

**Social Networks Sites: Usage and Effects**

Ahmed Y. Abdelraheem\*  
Sultan Qaboos University, Oman

Submitted: 6/2/2013

Revised: 24/6/2013

Accepted: 26/8/2013

The aim of this paper is to explore the students' use of social networks sites (SNSs) and its effects on students' achievement. A questionnaire using a Liker type scale was distributed to a sample of 120 undergraduate students who participated in the study. The results show that students use SNSs for social matters more than for academic purposes. In this regard, there is no significant difference in the use of social network sites between female and male students. Students with smart mobile phones use SNSs more than those with normal mobiles. Facebook was the most used site. There is no significant difference in students' use of SNSs due to students GPA. More than fifty percent of sampled students spent two hours or more per day on SNSs. The study concludes with some recommendations.

Keywords: social networks sites, social media, Facebook.

**مواقع الشبكات الاجتماعية: الاستخدامات والتأثيرات**

أحمد يوسف عبدالرحيم\*

جامعة السلطان قابوس، سلطنة عمان

هدفت هذه الدراسة لاستكشاف استخدامات مواقع الشبكات الاجتماعية وإثرها على بعض المتغيرات. تم توزيع استبانة على نمط ليكرت لعينة من طلاب الدرجة الجامعية الأولى الذين شاركوا في هذه الدراسة مؤلفة من ١٢٠ طالبا. أظهرت النتائج أن استخدامات الطلاب لهذه المواقع في الأغراض الاجتماعية أكثر من استخداماتها للأغراض الأكاديمية كما أنه ليس هناك فروقات جوهرية في استخدامات هذه المواقع بين الطلاب الذكور والإناث كما أن الطلاب الذين لديهم هواتف نقالة ذكية كانت استخداماتهم لهذه المواقع أكثر من أقرانهم الذين يمتلكون هواتف نقالة عادية. موقع فيسبوك كان من أكثر المواقع استخداما كما أنه لم توجد فروقات جوهرية في الاستخدام لهذه المواقع تعزى لمتغير المعدل التراكمي للطلاب. وأظهرت النتائج أيضا أن أكثر من ٥٠٪ من الطلاب يقضون ساعتين أو أكثر يوميا على شبكات التواصل الاجتماعي. وختمت الدراسة ببعض التوصيات. الكلمات المفتاحية: مواقع الشبكات الاجتماعية، الوسائط الاجتماعية، فيسبوك.

\*[ahmedyar@squ.edu.om](mailto:ahmedyar@squ.edu.om)

Social networks sites (SNSs) have changed the way of human communications. From simple beginnings as a platform for sharing photos, discussing common interests, and supplementing traditional social interactions, they have become the source of change in different fields. They have revolutionized the way people interact, the way they communicate, and even the way they think (Weisgerber & Butler, 2010). The rise of social software provides new avenues and new opportunities for increased participation and collaboration and an opportunity to change the way people learn (Parker & Chao, 2008; Prensky 2011). The participatory web, including social networking sites such as Facebook and content-sharing sites such as YouTube and Flickr, allow individuals to establish or maintain connections with others, establish their social networks, and share information in the form of wikis, blogs, tweets, podcasts, video, RSS feeds, and more (McCarthy, 2010). Social media has been defined in different ways. These technologies include blogs, wikis, media (audio, photo, video, text) sharing tools, networking platforms (including Facebook), and virtual worlds. Over the years, social networking among college students has become more and more popular. It is a way to make connections, not only on campus, but with friends outside of school. Social networking is a way that helps many people feel as though they belong to a community. Due to the increased popularity of SNSs, economists and professors are questioning whether grades of students are being affected by how much time is being spent on these sites (Choney, 2010). With smart phones being able to access the Internet and have capabilities to house applications of social networking, many are concerned about how smart phones with social networking applications will affect students' grades. Social networking became popular between 2004 and 2006, after Facebook and MySpace were created. Facebook currently claims over 800 million active users sharing more than 30 billion pieces of content each month in the form of web links, news stories, blog posts, notes, photo albums, etc. (Facebook Statistics, 2011). Twitter, a social networking and microblogging service, is averaging 140 million tweets per day, up from 50 million the previous year, and gets 460,000 new accounts every day (Twitter Statistics, 2011). People are flocking to the Internet in order to upload pic-

tures, share videos, tell stories, and simply interact with others (Weisgerber & Butler, 2010).

The process of teaching and learning has always been fertile ground for early adopters of innovation in computing technology. It is, therefore, no surprise that educational practitioners and theorists have begun to eagerly explore how social media can be harnessed to describe and implement new paradigms for communication, learning, and education. Wikis, blogs, microblogs, online groups and forums, podcasts, Web mashups, virtual worlds, recommender/evaluation systems, social repositories, and social tagging/bookmarking are but a few of the applications enabling innovative behaviors that support the acquisition, access, manipulation, processing, retrieval, presentation, and visualization of information within a teaching/learning space. Hordemann and Chao 2012 evaluated an interactive social media learning environment to assess the design and implementation challenges of this environment. They found that the designs of the chat and awards systems were the areas of greatest concern. Given the potential benefits of game-oriented learning, the failure of the award system is of particular note. The immediate feedback of quiz results and the ability to ask questions anonymously were the greatest successes. The note-taking feature was a qualified success. Resolution of chat issues will require both social adjustments as to how such a system is used and technical alterations to limit the incoming rate of chat. The awards system requires a complete rework, both to make the awards more interesting and more appealing and to ensure that the correct behaviors are being motivated. The question system can be enhanced by providing more generic functionality, giving users a way to simply indicate that they have lost track of the lecture instead of forcing them to ask specific questions. Theatrically, Dabbagh, and Kitsantas (2012) attempted to generate a conceptual model for using social media in formal and non-formal settings. She reviewed research that supports her claim, conceptualized the connection between personalized learning environment (PLE), social media, and self-regulated learning, and provided a three-level pedagogical framework for using social media to create PLEs that support student self-regulated learning. Practically, Clark, Logan, Luckin, Mee, and Oliver (2009) investigated

how adolescent students perceived and used Web 2.0 technologies (social media) both in formal and informal learning contexts. Students were asked what types of Web 2.0 technologies they used and why, and completed a learning map where they were instructed to visually map out the different technologies they used and for what purpose. The results showed that while students tended to use more Web 2.0 technologies during their free time than in school, they did use Web 2.0 technologies for school purposes.

Effectively engaging students requires not only understanding their attitudes towards academic life, but also understanding their social life (McCarthy, 2010). Many of today's younger students can be thought of as "digital natives", a term coined by Prensky (2001) to describe individuals who have known nothing but a digital environment since birth, surrounded by and using cell phones, computers, videogames, digital music players, and all the "necessities" of the digital age. In many cases, this digital culture has influenced student skills and preferences in a number of key areas related to education (McCarthy, 2010). These students prefer receiving information quickly and are adept at processing that information rapidly; they prefer multitasking and nonlinear access to information; they have a low tolerance for lectures and prefer active rather than passive learning, and they rely heavily on social media for social and professional interactions and accessing information (McCarthy, 2010). Veletsianos and Navarrete (2012) indicated that learners enjoyed and appreciated the social learning experience afforded by the combination of the online social network and the employed pedagogy. Learners supported one another in their learning and noted that they perceived that their learning experience was enhanced by their interactions. Nevertheless, in contrast to claims from the existing literature on informal learning in SNSs, and in support of emerging empirical evidence from the use of online social networks in hybrid courses (Arnold & Paulus, 2010), learners limited their public activity to course-related topics. Additionally, students did not appear to mix social and educational participation and seemed to need support in managing the expanded amount of information available to them. In order to manage their time and participation, learners devised strategies and "workarounds" to complete assigned activities

and course commitments. Veletsianos and Navarrete (2012) observed that frequent and ongoing participation and collaboration within the context of the social network (in combination with the relatively short duration of the course) seemed to mitigate the problems traditionally facing online learners, such as isolation and lack of support, while contributing to a positive learning experience.

In a study carried out by Valjataga et al. (2011), college students' perceptions of the pedagogical affordances of social media in supporting the development of PLEs were examined in order to evaluate a course design that was premised on social media. Students were given the freedom to select social media tools to create personal and distributed learning spaces to facilitate individual and collaborative learning tasks in an educational technology course. Findings showed that students' perceptions of the affordances of personalized learning environment (PLE) dynamically changed as they navigated the course landscape of social media tools to construct and perform learning activities aligning with the researchers' operational definition of affordances of social media. This led the researchers to recommend that (a) students should be encouraged to develop skills and confidence in the selection, application, and use of social media tools for personalized learning and that (b) new pedagogical models and approaches are needed to enhance students' abilities to organize and customize their own learning environments and advance their self-direction and self-awareness in a PLE.

In terms of the effects of social media on students learning, Stollak et al. (2011) found that GPA did not play a role in the use of any of the major social networking tools, and minutes spent on several of the sites did not differ. The major differences lay in time spent with Facebook, which did show a negative relationship between time spent on the social network and one's grades. They also, found that juniors and seniors were more likely to use Twitter and LinkedIn, and read blogs, than their younger colleagues. However, other than Facebook, there was no significant difference in the amount of time spent accessing these sites. As expected, tools such as Twitter and LinkedIn have more relevance to older students as they try to connect with others in their job search or find work. Similarly, perhaps younger students use Facebook longer as they are building

their social connections, whereas older students already have a well-established network of friends and colleagues. Moon (2011) found that the correlation or relationship between Facebook use (hours spent per week on Facebook) and academic performance (cumulative college GPA) is  $-.129$ . Facebook use (hours spent per week on Facebook) is negatively correlated with academic performance (cumulative college GPA) and there is no significant effect of time spent on Facebook and academic performance. This means using Facebook is not showing an impact on academic performance, despite the fact that 25% of students in Moon's aforementioned study believe that Facebook use has a negative impact on academic performance. Ahmed and Qazi, (2011) found that SNSs are mainly used for non-academic purposes by the students. This fact may give rise to a proposition that excessive usage of SNSs might be having adverse impacts on academic performance of the student users but actual results did not imply that. An interesting conclusion has been drawn on the basis of the findings of Ahmed and Qazi's 2012 study that students are managing their time efficiently and hence, the use of SNSs does not harm their academic performance. On the other hand, Bauerlein (2008) explained that social networking sites (i.e. Facebook) lead to weaker writing and reading skills because students are using short-hand versions of words and new lingo (i.e. lol, g2g, and ttyl). Online social network sites are filled with incorrect grammar and new lingo. So, if students are using Facebook during their academic preparation time, they may increase grammar mistakes when writing a paper or working on a project because they are in a "social networking mindset" instead of an "academic mindset." Many of the professors blame social media, such as Facebook, for the lack of quality in their students' writing. Vanden Boogart (2006) found that a high level of Facebook use was found among students with lower GPAs. Karpinski and Duberstein (2009) found significant differences in grades between Facebook users and non-Facebook users. On the other hand, some researchers have found Facebook use to be a helpful tool and resource for college students (Ellison, 2010; Lipsett 2008; Ellison, Steinfield, & Lampe, 2007). Lipsett (2008) believes that Facebook could be used as an alternative place to house and record academic achievements and examples of schoolwork.

While Ellison (2010) found that college students used Facebook to arrange face-to-face study groups, help manage group projects, coordinate meetings, and chat or message about assignments. Ellison (2010) also asserted that college students are able to use Facebook to facilitate their academic goals and that Facebook is an untapped educational resource. Additionally, students from the Ellison (2010) study stated that they wished Facebook would offer more features and tools to help them with schoolwork. Facebook can be very engaging, which is why professors might consider using Facebook as an educational tool. Professors could use Facebook to engage their students and find productive ways to reach academic objectives. For example, Facebook can be used to facilitate instructor-to-student and student-to-student course communication, respond to questions, get announcements and updates, and manage out-of-class projects. It is clear that social media for education have become dynamic, ubiquitous, distributed, real time, collaborative, bottom up, many to many, value based, and personalized. Some have referred to this movement as Education 2.0, but it should, more likely, be understood as an early glimpse of the future of the entire educational process.

### **Problem statement**

The wide spread use of the social networking sites increased rapidly in the last decade. This is probably due to the reason that college and university students as well as teens used it extensively to get global access. These social networking sites such as Twitter and Facebook have become very popular in today's life. As mentioned earlier in the literature, the negative effects of these social networking sites overweigh the positive ones. These sites have caused some potential harm to students. Students become victims of social networks more often than anyone else. The reason for this is that when they are studying or searching their course material online, they get attracted to these sites to kill the boredom in their study time, diverting their attention from their work. On the other hand, these sites could be used in a positive way to increase students' learning. Having this conflict between the negative and positive effects of SNSs, the present study attempts to investigate and cast light on how university students use social networks sites in both formal and informal learning and focuses

on the effects of the social network sites on the GPA, time spent on them and gender in a university located at developing country. The findings of this study will uncover the effects of these sites and expand our knowledge about the actual use of social networks sites and how these technologies can be used to connect formal and informal learning. With this concern in mind, this study addresses the following questions:

1. What are the students' uses of SNSs for social and academic purposes?
2. Are there any differences between students' social use and academic use of SNSs?
3. Which SNSs are the most used by students?
4. Does the use of SNSs vary according to gender?
5. What is the effect of the use of SNSs on the type of mobile?
6. What is the effect of the use of SNSs on the students' GPA?
7. How many hours do students spend on SNSs daily?

#### Study importance

The findings of this study can help administrators, professors and parents recognize the extent to which university students' use SNSs and how that will affect their academic achievement.

#### Definitions of terms

**Achievement:** Is defined theoretically as "something accomplished successfully, especially by means of exertion, skill, practice, or perseverance" American Heritage Dictionary 4<sup>th</sup> Edition, 2010. Achievement is defined operationally in this study by the Grade Point Average (GPA) obtained by students.

**Social networks:** "Social networks are technologies that facilitate social interaction, make possible collaboration, and enable deliberation across stakeholders" Bryer and Zavatarro (2011, p. 327). The sites that use electronic communication between people and let them freely express their feeling. In this study, they are Facebook, Twitter, Youtube, Flicker, Myspace, Google apps, blogs and others.

**Usage:** Students' frequent utilization of the social networks sites and are measured by their responses to the instrument items.

**Effects:** The influence and impact of using SNSs on students' performance measured by their (GPA) and calculated by different statistics.

#### Instrument

In order to develop the instrument, the researcher surveyed the literature and informally interviewed some of the students at the college of education to get some information from them about their use of the SNSs for social and academic reasons. The instrument was composed of 20 Likert-type questions; ten for social use of social media and ten for academic use. (see Appendix 1). The survey was expected to take seven to ten minutes to be completed. The instrument was given to a panel of SQU faculty members for face validation. They reviewed the instrument and gave some suggestions. The researcher took care of these suggestion and revised the instrument accordingly. The reliability of the instrument was measured by alpha Cronbach by the use of SPSS and was found to be 0.87. This value is sufficient for the purpose of this study. After that the instrument was ready for distribution to the sample of the study to get the needed information. The data was then treated by the use of SPSS for analysis.

#### Procedure

The present study was carried out during the Summer semester of 2012 at the College of Education at Sultan Qaboos University in the Sultanate of Oman. The questionnaire was distributed to students who registered in three courses. These courses were TECH 2007 "introduction to instructional technology", TECH 2113 "photography in education" and an elective course ISLM. 2090 "Islamic ethics". The total number for the three courses was 153, only 120 students participated in this study. This college has a student body of approximately 1629. The gender breakdown of this college is 53.2% female and 46.7% male. The questionnaire was collected from the students and the data was entered in the computer and treated using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences SPSS-19. After that, the data was analyzed by the suitable statistics to obtain the answer for the research problems.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

To answer the first question of the study which states "What are the students' uses of SNS for social and academic purposes? Means

and standard deviations were calculated by the use of SPSS. The results are shown in table (1) below.

**Table 1**

<b>Means and Standard Deviations Of Students' Use of SNSs</b>					
Social use of SNSs			Academic use of SNSs		
Items	Mean	S. D.	Items	Mean	S. D.
Item 1	3.5167	1.09224	Item 11	3.6500	.89490
Item 2	3.1583	1.15951	Item 12	3.5083	.97873
Item 3	3.2250	1.11869	Item 13	3.6250	.86055
Item 4	4.0084	1.07747	Item 14	3.7899	.89133
Item 5	3.3833	1.16087	Item 15	3.5250	.96982
Item 6	4.3697	.76873	Item 16	3.5583	.95966
Item 7	4.3667	.73259	Item 17	3.8167	.92567
Item 8	4.0583	.89156	Item 18	3.8824	.85546
Item 9	3.9833	.95251	Item 19	3.3250	1.09362
Item 10	3.8333	.99860	Item 20	3.8250	1.07424
Total	3.7894	.54374	Total	3.6498	.60055

It is clear that from table 1, items 4, 6, 7, and 8 of the social use have the highest score which means that the students use social media for communicating with their friends, entertainment and relaxation, exchange news through text and video and to fill the leisure time respectively. Item 2 (using SNSs to know other people in my class) and item 3 (using SNSs to know other people living near to me) receive lowest rating, which means that students use of SNSs for knowing other people is not highly practiced. Regarding the academic use, the highest items are 14, 17, 18, and 20, which means that students use SNSs for positive scientific dialogue, to develop their ability to learn, produce personal knowledge and to collect data for conducting research. The overall mean for the use of SNSs for social purposes is higher than that of academic purposes as shown in table 1. This result is supported by Clark, Logan, Luckin, Mee, and Oliver (2009). These researchers stated that while students tended to use more Web 2.0 technologies during their free time than in school, they also did use Web 2.0 technologies for school purposes.

To answer the second question which states "Are there any differences between students' social use and academic use of SNSs?," a paired sample t test was used as shown in Table 2.

It is clear from table 2 that there is a significant difference at  $\alpha$  0.05 in the means for using SNSs for social use and academic use in favor of the social use ( mean =3.7894, Std = 0.5437). This result is reasonable and justified because these sites when invented were mainly for social collaboration and communication. This result is supported by many research findings

(e.g., Ahmed and Qazi, 2011, Weisgerber & Butler, 2010, Choney, 2010). One can add, these participatory web, allow students to establish or maintain social connections with others, establish their social networks, and share information in the form of wikis, blogs, tweets, podcasts, video, RSS feeds, and more. In addition,, social networking among college students has become more and more popular. It is a way to make social connections, not only on campus, but with friends outside of school. Social use of social networking becomes a way that helps many students feel as though they belong to a community in which they share social news away from academic life. Recently, educators started to think about using them for educational purpose (Veletsianos and Navarrete (2012), Dabbagh and Kitsantas, 2012). However, the most common technology used was email to transfer files and seek help from teachers or peers. This result shows that students are not fully taking advantage of the benefits that Web 2.0 technologies have to offer for formal learning. The author concludes that in order for students to use Web 2.0 technologies as formal learning tools they need training. Similarly, Cigognini, Pettenati, and Edirisingha (2011) reported that learners need support, guidance, and pedagogical interventions to make the best possible use of social media to support their learning goals.

**Table 2:**  
**Paired Samples Statistics for the Social Use and Academic Use of SNSs**

	Social use	Academic use
Mean	3.7894	3.6498
Std Deviation	0.54374	0.60055
Number	120	120
Df	119	
t	2.266	
Sig(2- tailed)	0.025*	
Correlation	0.308	

To answer the third question of the which states " Which SNSs are the most used by students?," frequencies and percentiles are used as indicated in the following table.

**Table 3**  
**Frequency and Percent of Social Networks Sites as Used by Students Sample**

	Frequency	Percent
Facebook	62	51.7
Youtube	24	20.0
Twitter	8	6.7
Flicker	3	2.5
g. app	2	1.7
Other	21	17.5
Total	120	100.0

Table 3 shows that the Facebook was the most used site followed by Youtube and Twitter. This result is supported by statistical reports on social network usage by Facebook (2012), Youtube (2012), and Twitter (2011). Facebook currently claims over 800 million active users sharing more than 30 billion pieces of content each month in the form of web links, news stories, blog posts, notes, photo albums, etc. (Facebook,2012).

Youtube claims over 800 million unique users visit YouTube each month and over 4 billion hours of video are watched each month on YouTube ( Youtube statistics, 2012). Twitter, a social networking and micro-blogging service, is averaging 140 million tweets per day, up from 50 million the previous year, and gets 460,000 new accounts every day (Twitter Statistics, 2011). People are flocking to the Internet in order to upload pictures, share videos, tell stories, and simply interact with others (Weisgerber & Butler, 2010).

To answer questions 4, 5 and 6 of this study which state "Does the use of SNSs vary according to gender? Dose the use of SNSs vary according to mobile type? And What is the effect of the use of SNSs on the students' GPA? Respectively. The t-test was used answer both the gender and the type of mobile questions, while ANOVA was used to answer the GPA question. The results are shown in Table 4.

**Table 4**  
**T- Test of Gender and Mobile Type Differences in Means Use of Sns for Gender and Type of Mobile**

Variable	Means	S. D.	t	Sig.
Male	3.7940	.5246	-.085	0.932
Female	3.7855	.5628		
Smart mobile	3.7737	.43300	1.92	0.05
Normal mobile	3.5989	.51059		

Table 4 shows that there is no significant difference in means between male and female use of SNSs. This result contradicts what Hargittai (2007) found in his study in which he found that females are 1.6 times more likely to use an SNS than male students. Table 4 also shows that there is a significant difference in means between students who have smart mobile phones and those who have normal mobile phones. This result could be explained by the fact that with smart phones students are able to access the Internet quickly and make use of applications of social networking available to them. This will lead to increase their utilization of SNSs. Also, smart mobile helps students to use their social networks to their full

potential, they can access SNSs from their smart mobile so they can share their favorite moments as they happen, and get up-to-the-minute information in many issues. For this reason, the number of social users accessing sites on their smart phones has grown from 53% to 67% in the past 12 months, making it now the most popular device for every age category under 50(2013 Yellow Social Media Report). To check whether the use of SNSs leads to differences in GPA, ANOVA was used as shown in table 5.

**Table 5**  
**ANOVA for Differences of Means in GPA**

Source of variation	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	.366	2	.183	.858	.427
Within Groups	24.741	116	.213		
Total	25.107	118			

As indicated in table 5 there are no significant differences in the means of the GPA, which means that the use of SNSs has no effect on GPA. Students with different GPA use SNSs in a similar way. In addition, that means students with high GPA use SNSs the same way as those with average or low GPA. As discussed earlier in the literature, the use of SNSs does not affect the students GPA. The above result contradicts Vanden Boogart's (2006) findings in which he stated that a high level of Facebook use was found among students with lower GPAs. Karpinski and Duberstein (2009) found significant differences in grades between Facebook users and non-Facebook users. On the other hand, Some researchers have found Facebook use to be a helpful tool and resource for college students (Ellison, 2010; Lipsett 2008; Ellison, Steinfield, & Lampe, 2007). This means that the use of SNSs do not affect the GPA and may assist students achievement.

To answer the last question which states "How many hours do students spend on SNSs daily?," frequency and percent were used to show the time spent by students on SNSs.

Table 6 shows that 30.8 % of the sample spends more than two hours per day on social network sites. About 25% of the sample spends one hour per day, 20 % of the sample spends two hours per day and 22.5% of the sample spends half an hour per day. One can say those who spend two hours and more than two hours comprise 51.6% and this means that

more than 50% of the students spend two hours or more in SNSs daily. This amount of time cannot be ignored. It might affect their grades, take them away from their study and distracts them. This may give rise to a proposition that excessive usage of SNSs might have adverse impacts on academic performance of the student users but actual findings of this study did not support that proposition.

**Table 6**  
**Frequency and Percent of Hours Spent on SNSs Daily**

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Half an hour	27	22.5	22.7	22.7
One hour	30	25.0	25.2	47.9
Two hours	25	20.8	21.0	68.9
More than 2 hours	37	30.8	31.1	100.0
Total	119	99.2	100.0	
System	1	.8		
Total	120	100.0		

## CONCLUSION

The current paper investigates the use of SNSs by a sample of university students. Students' use of SNSs for social purposes was found to be more than their use for academic purpose. Facebook was found to be the most used and popular sites and after it the Youtube sites. No significant difference was found between female and male uses of SNSs, which means that the use of SNSs by male and female are similar. Concerning the effects of the use of SNSs on GPA, the study found that GPA does not vary with the use of SNSs. Students with different GPA use the SNSs equally. Regarding the time spent on SNSs, it was found that more than 50% of students spend two hours or more in SNSs per day.

### Recommendations

From the study findings the researcher recommended that:

1. The students should be encouraged through different assignments and activities in their study to make use of SNSs.
2. More research is needed to look carefully at the students' best practices in SNSs and what types of SNSs could be used to enhance learning as well as matching these sites with suitable courses and relevant applications.

## REFERENCES

- Ahmed, I., & Qazi, T. (2011). A look out for academic impacts of Social networking sites (SNSs): A student based perspective. *African Journal of Business Management Vol.* 5(12), 5022-5031.
- Arnold, N. & Paulus, T. (2010). Using a social networking site for experiential learning: Lurking, modeling and community building. *Internet and Higher Education* 13, 188-196.
- Bauerlein, M. (2008). *The Dumbest Generation: How the Digital Age Stupefies Young Americans and Jeopardizes Our Future (Or, Don't Trust Anyone Under 30)* The Dumbest Generation: How the Digital Age Stupefies Young Americans and Jeopardizes Our Future (Or, Don't Trust Anyone Under 30). Jeremy P. Tarcher/Penguin,
- Bryer, T.A. & Zavattaro, S.M. (2011). Social media and public administration: Theoretical dimensions and introduction to symposium. *Administrative Theory & Praxis*, 33(3), 325-340.
- Choney, S. (2010). "Facebook Use Can Lower Grades by 20 Percent, Study Says." [http://www.msnbc.com/id/39038581/ns.technology\\_and\\_science-tech\\_and\\_gadgets](http://www.msnbc.com/id/39038581/ns.technology_and_science-tech_and_gadgets).
- Cigognini, M. E., Pettenati, M. C., & Edirisingha, P. (2011). Personal knowledge management skills in web 2.0- based learning. In (Mark J.W. Lee And Catherine McLoughlinEditors). *Web 2.0-Based E-Learning: Applying Social Informatics for Tertiary Teaching*, pp109-123, *Information science reference, Hershey, New York*.
- Clark, W., Logan, K., Luckin, R., Mee, A. & Oliver, M. (2009) 'Beyond Web 2.0: mapping the technology landscapes of young learners', *Journal of Computer Assisted Learning* 25(1), 56-69.
- Dabbagh, N., & Kitsantas, A. (2012). Personal Learning Environments, social media, and self-regulated learning: A natural formula for connecting formal and informal learning. *The Internet and Higher Education*, 15(1), pp. 3-8. Available from <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.iheduc.2011.06>.
- Ellison, N. B. (2010). Facebook use by undergraduates: An educational tool? *Facebook in Education*. Retrieved on Septmeber,25, 2012, from,

- [http://www.facebook.com/note.php?note\\_id=487460320569](http://www.facebook.com/note.php?note_id=487460320569)
- Ellison N. B., Steinfeld, C. & Lampe, C. (2007). The benefits of Facebook friends: Social capital and college students' use of online social network sites. *J. Computer-Mediated Commun.*, 12(4). Retrieved on September, 2012, from <http://jcmc.indiana.edu/vol12/issue4/ellison.html>.
- Facebook Statistics. (2011). Retrieved September, 2012 from <http://newsroom.fb.com/content/default.aspx?NewsAreaId=22>
- Hargittai, E. (2007). Whose space? Differences among users and non-users of social network sites. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, 13(1), article 14. <http://jcmc.indiana.edu/vol13/issue1/hargittai.html>.
- Hordemann, G & Chao, J. (2012). Design and Implementation Challenges to an Interactive Social Media Based Learning Environment. *Interdisciplinary Journal of Information, Knowledge, and Management*, 7, 91-106
- Karpinski, A., & Duberstien, A. (2009). A description of Facebook use and academic performance among undergraduate and graduate students. *Poster presentation at the 2009 American Educational Research Association Annual Meeting*, San Diego, CA.
- Lipsett, A. (2008) 'McDonald's A-level 'tough course', says Brown', *The Guardian*, 28 January, Retrieved September, 2012 from <http://www.ascilite.org.au/ajet/ajet26/mccarthy.html>
- McCarthy, J. (2010). Blended learning environments: Using social networking sites to enhance the first year experience. *Australasian Journal of Educational Technology*, 26(6), 729-740.
- Parker, K. R., & Chao, J. (2008). Weaving a knowledge web with wikis. In R. D. M. D. Lytras, *Knowledge networks: The social software perspective* (pp. 28-45). Hershey, Pennsylvania: Idea Group.
- Prensky, M. (2001, October). Digital natives, digital immigrants. *On the Horizon*, 9(5) 1-6. Retrieved November 24, 2011, from [http://www.albertomattiacci.it/docs/did/Digital\\_Natives\\_Digital\\_Immigrants.pdf](http://www.albertomattiacci.it/docs/did/Digital_Natives_Digital_Immigrants.pdf)
- Prensky, M. (2011). A huge leap for the classroom. *Educational Technology*, Nov-Dec. Retrieved November 28, 2011, from <http://marcprensky.com/writing/Prensky-EDTECH-LearningCatalyticsNov-Dec-2011-FINAL.pdf>
- Stollak, M., Vandenberg, A., Burklund, A., & Weiss, S. (2011). Getting social: The impact of social networking usage on grades among college students. *Proceedings of ASBBS, Las Vegas* February, 2011.
- The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language*, 4th edition. (2010). Houghton Mifflin Harcourt Publishing Company. Published by Houghton Mifflin Harcourt Publishing Company.
- Twitter Statistics. (2011, March 14). Retrieved November 28, 2011, from <http://blog.twitter.com/2011/03/numbers.html>
- Valjataga, T., Pata, K. & Tammets, K. (2011). Considering Students' Perspectives on Personal and Distributed Learning Environments in Course Design. In (Mark J.W. Lee And Catherine McLoughlin Editors). *Web 2.0-Based E-Learning: Applying Social Informatics for Tertiary Teaching*, pp85-108, Information science reference, Hershey, New York.
- Vanden Boogart, M. (2006). *Uncovering the social impacts of Facebook on a college campus*. Unpublished Master degree, University of Wisconsin - Madison.
- Veletsianos, G., & Navarrete, C. (2012). Online Social Networks as Formal Learning Environments: Learner Experiences and Activities. *The international review of research on open and distance education*, 13,1, retrieved on October 2012 from <http://www.irrodl.org/index.php/irrodl/article/view/1078/2077>
- Weisgerber, C., & Butler, S. (2010). Editor's introduction: Special issue on communication pedagogy in the age of social media. *Electronic Journal of Communication*, 20(1-2), 1. Retrieved November 25, 2011, from <http://www.cios.org/www/ejc/v20n12toc.htm> Weisgerber & Butler, 2010
- Yellow Social Media Report, (2013). Retrieved May, 2013 from [http://about.sensis.com.au/IgnitionSuite/uploads/docs/Yellow%20Pages%20Social%20Media%20Report\\_F.PDF](http://about.sensis.com.au/IgnitionSuite/uploads/docs/Yellow%20Pages%20Social%20Media%20Report_F.PDF)
- Youtube statistics, (2012). Retrieved September, 2012 from: [http://www.youtube.com/t/press\\_statistics](http://www.youtube.com/t/press_statistics)

## Appendix 1

### Sultan Qaboos University, College of Education Instructional and learning technologies Department

Dear Students,

The researcher is conducting study about students utilization of social networks sites (SNSs) and their relation with some variables. Please answer the following question honestly. Your answer will be used for the research purpose only and will be treated confidentially.

#### First: General information, Please tick your option.

Your gender is: Female, Male, Your GPA is: Below 2. Between 2 and 3 More than 3  
Your mobile is: Smart mobile Normal mobile Network that you use: Facebook Twitter  
Youtube Myspace Blog Linkedin Flicker G. apps Other.

Number of hours using networks sites per day: Half an hour One hour Two hours More than two hours.

#### Second: SNSs use, Please tick your option

Item number	Item statement	Strongly agree	Agree	Uncertain	Disagree	Strongly disagree
<b>Social use of SNSs, I use SNSs</b>						
1	To search for my friends					
2	To know other people in my classroom					
3	To know other people living near to me					
4	To get in touch with my old friends					
5	To Know new people					
6	For Entertainment and relaxation					
7	To exchange written and photographic news					
8	To fill the leisure time					
9	To exchange thoughts and ideas in public topics with my friends through pictures and videos					
10	For congratulation in happy occasions					
<b>Academic use of SNSs, I use SNSs</b>						
11	To exchange academic information with my classmates					
12	To cooperate with my classmates in solving academic problem					
13	To express my scientific ideas freely					
14	To help me in imitating scientific dialogue					
15	To interact with my classmates in scientific projects					
16	To discover my classmates abilities and make use of them					
17	To develop my personal abilities in learning processes					
18	To produce knowledge through free communication with my friends					
19	To seek help from my instructor and classmates to solve assignments and activities					
20	To collect data for conducting research					