

## The Impact of Social Media on Youth: A Case Study of United Arab Emirates

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### Abstract

Traditional media sources such as newspapers and the radio have for a long time been the main information channels in many regions across the world. Nonetheless, with the growing popularity of other substitutes of traditional media such as the social media, many people have come to prefer these sources of information.

The usage of social media has become an instrument of organizational activism as well as a tool for spreading political ideologies in the Middle East region. There are new online mannerisms that have transformed the local traditional communication channels thereby enabling the youth from all backgrounds to become politically empowered. However, the impacts of social media have changed regarding the long-term implications of internet use within the region. The presence of social media in the region has transformed into a unique insight into the roles of online communication networks and has brought about changes in the Gulf States. There are existent shifts in the political, social, and religious roles and identities of the citizens such that it has led to digital activism in the areas. Furthermore, there exist various contributions from a number of interdisciplinary experts. The research on the impacts of social media in the region has also revealed the expected.

### INTRODUCTION

Social Media is among the current forms of media that has diverse qualities and characteristics. It has several facilities on the same channels like communication, image sharing, texting, audio and video sharing. Additional features that are present include the faster publication, Wide coverage and linking of the people globally and direct connecting with different people. It is essential to point out that social media is the cheapest and one of the fastest access to the world. Therefore, it is one of the most important facets of people of all ages. Today, the use of social media is growing day by day at a significant rate. The majority of the youth today are shifting to the utilization of the social media. Hence, it is one of the powerful implements that influence the lives of the youth today. This shift has led to the question regarding the holistic impact of social media on the youth. It is indispensable to point out that social media has multi-faceted implications on the living styles. The study will provide an ongoing process that seeks to spot the specific influence of the social media in the lives of the youth. The study also emphasizes on the influence of the social media on the youthful generation, their lifestyle, their political and educational awareness, their trends, their education process, and social life.

#### Aims of the Study

- i) To explain the influence of social media on youth's life in United Arab Emirates.
- ii) To evaluate the manner in which youth utilize social media in United Arab Emirates.

- iii) To examine the benefits and the structure of social media preferred by the youth.
- iv) To evaluate the time the youth spend while using social media.
- v) To recommend some of the measures that will promote efficient social media use.

#### Reasons for selecting the topic

The researcher was attracted to such topic because he had cultivated a questioning attitude towards the media worlds in which we live, on the other hand, the study provides a measure of applying the social media in the accurate route for the youth and helps improve understanding among the youth on the implication of the youth. Through the study, the youth in United Arab Emirates will find the implication of the social media in their lives. It is essential to point that the study will act as a resourceful material in influencing most of the manner in the way the youth use the social media. Social media is a potent tool that has effects on the social life of the user, impact on the way of life and groom the mentality of an individual.

#### The study hypotheses

- i) It is probable to conclude that social media is generating alertness for the young generation by promoting enhanced lifestyle.
- ii) It is probable to suggest that social media is a potential source of info for the youth.
- iii) It is probable to suggest that social media is an influential resource in influencing educational outcomes for the youth.

- iv) It is probable to suggest that social media influences the manner the youth in United Arab Emirates interact with their peers.
- v) Youths in United Arab Emirates use social media in a constructive way.

### Statement of the Problem

The study is designed to offer an examination of the impact of the social media on the youth with, a critical look at the youth in United Arab Emirates. The primary focus is the influence of the social media on the different aspects of the youth's life, such as social life, political awareness, religious practices, educational goals and other societal trends.

### Literature Review

#### Trends in the Social Media Usage in Arab World

Currently, the utilization of the social media has varied penetration in the world. On the other hand, the United Arab Emirates has the highest Facebook penetration at 50% (Maamari & Zein, 2014). In recent years, there has been an enhancement in the debate on the role that social media played in the Arab uprisings that led to the fall of some the ruling regimes in the Arab world. United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Kuwait have the highest number of Facebook users. The youths in the Arab World are the leading users of social media, with over 70% of the users in the region being the youth. Erdoğan and Cicek, (2012) point out that social media is described as a collection of various internet applications that are founded on the different perspective of the internet, and also allow the design and the swap over of the content created by the user. On the other hand, youth is described as the period of life when an individual is immature. It is a time between childhood and adulthood. The youth are the most important people in any country since the progress and development are based on their energy and enthusiasm (O'Keeffe & Clarke-Pearson, 2011).

young people is unaware of the dangers that await them online, and that social media have a negative impact on interpersonal contacts in the real world, therefore it is necessary to increase the knowledge of young people about the dangers lurking on the Internet and introduce educational programs to solve this problem.( Wojdan Et al, 2021).

Today, social media is one of the platforms that the youth utilize to study new trends in learning, develop their writing and communication skills, to promote their

cultures and religions, communicate with their peers and get involved in the growth and development of the society (Barker, 2009).

Adeosun, & Shittu (2021) found that the informal network society and external knowledge all have a positive relationship with learning and innovation in youth-owned small businesses, -owned businesses. Valenzuela, Arriagada, and Scherman (2012) argue that social media has a different effects on the various aspects of the citizens of United Arab Emirates. This task covers the diverse aspects of the life of a youth in the country. Social media such as Facebook, Twitter, Skype, MySpace, and YouTube have been promoted as life transforming applications in all the countries in the world. These applications are also applicable to all individuals in United Arab Emirates. Rani (2019) pointed out that Social media also influence students positively to understand human behaviors and negatively become selfish and fanatic .Social Media is a means of linking people where they generate, distribute and swap ideas in the virtual community and the networks provided by these applications. As outlined above, social media use will likely affect appearance self- esteem, but an opposite direction of influence is also viable. Some ad-olescents, depending on pre-existing levels of appearance self-esteem, may be more likely to engage in self- or other-oriented social media behaviors. For example, youth with high self-esteem are less negatively affected by feedback on social media (Martinez-Pecino & Garcia-Gavilan, 2019).

Today, social media provides various online technologies that enable people to communicate easily and share critical information. According to Chambers (2013), Social media is an evitable aspect of life for the majority of youth in the country. Social media has therefore brought far-reaching changes in the lives of youth in the United Arab Emirates. The main intention of the study is to offer a holistic outlook of the implication of social media on youth in the United Arab Emirates.

Zweiri and Murphy (2011), evaluates the many forms of media in the Middle-East, including social media and the role that each of these forms of media play. Ahmed (2011) added that social media in the UAE plays a very important comprising the voluntary social work. Edwards, (2017) elaborates the importance that news, particularly local news, in the UAE. Bagersh, (2011) goes through the changing parts in the United Arab Emirates media world particularly social media as an important advertising tool. Al-Jenaibi, (2016) analyzed the growing utilization of social media in the Gulf and showed that the Twitter community is very large in the

UAE. Ajami (2001), examined the things that the Muslim world is consuming and discovered that they mostly like to watch the news. On the other hand, Ahmed (2014), showed that the utilization of social media assists in enhancements. Pintak (2007), evaluated how journalists are being treated in the UAE. Badreya (2014), concluded that social media had worked for hand in hand with new media to foster the spring of UAE media. Kamalipour and Mowlana (1994), examined mass media in countries in UAE including the political, social and economic impact. Moreover, Wilson Dizard, (1997) adds to this study by evaluating new and old media and the political, economic, social and technological in the media environment. On the other hand, Altschull, (1995) argues that politics is the best way to comprehend social media. Siebert, (1963) elaborated the various theories being that can help one understand the press. Wolfsfeld, (2004) evaluates public policy and its relationship to media stating that politics and media are closely inter-related.

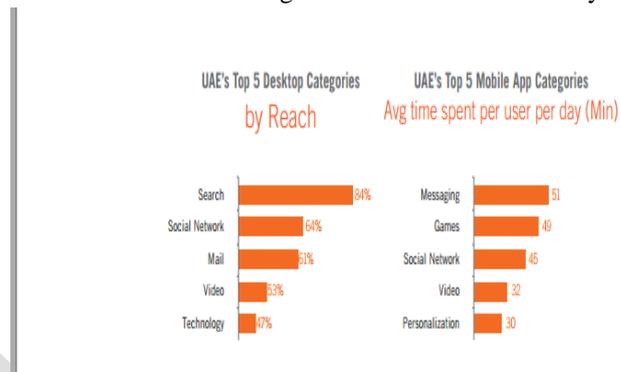
Numerous organizations have also incorporated the culture of data intensity while more companies have attempted to reap the benefits of this strategy. Despite the fact that more data is available through this approach, the quality of the data gathered has continued to hinder its usage in given companies. The creation of large amounts of data in the companies requires more work in the determination of its value in the companies. The data collected is required to be processed according to its quality for it to be used in the companies. These processes of valuing different qualities of data vary and has proven to be a challenge for various companies due to a recurring characteristic. The development of generic processes and patterns in organizations to formulate solutions requires that given data is reused by the organizations. The processes of patterns to be used in handling the data qualities are frequently derived from the study of the methods by which a given company uses the different qualities of data to create an operational value. These processes are then integrated into other organizations (Wahyudi et al., 2016).

## Chapter one

### 1.1 Trends in the Social Media Usage in UAE

According to the Maamari and Zein, (2014), the social media platforms of WhatsApp and Facebook had 97% and 89% utilization among the people. YouTube had a 73 % level of utilization among the youth in United Arab Emirates. Additionally, the report also points out that the utilization of the social media is also significantly higher among 18 to 21-year-olds. Most of

the young professionals in the United Arab Emirates are most active in LinkedIn. Most of the youth have the highest number of social media utilization (Grube, 2012). Most of the youth in United Arab Emirates prefer to use the social media to get information about the news and social events. The report also points out that a significant number of the youth use the social media to bond with families and friends, other people and the organizations all over the world. Almost a third of those who were interviewed during the survey spent time on social media for an average of two or three hours a day.



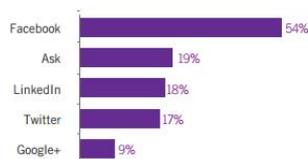
(Source: Retrieved from Arab Media Outlook20016)

Maamari and Zein (2014), also point out that Instagram is becoming popular among the youth. However, the unfortunate side of the social media utilization is that it significantly informs the changes the manner in which the youth perceive themselves. It has huge implications in the way the youth view themselves since they base their looks by the number of likes they receive on the photos they share in the social media (Khan, 2012).

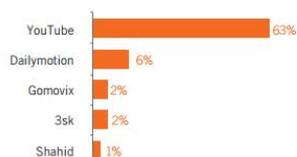
### 1.2 Impact of Social Media on Youth

According to Selfhout, Branje, Delsing, Ter Bogt, and Meeus (2009), social media has a diverse impact on youth's life in a holistic manner. In United Arab Emirates, it is easier to access the internet now compared to a few years back. Therefore, there has been both the negative and positive impacts of the social media to the youth. Most of the people between the ages of 12 to 21 years in the United Arabs Emirates have access to technology. Therefore, most of the aspect of their lives has been influenced by the social media. It is for this reason that some people in the country have referred the youth as the 'the flabby generation, owing to their continued and heavy use of technology (Jain, Gupta & Anand, 2012).

UAE's Top Social Network Websites by Reach



UAE's Top Video Websites by Reach



(Source: Retrieved from Arab Media Outlook20016)

Most of the youth are impacted by what they allow to influence their lives. However, it is imperative to note that there are both negative and positive consequences of social media in the individual lives of the youth.

### 1.3 Negative implications of Social Media

One of negative influence of social media on youth in United Arab Emirates is that social websites have emulate than the things that should be a priority such as education, sports and family (Juszczuk, 2015). Therefore, most of the youth today spend most of their time scrolling down the social media, rather than utilizing their time to interact with the facets of life that improve their lives. They have prioritized the use of social media, leading to the decline in the quality of their real social lives with their parents and friends. Secondly, Undiyaundeye (2014) argues that through the social media, the youth portray themselves as someone they are not. Therefore, most of them lead double lives. Since the manner they portray themselves is not authentic, they often fall into traps of having to establish a relationship with individuals who are not real.

Additionally, the youth also easily fall victims to cyber bullying from these social media sites and hence, lead to depression and suicidal tendencies (Jelenchick, Eickhoff & Moreno, 2013). Cyber bullying has holistic effects in the life of the youth. Individuals influenced by the social media may develop body dysmorphic disorder. According to Lenhart, Madden, Smith, and Macgill (2009), the need to have a physical appearance similar to the people they see in the social media, may lead to some of them viewing their body parts as not perfect, and hence, may need to change their physical appearance. Finally, social media is a potent temptation. The youth may be addicted to the social media and begin sidetracking their lives. It leads to the shift of the priorities. There are some incidences that

parents have had to take their children to the rehabilitation centers as a result of over- indulgence to the social media (Lenhart, Purcell, Smith, & Zickuhr, 2010).

### 1.4 Positive Implications of Social Media on the Youth

There are also various benefits of social media for the youth. Correa, Hinsley, and De Zuniga, (2010) point out that social media has over the years been used as the outlet for the thought that the youth desire to share with their peers. Therefore, social media is a platform that the youth use to express themselves. Social media also assist people to connect with their peers all across the world. Some of the specific ways that youth use social media to influence their lives are by keeping connections between friends when they cannot be able to physically meet. Madden et al. (2013) argue that youths can connect with each other in a variety of ways, chat and make friends. Secondly, social media also keeps the youth up to date with the things that are happening around the world. Therefore, the youth can get information on what is happening across the globe. Additionally, social media also provides the youth with a platform that they can express themselves in a way that the public would not allow them to (Khedo, Suntoo, Elaheebocus & Mocktoolah, 2013). Therefore, social media is a platform that improves the freedom of expression. Social media also assist in developing skills. Youths have the ability to make friends from the social websites. Finally, social media also provide a fun way in which youth can interact other than seeing their friends in person.

## Chapter Two

### 2.1 Study Methodology

The descriptive approach was utilized to carry out the research. A survey type of the research was used to analyze available secondary sources on the internet. The population used is the youth in the United Arab Emirates.

### 2.2 Theoretical Approach and Problem Identified

There are various theories that qualify to support my dissertation. One of the theories that best apply is the gratification theory. When the youths use the social media, the primary goal is to ensure that they get the gratification they desire. Most of the youth have the desire to ensure that their get satisfaction from the use of social media. Therefore, the theory was the approach

used to determine the best way to achieve the dissertation objectives. One of the main problems identified in the research was an inability of getting peer review content regarding the utilization and the impact of social media in United Arab Emirates.

## 2.3 Digital and media technology theories

### Diffusion and innovation theory

The diffusion and innovation theory elaborates on the rate of spread of technology and the modes by which it is adopted into a given social context. This theory further highlights the primary elements that influence the spreading of new methods as well as ideas through innovation, social systems and communication channels. According to the Everett Rodgers, the intrinsic characteristics of the occurrence of innovation have an impact on individual decisions in the adoption of a particular form of innovation and the characteristics of adoption categories (Rodgers, 1962).

The theory mainly argues that leaders are not the only factors that exert the pressure of change concerning the behaviour of the media audiences. According to him, additional factors known as change agents and gatekeepers are responsible for the process of diffusion. The theory further includes a framework that considers the methods by which information flows across various networks. The framework also considers the factors that shape people's opinions on technologic matters. The theory is used to describe the consequences of the society as it adopts a particular form of technologic innovation.

### The domestication of media theory

Roger Silverstone's theory primarily focuses on the domestication of media and the processes involved in controlling media innovations. The taming of media is seen to mainly rely on the take of the societal communities. The theory further reflects on the methods by which people's choices regarding technology are constrained by moral values of the society. A set of values is considered within a given society. The theory also differentiates the decision making processes during innovation and technology according to different phases of integrating the new changes. Domestication has been seen to consider the values and beliefs of a given societal group from a constrained perspective during the adoption and innovation process. The key motives used to inform communities to adopt new technologies are required to consider the priorities of the communities (Silverstone, 1992).

### Social network theory

The theory by Everett Rogers and Jan Van Dijk reflects on the social structures and relationships that surround and individual, group, or organisation and their impacts on their behaviours (Van Dijk, 2005). This theory recognises the possibility of shifts within a given society from a tight bound social system and the formulated communities. The geographical ties are viewed as loose bounds because they are related to the flexibility and dynamism of the existent social networks. The communication networks are then defined to consist of interconnected individuals linked through a pattern of communication flow. The network analysis also considers the methods by which individuals will connect and relate to each other which will therefore create an interpersonal communication structure. The theory is significant because it focuses on the number of people who are loosely connected in their social networks within a contemporary society. The survival of their interpersonal relationships is based on the digital support of the network based society. The theory has also offered a possibility of reviewing the communication within social structures in diverse communities (Rogers & Kincaid, 1981).in chapter three the researcher will discuss the study methodology

## CHAPTER 4

### DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

This section of the dissertation explores the findings and outcomes generated from the questionnaires. The use of social channels has challenged conventional media forms including television, print media, and radio in the United Arab Emirates. However, the homogeneity of social platforms is unevenly distributed meaning that some areas in the United Arab Emirates have a slightly higher usage than others. Regardless, this dissertation explores the questionnaire findings collected in the use and substitution of traditional media outlets with more innovative platforms like *Twitter*, *Facebook*, *WhatsApp*, *Snap Chat*, *Instagram*, *Pinterest*, and *LinkedIn*. The variables used in the results include; the age of users, gender, and education levels – and their varied preferences in the utilization of social channels and traditional media forms.

The first step of the analysis of questionnaire findings was to test the reliability of the data collection instruments and the findings collected. The case processing summary show a 100% validity, and the reliability statistic shows a Cronbach alpha of 0.070 for a

total of 18 items. The use of social networking differs across genders with male showing a higher use of 53% as compared to their female counterparts who account for 47%. As such, it is clear the use of modern technology in information conveyance is higher for male viewers and listeners as opposed to female audiences.

**Reliability**

**Case Processing Summary**

		N	%
Cases	Valid	100	100.0
	Excluded <sup>a</sup>	0	.0
	Total	100	100.0

a. List wise deletion based on all variables in the procedure.

**Reliability Statistics**

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.070	18

The findings show the frequency in the use of social networking channels differs on the levels of education. For example, the utilization is higher for audiences with a secondary education who account for a frequency of 43, followed by undergraduate students at 37, preparatory 18, and Masters Level have a frequency of 5. The results indicate the frequency in the use of substitute social channels from traditional media outlets reduces the level of education. Users with a secondary education have the highest frequency while persons with a Master's education have the least frequency at 5.

The selection of technology or the preference in the utilization of channels differs to a larger extent. The research compared the use of three primary forms of communication and information transfer; television, laptop, and smart devices. Smartphones are the most preferred by 95% of respondents, laptops, and television is the lowest at 4% and 3% respectively.

Another variable tested as part of the data collection was the model of accessing news. The findings compared the technologies used by users in accessing news, information, and in communication transfers. 65% of the respondents indicated they use social media to access news, 22% use television, 6% newspapers, and 4% use other methods. The findings reveal social media as the most popular information channel in the United Arab Emirates while newspapers have the least viewership at 4%.

The research examined what users prefer to read in the identification of user preferences and selection. Again, social media channels like *Facebook*, *Twitter*, *WhatsApp*, *Instagram*, and *YouTube* had the largest preference at 58%, followed by online newspapers at 21%, and finally print newspapers at 8%. Approximately 13% of respondents indicated they do not have a specific, or a preferable model of reading news.

Radio usage was also tested as an independent model of information transfer and communication. The research evaluated the number of hours users spend on radio. 17% of the respondents indicated they spend 1-2 hours while the remaining 84%, which are a majority, stated that they neither listen to radio nor view it as an attractive information channel.

The access to film content was evaluated independently, and the models tested included; cinema, online streaming, television, and DVDs. Cinema had the largest viewership at 42%, followed by online streaming at 38%, television 18%, DVDs 3%. A small 4% of respondents indicated they do not have a particular way of watching films and movies. From the above findings, it is evident theaters are preferable platforms in UAE for watching films while DVDs have the least usage. Online streaming is fairly accessible and utilized and ranks as the second most popular platform after cinemas.

The next area of analysis was the number of time audiences, and viewers spend on television. The majority of respondents 34% indicated they spend 2-3 hours, 32% reported they spend less than an hour on TV, 28% spend 1-2 hours, and 4% spend more than 3 hours. The above findings are important as they show the frequency in the use of TV and how respondents view this specific media outlet for communication and information conveyance.

When asked how likely they are to use social networking channels, 37% reported very likely, 27% indicated they were extremely likely, 25% moderately, and 10% stated they were slightly likely to use social platforms. The above statistics show that social media is a popular and reputable channel with a majority of respondents demonstrating confidence and reliability in the utilization of social media for information and news.

Instagram and Twitter were assessed on their levels of use and frequency in the United Arab Emirates. The findings indicate that Instagram is more popular than Twitter with a 64% acceptance rate as opposed to Twitter which has 24% acceptance. Overall, 37% responded they do not use Instagram as opposed to

Twitter which has a rejection rate of 77%. Therefore, most users prefer Instagram than Twitter as shown by variations in acceptance and rejection levels.

Data collection was also done in the use of YouTube. The site had a positive acceptance at 60% and a rejection of 40%. Comparatively, both YouTube and Instagram are similarly popular, but the rejection rate of YouTube is higher than that of Instagram which is at 24% low. Google Plus was an equally popular platform whose acceptance was

82% and only a rejection rate of 18%. Hence, Google Plus is perhaps the more useful social site after Instagram and YouTube.

WhatsApp results showed a strong usage by over 94% of the respondents and only 9% rejection. The positive indicators in the utilization of WhatsApp are partly attributed to a large number of smartphone users.

This analysis supports that of all the social channels, WhatsApp is the most used as it features the highest acceptance rate and the lowest rejection in the United Arab Emirates. Snapchat as a communication technology was also evaluated independently. Findings indicate 74% of users rely on Snapchat while only 25% do not view the channel as an attractive model of communication and information conveyance.

Overall, the study determined the time users spend in the social media. 44% indicated they spend 2-3 hours, 37% spend more than 3 hours, and 17% less than an hour in social media. Almost every respondent used a smartphone device to access social media as exemplified by the results; 98% admitted using smartphone devices for social media purposes, and only 2% indicated they do not use their smartphones for social networking.

The number of friends in social media as compared to real-life was also tested. The goal for testing respondents' number of friends in both platforms; real-life and in social media, was to identify whether social factors have an influence on the frequency of social media usage. The results reveal that 18% of respondents have more friends in social media, 34% admit some of the times they have more friends in digital channels, and 13% indicated they have friends most of the time in social media. Only 16% admitted they do not have more friends in social media as compared to real-life. 18% stated they rarely have more friends in social media.

The results further capture the significance of social media to real-life experiences. A majority of

respondents 37% indicate that most of the time, social media can be an effective tool for life teachings and experience. 32% admit social media can offer life teachings all of the time while 26% acknowledge that sometimes, social media can be used for life experiences. An important part of the questionnaire results is the use of social media to express personal ideas and attitudes. A majority of users acknowledged they sometimes use digital channels to express feelings and ideas; 8% all of the time and 26% most of the time.

Social media use was evaluated based on its ability to offer education and entertainment. Most respondents had confidence in entertainment at 74% while only 46% indicated they use social media as an avenue for education. 84% relied on social media as a source of information like; news, reports, and findings, etc.

An important part of the study was to gather findings on the most popular and preferable social channels. Instagram was the highest at 44%, Facebook 22%, WhatsApp 17%, and YouTube at 12%. Only 6% found Google Plus as useful, and 3% had confidence in Twitter as a useful information channel.

Mobile devices are the most preferable to access social channels with a 99% utilization rate in the UAE. It is important to note that social networking channels were used for online shopping and commercial purposes by respondents. 43% admitted that sometimes they find social media instrumental for shopping and only 18% prefer to buy online. 17% reported they hardly shop online and 17% admitted they have never bought online.

The majority of respondents stated they would use Instagram as their favorite channel. YouTube was the second most popular at 26% and Facebook at 24%. Twitter and Google Plus had the least preference at 6% and 3% respectively.

46% of the questionnaire findings indicated that users have 1-50 friends on their social channels, 61% have 50 – 100 friends, and 38% respondents have more than 100 friends. 36% of people are very likely to use social websites, and 28% are extremely likely to use similar platforms. Finally, the research gathered information on avenues that UAE respondents use to access the internet. The results were as follows; 38% use their relatives' houses, 30% friends' houses, and 18% use the cyber cafés for surfing and browsing. Youth centers and shopping avenues had the least usage at 3%. Only

9% admitted using the school library to access social websites.

### Conclusion

Social media has significant contribution to people's life. Some of the platforms provided are the Facebook, Twitter, Skype and MySpace. These platforms are essential since they assist in ensuring that the interaction between the youths is made open in the world. Social media is one of the potent tools that significantly impact the lives of youth in the United Arab Emirates and indeed to the whole world. Since majority of the youths were born in the digital age, most have been conditioned to believe that they cannot do without it. Most of the youth depend on it in their daily lives. However, it is critical to appreciate that the social media has both positive and negative effects in the lives of the youths.

### Recommendations

One of the recommendations is that the youth need to be trained in the best ways of using the social media so as to minimize the time that they spend on chatting and doing other activities that have no meaningful impact on their lives. Secondly, there is the need for the internet providers to devise mechanisms that they can filter the content that reaches the youth. It is also essential for the parents play their role in monitoring the activities of the youth in the social platforms. Finally, there is a need to ensure that youth get trained on the legal issues regarding the utilization of the social media. Posting of malicious and reputation damaging content may lead one to jail.

### Suggested Areas for Further Research

Since the above study was based on the overall social media, there is the need for a study to be done on other social media sites such as Instagram or Facebook. Additionally, there is also the need for a study to be undertaken to determine the impact of the social media on the other age groups.

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