

Antecedents and Outcomes of Social Networking Sites Usage Among Students within Higher Education in UAE. Opportunities vs Challenges and Future research

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Abstract

Socialnetworking became a buzzword in both economic and social life. It speeds up the growth of economy through providing a flexible and effective communication tool. The leading platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, WhatApp, and LinkedIn play an effective role in the development of education system. Yet, few studies have investigated how social networking influence studies education and how to maximize their advantages, especially in the Middle Eastern countries. This leaves gap that needs to be bridged and studies are needed to understand this issue and how the students in higher education institutions benefit from them. Therefore, this study aims to identify the key drivers of socialneworing in the Middle eastern countries in general and from UAE particularly. This study also intends to highlight on the opportunities of socialnetworking as well as the challenges that face the effectiveness utilization socialnetworking in education system. Finally this study conclude with the future research trend.

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I. Introduction to Social Network

Online and internet technology applications and services have rapidly turned to be an indispensable in the daily life of most individuals and significantly impacted every facet of operations in organizations(Al-Shami et al., 2019; Greengard, 2015) It has also become an essential platform in knowledge management system which

improves knowledge acquisition, task efficiency, and decision quality (Cheung, Chang, & Lai, 2000; Parveen & Sulaiman, 2008; Curran, Fenton, & Freedman, 2016). This is evidenced by the number of online users in the world today (3,885,567,619) (Internet World Stats, 2017b) as shown in Table 1.

Table 1. World internet usage & population

WORLD INTERNET USAGE AND POPULATION STATISTICS JUNE 30, 2017 - Update						
World Regions	Population (2017 Est.)	Population % of World	Internet Users 30 June 2017	Penetration Rate (% Pop.)	Growth 2000-2017	Internet Users %
Africa	1,246,504,865	16.6 %	388,376,491	31.2 %	8,503.1%	10.0 %
Asia	4,148,177,672	55.2 %	1,938,075,631	46.7 %	1,595.5%	49.7 %
Europe	822,710,362	10.9 %	659,634,487	80.2 %	527.6%	17.0 %
Latin America / Caribbean	647,604,645	8.6 %	404,269,163	62.4 %	2,137.4%	10.4 %
Middle East	250,327,574	3.3 %	146,972,123	58.7 %	4,374.3%	3.8 %
North America	363,224,006	4.8 %	320,059,368	88.1 %	196.1%	8.2 %
Oceania / Australia	40,479,846	0.5 %	28,180,356	69.6 %	269.8%	0.7 %
WORLD TOTAL	7,519,028,970	100.0 %	3,885,567,619	51.7 %	976.4%	100.0 %

Source: (Internet World Stats, 2017b)

Social network sites, also known as social networking service, online social networks, social media, social media sites, social media platforms, phenomenon are still under debate (Cocosila & Igonor, 2015). Social networks are one of the internet platforms, which is growing fast. Studies link the internet and social networks to organization performance (Wang & Hou, 2003; Chen, 2008), other studies emphasize that internet platforms improve knowledge acquisition, task efficiency, and decision quality in organizations (Isaac, et al., 2016). The growth of

social networks users worldwide (see Figure 1) in the leading platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp, and LinkedIn need initiatives and studies to understand this issue and how the students in higher education institutions benefit from them. According to (Arab Social Media Report, 2015), online social networks in the Arab world is perceived as having numerous positive aspects that enhance the quality of life of individuals, business profitability and governmental interaction with the public.

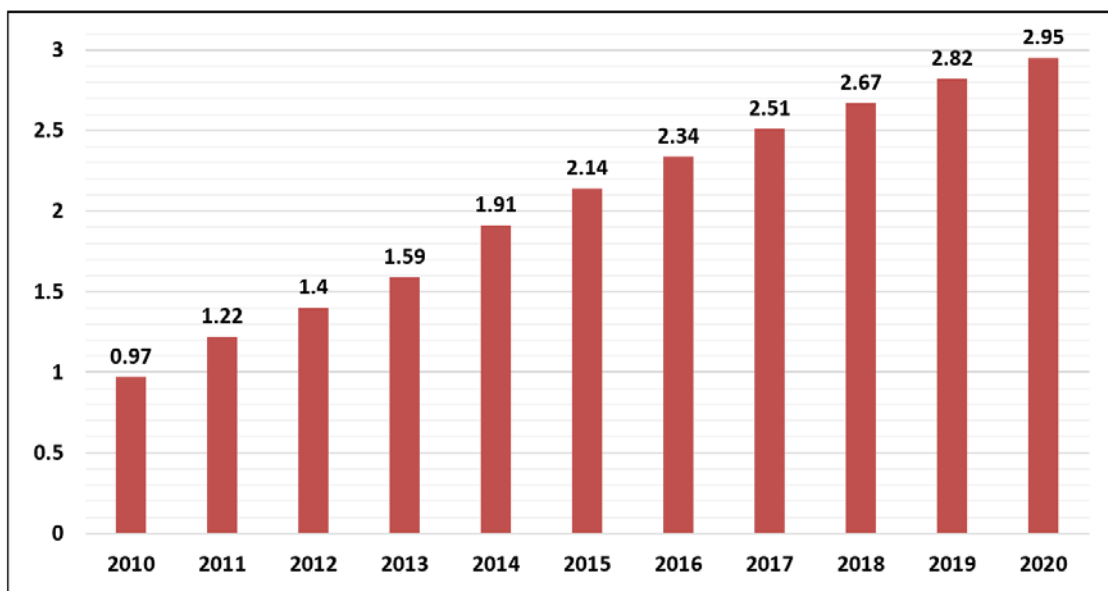


Figure 1. Number of online social networks users worldwide from 2010 to 2020 (in billions)
Source: (Statista, 2017a)

II. Social Network in the UAE

With regard to the context of this study, the United Arab Emirates (UAE) is among the highest countries in the world and region in terms of internet penetration, mobile internet usage, and number of active social media users (World Development Indicators, 2017). The online penetration (% of populations use the online

services) stands at 91.24% compared to its neighboring Arab countries such as Bahrain, Qatar, , Kuwait, Oman, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Algeria, Egypt, Yemen, Libya , and Iraq with the online penetration being recorded at 93.48%, 92.88%, 82.08%, 74.17%, 69.62%, 53.4%, 38.2%, 35.9%, 25.1%, 19.02% and 17.22%, respectively (see Figure 2).

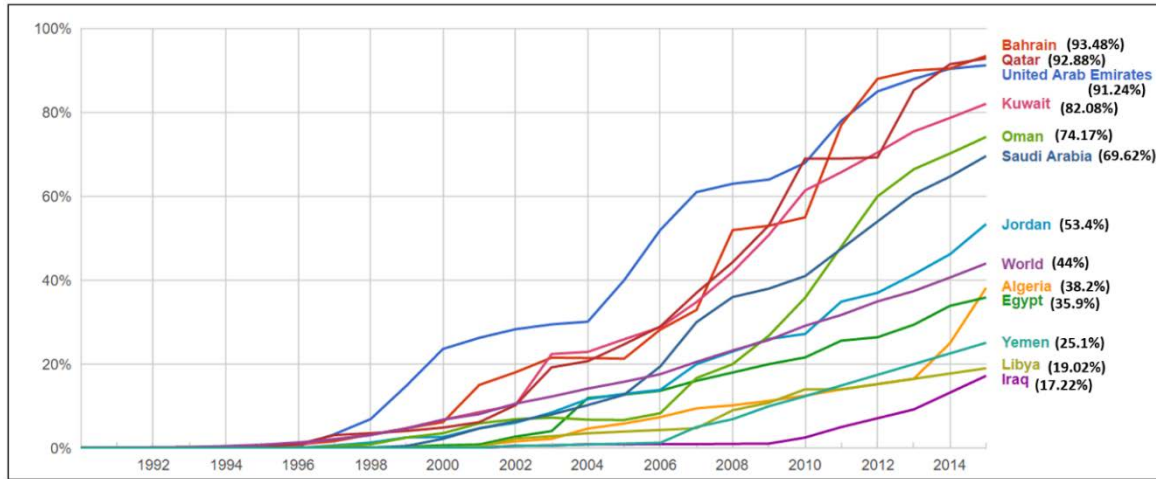


Figure 2: Online users as percentage of population: UAE vs. neighbor Arab countries
Source: (World Development Indicators, 2016)

Moreover, Figure 3 shows that 92% of the population of the United Arab Emirates are using Facebook, whereas 93% are YouTube users followed by WhatsApp with 79% and so forth. This indicates an important opportunity that needs to be exploited in higher education institutions to improve professional practice, personal

development and quality of education. It is, therefore, relevant for scholars and policymakers in UAE to understand how to utilize the use of social network sites which lead to a major improvement in the performance of students in the higher education institutions.

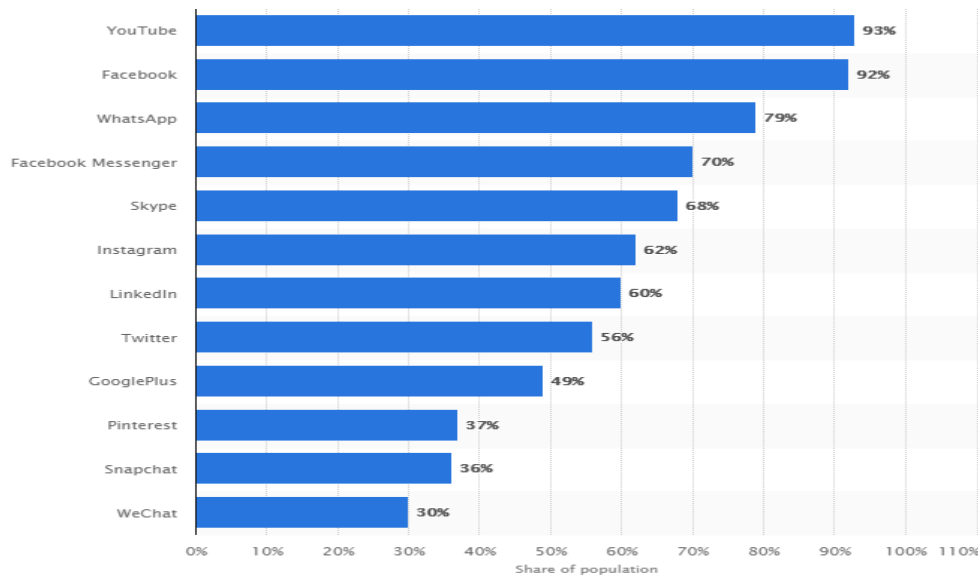


Figure 3: Penetration of leading social networks in the United Arab Emirates
Source: (Statista, 2017b)

III. Challenges from UAE Perspective

According to the Internet World Stats (2017), the UAE comes second in terms of the population percentage that are using the internet with a

whopping 90.6% which is considered among the highest in the world. However, Figure 1.6 shows that the UAE is positioned at the tenth place in the world in terms of the impact of technology usage on organizational performance (Global

Information Technology Report, 2017). His Highness Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum the vice president and prime minister of the United Arab Emirates emphasized that the vision and long-term strategy of the UAE government is to always strive to be number one in the world in all aspects including technology usage. Therefore, there is a clear gap between the

indicator of the impact of technology usage on organizational performance and government's vision of the future in this aspect (figure 4). In order to fill this gap, this study addresses the link between technology usage (internet) and individual outcomes (performance impact) within the public sector in UAE namely Abu Dhabi police department.

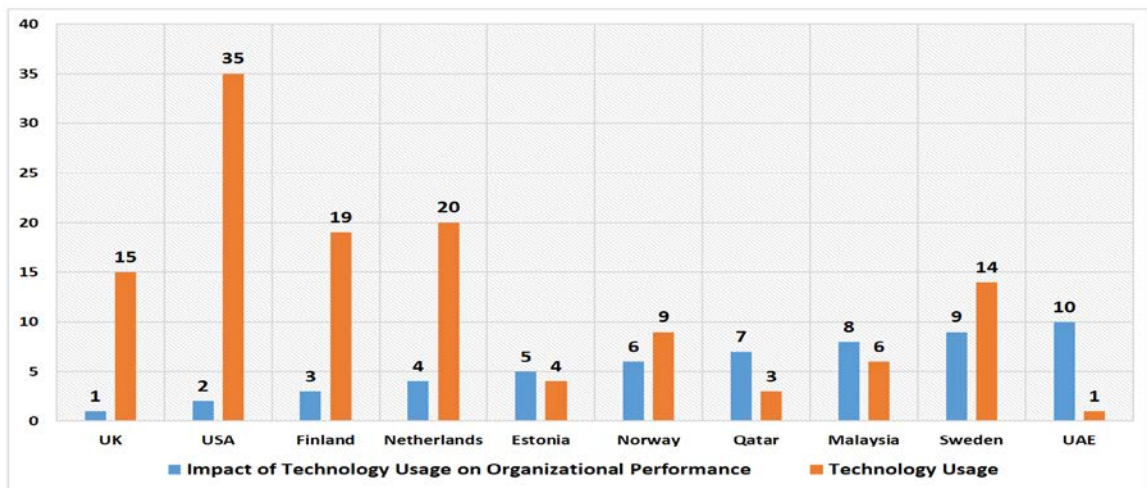


Figure 4: Technology usage and impact of technology usage on organizational performance (Ranking among 139 country)

Source: (Global Information Technology Report, 2017)

In terms of the industrial gap, Figure 5 clearly shows that although the UAE comes first or second among 139 countries in most of ICT

indicators, it drops to the 26th place in the ICT performance impact indicator,

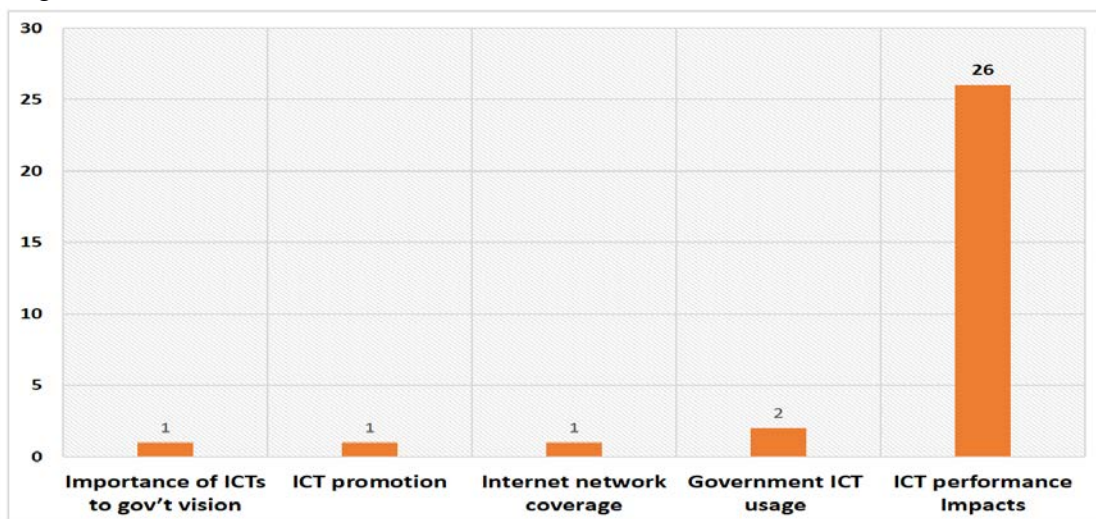


Figure 5: UAE Ranking among 139 country regarding ICT issues

Source: (Global Information Technology Report, 2017)

The focus of this study is to identify the impact of social networking site usage on the performance of students in high education institutions in UAE. Therefore, it is worth to use, which is the aim of the ongoing research and this paper is a part of it. The findings from this study will be beneficial for three different levels individuals, organizations and the country as a whole. For the individuals level, studies have revealed that online platforms usage improve the efficiency, knowledge acquisition, and decision quality for individuals (Isaac, et al., 2016; Norzaidi and Salwani, 2009; Norzaidi et al., 2007; Wu and Wang, 2006). For organizations level, studies show that online services usage influence positively organizational performance (Wang & Hou, 2003; Chen, 2008). For the state level, studies have shown that the online applications usage has the potential to improve all aspects of our social, economic and cultural life (Kocaleva, 2014), and it is linked to national income (Pew Research Center, 2013). Therefore, online platforms usage such as social networks sites can play a major role in encouraging economic growth, improving government efficiency and enhancing employee performance in UAE.

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