

The Academic use of Social Networks Among University Students in Jordan

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Abstract

Most of the Arab world youths are using Social Networks for many different uses, while academic uses are still not in a formal perspective. This study aimed at exploring the academic uses of Social Networks among the students of several Jordanian Universities. The sample was analyzed according to university, faculty, gender, and year level. The study took place in four Jordanian universities in the first semester / 2012, by exploring (727) of those students through a questionnaire to collect data about SNS uses. Results of T-test, ANOVA, and Scheffe Post Hoc Tests, revealed a great deal of uses of Social Networks in three domains: 1) Academic, 2) Intensity, and 3) Group uses, but not in a formal perspective. The researchers' recommendations are to make better use of those Social Networks by integrating them in universities' learning management systems.

Keywords: *Social Networks Sites (SNSs), Higher Education, Academic Use, academic relations, University students, Jordanian University.*

1. Introduction

Over the past decade, the use of social network sites (SNSs) has been increasing. SNSs is considered an important research field for scholars who are interested in online technologies and the social and cultural impact on them, it is shown in recent scholar work in the area (Andraws et al., 2013; Boyd & Ellison, 2007; Donath, 2007; Ellison, Steinfield & Lampe, 2007; Golder, Wilkinson & Huberman, 2007; Valkenburg, Peter & Schouten, 2006, Lampe, Ellison & Steinfield, 2007). SNS

is considered as the "web-based services" which allow individuals to (1) create a public or semi-public profile within a certain bounded system, (2) connect with other users with whom they share a connection, and (3) view and visit their list of connections and other connections made by others within the system" (Boyd & Ellison, 2007). In 1997 first social network site was launched and now there are hundreds of SNSs worldwide, supporting many kinds of practices, users and interests (Boyd & Ellison, 2007).

Facebook is one of the biggest social network sites among the Jordanian students. Referring to statistical data by the Arab Social Media Report (ASMR), there were 2.244 million Facebook users in Jordan by till October 2012, and more than 217,000 new accounts were created between January and June 2012. Jordan has been ranked the 7th among the Arab states in number of Twitter users and 2nd in volume of Facebook users across the region. 75 percent of Facebook users in Jordan are between the age 15 and 29, 56 per cent are male, and 58 percent prefer to use Arabic language in their activities on these sites.

Facebook became also very popular among undergraduates, with usage rates up to 90% at most American campuses (Stutzman, 2006; Lampe, Ellison & Steinfield, 2006). Many recent researches has been inducted on various aspects of SNSs usage, such as the use of Facebook in academic settings and the demographic predictors of Facebook use (Hewitt & Forte, 2006). Many of the research aspects focus on the outcomes of Facebook

usage in terms effects among young adults and the relationships between peers which is significant both for generating o benefits offline, commonly known as social capital.

Social capital is used to describe the benefits person receives from one's relationships with other people (Nan, 1999). Moreover, (Ellison, Steinfield & Lampe, 2007) as for the psychosocial development it is found evidence that self-esteem may work as a moderator of the relationship between social network site use and social capital. In other words the young people with low self-esteem were found to benefit more from their use of Facebook than those with higher self-esteem. However, it was not possible for Ellison, Steinfield & Lampe (2007) to establish any time order to the relationships among Facebook use, self-esteem, and social capital with data at only one point in time.

This paper presents the main findings of a study conducted in Jordanian universities to evaluate the use of social networking sites by universities' students. It investigates the use and the academic impacts of social networking sites among the students. It also tries to depict the relationship between the intensity of use and the field of the higher education of the users. A particular focus the use of social networking sites and academic impact and extent to which user's self-esteem moderates relationship. We were motivated in this study by the continuous increasing of the number of students joining the SNS. For example the percentage of students who joined the social sites on the campus of the university in Jordan is estimated to be between 85% and 95% (ASMR).

The changing concepts of learning and communication among the academic community requires more researchers to overcome and face-to-face interaction to examine the Internet in order to understand the relationships and academic students to develop more of the blocks on the SNS for the exchange of educational resources, townships relationships and support. As such, Riva and Galimberti (1998) confirms this, where the residence halls, student unions and classrooms once flourished as the collective community centers, virtual reality has diminished the need for these geographic locations to form a community. It is suggested that Facebook provides "easy to use" democracy and environment for student participation in communities of practice in ways that traditional learning spaces such as learning management systems can least afford to do.

2. Background of the study

Nowadays, most universities in the world are using social media in order to advertise and pass on specific information, and maintain a high level of communication with their students whereas their academic use still very limited. The power of social media as a common means to build networks and replace traditional community building has rapidly recognized by universities. They have moved from just having a website to be engaged in the land of new social media platform. Their use is wide to cover a lot of tasks such as maintaining connections to alumni, hunting for prospective students, and promoting the advances of their research departments.

There are many benefits educational and personal for the use of social networking sites for both teachers and students. Social networking sites like Facebook, Multiply, Myspace, and Twitter are currently used by people of all ages around the world to connect with each other. Some of them are using these new media for educational purposes.

The interest of academic researchers has been increased by the rising popularity of social networking sites. Researchers in developed countries confirm that social networking sites have done lots of impact on the students learning in a positive different ways. Now social networks focuses on retaining and developing relationships among teachers and their students. They are used for professional development, as well as learning, and sharing content or information. In the survey conducted by the National School Boards Association (NSBA), it was found that 50% of teenagers would use social media to talk to their friends regarding school homework online or through text messaging. 60% of the surveyed teenagers show that they discuss topics that are linked to education through their account.

Various studies are conducted by Boyd & Ellison (2007) in which researchers examined and studied a the impact of the online professor existence on the student-professor relationships, the correlation and connection between libraries and social networking sites, and also the connection between students' social networking and the technical ability and notice their level of skills. Students can get educational benefits like going beyond than the classroom to follow interests, as well as creativeness and self expression, contacting varied viewpoints, and online networking to make decisions correlated to higher

education such as which college to focus on and or which programs to chase, as per Greenhow & Robelia (2009).

Students replied to a question about what they study from social networking site, they listed technology skills at the top, then creativity, also being open to new or different views, and communication skills. All the students did not know that internet and networking would provide lots of academic and professional networking opportunities.

Bookmarks of the desired and most used website can be given by teachers and among students for lessons and or problems that are for practice by using social networking and social bookmarking. Also posting in all kinds of blogs or other forms of writing students can also be given out assignment using social networking. Teachers are rely now more and more on social networking sites to help their students and fellow teachers in receiving important information details for schoolwork or other events going on.

In general the social networking sites focuses intensively on the field of Learning, the social network sites also handle big problems raised by educators in the recent period. Like the problem of lacking of humanitarian aspect which is described as teaching lacks spirit. However, Social networks have been helping to resolve some of these problems, through adding interactive way with humans, by making participation of the human element in the educational process something important. Which can lead to an increase of attraction people toward e-learning and some of researcher in the field of social sciences carrying out studies to examine this phenomenon and to clarify the reason behind the attraction educated about social network sites such as Ractham & Firpo (2011) and Jiang & Tang (2010).

Ractham & Firpo (2011) has identified and studied the possibility of using social networking technology in a graduate-level introductory MIS course through Facebook in order to enhance learning and boost that up. The main finding was that Social networking technologies such as Facebook is able to allow members participating in a learning environment where the learning process can occur interchangeably from both inside and outside of the classroom. They underlined the benefits of a successful use of social networking in education for both students and instructors. The benefits for students are some degree of informal learning through informal communication, in addition to support for collaboration, as well as feedback

on thoughts and collaboration that is independent of space and time. For instructors, it was found out that gaining feedback from students and constant communication with them and producing effective instructional technology for their customers as the most significant benefits. As a result, networking technology could be used effectively to promote a culture of learning, for both students and teachers. Furthermore, in the future, there is a significant potential to expand teaching and learning out of classroom. As the social-networking sites will have the best potential.

Jiang & Tang (2010) outlined the way to use the social networking to support education for building pedagogical model through using social networking and that study tried to find out the balance between developing individual creativity along with group activity of collaboration. Based on a traditional instructional model, this model was created and gained the characteristic of design education. The social networking sites have become one of the main means of communication between students and teachers. Nevertheless, this model has been predicted to enhance learning efficiency.

Looking at the previous studies, we can conclude that the social-networking sites will have a major role in improving and developing education on the level of the students as well as teachers.

3. Problem statement of the study

The Arab world, especially the youth are very much fond of social networks, such as Facebook, twitter .and the Arab spring is a clear example for that. Although, university students are using Social Networks in different ways, so the academic may had to do a part of this use. Therefore, the current study focused on surveying Social Networks uses among the students of Jordanian universities.

4. Objective and questions of the study

The primary objective of this study is to describe the academic participation, intensity and group uses of social networks among the students of Jordanian Universities beside the uses differences according university, faculty, gender and year level. To achieve this goal, the two research questions were made:

Question 1: What are the academic participation, intensity and group uses of social networks among the students of Jordanian Universities?

Question 2: What are the academic, intensity and group uses of social networks according to University, Faculty, Gender and Year Level among the students of Jordanian Universities?

5. Method

By the nature of the subject, the data of which was collected by a questionnaire, determined the descriptive quantitative research design for this study. Hopkins (2008) considered that quantitative research is quantifying the relations between variables.

5.1 Sample of the study

The sample of the study consisted of (727) students drawn randomly out of (4) Jordanian universities, resembling the study variables: 1) university, 2) faculty, 3) gender, and 4) year level, as shown below:

Table 1: The breakdown of sample:

		Frequency	Percent
University	University of Jordan	280	38.5
	Hussein	155	21.3
	Balqa	135	18.6
	Sumaya	157	21.6
Total		727	100
Faculty	Science	531	73
	Arts	196	27
Total		727	100
Gender	Male	319	43.9
	Female	408	56.1
Total		727	100
Level	First Year	163	22.4
	Second Year	154	21.2
	Third Year	177	24.3
	Fourth Year	233	32.0
Total		727	100

It was hard for the researchers to collect data about the whole population, so the research results are limited to the sample as participants of this study.

5.2 Measurement tools

The data collected through out a questionnaire prepared to have evidence about each: Academic, Intensity, Group Use, and overall uses. The questionnaire items were collected through literature reviewing and social networks nature.

The validity of the questionnaire where confirmed through (4) referees to judge the items with the relation of its domains. The questionnaire's items have been recoded as shown below:

Table 2: Questionnaire Scale:

Scale	strongly agree	agree	undecided	Disagree	strongly disagree
Rate	5	4	3	2	1

The score 3 considered as a crucial point to determine the students' agreements at the questionnaire scale

The reliability calculated by repeating the questionnaire to the same (30) participants drawn randomly out of the population but not included in the sample of the study, where Pearson Coefficients were calculated as shown below:

Table 3: Pearson Correlation:

Domain	Correlation
Academic Use	.980**
Intensity of Social Networks Use	.992**
Group Use	.972**
Overall	.990**

All the correlations were statistically significant at the level $\alpha \leq .001$

6. Results and discussions

To achieve the study objective, the questionnaire distributed to the four university students, then data where analyzed by using SPSS to calculate the means and standard deviations as show below:

Table 3: Means and standards deviations of participant's responses:

Domain	Item	Mean	Std
Academic Use	Communicating with my instructor at the university	3.158 2	1.1741 1
	A requirement of the course I took	3.155 4	1.2034 4
	I would add my instructor to my group if he had an account at the social networks	3.576 3	1.2034 8
	I get benefits of the published sheets and documents about my course at the social networks	3.609 4	1.1226 8
	I prefer that every course has its	3.643	1.1126

	own webpage at a social network site	7	2
	I prefer having my own portfolio at learning management system at my university	3.522 7	1.1142 5
	My achievement became better after communicating with my friends at the university, through the social networks	3.277 9	1.2093 9
Total		3.420 5	0.7693 9
Intensity of Social Networks Use	Social Networks are part of my everyday activity	3.796 4	1.0548 8
	I am proud to tell people I am on Social Networks	2.873 5	1.1320 3
	I would be sorry if Social Networks Blocked at the campus	3.510 3	1.2940 2
	Looking at or posting photos	3.088 0	1.1271 5
	Entertainment	3.603 9	1.0819 8
	Finding out about or planning events	3.605 2	1.0229 5
Total		3.412 9	0.7189 0
Group Use	I feel I am part of the Social Networks community at the campus	3.489 7	1.0894 4
	Communicating with friends on campus	3.707 0	1.0540 5
	Communicating with friends not on campus	3.995 9	0.9784 1
	Communicating with friends seen rarely	4.045 4	0.9815 8
	Sending or receiving messages	3.528 2	1.0531 2
	Reading comments or discussion board	3.401 7	1.0449 4
Total		3.694 6	0.6964 1
Overall		3.504 7	0.6052 8

Out of the table above:

1. The highest item where in the domain of Group Use: Communicating with friends seen rarely (4.0454), while the lowest item where in the Intensity of Social Networks Use: I am proud to tell people I am on Social Networks (2.8735).
 2. the most approval item among the students at the Academic Domain, where: I get benefits of the published sheets and documents about my course at the social networks (3.6094) while the Item: A requirement of the course I took, took the lowest improvement.
 3. the most approval item among the students at the Intensity of Social Networks Use, where: Social Networks are part of my everyday activity (3.7964)
2. The Item: Reading comments or discussion board took the lowest approval.

6.1 Results of Question 1

What are the academic, intensity and group uses of social networks among the students of Jordanian Universities?

One sample T test used to determine the academic, intensity and group uses of social networks uses at the crucial point 3 among the students of Jordanian Universities, as shown in the table below:

Table 4: T-test results:

Uses	Mean	Std	DF	T	Sig
Academic	3.4205	0.76939	726	14.737	0.000
Intensity	3.4129	0.71890		15.486	0.000
Group	3.6946	0.69410		26.894	0.000
Total	3.5047	0.60528		22.481	0.000

All the means were above the crucial score 3 significantly, which shows that all students' responses ranged between agree and strongly agree, while Group uses where the highest mean as shown in the following chart:

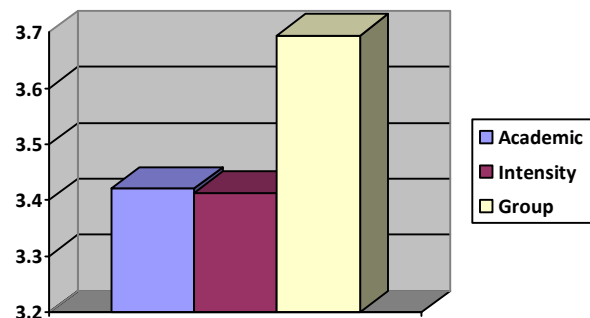


Figure 1: Students responses according to Social Networks Uses

Not surprisingly, most uses of Social Networks were the group use, which can be referred to nature of Arab youths; this nature refers to social communicating needs that Arabs always seeking, as a part of religion and family raise. One of the comments that students add to the questionnaire was: "it is our obligation to have one good build community"

6.2 Results of Question 2

What are the academic, intensity and group uses of social networks according to University, Faculty, Gender and Year Level among the students of Jordanian Universities?

The students' response according to each: Social Networks domains and the study variables (university, faculty, gender, and year level) where calculated as shown below:

Table 5: Participant's responses according to the study variables:

Variables	Academic		Intensity		Group		Total		
	Mean	Std	Mean	Std	Mean	Std	Mean	Std	
University	Jordan	3.5398	.70341	3.5012	.64988	3.8381	.60132	3.6218	.54965
	Hussein	3.6488	.65672	3.4312	.67280	3.6194	.70526	3.5708	.56467
	Balqa	3.2360	.79296	3.1568	.76695	3.4901	.75825	3.2912	.62034
	Sumaya	3.1410	.84778	3.4575	.79032	3.6890	.73938	3.4140	.66537
Total	3.4205	.76939	3.4129	.71890	3.6946	0.6941	3.5047	.60528	
Faculty	Sciences	3.4498	.75932	3.4749	.69890	3.7546	.66935	3.5540	.59574
	Arts	3.3411	.79260	3.2449	.74677	3.5323	.74274	3.3711	.61225
	Total	3.4205	.76939	3.4129	.71890	3.6946	0.6964	3.5047	.60528
Gender	Male	3.4048	.79492	3.3584	.73096	3.6839	.69675	3.4783	.61203
	Female	3.4328	.74959	3.4555	.70729	3.7030	.69688	3.5253	.59990
Total	3.4205	.76939	3.4129	.71890	3.6946	0.6964	3.5047	.60528	
Year Level	Year1	3.5004	.74491	3.4622	.69668	3.6656	.66137	3.5405	.56274
	Year2	3.3924	.78664	3.3929	.72377	3.6526	.72309	3.4747	.63977
	Year3	3.4399	.75676	3.3917	.79299	3.7090	.72055	3.5097	.63842
	Year4+	3.3685	.78385	3.4077	.67342	3.7318	.68574	3.4956	.58704
Total	3.4205	.76939	3.4129	.71890	3.6946	0.6964	3.5047	.60528	

One-way AONVA used to examine the means differences of social networks uses among the students of Jordanian Universities according to University. The table below is showing the ANOVA results:

Table 6: Summary of F-test results according university:

Source		Sum of Squares	DF	Mean Square	F	Sig
Academic	Between Groups	28.925	3	9.642	17.39	.00
	Within Groups	400.844	72	.554		
	Total	429.769	72			
				6		
Intensity	Between Groups	11.402	3	3.801	7.553	.00
	Within Groups	363.803	72	.503		
	Total	375.205	72			
				6		
Group	Between Groups	11.960	3	4.097	8.718	.00
	Within Groups	254.023	72	.470		
	Total	265.983	72			
				6		

The table of ANOVA shows significant differences of all social networks uses among the students of Jordanian Universities according to the University. Scheffe Post Hoc Test where used to determine which means (University) differ. The multiple comparisons are shown in the following table:

Table 7: Summary of Scheffe Post Hoc Test:

Academic		Hussein	Balqa	Sumaya
Jordan		-.10905	.30382*	.39876*
Hussein		-	.41287*	.50781*

	Balqa			.09494
Intensity	Hussein		Balqa	Sumaya
	Jordan	.07001	.34440*	.04365
	Hussein	-	.27439*	-.02635
	Balqa	-	-	-.30075*
Group	Hussein		Balqa	Sumaya
	Jordan	.21874*	.34797*	.14914
	Hussein	-	.12923	-.06960
	Balqa	-	-	-.19884

The comparisons show:

1. The Academic uses of social networks are significant at the level $\alpha \leq 0.05$ between both of the students of Jordan University and Hussein University and both of Balqa and Sumaya Universities students, where the academic uses among the students of Jordan University and Hussein University's students, where more than Balqa and Sumaya Universities' students.
2. The intensity of using social networks, where significant at the level $\alpha \leq 0.05$ between both of the students of Jordan and Hussein Universities versus Balqa University, where the intensity of using social networks is more higher among them than the students of Balqa University, While the students of Sumaya University have more intensity of using social network than the students of Balqa.
3. The Group uses of social networks are significant at the level $\alpha \leq 0.05$ between the students of Jordan University and both Hussein and Balqa Universities' students, where the group uses of social networks are higher among the students of Jordan University.

The following chart showing the means according to the social networks uses and the universities:

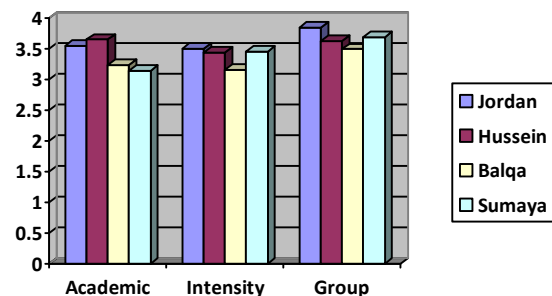


Figure 2: Social Networks uses according to universities

To examine the uses of social networks among the Jordanian Universities students according to Faculty and Gender, Independent Samples T Test where used:

Table 8: a. According to Faculty:

Variables	Mean	Std	T	df	Sig
Academic Sciences	3.4498	.75932	1.693	725	.091

	Arts	3.3411	.79260		
Intensity	Sciences	3.4749	.69890	3.864	.000
	Arts	3.2449	.74677		
Group	Sciences	3.7546	.66935	3.855	.000
	Arts	3.5323	.74274		

The table shows that the Academic uses were not significant among the students according to Faculty, but the Intensity and Group uses are significant for the Sciences faculty students.

Table 9: b. According to Gender:

Variables		Mean	Std	T	df	Sig
Academic	Male	3.4048	.79492	.486	725	.627
	Female	3.4328	.74959			
Intensity	Male	3.3584	.73096	1.809		.071
	Female	3.4555	.70729			
Group	Male	3.6839	.69675	.367		.714
	Female	3.7030	.69688			

The table shows that the Academic uses were not significant among the students according to Gender at the level $\alpha \leq 0.05$.

One-way AONVA used to examine the means differences of social networks uses among the students of Jordanian Universities according to Year Level. The table below is showing the ANOVA results:

Table 10: Summary of F-test results according to year level:

Source		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig
Academic	Between Groups	1.860	3	.620	1.04	.37
	Within Groups	427.909	72	.592	8	1
	Total	429.769	72			
				6		
Intensity	Between Groups	.543	3	.181	.349	.79
	Within Groups	374.662	72	.518		0
	Total	375.205	72			
				6		
Group	Between Groups	.767	3	.256	.526	.66
	Within Groups	351.331	72	.486		4
	Total	352.098	72			
				6		

The table of ANOVA shows no significant differences of all social networks uses among the students of Jordanian Universities according to the Year Level.

7. Conclusion

After examining the results discussed above, it appears that Jordanian universities students are using Social Networks in a very high degree at all levels, especially

group use, while the academic uses are existed, beside intensity. It appears that students are willing to use Social Networks as a communication tool for the benefits of academic uses. It is up to educators who can take advantages of Social Networks to be integrated within the academic role, as Social Networks are part of students' every day activity, and they are ready to communicate between each others in order to deal with coerces, even if those sheets or memos are not confirmed by their teachers or in a formal frame.

The researchers recommend the policy makers in higher education in Jordan and Universities, to integrate web 2.0 beside web 1.0 to learning management systems as a tool of communication, which may help greatly both students and educators.

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