

The Influence of Social Media on University Students' Future Aspirations and Planning

Hunida Gindil Abu Backer*

Assistant Professor, Department of Mass Communication, College of art and science, Abu

Dhabi University. ORCID ID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-4944-5997>

Email: hunida.ahmadoun@adu.ac.ae

Abstract

This study aims to assess the impact of intensive social media use on university students' future plans. To achieve our goal, 496 media students at Abu Dhabi University were surveyed using a quantitative descriptive methodology and a questionnaire. The findings revealed a growing trend among students to pursue content creation for financial gain, potentially compromising ethical standards and educational commitments. Furthermore, a concerning percentage of students expressed a willingness to abandon their studies for social media fame. Additionally, we found that intensive social media use hinders the development of cultural identity by causing a disconnect from local issues. Therefore, this article recommends the following. Firstly, implementing educational guidance programs to align students' future plans with sustainable development goals. Secondly, raising awareness among stakeholders about the risks of excessive social media use. Thirdly, media literacy courses should be incorporated into curricula. Fourthly, balanced social media consumption should be promoted. Lastly, fostering stronger cultural identity formation. Accordingly, universities and social media platforms should cooperate to advance responsible content creation. This collaboration will lessen the detrimental influence of excessive social media use on students' academic as well as personal growth.

Keywords: University Student, Future Plans, Extensive Use, Social Media.

Introduction

Modern technologies have accompanied us into a relatively modern era. This era is dominated by communication tools through digitalization, fundamentally altering the media landscape. This type of shift has transformed the world from a metaphorical "small village" into a relatively "small sphere" contained within a

mobile phone. It opposes the importance of traditional media such as newspapers, radio, and television. Currently, media exist as applications along with the networks within a device that individuals carry everywhere (Sutherland et al., 2018). In educational contexts, social media platforms have remained instrumental in fostering a sense of belonging in university students to their academic groups. The transition from in-person to virtual communication has made it easier for both children and adults to engage deeply with these platforms, often losing track of time. This type of phenomenon underscores the pervasive nature of social media and its defining role in contemporary society (Abdel Monem, Al-Tahir, & Ghareeb, 2018).

Likewise, the widespread acceptance of technologies in modern communication and the engagement of very diverse age groups in social media usage highlight the important role in fulfilling desires for information, communication and interaction along with entertainment. This rise in information technology, with the support of media applications, presents a modern challenge that has attracted scholars, policymakers, and civil organizations. However, initially received with enthusiasm, various social media platforms have progressed into tools for developing communication for different users and generating revenue for numerous media companies. This kind of evolution has led to intense engagement, affecting individuals, societal dynamics, and communal responsibilities. According to previous studies, such as Aichour (2019), the widespread use of social media has notable implications for both individuals and society. Research findings on social media's effect on mental health are quite mixed, with some studies suggesting it can alleviate depression. On the other hand, other studies point to a link between frequent use and depressive symptoms (Alsabaani et al., 2018).

Social media networks have become indispensable across several life domains, particularly in the domain of education (Sutherland et al., 2018). Within academic environments, social media platforms have played an important role in fostering a sense of belonging among students in their educational communities. Regardless of age, the transition from physical to virtual communication has made it easier for individuals to engage with these platforms for prolonged periods. They do so regularly without conscious awareness of the time used online. This kind of

phenomenon underscores the pervasive nature of social media and its unique characteristics in the contemporary era (Abdel Monem et al., 2018). University students, as vital human capital, play a crucial role in addressing societal challenges through their engagement, opinion sharing, and active participation in youth initiatives and national programs.

This study addresses the critical issue of the effects and consequences of heavy social media usage, focusing on its relationship with university students' future planning. A survey conducted at Abu Dhabi University's College of Media serves as the basis for this examination. The aim is to analyze students' perspectives, the transformations and the impacts of social media. Additionally, it seeks to understand interactive communication and its influence on students' aspirations for the future. The objective is to illuminate the impact of social media usage. Consequently, we can enhance our comprehension by exploring how it influences the acquisition of social responsibilities among university students.

Central to this investigation is the question: What are the repercussions of intensive social media usage? In this paper, the main objective is to evaluate the impact of the intensive use of social media on university student's future plans and analyze the resulting influences. To achieve the objective, several sub-objectives can be formulated as follows:

1. To identify the motivations of university students for intensive use of social media.
2. To analyze the future plans of university students who use social media.

Literature Review

The emergence of the "social media generation" is characterized by its deep integration into daily routines, emphasizing its indispensability. Social media, built on Web 2.0 technology, enables user-generated content, fostering connectivity among users (Aladdin, 2020). Initially a digital tool for specific societal segments, "social media" was first coined in 1994. It evolved significantly with the launch of platforms like SixDegrees.com in 1997 and MySpace.com in 2003. This evolution culminated in Facebook's global proliferation (Aichner et al., 2021; Al-Hajran, 2021). By 2009, Facebook boasted over 175 million active users, underscoring its expansive role (Kircaburun et al., 2020).

The utility of social media extends beyond connecting individuals; it enables networking, cultural exchanges, and the preservation of heritage. Additionally, it serves commercial and employment purposes. While it offers numerous benefits, including bridging communities and fulfilling diverse needs, its extensive use raises concerns about its impact on societal and familial structures (Al-Hajran, 2021). Advocated is a balanced use of social media to prevent interference with daily responsibilities. This challenge is often overshadowed by its widespread influence.

Social media platforms have integrated a variety of features (Marchesani, Masciarelli, & Ceci, 2024). These include the use of images and sound, direct communication, and diverse interactions ranging from simple likes to complex visual and written exchanges. They are accessible to all age groups, facilitating interactions without time or demographic restrictions. By challenging conventional guardianship ideas, this accessibility ushers in a generation where digital communication channels predominate. The current generation's profound reliance on and attachment to social media platforms significantly shapes their identity, aspirations, and daily routines. This widespread engagement, particularly among the youth—who are pivotal to the future of societies—poses inherent risks. The lack of a scientific approach and awareness often leads to isolation from familial and community ties, personal interests, and responsibilities. This favors increased social media engagement.

The extensive use of social media not only affects individuals' futures (Barnidge & Xenos, 2024) but also has broader implications for societal and national prospects. University students, influenced by success stories that transition from poverty to wealth through social media, may devalue education and skill acquisition. The allure of achieving fame and wealth through simple content creation, such as imitating dances or posting viral images, challenges the perceived necessity of formal education. The trend of students abandoning their studies to pursue content creation or product promotion on social media merits critical examination.

Hypotheses Development

Mosharrafa, Akther and Siddique (2024) examined the effect of social media usage on the educational performance of various university students: the mediating

role of mental health in a cross-sectional study in Bangladesh. Through confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) and structural equation modeling approach, the study checked the accuracy of the scale. Accordingly, the authors analyzed key values using the Bergen Social Media Addiction Scale and mediation analysis. The findings proved a significant positive impact of social media usage on academic success and psychological well-being, with a comparative fit index of 0.921 and an RMSEA of 0.06, indicating a good model fit. A very notable positive connection between social media use and academic success was observed. The study established the mediating role of mental health between social media addiction and academic performance. Accordingly, it suggested a beneficial impact of online social media on mental well-being. [Oyinbo et al. \(2024\)](#) explored social media use and its positive association with perceived stress in female college students.

[Chen and Xiao \(2022\)](#) reviewed the impact of social media on the development of students' affective variables, analyzing the dual impact of social media on students' emotional states. The authors highlighted both positive and negative outcomes, with significant attention to negative psychological symptoms like depression, anxiety, and stress, attributing these to unfair social comparisons. Similarly, [Elsayed \(2021\)](#) aimed to understand the negative effects of social media on the social identity of adolescents from a social work perspective. The findings indicated several adverse impacts on adolescents' social identity, emphasizing the need for protective measures by families, schools, and other institutions. [Kolhar, Kazi and Alameen \(2021\)](#) examined the effect of social media use on learning, social interactions, and sleep duration among university students. They revealed negative implications for academic performance, social interactions, and sleep patterns among students, primarily due to excessive social media use.

The studies mentioned above collectively contribute to understanding social media's multifaceted effect on academic performance, mental health, and social identity, offering a comprehensive overview for further research development. The communal examination of research concerning the utilization and satisfaction derived from social media by young individuals underscores its significant influence on their lives. It also highlights its impact on their aspirations for the future. The aggregated

insights from these studies demonstrate that social media usage offers psychological advantages to university students, positively affecting their academic achievements. Different social media platforms have arisen as essential resources for information among the youth, promoting learning motivation through enhancing self-esteem. This effect is credited to social media's influence on users' self-image and the range of emotions it can evoke, which are not universally positive.

Analysis of the first, third, fourth, and seventh studies revealed that university students engage with social media voluntarily, often without parental supervision. The primary purpose is to seek important scientific information. In contrast, findings from the second study caution that spending over two hours daily on social media may lead to anxiety and psychological distress. This observation aligns with this research. It suggested that university students can find pleasure in social media interactions without it becoming overwhelming. The fifth study pointed to the detrimental impacts of social media on young people, notably in areas of achievement, delay, conclusion, and fragmentation.

Notably, only a minimal percentage of students use social media for educational purposes. A considerable number of students were engaged in these platforms for entertainment and to connect with unknown individuals, driven by curiosity. Such behavior poses potential risks and safety concerns. The eighth study indicated that social media usage does not directly correlate with happiness and subjective well-being. Moreover, the ninth study encapsulated the ongoing debate regarding the positive and negative effects of social media, emphasizing the importance of incorporating media literacy into university programs. This initiative aims to develop critical thinking skills concerning the content on media and social networking sites. It also advocates for rigorous monitoring of social media use by parents and the state. Proposing the reinforcement of authentic Islamic principles is seen to counteract Western influences.

These outcomes align with the aim of the present study, which endeavors to raise awareness among Arab youth about the complexities and hazards associated with excessive social media use. The primary objective is to enlighten young people about its effects on their personal lives and their crucial contribution to the future development of

their countries. The discussion above led to the following research hypotheses;

Hypothesis 1. Significant gender differences exist among university students regarding their susceptibility to the intensive use of social media.

Hypothesis 2. A statistically significant relationship is evident between the weekly frequency of social media usage by university students, their motivations for engaging with social media, and their future plans.

Methodology

Research Approach, Population and Sample

This investigation focused on students from the Media Department at the College of Arts, Abu Dhabi University, United Arab Emirates. It served as a research that adopted a descriptive and analytical methodology within the framework of a quantitative research philosophy to fulfill its objectives. The descriptive method focuses on utilizing factual data, information, and observations to depict a phenomenon accurately. This approach encompasses scientific analysis and interpretation. It involves hypothesis testing and the identification of prevalent relationships among variables. It systematically classifies and organizes data. Subsequently, it concludes with generalizations that contribute to the development and enhancement of the reality under study (El Helou et al., 2022). The primary goal of this work is to collect and estimate the college student perspectives regarding the impact of excessive social media use on their planning for the future. The study highlighted the risks accompanying with prolonged and frequent weekly engagement in social media activities. It examined its impact on their interest in the future.

The survey has been used as a crucial instrument for fulfilling the purpose of research. It has been designed to explore the effects of intensive social media usage on university students' future aspirations. Its selection was based on its ability to collect data from extensive and densely populated cohorts efficiently. Consequently, providing insight into individual perspectives on a variety of topics. This method enables the systematic and uniform gathering of both qualitative and quantitative data. It establishes it as a commonly employed tool in research endeavors. The survey

has been crafted to meet the research objectives and thoroughly investigate the study's queries, encompassing four primary areas with 31 questions. These questions span demographic details, motivations for using social media, and students' future intentions regarding social media engagement.

A representative sample of students and reflecting the broader community in the Arab region. Specifically, students from the Media College were chosen due to their direct relevance to the subject matter. Given the limited size of this group, the research encompassed the entire community as its statistical population, equating the sample size with the population for analytical purposes. The questionnaire was distributed to Media College students within the university. Out of the 496 media students at Abu Dhabi University, 403 participated by completing the electronic questionnaire. This resulted in a noteworthy response rate of 81%. The gender distribution within the sample was 55% female and 45% male. This mirrors the demographic characteristics of the larger study community.

Internal Validity and Consistency of the Research Instrument

The questionnaire was administered to 12 specialists in the fields of language, information, education, and psychology to assess the research instrument (the questionnaire). These experts suggested various changes in the scale items. Subsequently, by following the instructions of experts, various changes were made in the scale items for improvement. Following their suggestions, modifications were made to enhance its effectiveness. After that, the study checked the reliability of the questionnaire. For this purpose, a pilot study was carried out by using 25 responses. While checking the reliability, this study found 0.85, the reliability coefficient, which is satisfactory.

The Statistical Processing of Data

The statistical process was carried out by using statistical tools, and a test related to Cronbach's alpha was used to examine the reliability of the scale. In this process of data analysis, various methods, procedures, and statistical analyses were employed. Processes such as weighted average calculations, standard deviation, and ranking were used. The significance of the relationship was considered in this process by using the p-value.

Results

Gender-Based Analysis of Social Media Motivations and Impacts on University Students: Insights from Abu Dhabi University's College of Media

This section examined the similarities and differences in university students' motivations for using social media. It also explored the impact on their future aspirations, their engagement with international and local issues, and the level of satisfaction among male and female students. [Table 1](#) presents the gender distribution of the sample, consisting of 496 students from the College of Media at Abu Dhabi University. Of the 403 participants who took part in the study, 283 were female (i.e., 70%) and 120 were male (i.e., 30%), all representing the Media College at Abu Dhabi University.

Table 1: The Respondent's Distribution Is Based on Their Gender in The Study Population.

Frequency	Percentage	Gender
182	45	Male
221	55	Female
403	100	Total

Demographic Distribution of University Students by Age: Enrollment Trends and Government Employment Influence

[Table 2](#) lists the age categorization into four distinct groups. It indicates that the age bracket ranging from 24 to 27 years records the highest proportion of students, representing 45% of the total. This can be attributed to the phenomenon of students pursuing government employment after completing secondary education and subsequently resuming their studies. Following closely with a percentage of 44% is the age group of 18 to 23 years, representing the typical age group for university enrollment.

Table 2: The Respondent's Distribution Is Based on Their Age.

Frequency	Percentage	Age
179	%44	17 -22
180	%45	23 - 28
44	%11	More than 28
403	100%	Total

Intensive Daily Social Media Usage Among University Students: A Comprehensive Analysis

Table 3 displays the frequency distribution of student engagement with social media throughout the week. The data shows that a substantial majority of the surveyed students, 95%, reported using social media platforms every day of the week. This underscores the deep connection many young people have with digital platforms and their significant impact on university students' interests. Such consistent engagement indicates that social media is thoroughly integrated into the daily lives of these individuals.

Table 3: Frequency Distribution of Student Engagement With Social Media During The Week.

Frequency	Percentage	Number of days
0	%0	One day
6	%1.5	Two days
0		Three days
9	%2.2	Four days
0	%0	Five days
0	%0	Six days
388	%96.3	Seven days
403	100	Total

Extensive Daily Social Media Consumption Patterns Among University Students

Table 4 provides insight into the frequency distribution of periods of social media use in hours per day among the surveyed students. The data reveals that a substantial proportion of students, accounting for 59% of the total, reported using social media for more than 11 hours per day. This extensive usage pattern suggests a significant portion of students dedicate a considerable amount of time to engaging with digital platforms daily. Furthermore, 27% of respondents reported using social media for 4 to 10 hours. Additionally, 12% reported using it for 1 to 3 hours. Notably, a very small percentage, 2%, reported using social media, which is also less than 1 hour per day. Such results shed light on the prevalence of prolonged social media usage among university students. They also highlight its potential implications for their daily routines and activities.

Table 4: Frequency Distribution of Periods of Social Media Use in Hours Per Day.

Frequency	Percentage	Number of hours
6	%2	Less than 1
50	%12	1 - 3
108	%27	4-10
239	%59	More than 11
403	100	Total

Diverse Preferences in Social Media Platforms Among University Students: An Analysis of Popularity and Engagement

The distribution of percentages given in Table 5 reflects varying levels of preference for unique social media platforms among surveyed participants. TikTok emerges as the most favored platform, with a significant percentage of 19.10%. It is followed closely by Snapchat and Instagram, each accounting for approximately 18-19% of participants' preferences. These findings suggest a diverse landscape of social media usage preferences among surveyed individuals. They highlight the importance of understanding and addressing platform-specific dynamics in research. Additionally, it underscores the importance of addressing practices related to digital engagement and communication. Furthermore, relatively lower percentages for platforms, including LinkedIn and Facebook, indicate varying popularity among the surveyed population. This underscores the nuanced nature of social media usage patterns among contemporary university students. Such insights contribute to the broader discourse on digital media preferences and behaviors, informing strategies for effective engagement and communication in academic and professional contexts.

Table 5: Prevalence of Social Media Platform Preferences Among Surveyed Participants.

Rank	Percentage	Frequency	Social Media Platform
1	19.10%	77	TikTok
4	16.63%	67	WhatsApp
3	18.36%	74	Instagram
2	18.86%	76	Snapchat
5	8.68%	35	YouTube
8	0.74%	3	LinkedIn
7	3.47%	14	Facebook
5	8.68%	35	Twitter
6	5.46%	22	Telegram
100%	100%	403	Total

Multifaceted Engagement: Analyzing University Students' Motivations for Social Media Usage

Table 6 presents an in-depth analysis of reasons behind social media usage among university student, delineating numerous categories of engagement along with their corresponding percentages. It uncovers that a fraction of students, approximately 10.18%, utilize social media to stay updated with news as well as events, while 20.34% use it for information acquisition. Moreover, the largest segment, 24.81%, engages in communication through these platforms. A very small percentage, 7.44%, leverages social media for professional endeavors, 18.86% for entertainment perspectives, and 15.87% for creating content. This type of distribution provides insightful observations on the multifunctional use of social media among students, underscoring its significant impact across educational, social, and professional domains. The pronounced use of entertainment and communication underscores students' preference for using these platforms as an avenue for leisure and socializing, thereby highlighting the integral role of social media in facilitating relaxation, enjoyment, and the cultivation of social connections. The prioritization of entertainment with communication not only reflects the students' tendencies towards seeking enjoyment and interaction on social media but also emphasizes the importance of these activities in influencing their online behaviors and experiences.

The findings of the current study resonate with the conclusions drawn by [El Abiddine et al. \(2022\)](#), which pointed out the crucial role of social media in bolstering communication among several students, especially in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. It was noted that social media emerged as a vital channel for maintaining connections and interactions during periods of lockdown. The pandemic and remote learning necessitated this.

This study used a 5-point Likert scale to examine response patterns for investigating the influence of social media on university students' future aspirations (see [Table 7](#)). Next, this study calculated the mean as well as standard deviation, arranged the questions using descending mean scores, and assessed the prevailing attitudes.

Table No. 6: Distribution of University Students According to The Nature of Social Media Usage.

Rank	Percentage	Frequency	Nature of Usage
5	10.18%	41	Searching for local and global news and events
2	20.34%	82	Obtaining information
1	24.81%	10	Communicating with others
6	7.44%	30	Investing and conducting business
3	18.86%	76	Seeking entertainment
4	15.87%	64	Content creation and sharing on social media
100%	100%	403	Total

Assessing the Impact of Extended Social Media Usage on University Students' Daily Lives and Attitudes

We used a 5-point Likert scale to examine response patterns and investigate the influence of social media on university students' future aspirations (see [Table 7](#)). Then, we calculated the mean and standard deviation, arranged the questions according to descending mean scores, and assessed the prevailing attitudes.

Table 7: The Five-Point Likert Scale.

Result	Range
Strongly Agree	1.00-1.80
Agree	1.81-2.60
Neutrally	2.61-3.40
Disagree	3.41-4.30
Strongly Disagree	4.31-5.00

Exploring the Study's Principal Objectives

In this section of the study, the main findings are discussed by addressing the primary research objectives as follows:

Objective 1: To explore the motivations of university students in their extensive use of social media platforms.

The research findings pertaining to this objective will be elucidated by analyzing the data presented in [Table 8](#). The table details the results of a survey that included eleven questions designed to gauge the motivations for using social media. Answers were gathered using a five-point Likert scale, from "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree." The analysis reveals a pronounced consensus among young

people, with a majority either strongly agreeing or agreeing with the presented motivations. Notably, certain motivations garnered more agreement:

1. 75% strongly agreed that they engage with social media to explore global cultures.
2. 74% appreciated the constant availability of social media.
3. 72% sought information through social media content.
4. 69% found social media a refuge from life's stresses.
5. 67% viewed social media engagement as a pivotal method for achieving global recognition.

These insights highlight several key points:

1. University students perceive social media as a vital gateway to understanding world cultures. This challenges the media's conventional gatekeeping role and questions parental control over their informational exposures.
2. The findings affirm a shift from traditional media reliance to a preference for contemporary digital and social media platforms.
3. An increasing trend among university students shows a motivation to leverage social media for monetary benefits.

Table 8: Identifying the Underlying Motivations of University Students for Intensive Use of Social Media Platforms.

Question	No.	I Strongly disagree.	I disagree	Neutral	I agree	I Strongly Agree	Mean	STD	Rank	جدول رقم 8: دوافع الطالب الجامعي في استخدام وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي.
										Result
		N	N	N	N	N				
		%	%	%	%	%				
I use social media materials to spend leisure time.	1	0	4	24	98	277	4.61	0.647	3	Strongly Agree
Using social media helps me escape life's pressures.	2	2	4	14	86	239	4.33	0.647	10	Strongly Agree e
I depend on social media for acquiring information.	3	0	3	6	76	291	4.60	0.734	5	Strongly Agree
I use social media to obtain unrestricted, uncensored material.	4	18	14	15	12	165	3.43	1.565	8	Agree
Through using social media, I can learn about cultures around the world.	5	0	2	1	22	303	4.71	0.561	1	Strongly Agree
Using social media provides a unique personal harmony.	6	0	2	13	106	235	4.41	0.794	9	Strongly Agree

Strongly Agree	4	0.616	4.60	265	120	16	0	2	Through using social media, I can learn about modern lifestyle patterns.	7
				65	30	4	0	1		
Strongly Agree	6	0.766	4.55	273	92	26	10	2	Social media is considered one of the most critical ways for youth to communicate.	8
				67	23	6	3	1		
Agree	2	0.577	4.69	299	88	12	4	0	I'm attracted to using social media because it's available anytime.	9
				74	22	3	1	0		
Strongly Agree	11	1.205	3.95	189	84	86	46	16	I use it to achieve financial returns.	10
				47	21	17	11	4		
Strongly Agree	7	0.830	4.52	271	90	28	8	6	Using social media is considered one of the most important ways to achieve global fame.	11
				67	22	7	2	2		
Strongly Agree		0.813	4.40						Total	

Objective 4: Analyzing the Future Plans of University Students Engaged in Social Media Use

1. This study explores the effects of social media on university students' future planning, as outlined in [Table 9](#). The table presents a summary of a survey comprising ten questions aimed at understanding students' future aspirations connected to social media usage. It employed a five-point Likert scale ranging from "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree". The results reveal a significant shift in student interests in strategic future planning. Noteworthy findings demonstrate a substantial consensus on content sharing for views (52%), engaging in social media for financial gain (52%), and the ambition for fame (48%).
2. A concerning 46% of students expressed disagreement with abandoning their studies for social media fame. Meanwhile, 36% were willing to forsake their education for fame opportunities, and 17% remained undecided. This reflects a worrying trend that may undermine the academic engagement and professional futures of this generation, especially as trivial content garners significant views and financial returns amidst rising unemployment among graduates.
3. The results affirm a growing interest in weaving social media into students' future planning, influencing their life's direction.
4. The pursuit of fame, regardless of its impact on personal development and societal awareness, marks a dangerous inclination. It underscores a shift towards embracing

global identities over local issues. This suggests a decline in recognizing the potential of today's youth to support and enrich the nation's future.

Table 9: Future Career Plans of Arab Youth.

Result	Rank	STD	Mean	I Strongly Agree	I agree	Neutral	I disagree	I Strongly disagree.	Question	No
				N	N	N	N	N		
Agree	4	1.068	4.02	165	134	64	26	14	Developing my communication skills and experiences	1
Agree	5	1.129	3.87	145	134	62	50	12	Developing my professional path	2
Agree	7	1.278	3.71	147	104	72	50	30	Obtaining higher academic degrees in my scientific specialty	3
Strongly Agree	2	0.912	4.29	210	125	48	14	6	Share content that gets views	4
Agree	8	1.402	3.66	52	31	11	4	2	Creating scientific content specialized in one of the fields	5
Agree	9	1.339	3.51	160	87	66	40	50	Creating content that contributes to sustainable development	6
Agree	3	1.050	4.14	40	22	16	10	12	Reaching the pinnacle of fame by all means	7
Agree	10	1.471	2.86	122	105	76	56	44	Quit studying and focus on creating content for social media	8
Agree	6	1.123	3.77	30	26	19	14	11	Adopting awareness campaigns through social media	9
Strongly Agree	1	0.960	4.25	195	116	54	28	10	Achieving a profitable financial source with social media	10
Agree		1.173	3.81	78	74	68	80	103	Total	

Hypothesis Testing Outcomes

Hypothesis 1: A Statistically Significant Correlation Exists Between the Frequency of Social Media Use and University Students' Motivations

Hypothesis 1 posited a statistically significant relationship between the frequency of social media usage throughout the week by university students, their underlying motivations for engaging with social media, and their planning for the future. Utilizing the Pearson correlation coefficient, the analysis revealed:

- There is a strong direct correlation ($r = 0.641$, $p < .001$) between the frequency of

social media usage and students' motivations for exposure. This suggests that increased motivation leads to heightened usage, potentially reflecting a negative impact.

- A weak direct correlation ($r = 0.231$, $p < .001$) was identified, linking social media usage throughout the week with the future career aspirations of Arab youth. This indicates that greater usage may detrimentally affect future planning, impacting focus and attention to detail.
- A very weak direct correlation ($r = 0.168$, $p < .001$) emerged between weekly social media usage and the balance of positive and negative effects experienced. This finding underscores that the benefits of social media use are not inherently tied to its intensity, which also brings exposure to negative aspects like content superficiality and sensationalism.
- Lastly, a very weak direct correlation ($r = 0.104$, $p = 0.037$) exists between the daily hours of social media use and the satisfaction derived from such engagement. This outcome highlights that fulfillment from social media does not necessitate overuse but can be attained through thoughtful consumption (see [Table 10](#)).

This revised analysis concisely reiterates the complex dynamics between social media usage patterns among university students and their effects on motivations, future planning, and the balance between positive and negative outcomes. It promotes a nuanced understanding of digital engagement's role in modern academic environments.

Table 10: Correlation between daily social media usage and independent variables.

Direction of Relationship	Strength of Relationship:	R2	significant	R	independent studied variables
Positive	Moderate correlation	0.18	0.00	0.419**	Motives of university students to use social media 1
Positive	Very weak correlation	0.04	0.00	0.197**	Career plans of Arab youth for their professional future 2
Positive	Very weak correlation	0.01	0.27	0.110*	The Advantages and Disadvantages of Stemming from Intensive Use of Social Media 3
Negative	Moderate correlation	0.22	0.00	0.47-**	Satisfaction achieved by university students through their use of social media 4

❖ Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed) **

❖ Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed) *

Hypothesis 3: Significant differences exist between genders (male and female university students) in being affected by intensive social media use.

There is a statistically significant difference between males and females (university students) in the motivations for using social media ($p = 0.027$). Additionally, there is a difference in the gratifications obtained through its use and their future professional plans. This result indicates gender-based differences in usage motivations, achieved gratifications, and future planning. This expected outcome reflects the distinct needs of females compared to males, as well as in the context of the future, aligning with the study's hypothesis that females tend towards the concept of marriage (see [Table 11](#)).

Table 11: Differences in The Impact of Intensive Social Media Use Among Male and Female University Students.

Significance	Female (221)	Male (182)	ID
mean±Sd	mean±Sd		
0.027	4.4± 0.030	4.5± 0.575	1
0.005	4.5± 0.578	4.3± 0.604	2
0.000	3.7±0.443	4.0± 0.514	3
0.000	3.6± 0.577	3.9± 0.668	4

Discussion

The analysis of how intensive social media use affects university students of different genders (male and female) showed clear differences. This research considered the gender and age of participants. It revealed distinctions between male and female students in areas such as motivations, gratifications, and future planning. Despite expecting these variances, the study offered a somewhat contrasting view, especially regarding the impact of acceptance. Their results showed no significant gender differences in the negative consequences of social media usage.

Additionally, the current study investigates the reasons behind university students' heavy use of social media. It poses 11 questions related to their needs for fulfillment. Media students at Abu Dhabi University showed varied agreement levels with certain motivations, especially the desire to engage with global cultures facilitated by the continuous availability of these platforms. The study by [Claire El Helou et al. \(2022\)](#) supported the idea that such platforms increase the sense of social

belonging. It indicates that these motivations primarily represent personal goals rather than significant societal or family expectations.

[Abdel Monem et al. \(2018\)](#) substantiated the perception of social media as a pivotal information source among university students. The National Youth Research Center at King Saud University validated that the youth employ social media for important communication, opinion expression, and information acquisition. This trend gains a vital significance amidst the challenges of assimilating information via official media outlets, which traditionally aim to safeguard societal interests. The youth's pivot towards social media introduces them to a vast spectrum of unfiltered as well as unchecked information, signaling a decline in traditional media gatekeeping principles.

Compared to traditional media, numerous respondents, including print newspaper users, refrained from using these platforms, particularly because of the COVID-19 pandemic. [Maziou \(2020\)](#) affirmed the important role of these platforms in fostering global acquaintance and cultural exchange. Likewise, [Skour \(2021\)](#) revealed the influence of Facebook on user behavior and cultural identity. The investigation also carefully analyzed future plans of the university students engaging with social media, deploying ten inquiries directed at media students from Abu Dhabi University. The results pointed to a very significant concern, with student responses ranging from the hopes for high viewership to contemplating abandoning their studies in pursuit of fame. [Al-Zuhry \(2016\)](#) echoed this sentimentality, noting a rise of media professionals without specific expertise, which resonates with the outcomes of this study.

Conversely, [Boateng and Amankwaa \(2016\)](#) found strong evidence supporting social media's role in enhancing academic pursuits. [Arar and Riahi \(2021\)](#) concentrated on post-graduation goals, illustrating social media's impact on future ambitions. [Shayan \(2019\)](#) highlighted the beneficial effects of social media on civic engagement, notwithstanding potential drawbacks. [Mosharrafa et al. \(2024\)](#) highlighted the positive mediating role of social media in mental health, asserting its importance in promoting student well-being. The study pointed out the challenges in creating interventions to reduce students' reliance on social media platforms.

Conclusion

The study concludes that intensive social media use has a notable impact on university students' plans and aspirations. It emphasizes a trend where students increasingly engage in content creation for financial gain, which may detract from their educational and career advancement. The findings underscored the necessity for educational guidance initiatives and heightened awareness across societal sectors regarding social media's effects on young people. The research advocates for the formulation of strategies to involve youth in activities that are in harmony with sustainable development goals. It proposes a balanced use of social media to protect the future welfare and career opportunities of the younger population.

Implications of the Study

Implementation of educational guidance programs in universities to steer students towards developing a future aligned with sustainable development goals. This is instead of being solely driven by financial gains from social media content creation. Raising awareness among state institutions, families, and religious bodies about the threat of excessive social media use to the academic reality and professional future of youth. Encouraging their participation in community development activities is important.

Furthermore, media literacy courses should be incorporated into university curricula to develop student's critical thinking skills for discerning credible information from superficial or sensationalized social media content. Additionally, the promotion of stronger cultural identity formation and engagement with local and national issues among students should be raised. This is to counterbalance the tendency towards global identities and fame-seeking through intensive social media use. These actions are needed to be promoted by following the results of this study. It is necessary to develop educational guidance programs in universities. These programs aim to attract and influence youth towards developing future plans that align with sustainable development programs for their countries. This is instead of being solely driven by the pursuit of financial gains and fame through social media content creation. This study recommends the incorporation of media literacy courses into university curricula. These courses should aim to develop critical thinking skills

among different students regarding media content. It will enable them to discern credible information from the superficial as well as sensationalized content on social media platforms.

Limitations and Future Directions

This study is limited to the extensive use of social media and its impact on university students' future plans. Geographically, the research was carried out at Abu Dhabi University, located in the United Arab Emirates. Furthermore, field research was performed using a questionnaire administered to students from the Department of Media at the University of Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates. Future studies should conduct multi-university and cross-cultural studies. These studies aim to enhance the generalizability of findings on the impact of intensive social media use on students' future plans. Implementation of longitudinal studies to assess the long-term impacts of intensive social media use on academic performance, career trajectories, and personal development of university students is also important. Future studies should develop and evaluate the effectiveness of educational interventions. They include guidance programs and media literacy courses to shape responsible social media usage and critical thinking among students. Finally, future studies should explore potential collaborations between universities and social media platforms to promote responsible content creation, fact-checking mechanisms, and ethical standards. Additionally, they examine the impact of platform policies on mitigating negative effects.

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