



Social Media and Its Impact on Society

Prepared by:
Ezz Eldin Ahmed Mohammed
Abdelrahman Ahmed Youssef
Abdelrahman Mostafa Kamel
Abdelrahman Emad Eldin

Under supervision of:
Dr. Aya Farag

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Social media usually refers to the means of interactions among people in which they create, share, and/or exchange information and ideas in virtual communities and network.

Social media is considered one of the most useful - yet dangerous- innovations of all time -considering how it connects the whole world together and turns it into a small village¹ and what it is used for- its impact on societies is undeniable; it has changed the world forever -for better or worse-.

The fascinating nature of it and its history and what it could lead to in the future are what make it an interesting topic.

Definition of Social media ^[6]

“Social media can be broadly defined as the set of interactive Internet applications that facilitate (collaborative or individual) creation, curation, and sharing of user-generated content. Examples of social media platforms are numerous and varied. They include Facebook, Wikipedia, and Craigslist, recipe sharing sites (e.g. allrecipes.com), YouTube, and Instagram. Social media platforms all share the above-mentioned characteristics but are unique from one another in many respects. Platforms often vary in their architecture, structures, norms, and user bases”

General Objective

The goal of this research is to introduce, analyze and conclude the impact of social media on societies and how it could be controlled and used to further develop them (and avoid its consequences).

¹ Definition of globalization.

Specific Objectives

- To describe: is to give a general idea on the current state of social media in Egypt and the world.
- To correlate: Since social media is -somewhat- representative of real society (later to be discussed), this research is going to show how it relates to lots of different social phenomena. (e.g. The relation between S.M and education, crime, fanaticism, etc.)
- To compare: between life before and after the invention of social media, which will eventually lead us to a better understanding of social media
- To control: How could social media be controlled so that it's a helpful tool instead of a destructive one?
- To predict: How is social media going to look like in the foreseeable future?

After giving an idea about what social media is and how important it is, it is essential to discuss the research that covered social media from many points of view and that will be done in the next chapter.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

A plethora of researchers have discussed social media and its effect on society from various perspectives, and so as not to reinvent the wheel; the following will be discussed: the topic of research, methodology and findings.

In 2019, Abd Al-Maqsood ^[1] carried out research into the role of social media influencers in shaping followers' interests towards daily lifestyles. The research relied on e-survey as a data-collecting tool. It was conducted on a purposive sample of size (150). The most important findings being that while there was a correlation between the purposeful content and the influencers' credibility, there was no relation between following social media influencers and buyer behavior. The respondents also pointed out influencers' biggest negative point being that they may exploit their number of followers for personal gain.

In 2021, Attia ^[4] conducted research that aimed to monitor the relationship between married people's use of "Facebook" and the growing phenomenon of divorce in Egyptian society. The research relied on two main approaches, the media survey method, and the correlational approach. While the data collection was based on the survey sheet tool. The research community is determined in a sample of (400) married couples who were drawn using the intentional sampling method. The results revealed that most of the respondents believe that there is a significant relationship between the use of "Facebook" and the increase in the divorce rate in Egyptian society the research also found that emotional divorce² is the most common among spouses, due to the use of "Facebook", according to the respondents, while in the second place, irrevocable divorce³.

In 2022, Sahar ^[9] studied the relationship between exposure to sports content on social media and "Hooliganism" using the survey method and applying it on a sample of (403) child

² The separation of spouses emotionally and psychologically only.

³ Spousal separation.

(ages: 10-12). The study found out that 49% of the child respondents had a high rate of Hooliganism. The study then established a model for how parents should supervise their children's usage of social media.

In 2022, Iman Awad ^[5] aimed in her study to identify the relationship between social media and rates of depression and anxiety among samples of young people. Her study relied on a sample method of (280) young people from the governorates of Cairo and Dakahlia. She found that there is a significant correlation between intensity of using social media and the increase in depression rates, while the hypothesis was not proven regarding the increase in anxiety rates. 71% of the sample is permanently affected psychologically by social media content, while 27% are affected in a non-permanent and non-continuous way, while 1.4% are not affected at all. The forms of influence are represented in "Escape from reality" by 98%, In the second place, "Imitating celebrities from society stars and social media stars" and "Eliminating daily burdens and wasting time come with a rate of 97.3%."

In 2022 Eido ^[2] aimed in his study to know the role of social media in formatting and enhancing political awareness among public universities in Duhok in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq. Eido used the descriptive and sample method of (258) male and female students at the public universities of Duhok. He found at the end of his research some influential finding, the most important of which is that the students use social media at a high rate and rely on them to find out information and political news as it is a quick means and not to effective censorship. It also contributes to activating political participation and strengthening their political awareness.

In 2022, Fatma and Noura ^[6] tried in their study to reveal the motives of adolescents who use these sites, and this by posing the problem of adolescents' use of social media and its relationship to their cultural alienation. Their study relied on a sample method of (40)

adolescents from those with intermediate and secondary education. They found that: The order of adolescents' motives for using social media the study in the first place, followed by communication with friends and staying away from family problems in the second place, and then followed by new friendships and entertainment in the third place. Arranging the dimensions of the cultural alienation for the adolescent: the meaningless dimension – the non-normative dimension – the isolation dimension. The results also demonstrated the existence of a correlation between the adolescent's use of social media and his cultural alienation.

In 2022, Engy ^[7] aimed in her study to target the reasons for media institutions' use of the Instagram application through their official pages in newsrooms, and the evaluation of this use. Her study relied on the descriptive survey method and was applied to a deliberate sample of (58) from the heads of the social media departments in various media institutions. Her study's finding was: The sample of the study confirmed the reason for using Instagram to achieve more spread. Official sources came at the forefront of television channels, while technical sources came to the fore in radio stations. Entertainment content topped the materials on Instagram, while the use of stories topped. The study sample confirmed the use of an indicative guide for publishing on Instagram. Ease of access to the public topped the disadvantages achieved from using Instagram to publish content, while the inability to write long texts was at the forefront of the negatives. The study sample suggested organizing courses on how to optimally disseminate content via Instagram.

In 2022, Thukral's and Kainya's ^[12] study was about social media and how it influences crimes. He explained in the article the relationship between social media and criminal law. Additionally, the study analyzed the role of law enforcement in detecting and averting cybercrime committed using social media. The descriptive methodology was used to explain the relationship between the impacts of social media on crime. As a result of these social media channels face-to-face engagement has become rare. The effects of social isolation on the mental

emotional, physical, and psychological well-being of young people have been extensively studied and documented. These include anxiety and fear of missing out, as well as several other issues. Because social media lacks privacy, there is a high risk of a third party exploiting a person's private information.

In 2023, Rania et al. ^[8] performed research regarding the assessment of information credibility on social media. This is a descriptive study which relied on the survey approach using an electronic questionnaire form addressed to a sample size of (64). The most important findings were: The most relied on platform was “Facebook”. The reason being that it cares about social issues (rather than the information being credible). 57.81% of the respondents only “occasionally” fact-checked the information. The criteria most of them used to assess the credibility was “Photos and Videos”. Finally, 50% of the sample use social media as a primary source of information.

In 2024, Salah ad-Din's ^[10] study sought to identify the role of social networking sites in empowering women economically, and the challenges facing women working on social networking sites and ways to overcome them. The study used the descriptive approach and an electronic questionnaire on a deliberate sample of (185) women who used social networking sites. Among the most important findings of the study is the positive idea of using social networking sites as an economic source by 85.9%. It also showed that the most motives for women's use of social networking sites as an economic source is the poor economic situation and the lack of job opportunities available by 14.2%, while the study confirmed that the most important economic roles achieved are Increasing economic income and that the most important social roles achieved are to improve the image of women in front of themselves, while the study highlighted that the most important challenges facing women working on these sites is exposure to some harassment.

In 2024, Sundari and Malathi ^[11] covered in depth in his paper Crime prediction and categorization using social media posts and offered a comprehensive overview of several ML and DL frameworks. Initially, different ML and DL based crime prediction models designed by many researchers are examined in brief. The next step is to do comparison research to learn about the shortcomings of those frameworks and provide an alternative method for effectively predicting crimes based on social media postings. To make better use of their resources, anticipate crime at a specific moment, and serve society better, researchers may use this review to determine the most efficient and reliable detection techniques for recognizing criminal episodes and their patterns.

In 2024, Ashraf Nabawy ^[3] tried to discover how social media platforms could be used to enhance the education process of sciences. The researcher used the descriptive analytical method and collected data using an e-survey that was sent to (35) sciences teacher. The study showed that 74% of the teachers agreed on the importance of social media in educating sciences. The study also recommended that the education process should be a mixture between the classic method (offline\face-to-face in classes) and the modern method (online\ social media-based) so that the education system could gain the strengths of both methods that could make the process easier, better and be capable of continuing regardless of any crisis.

From the literature review it is found that there is a relationship between the independent variables and the dependent variable, and this relationship and the variables will be discussed in the next chapter.

Chapter 3: Research Variables

Social media is one of the most developed inventions in the 21st century in various topics and effects and get effected with plenty of variables such as: Cyberbullying, Algorithms, Privacy, Education, Fanaticism, Mental health, Political status, Economic status. These previous variables each one will be discussed as following: Cyberbullying its danger increased these days and it has become a global phenomenon, Mental health is important at every stage of life , from childhood and adolescence through adulthood , Algorithms in social medial create a good user experience by making individual user's feeds interesting and engaging , Social media has been influencing the political status of any country within the past 20 years, since it is an easy way for people to discuss their political opinions with little to no consequences. Alongside the fact that it became a great way for politicians to communicate with people easily. Within the past few years, the role of social media in education has risen exponentially. As seen in teachers advertising their content on it in the form of creating short educational videos to pique students' interest in joining their own platform. As well as making communication easier for parents and teachers. The "little to no consequences" previously mentioned also meant that people with extreme opinions (or those who are close minded) could also use social media platforms as a way of confirming their personal bias and spreading It, which leads to dividing people into fanatic groups that affected real-life national security at times. Privacy of data is important as users leave digital footprints daily, but using social media may put individual's data at risk.

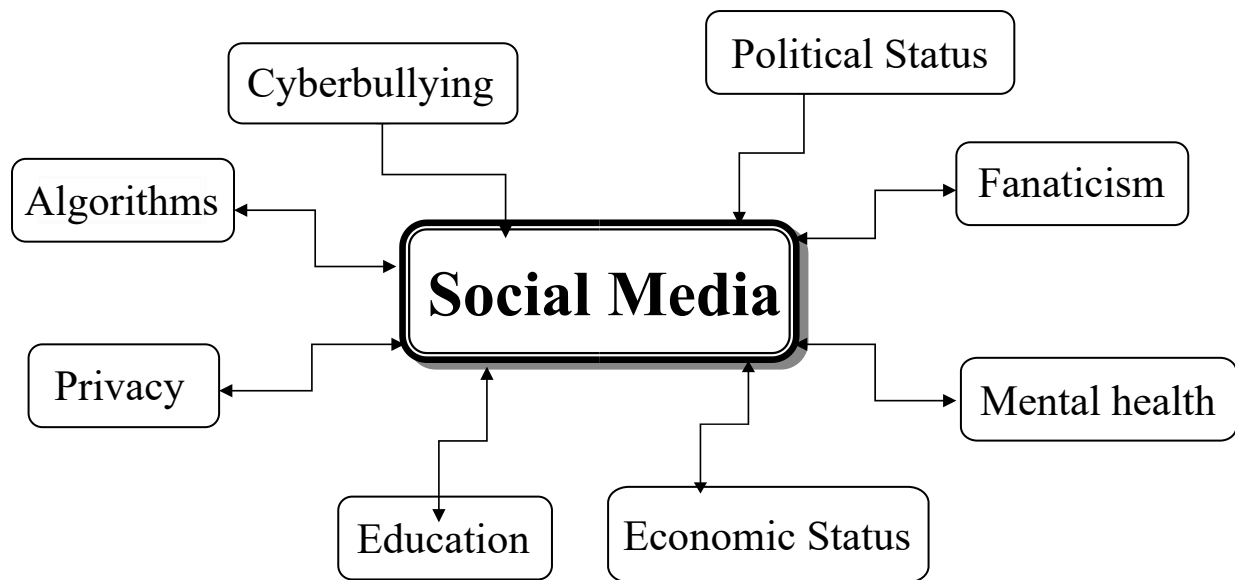


Illustration of social media and related variables

Political status:^[2]

It's often affected by social media, since anyone -with enough Internet knowledge- can easily manipulate people online and trick them into believing things that may cause destruction to a country, or use it to try and “liberate” his country (for instance, one of the most vital reasons why 2011’s Egyptian revolution started and succeeded was because of a Facebook page created in 2010 “*We Are All Khalid Said*”), or that it can be used as a presidential campaign tool (example: How USA’s ex-president Donald J. Trump used twitter to give himself an edge over Hillary Clinton in the 2016 American presidential election^[9]).

Algorithms:

Algorithms play the biggest role in what social media platforms do and how they work, as most of them keep track of what a user does all the time: what they watch, listen to, like or dislike and what they talk about etc. (basically collecting as much data as legally possible), which is meant to “personalize” the user’s experience through predicting -using ML models- what content the user is more likely to engage with, which means more time spent on these platforms thus more profit (For example, YouTube’s algorithms are designed so that it

recommends users videos of similar content to that they already watched to keep them engaged as long as possible). This can be both useful and concerning; as it can help finding items to purchase conveniently for example, but it can also raise concerns regarding *privacy*.

Privacy:^[7]

Regarded as one of the more important topics when it comes to being online in general, as evidenced by the 2018 lawsuit against Facebook, reason being that “data firm Cambridge Analytica paid a Facebook app developer to gain access to 87 million Facebook users' personal data. The data was converted into detailed voter profiles used to target U.S. voters on behalf of Donald Trump's 2016 presidential campaign. A lawsuit that cost Facebook 725 million USD”, which goes to show how important privacy is for internet users.

Fanaticism:^[12]

Social media can be fuel for all sorts of bigotry and close-mindedness. As previously shown in Sahar's study, there was a relationship between children's exposure to social media and Hooliganism (which is sports fanaticism). A big part for why is how easy it is to search for or find a Facebook group that makes the user feel “comforted to find people that think like him. Unfortunately, that may result in the Algorithm playing a huge role in isolating people from anything that may oppose their point of view. Leading them to be completely dismissive of other perspectives and only thinking their beliefs are correct, since that's what's only being shown to them.

Education:^[10]

Social media is no longer just a source of entertainment and amusement, but rather it provides a wide scope for learning. YouTube for example proved to be a great platform for self-education, as one can easily find tons of free (and high quality) courses there that help students at all education levels and those who want to improve their skills or learn new ones. And While “TikToks” and “YouTube shorts” aren’t made specifically for learning, they provided a good way of advertising education in a fun and engaging way. For example: one could be scrolling through TikTok only to stumble across a 60-second intriguing math short video, which can lead to more and more people learning mathematics, when the same person hated even the idea of seeing numbers and letters together in an equation.

Mental health:^[4]

Mental health is a state of mental well-being that enables people to cope with the stress of life, realize their abilities, learn well and work well, and contribute to their community. Multiple studies have indicated a link between depression. Social media can create feelings of isolation and loneliness as individuals compare their lives to idealized versions presented on social media. Social media can also create a sense of disconnection from real-life relationships, leading to feelings of depression. There is also a relationship between social media and anxiety such that human beings need face-to-face contact to be mentally healthy. Nothing reduces stress or boosts the mood faster or more effectively than eye-to-eye contact with someone who cares about him. Fear of missing out (FOMO) and social media addiction. While FOMO has been around far longer than social media, sites such as Facebook and Instagram seem to exacerbate the feeling that others are having more fun or living better lives than one is. The idea that man is missing out on certain things can impact his self- esteem, trigger anxiety and fuel even greater social media use, much like an addiction. FOMO can compel one to pick his phone every few

minutes to check for updates or compulsively respond to each alert – even of that means taking risks while he is driving, missing out on sleep at night, or prioritizing social media interaction over real world relationships.

Cyberbullying:^[16]

Cyberbullying is the use of technology to harass, threaten, embarrass or target another person. Online texts, posts, or messages all count. So does posting personal information, pictures, or videos designed to hurt or embarrass someone else. About 10 percent of teens report being bullied on social media and many other users are subjected to offensive comments. Social media platforms such as Twitter can be hotspots for spreading hurtful rumors, lies, and abuse that can leave lasting emotional scars.

After explaining each variable and determining its relationship with the independent variable (social media), There is a question appears that is how to ask about each variable and then evaluate the results. The next chapter is an example for a survey trying to include all variables.

Chapter 4: Survey Design and Implementation

In this chapter, it is important to present a survey to measure several levels, so the questions will be divided into (Demographic / Time Consumption / Mental health / Marketing / Privacy / Education / Political status / Language / Economic status).

Demographic Questions

What is your age group?

- ~ Under 18 years
- ~ 18-24 years
- ~ 25-34 years
- ~ 35-44 years
- ~ 45-54 years
- ~ 55-70 years
- ~ Above 70 years

What is your gender?

- ~ Male
- ~ Female

What is your employment status?

- ~ I'm a student
- ~ I have a full-time job
- ~ I have a part-time job
- ~ I'm currently unemployed

What is your marital status?

- ~ Married
- ~ Divorced
- ~ Single
- ~ Widowed

What is your income group? (in EGP)

- ~ Less than 5,000
- ~ 5,000-10,000
- ~ 10,000-15,000
- ~ 15,000-20,000
- ~ More than 20,000

Time Consumption

Approximately, how long do you spend on social media per day?

- ~ Less than one hour.
- ~ From one to five hours.
- ~ From five to ten hours
- ~ More than ten hours.

Which social media outlet do you spend the most time on?

Facebook

Twitter

Instagram

WhatsApp

Other.....

Do you think that you spend too much time using social media?

- ~ Strongly agree
- ~ Agree
- ~ Disagree
- ~ Strongly disagree

Marketing

How often do you feel that social media seems to show you ads about things you talk about?

- ~ Usually
- ~ Often
- ~ Seldom
- ~ Never

Do you prefer to shop online or offline?

- ~ Offline
- ~ Online

Do social media influence your product choices?

- ~ Yes
- ~ No

How likely are you to buy a product recommended online?

- ~ Very likely
- ~ Somewhat likely
- ~ Quite unlikely
- ~ Very unlikely

Mental health

How do you evaluate your social media experience on your mental health?

- ~ Very negative
- ~ Negative
- ~ Positive
- ~ Very positive

“I always compare myself to people I follow”, how do you agree with this statement?

- ~ Strongly agree
- ~ Agree
- ~ Disagree
- ~ Strongly disagree

“The content I watch encourages me to become a better version of myself”, how do you agree with this statement?

- ~ Strongly agree
- ~ Agree
- ~ Disagree
- ~ Strongly disagree

How often do you use social media at bedtime?

- ~ Usually
- ~ Often
- ~ Seldom
- ~ Never

If you have children or younger siblings, do you monitor their use of social media?

~ Yes

~ No

Which of the following emotions do you experience while using social media? (Select all that apply)

Envy

Inadequacy

Loneliness

Fear of missing out (FOMO)

Anxiety

Depression

Joy

Inspiration

Have you ever been bullied online?

~ Yes

~ No

Education

How useful is social media for learning?

~ Very useful

~ Somewhat Useful

~ Not useful

Do you use social media to communicate with your teachers/professors?

- ~ Yes
- ~ No
- ~ Yes, I also use it more than formal E-MAIL.

Do you think that you and your peers will achieve better results if social media is integrated into lessons?

- ~ Yes
- ~ No

What do you consider to be the main pitfalls of the use of social media in an educational setting?

Privacy

Do you think social media addiction can impact your security and privacy?

- ~ Yes
- ~ No
- ~ Not sure

Do you think social media platforms are doing enough to protect your data and privacy?

- ~ Yes
- ~ No
- ~ Not sure

Which of the following information do you share on social media? (Select all that apply)

Personal photos

Location

Date of birth

Relationship status

Work information

Your private number

~ None of the above

What steps do you think social media platforms can take to improve security and privacy?

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Political status

How much of what you see on social media is related to politics?

~ A lot

~ Some

~ A little

~ None

Are the political discussions you see on social media:

~ More respectful

~ Less respectful

~ About the same

Are the political discussions you see on social media:

- ~ More politically correct
- ~ Less politically correct
- ~ About the same

How willing are you to believe news on social media?

- ~ I never believe in any news on social media platforms.
- ~ I may believe them, but only if the news isn't that important.
- ~ It depends, if the news is backed up by reliable sources I tend to believe them, otherwise not.
- ~ Often, I tend to believe them, unless the news is obviously faked.
- ~ I always believe in news on social media without needing to fact-check them.

Language

Did you (or anyone you know) start using social media slang in real-life?

- ~ Yes
- ~ No

Did engaging with foreigners and watching videos on social media platforms improve your real-life speaking skills?

- ~ Yes, it helped me improve my grammar and accent a lot.
- ~ Yes, to a certain degree.
- ~ Not at all.

Economic status

Did you (or anyone you know) use social media platforms as a “job”? If yes, please mention the platform.

~ Yes

~ No

--

Do you agree that social media is a good main source of income and an alternative to the “typical” 9 to 5 jobs? Why?

~ Yes

~ No

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In this survey, it was taken to cover all the elements mentioned, and the variety between the questions was also taken in mind, whether they were optional questions, questions of agreement or disagreement, or open-ended questions for the person who will answer this survey.

Chapter 5: Conclusion and Recommendations

After learning about the different aspects of social media, it is now clear how deeply integrated social media is in our society in this modern era. It is seemingly impossible to live without its existence due to how it makes communication and socialization much easier, and - in Aristotle's words- "*Man is by nature a social animal*". So, making socializing easier is, essentially, making life easier.

However, this doesn't come without its downsides. As previously discussed, social media can lead to health and mental issues, as well as a divide between people.

To combat the problems of social media, such as degradation of attention spans (especially with kids), extremism in general and moral degeneracy, there must be awareness campaigns led by the government or any non-governmental organization. This can be done in many ways, some of them would be:

- TV / Internet advertisements to make parents aware of the issue and its seriousness.
- Awareness initiatives from schools in coordination with the Ministry of Education.
- Creating a national social media platform, making it easier to filter out inappropriate content. (though this might be controversial, since in the wrong hands it can lead to unjustifiable censorship and restriction of freedom of speech)

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