



Social Media Utilizing for Studying and Learning Purposes among University Students in Kurdistan-Iraq

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Abstract

The study focuses on utilizing social media for studying and learning purposes among university students in Kurdistan-Iraq and Lebanese French University (LFU) Erbil, Iraq in 2022 was taken as an example. The study focuses on social media interest and time spent by undergraduate students and taking advantage of it for studying & learning purposes. The mixed method approach is depended on to find out and translate the data results. The Chi-Square test of independence indicated there is not any significant relationship between academic levels and the favorite Social Media app or daily time spent on social media. The results illustrated that Facebook (23.5%) after Snapchat (47.8%), is the second most interesting Social Media platform that is generally used by university students. Additionally, Facebook (20%) is the third most used Social Media application for learning and studying after YouTube (33%) and Viber (20.9%). Meanwhile, academics can take advantage of social media, especially Facebook and YouTube to utilize in the teaching and learning process in academic establishments.

Keywords: Social Media Platforms, Facebook, YouTube, Undergraduate Students, Time Spending for Studying and Learning

Introduction

In the 21st century many great changes have happened to the world, among them inventing and widely using technology in miscellaneous fields of life to an extent that the era is called the century of technology. Technology is a broad field that includes many inventions: electronic devices (the computer, mobile. . . etc.), the internet, and online Social Media applications. . . etc. Therefore, social media is a product of newly developed science and technologies). Social media is defined as "a group of Internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0 and that allow the creation and exchange of user-generated content" (Kaplan & Haenlein

2010, p. 61). That is to say, using social media requires an electronic device, the internet and online applications; meanwhile, its applications are various: Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, Viber, WhatsApp, Viber, Telegram and YouTube. . . etc., each of them may have some similarities and differences in terms of providing services. People can directly contact each other and exchange their ideas, thoughts and knowledge through using Social Media applications, and are capable of posting and sharing different types of data, information and knowledge via posting pictures, videos, and pieces of writing. This has had its effect on every aspect of life; political, financial, environmental, medical, psychological. . . social life and educational aspects, too. In the present times, social media is being used broadly all over the world; however, many people from different parts of the world take advantage of using it for different aspects of life, but at the same time it has brought many issues to the users. Al-Ashour (2017). cited in his article “Impact of Social Media upon Undergraduates Student Behaviors in the University of Kufa, Iraq” “Because of its ease of use, speed and reach, social media is fast changing the public discourse in society, setting trends and agendas in topics that range from the environment and politics to technology and the entertainment industry” (p.3048). Rahim & Jalaladeen (2016) shed light on “Social Media Role in Undergraduate Students' Environmental Awareness at Suleimani University in Iraq”. The paper explained that despite broadly using Social Media but using it for education, then environmental awareness is their last concern. Additionally, they use Facebook daily above four times than they use at night. Rassool (2018) published “Analysis of the Relationship between Social Media and Education System in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq”. The paper indicated that only about (45%) use social media for learning and teaching, while (85%) of students use social media for socializing and communication.

Meanwhile, it is observed that social media is broadly used among university students in Kurdistan and Iraq, and they may use it quite randomly. That is to say, it may negatively affect them and be the main source of wasting their lifetime during study courses. So, despite the writings on negative and positive aspects of using social media, but still systematically using specific related Social Media apps in academic establishments is not determined to be effectively and efficiently utilized. The paper investigates how social media is used among university students in Kurdistan, Iraq. What are the most used Social Media apps? How much time do undergraduate students generally spend daily on social media? How much time do the students utilize social media for learning and studying? How can academics take advantage of and utilize social media for studying and academic purposes? The answers to the questions are hypothesized that the learners spend a great amount of time generally using social media, while they may very little and rarely take advantage of it for learning and studying. The study focuses on taking advantage of the Social Media time spent and interest among university students in Kurdistan Region, Iraq, and utilizing social media for studying &

learning purposes. The objectives are to find out the most applicable, interesting and compatible Social Media platforms to be utilised parallel to e-Learning tools, in creating an interesting academic environment for encouraging and motivating the learners in the studying and learning process.

Literature Review

The review of literature is made to investigate how social media is used in Iraq and Kurdistan region among university students. In the literature review, it appeared that many types of Social Media platforms are used for different purposes, and Facebook and YouTube are among the most commonly used Social Media platforms. Additionally, it indicates that a lot of Social Media time spent negatively affects the behaviours of the users and unfortunately the least of the time is used for learning and academic purposes in Kurdistan Region, Iraq.

In general, the broad use of social media has negatively affected the behaviour of users. Rahim & Jalaladeen (2016) shed light on the “Social Media role in Undergraduate Students' Environmental Awareness in the University of Sulaimani in Iraq”. The paper concluded that students use Facebook as the first top and YouTube as the second top Social Media platform. Alahmar (2016) published an article to investigate the impact that social media has on the academic performance of university students. The paper is conducted at the University of Babylon, Data of (n=57) was collected through an online questionnaire in the College of Medicine second-year medical students were targeted. The paper concluded that all students use Facebook and (96.5%) of them use Facebook-messenger, and accordingly “Facebook-messenger are very popular among second-year medical” (p. 77). Al-Ashour (2017) at the University of Kufa, Iraq, investigated on “Social Media Impact on behaviors of the Undergraduates Student”. A questionnaire and a heterogeneous stratified sample from (25) male and female students from all 21 university faculties, were randomly selected. The results indicated that social media has negatively affected (36%) of the students. Aljuboori et al. (2020) wrote about the “Impacts of Social Media on University students in Iraq” they focused on comparing political, economic and academic effects to the general effects of social media. The data collection was based on a survey about the four above categories, the number of participants was (201) among three Iraqi universities (Karbala, UOITC and Tikrit University) students. The results showed that generally, social media negatively affect real social relationship among relatives; despite the great use of YouTube, it indicated Facebook is the top used web-based social networking in Iraq.

Despite a lot of Social Media time spent, still due to a lack of encouragement and motivation it is very rarely used for learning and study purposes. GHAREB et al. (2018) in a case study survey-based data collection, concerned with “Social Media and Social Relationships in Kurdistan Society”. According to the survey results, educated people

(66.3% Bachelor's degrees and 20.7% Master's Degree holders) are interested in various Social Media activities. Rassool (2018) published "Analysis of the Relationship between Social Media and Education System in the Kurdistan region of Iraq Using Chi-Square Test" which sheds light on Social Media tools and education associations and relations. The data collection was taken from the students of a public university (University Of Duhok) and a private university (Nawroz of University) in Duhok City- Kurdistan, Iraq. The paper showed that the majority (85%) of the students use social media for communication and only about (45%) use it for learning and teaching. Makki & Bali (2021) in their article which investigated the perceptions of students and teachers regarding "The Use of Social Media as a Platform in Education: Ramifications of COVID-19 in Iraq" via online Google form questionnaire, (2010) responses received from universities and high schools' teachers and students and the parents of basic schools, too. The study reveals that due to some issues (lack of enough electricity, Internet, and ICT) only less than half of the participants supported using social media for study purposes. Furthermore, it confirms the dominance of Facebook among the other Social Media platforms in Iraq.

According to the following studies, social media may have a positive impact on academic skills and the learning process if the learners are supported and encouraged to use it in this direction. Redecker et al. (2010) wrote an article regarding "The Impact of Social Media on Learning in Europe", "To assess the current impact and scope of "Learning 2.0". . . two parallel studies were conducted, both of which exploited a vast resource of evidence and used a triangulation method to synthesize findings generated along different research lines" (6). Institute for Prospective Technological Studies (IPTS) research suggests that Social Media can help improve and innovate learning and teaching possibilities, by supporting learning and professional development along a lifelong learning continuum. Social media also enable communication between students and teachers, foster more active and proactive ways of learning, and open up new information sources. Ahmad & Hameed (2021) investigated the effects of social networks on the academic skills of Kurdistan Region university students in an article entitled "The Use of Social Media and its Effect on University Students' Academic Skills in Iraqi Kurdistan Region". The study depended on the content analysis method for the gathered data from (653) responses at Sulaimani Polytechnic and Raparin University, Kurdistan, Iraq. The study statistically indicates there is a strong significant positive correlation between Social Media utilization and academic skills.

However, generally intensive use of social media negatively affects the users but still, Social Media is used broadly, and the least time is for learning, if the learners are supported and encouraged to use Social Media for learning purposes in academic establishments, it will have a very positive impact and a great effect on the learning process. More specifically, Facebook and YouTube are the most used Social Media

platforms, and they can be significantly supportive of investing Social Media time spending and interest in studying and learning.

Methods and Methodology

The study investigated the favourite social media and the amount of time which is spent on social media by the university students for general and academic learning purposes. The paper was designed on a mixed-method and inductive reasoning approach. The scope and setting of the paper were undergraduate students of Lebanes Frenche University-Erbil, Iraq in 2022. The data were collected based on probability-stratified random sampling and cluster random sampling via a structured survey questionnaire from LFU. The Chi-Square test of independence is performed on IBM SPSS (V25) software program.

Results and Discussion

This paper investigates how social media and to what extent is used for studying and learning purposes among university students in Kurdistan-Iraq. A sample size of (n. 115) is collected from both males and females from all the grades of the undergraduate students at Lebanese French University-Erbil in 2022. Based on the nature of our categorical variables (nominal and ordinal) Chi-Square Test of Independence was used to test the hypotheses to find out the relationship between variables:

H0: There is not a significant relationship between the variables

H1: There is a significant relationship between the variables

The percentage of male (54.8 %) participants was more than the females (45.2 %) as it is shown in (Figure 1).

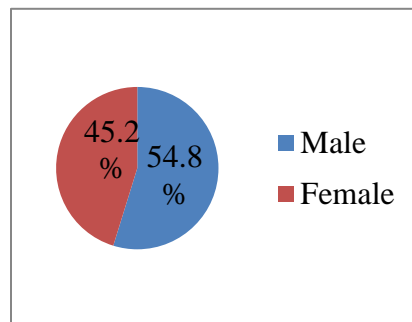


Figure 1: Gender (male and female) percentage of the participants

The participant percentage of the learners per their academic level is shown in

figure 2. The second-year students took the highest level (51.3%) of participants then the third-year students (21.7%), first year (11.3%) and fourth year (10.4) were nearly got the same ratio, while the fifth year students got the least proportion of participation.

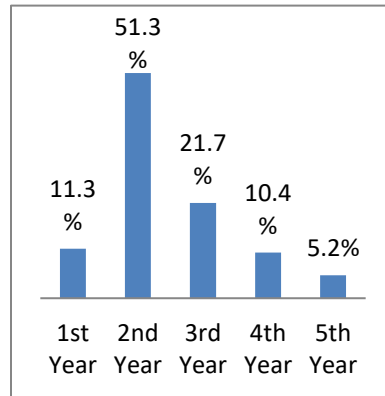


Figure 2: Illustrates the participants' percentage per their academic level

According to the results of Figure 3, Snapchat (47.8%) and Facebook (23.5%) have taken the top first and second of the most generally used Social Media platforms, contrary, Viber and Telegram are the least (0.9%) used Social Media Applications. It seems that Facebook & Messenger is the second most interesting social media that are generally used among university students.

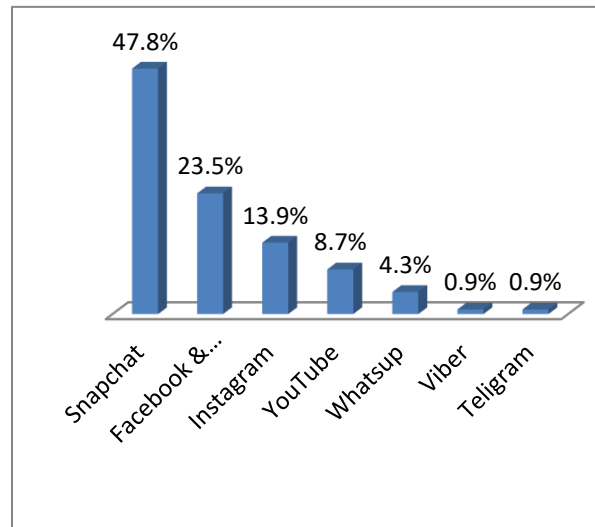


Figure 3: The generally used Social Media platforms

Furthermore, according to the percentage of the responses shown in Figure 4, among the most used Social Media platform for studying and learning purposes, YouTube (33%) has taken the top first and Facebook & Messenger (20%) is the top third after Viber which is (20.9%). However, Facebook & Messenger is not formally determined to be used for academic purposes; still, it is among the favourite Social Media platforms that are utilized for studying and learning purposes.

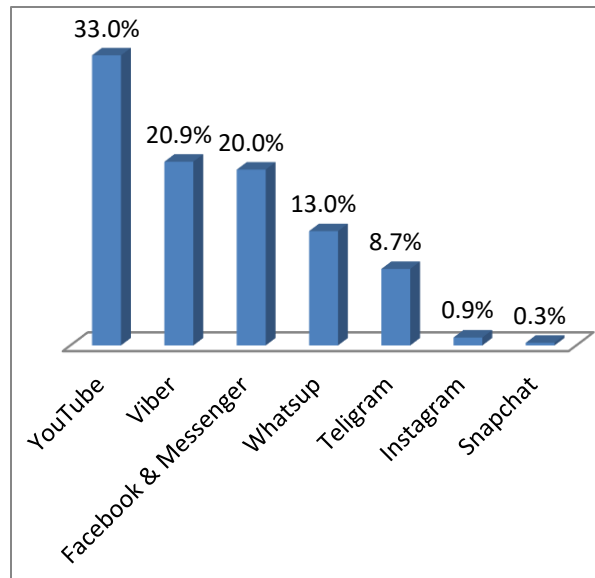


Figure 4: The utilized Social Media platforms for studying & learning purposes

Chi-Square Test of independence examined the relationship between the academic levels of the participants and generally Social Media using hours daily. Accordingly, Table 1 illustrates that $\chi^2 (16, N=155) = 19.780, P = 0.230 > \alpha (0.05)$. Therefore, there was not a significant association between variables. It means that regardless of their academic level, students spend a lot of time generally using social media to an extent that (36.5%) of them spend about (4-6 hrs.), (16.5%) about (7-8 hrs.), and (8.7%) use social media approximately (9-10 hrs.) daily.

Table 1: Generally, daily social media using hours

Academic Levels	1-3 hrs	4-6 hrs	7-8 hrs	9-10 hrs	More
1 st Year	46.2%	15.4%	15.4%	7.7%	15.4%
2 nd Year	33.9%	35.6%	22.0%	8.5%	
3 rd Year	32.0%	48.0%	8.0%	12.0%	
4 th Year	33.3%	33.3%	16.7%	8.3%	8.3%
5 th Year	50.0%	50.0%			
Total	35.7%	36.5%	16.5%	8.7%	%2.6

Similarly, the same test was used to test the association between the academic levels of the participants and daily social media using hours for studying and learning purposes, $\chi^2(4, N=155) = 3.955, P = 0.412 > \alpha(0.05)$, and again it shows that there was not a significant association between the variables. It corresponds that the university students similarly utilize an amount of time on social media for studying and learning purposes regardless of their academic levels, as (93%) of the respondents spend (1-3 hrs.) and (7%) of them expend (4-6 hrs.) each day.

Table 2 : Daily social media using hours for studying and learning purposes

Academic Levels	1-3 hrs	4-6 hrs	7-8 hrs	9-10 hrs	More
1 st Year	100.0%				
2 nd Year	94.9%	5.1%			
3 rd Year	92.0%	8.0%			
4 th Year	83.3%	16.7%			
5 th Year	83.3%	16.7%			
Total	93.0%	7.0%			

That is to say, Table 2 is evidence of a significant indication of utilizing the amount of time which is invested in social media for Studying and Learning, by university students. The vital point is that as appeared in the results (Table 1 & 2) however, university students waste a great amount of time on social media daily, but at the same time they utilize a significant amount of time on social media for studying and learning purposes, too. The participants were asked whether social media has wasted a lot of time from them as shown (Figure 5) most of the respondents agree (52.2%) and strongly agree (34.8%) which is a significant indication of self-awareness of the participants regarding wasting a lot of time on social media.

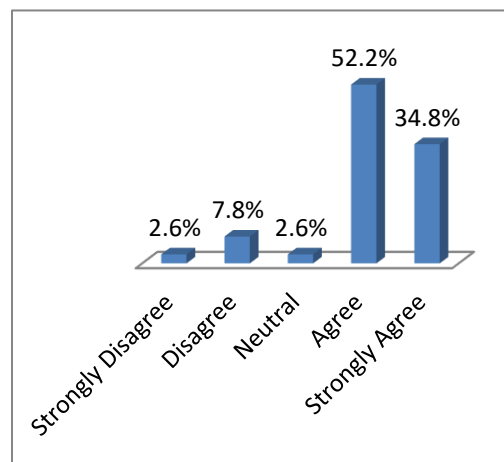


Figure 5: Social media has wasted a lot of time from me

To check the willingness of the participants towards reducing time spent on Social Media, they were asked if they aspire to reduce wasting time on Social Media, the Figure 6 explains that most of the undergraduate students agree (39.1%) and (40.9%) strongly agree. Being aware of wasting a lot of time on Social Media is the second important step toward reducing the negative side effect of Social Media.

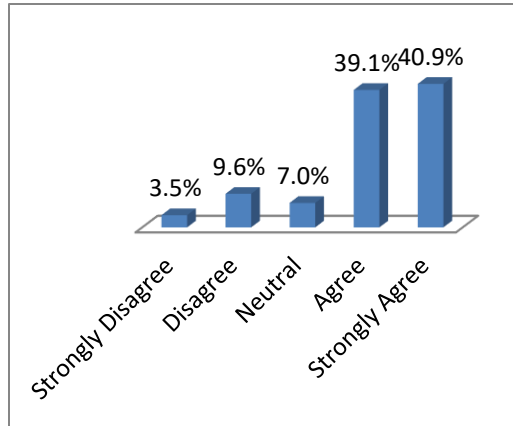


Figure 6: Aspire to reduce social media

In Figure 7, it is revealed that undergraduate students are not only aware of wasting a lot of time on social media and aspire to decrease using it, but also (25.2%) agree and (27.8%) strongly agree that they have practically tried to reduce it but were unsuccessful. Additionally, (20%) of them disagree with this perspective. Therefore, academics should try to find a compatible alternative to assist the learners to invest in their time spent on social media.

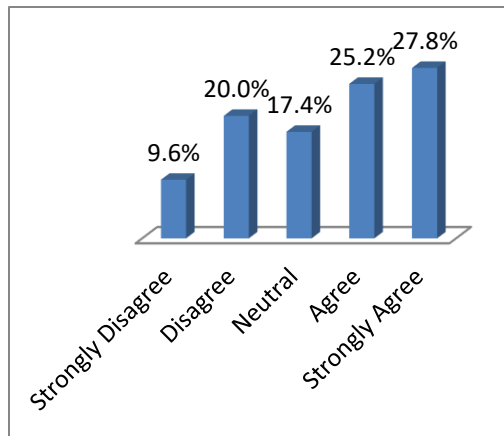


Figure 7: Attempt to reduce Social Media

The participants were requested to express their point of view towards the statement; the time they have spent on social if they had used it for reading on their major they would have been very successful, (33.9%) agree and (45.2%) strongly agree. This

discloses that despite understanding the situation, but the participants lack initiative towards utilizing better alternatives in their academic lifestyle.

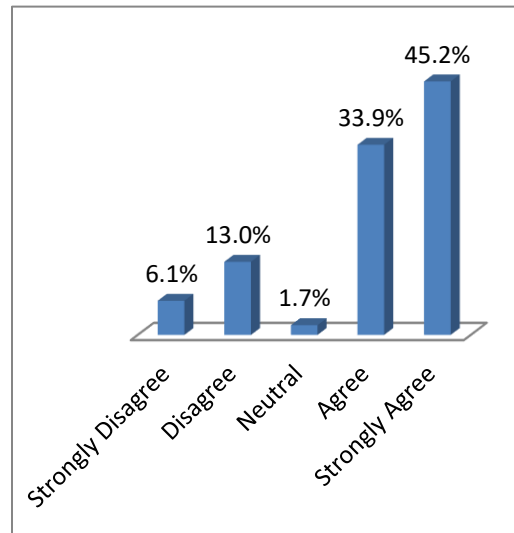


Figure 8: If you read on your major than using Social Media you would have been very successful

Conclusion

Social Media is a product of science and is a scientific invention but nowadays, it is not used that much for academic and scientific purposes. The outcomes of the literature review from previous studies and the results of this study confirm that students are generally captivated by Social Media, and they spend a great amount of time on it. Thus, academics should rethink and take advantage of it for education and learning in academic establishments.

According to the previous studies, Facebook is the most interesting Social Media platform and per this study, Facebook & Messenger (23.5%) is the second most interesting Social Media platform after Snapchat (47.8%) among generally used Social Media apps by university students. Therefore, academics individually or systematically can take benefit from that much interest of the university students in Facebook & Messenger and utilize them for academic and study purposes. The paper indicated that (20%) of the students have utilized Facebook & Messenger for studying and learning purposes, (33%) of them took benefit from YouTube for the same purposes.

Accordingly, the Undergraduate students of Lebanees French University (LFU) in the Kurdistan Region generally spend a lot of time on Social Media and some time for academic and study purposes. As it was hypothesized and expected the results

demonstrated that (36.5%) of the students spend about (4-6 hrs.) daily on Social Media, (16.5%) of them consume approximately (7-8 hrs.), and (8.7%) of them use Social Media around (9-10 hrs.) daily. However, it was not hypothesized that the learners use that much social media for learning and studying but regardless of their academic levels, students spend some of that time for academic and study purposes as it is indicated in the paper that (93%) of the respondents spend (1-3 hrs.) and even (7%) of them expend (4-6 hrs.) each day for study purposes.

New pedagogies and teaching methods focus on creating an interesting environment and increasing study interest via using various tools, means, techniques and strategies in the teaching and learning process. That is to say, academics individually or systematically can take advantage of utilizing Facebook and YouTube for academic and study purposes in academic establishments, as they are the most interesting Social Media apps and the students spend a lot of time on them. Additionally, Facebook as a very friendly user platform and has gathered almost all the services that are provided by all the other Social Media platforms such as public, private groups, survey pools and group chats can be created on Facebook and Messenger, videos, pictures, links and writing can be posted and shared, video calls and voice calls can be performed. Therefore, due to the mentioned facts, Facebook & Messenger can be the most appropriate and applicable Social Media platforms to be utilized along with YouTube and E-learning tools for the teaching-learning process in academic establishments.

Contributions & Implications

Facebook & Messenger as a very friendly user platform has gathered almost all the services that are provided by all the other Social Media platforms. Therefore, it can be the most appropriate and applicable Social Media platforms to be utilized parallel to the YouTube and E-learning tools for the teaching-learning process in academic establishments.

Limitations & Recommendations

Since the Chi-Square test for independence has been used and it is sensitive to small size samples, the researchers can take larger sample sizes to overcome the limitation of the test.

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