderate obstacles (67.3%), while Al-Zahra Medical students report only negative experiences (100%).

Additionally, students with lower internet usage tend to have slightly more positive experiences (13.8%) compared to those with higher usage (12.1%). These findings indicate that demographic factors, including age, gender, marital status,

place of residence, faculty, and internet usage, significantly influence students' experiences with obstacles.

Discussion

Our study examines how technological advancements, especially the Internet and social media, affect social interactions. While social media enhances communication, it also introduces issues like family division and generation gaps. The focus is on the University of Basrah, investigating whether social media strengthens or weakens family and student relationships [24].

The goals are to investigate how social media affects families and student interactions and whether it promotes unity or leads to division.

The study surveyed 430 students to understand the demographic features and the impact of social media and internet use on their performance. The sample consisted mostly of older students (57%), with a higher proportion of females (68%) and singles (93%). A majority lived in villages (60%) and were from colleges of Management and Economics (41%) and Nursing (23%). Most students (72%) reported limited internet use.

In terms of social media's impact, 74% experienced moderate effects on their academic performance, while 13% saw positive or negative effects each. When analyzing obstacles by demographic factors, younger students and females reported facing more moderate challenges. Additionally, those living in villages and with less internet use also experienced more moderate obstacles. The study's findings answer the following research questions: how do social media and the internet affect students' mental health, academic achievement, and social interactions? According to a recent study that polled students in six stages at our medical school, the majority of them used social media for two hours every day, while others spent more than six hours [25]. Our results are in line with a recent survey conducted at Mustansiriya and Baghdad Universities, which found that 28% of female students and 32% of male students used two social networking websites¹⁸. Additionally, according to another study that polled college students in Oman, 42% of participants used two websites, while 26% used three [26]. According to a recent survey of 100 students at Baghdad and Mustansiriya Universities in Iraq, Facebook was the most popular social media platform among 61.5% of male students

and 54% of female students, with Twitter and YouTube coming in second and third, respectively [27].

Our survey's stated social media usage is lengthier than that of a study conducted at Koforidua Polytechnic Institution, which found that 98.5% of students used the platform for 30 to 60 minutes every day, and another study conducted at US institutions that found 60 minutes per day [28]. Research revealed that while 64.6% of college students said using social media for academic purposes was beneficial, there was no relationship between students' grades and social media usage time [29]. The impact of social network sites on the academic performance of students in the polytechnics of Ghana [30].

1. Social Interaction: Social media enhances communication (60.7% agreed it improves connections) but can reduce face-to-face time with family and friends (30.9% strongly agreed it limits interaction). It both connects and isolates.
2. Family Dynamics: Social media helps students stay connected with family (60.7% agreed) but can also lead to reduced quality time (30.9% strongly agreed), indicating it can both unite and divide families.
3. Academic Performance: Social media often distracts students, with 44.5% strongly agreeing it wastes study time and 53.4% agreeing it harms academic performance. It is a double-edged tool for academics.
4. Mental Health: While not explicitly measured, social media can influence mood, with both positive and negative emotions easily transferred among users, suggesting potential impacts on mental health.
5. Demographic Insights
 - a. Age/Gender: Younger students and females reported more negative experiences.
 - b. Marital Status: Single students had more positive experiences than married students.
 - c. Residence: Urban students benefited more from social media than rural students.
 - d. Academic Level: First-year students reported more positive experiences, while fourth-year students faced more negative impacts.
 - e. Internet Usage: Lower usage correlated with more positive outcomes.

Students' use of social media can have both beneficial and detrimental effects. While it enhances communication, it can also distract, isolate, and harm academic performance. Awareness and balanced use are crucial to maximize benefits and minimize drawbacks.

Conclusions

According to the study's findings, social media affects students' lives in both positive and negative ways. Some students were able to use social media positively, such as searching for educational resources and joining study groups. These social media platforms provide effective communication and access to information, but they can also lead to a decline in academic performance. A significant portion of students use the internet for social and recreational objectives in addition to their academic ones. Overuse of social media causes distraction and lowers academic performance.

Therefore, it is important to raise awareness of how to use it in a balanced and beneficial manner. It also affects students' mental health, as some indicated that it improves their mood and gives them a sense of belonging.

Some students showed symptoms of anxiety and depression due to social comparisons and the pressure of following the lives of others online.

Continued use can lead to addiction, which can cause sleep disturbances. Social media has helped some students strengthen their connection with friends and family.

Excessive use can lead to decreased personal interaction and social isolation, with many students reporting that they spend less time with their family and friends due to their preoccupation with social media. The study showed that the problem lies not in social media itself, but in the way it is used.

These platforms can be powerful educational and social tools if used in moderation and balance.

It is essential to educate students about the importance of managing their time effectively to avoid the negative effects of social media.

Recommendations

1. Regulate usage time: Students should set a specific schedule for social media use so that it does not interfere with study or sleep time.

2. Focus on academic use: It is preferable to use social media as an educational resource, such as following academic pages and joining useful study groups.
3. Reducing excessive use: Avoid spending long hours on social media, especially when completing assignments or during lectures.
4. Promoting direct social interaction: Students should set aside time for in-person meetings with family and friends to strengthen real social relationships.
5. Organize awareness workshops: Hold seminars and workshops to teach kids how to utilize social media in a balanced way and about its advantages and disadvantages.
6. Promote non-digital activities: Support cultural, sports, and recreational activities that help students avoid excessive technology use and engage in real-life social life.

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