Study on the Use and Impact of Online Social Networking in Egypt

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Abstract—**Joining social networking sites is mostly selective and motivated by self-awareness of the individual's. After joining a social networking site, members are constantly evaluating the value of their membership and building their own perceptions towards the benefit and cost of being members in these networks. This paper strives to monitor the most important impact of using social networking sites in Egypt. Its intention is to offer analytical avenues for intellectual examination of what has clearly become of the most powerful and important socio-political phenomena of Egyptian society.**

Index Terms—**social media, network society, Egypt**

I. INTRODUCTION

Research frequently refers to national culture as a profound influential determinant that greatly affects the adoption of a technology [1]-[4] suggested that if cultural beliefs and attitudes toward Internet were better understood, then the Internet itself might be better adapted to the behavioral patterns of the adopting nation. A social networking phenomenon has emerged over the past ten years. In that time, social networking sites (SNS) have grown from a niche to a mass online activity, in which tens of millions of internet users are engaged, both in their leisure time, and at work. However, there has been very little research on the socio-economic impact of these sites in Egypt.

Social media offers much more than traditional media; it is free, allows campaigners and marketers to reach far more people and gives a voice to those that otherwise might not have one. In addition, platforms such as Twitter and Whats_up enable direct engagement with individuals and groups who have the power to effect change.

Social media is a group of Internet-based applications that allow the creation and exchange of user-generated content. It is easy to use, (a major attribute of SNS' popularity is their simplicity. Anyone with basic internet skills can create and manage an online SNS presence). Prior to SNS, users gained an online presence by having a personal homepage. The drawbacks were that these homepages are not easy to create and development and hosting of the site often incur costs. In contrast, SNS are free of charge and open for anyone to join. Most of them

require registration, while others limit membership through an invitation from members who are already members of the site

The basic level of entry in most SNS is the setting up of a 'profile': a personalized page developed by the user in which he/she presents him/herself to peers, through text, photos, music and videos amongst others functionalities. SNS allow users to mobilize and organize their social contacts and profiles in the way they want other members to see them. Most SNS allow their members to view the networks of their contacts and also in many cases, to traverse them. The externalization of networks is possibly one of the first times online users have been able to view their own online social networks, and share them with friends and the general public. Some SNS also support applications which allow users to describe the relation between themselves and other members [5].

II. METHODOLOGY AND PROCEDURE

The research conducted was analytical research and the data was collected with the help of a questionnaire in a cross sectional survey. After that a critical analysis was carried out of the collected facts and figures.

A. Population

The target population for the study was the college students, of bachelors program, of faculty of Computers and information, Helwan University, Egypt.

B. Sample

To explore the impact of online social networks on students, we chose a sample of 387 students (228 male, 159 female who were in the age bracket of 18 to 25 years).

III. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

A. Social Media Trust

SNS, at a basic technological level, combine social networking, a list of contacts and a profile. They may also be characterized in the way they differ from other online applications: Though SNS can appear to be similar, many of them are, in fact, quite different in terms of their purpose and the types of users they attract. It is also important, especially in terms of policy and future research [5].

In Egypt more people check their Facebook account in one day than the cumulative weekly readership of every national newspaper. It is more popular than email; among active Internet users, 12 per cent trust personal comments, while 61 per cent trust personal comments according to the posting persons. Table I, shows the number of some social media users in Egypt [6].

TABLE I. NUMBER OF SOME SOCIAL MEDIA USERS IN EGYPT (DEC. 2010)

Estimated Twitter Users No.	Facebook Users No.	Internet Users per 100**	Mobile subscriptions per 100**
295219	11000000	26.74	87.11

B. Rezones for Using SNS

Social networking sites have become an important source of news. While the credibility of some sources can clearly be contested, news channels tweet or give updates on significant happenings all over the world. Their availability on social networks makes news more accessible. Additionally, news quickly gets passed around the networks in ways never experienced before. Fig. 1 shows the rezones behind using SNS from the data collected.
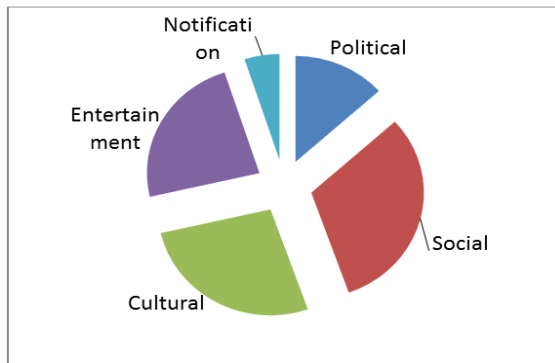

Figure 1. Rezones for using SNS in Egypt

C. Students' Academic Performance

E-learning is an important tool for learners. Online social networking sites engage students and need to be studied as distributors of information. The medium of internet has evolved with growth in its applications. The interactive nature of online environments has expanded with social networks. Connecting through social networks started as a niche activity, but with time it is now a phenomenon. The social networking sites are being used in various ways like forming communities, chatting, blogging etc. [7]. Apart from that different institutions are forming communities or groups on different Social Networking Sites. To study the relationship between use of social networks and students' academic performance, we selected variables, e.g. number of access hours per day, how many time student access these sites per day?, …etc. Results showed that 16 per cent spent more than 8 hours per day access these sites, which has a great impact on their studies.

D. Uses of Social Networks

From a sample of 387 students we found that all the students used one or the other social networking site. 42 per cent regularly manage at least one social media profile, and 74 per cent have joined an interest group.

E. Use of Social Networks on Mobile Phone

22 per cent from students reported that they used a social networking sites from their computer, while 18 percent reported that they used a social networking sites from their mobile phones, and 62 percent reported that they used both computer and mobile phones to access these sites. . While in Saudi Arabia these ratios are (23%, 31%, and 47%) respectively [8], and in Jordon [9] 65% access these sites from their personal, and 31% from their mobile phone.

F. Time Spent on Social Networking Sites

One of the negative effect of social media or network is it leads to addiction. Spending countless hours on the social sites can divert the focus and attention from a particular task. It lowers the motivational level of the people, especially of students. They mainly rely on technology and the internet instead of learning the practical knowledge and expertise of the everyday life. Average time spent per day in accessing such social networking is ranging from 2 to 5 hours, while 11% spent time range from 5 to 8 hours, and 16% spent more than 8 hours per day, as shown in Fig. 2. Among this time 39% spent time ranging from 1 to 3 hours accessing Facebook only. The majority use Facebook more than three years ago and they access it on daily basis. They may access it more than 5 times per day especially at night when they access it alone.
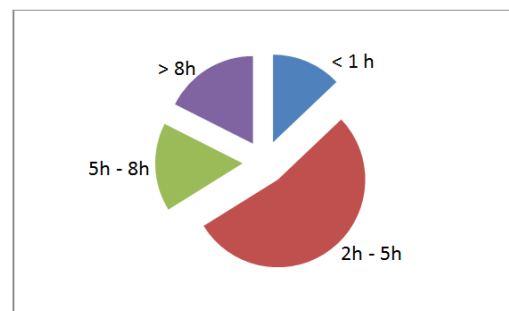

Figure 2. Daily time spent by sample

G. Using Kids for Social Networking Sites

Kids can be greatly affected by these social networking sites if they are allowed to use them. The reason is that sometimes people share photos on social media that contains violence and sex, which can damage the behavior of kids and teenagers. It put the negative impact on overall society as these kids and teenagers involve themselves in crime related activities. 44% believe that their interaction with their families decreased after they used social networks. Therefore 11% among them are going to prevent their children in the future from using these social networks, 50% will allow them to access partially, and 20% will let them use it freely even in daily basis.

H. Political Awareness

Arab Spring was perhaps the first time in Egyptian history during which events were majorly covered and reported by ordinary citizens via social networking sites rather that the mainstream media. According to the 2011 Arab Social Media Report [6], 88 per cent in Egypt get their news from social media tools and social networking sites. The survey collected the answers for two questions regarding if social networks increased or not the local political awareness and international political awareness. Fig. 3 represents the great impact of social networking in increasing both local and international political awareness.

I. Effect on Private Lives

Social networking sites encourage people to be more public about their personal lives. Because intimate details of our lives can be posted so easily, users are prone to bypass the filters they might normally employ when talking about their private lives. What's more, the things they post remain available indefinitely. While at one moment a photo of friends doing shots at a party may seem harmless, the image may appear less attractive in the context of an employer doing a background check.
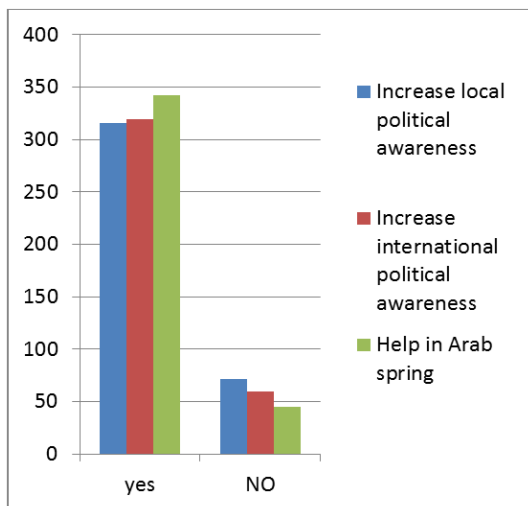
Figure 3.   Pros of social networking sites in political awareness

While most sites allow their users to control who sees the things they've posted, such limitations are often forgotten, can be difficult to control or don't work as well as advertised. It's entirely possible to have hundreds of friends on Facebook. They may not be friends you know on a personal level and spend time with in the real world on a weekly basis. But they're friends nevertheless. It isn't just your inner circle of close friends and even closer family members that social networking sites allow you to communicate with easily and effectively, either. They open the world up to you, making it a smaller place than it has ever been before. In Egypt, 34%. have less than 150 friendship on Facebook, 26% have150 to 300 friendships, and 17% have more than 300 friendship on Facebook. The analysis of negative effects of using Facebook from students point of views showed that, they truly understand the different aspects lead to these negative effects, as shown in Fig. 4.

Despite the large number of benefits to use these sites, but the non-conscious use by family members toward the establishment of social relations in all its forms online, and in the absence of effective policies for monitoring and control of these sites may pose a serious risk to the family stability, in addition to the many problems social that may arise, especially between spouses or between children and parents, which reflected negatively disintegration of the family [10].

Another analysis regarding the miss use of Facebook, students gave the lack of awareness the highest ratio, as shown in Fig. 5.
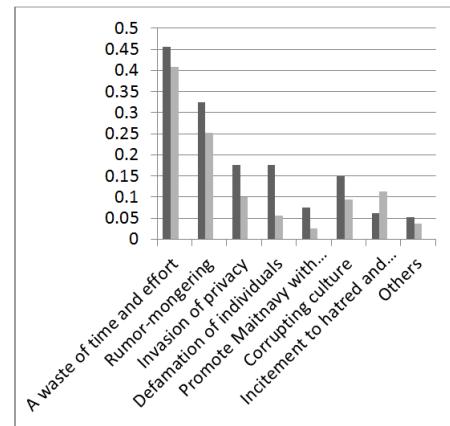
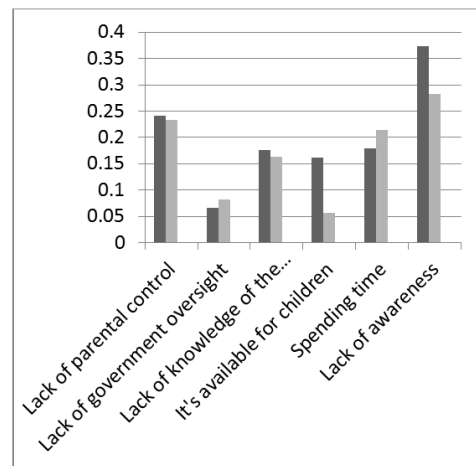Figure 4.   Negatives of social networking sites

Figure 5.   Rezones for misuse of social networking sites

IV. CONCLUSION

Given the opportunities created by social networking sites to allow users to create a new persona, it is remarkable how little deception people attempt on social networking sites. It also allows individuals to connect with a wider range of people, thus exposing them to a broader range of ideas and influences. A study about why accepting anonyms friendship requests on Facebook by students in Egypt reports that most users utilize the site to keep in touch with old friends or people they knew from the past. 46% use the site to 'check out the Facebook profile of someone new to them', 28% use the site to 'waste their time', and 11% use the site to ' find people to date'. Other findings are:

- The students use social networks for many purposes and fulfilling different roles: for communication, entertainment, academic and professional work. They share information, build and maintain friendships, see what friends do or share, keep in touch or track them, learn more about friends, and keep connections and track of news.
- Social networks' communication and connectivity capabilities that enable to share information in various sources with many people have become an everyday habit for and students and they can be used as compensation of being away from the people with whom they usually communicate closely.
- Usually students add persons whom they know (either in person or by reference) to their network. However, adding someone they don't know in person, there should be a reason; for example, the person is the friend of friends or she/he has a relevant background.

Students are aware that social networks can also exposes certain risks. For example:

- Excessive use of social networking sites affect negatively on students' grades.
- Social networking sites lost many time: although many of the features offered by social networking sites, but that users are wasting many times, both in communicating with friends and monitor their friends updates and post their comments as well as spend a lot of time in playing online games.
- Lack of privacy for users of social networks: people involved in social networking sites using their profiles to view their data and all the information about them in addition to the deployment of a lot of personal information about housing and the university it is possible to take advantage of some scammers this information to be exploited.
- Social networking sites can be used as a tool for the dissemination of false news: there are a large number of incorrect news spread through social networking sites daily, and a lot of users believe it and re-deployed again, causing a lot of rumors trading
- Use of social networking sites affect the mental state of the user: excessive use of social networking sites, increase the sense of loneliness, depression and addiction to sit in front of the Internet.
- Social networking sites affect family cohesion.
- Users of social networking sites vulnerable to social isolation: social networking sites affect

exacerbate feelings of unity among a lot of people, and separated from the real world, and not wanting to participate in life as well as to increase the feeling of self-confidence.

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