The influence of social media on Saudi graduate students: An explanatory case study of six
Saudi graduate students studying in American universities

by

Asma Abdulmana Alhamadi

B.A., College of Education, Riyadh, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, 2005
M.S., Kansas State University, Manhattan, KS, 2013

AN ABSTRACT OF A DISSERTATION

submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

Department of Curriculum and Instruction
College of Education

KANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY
Manhattan, Kansas

2017

Abstract

The purpose of this qualitative multiple participant case study was to identify the influence of social media on Saudi graduate students who are active social media users. Social media have been influencing Saudi students differently than those in other socio-cultural contexts due to the uniqueness of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) in terms of cultural, political, economic, and social life. This study contributes to educational technology broadly and understanding the experiences of Saudi graduate students who are active social media users specifically. This study sought to illuminate and clarify understanding of the influence of social media use on graduate students in the KSA. This study investigated the influence of social media on Saudi graduate students through the experience of six Saudi graduate students who have 200K or more followers/subscribers on YouTube, Twitter, Instagram, or Snapchat.

Vygotsky-based social constructivism was used to analyze and interpret the findings of the research in an effort to understand and make sense of the impact of social media on education through the participants' experiences as graduate students and active social media users. The significant findings of this research support social constructivism, in that learning occur through social interaction with the More Knowledgeable Other (MKO) in the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). The findings of the study included three emerging themes: (1) social media experience, (2) social media influence, and (3) changes brought by social media. Two categories emerged from the data under the first theme. The categories are (a) planned versus unplanned fame, and (b) social media preferred sites, activities and topics. Three categories and two sub-categories emerged from the second theme: (a) educational influence, which has two sub-categories —(i) formal teaching and learning (ii) informal learning —; (b) financial influence; and (c) gender issues in social media. The results contribute to the limited qualitative research on

Saudi graduate students and social media and to the overall social constructivism research in the

KSA higher education.

The influence of social media on Saudi graduate students: An explanatory case study of six
Saudi graduate students studying in American universities

by

Asma Abdulmana Alhamadi

B.S., College of Education, Riyadh, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, 2005
M.S., Kansas State University, 2013

A DISSERTATION

submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

Department of Curriculum and Instruction
College of Education

KANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY
Manhattan, Kansas

2017

Approved by:

Major Professor
Dr. Kay Ann Taylor

Copyright

Abstract

The purpose of this qualitative multi–participant case study was to identify the influence of social media on Saudi graduate students who are active social media users. Social media have been influencing Saudi students differently than those in other socio-cultural contexts due to the uniqueness of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) in terms of cultural, political, economic, and social life. This study contributes to educational technology broadly and understanding the experiences of Saudi graduate students who are active social media users specifically. This study sought to illuminate and clarify understanding of the influence of social media use on graduate students in the KSA. This study investigated the influence of social media on Saudi graduate students through the experience of six Saudi graduate students who have 200K followers/subscribers on YouTube, Twitter, Instagram, or Snapchat.

Vygotsky-based social constructivism was used to analyze and interpret the findings of the research in an effort to understand and make sense of the impact of social media on education through the participants' experiences as graduate students and active social media users. The significant findings of this research support social constructivism, in that learning occur through social interaction with the More Knowledgeable Other (MKO) in the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). The findings of the study included three emerging themes: (1) social media experience, (2) social media influence, and (3) changes brought by social media. Two categories emerged from the data under the first theme. The categories are (a) planned versus unplanned fame, and (b) social media preferred sites, activities and topics. Three categories and two sub-categories emerged from the second theme: (a) educational influence, which has two sub-categories —(i) formal teaching and learning (ii) informal learning—; (b) financial influence; and (c) gender issues in social media. The results contribute to the limited qualitative research on

Saudi graduate students and social media and to the overall social constructivism research in the

KSA higher education.

Table of Contents

List of Tables

Acknowledgements

Praise, gratitude, and all thanks are to Almighty God for giving me the strength and the courage to complete this dissertation. None of this would have been possible without Allah's blessings.

I would like to express my deepest gratitude to my major advisor, Dr. Kay Ann Taylor, for her patience, persistence, guidance, caring, and positive attitude. Thank you for providing me with a motivating academic atmosphere for doing my research. It has been my privilege to work with a professor and a scholar like you. You have taught me lessons that I have not expected to learn through this dissertation process. I know that I am a more confident student and scholar because I worked with you. I am forever grateful.

I would like to thank Dr. Haijun Kang, who believed in me by hiring me to work as his graduate assistant in a social media and technical support position for the Adult Education Research Conference (AERC). Working with Dr. Kang allowed me to practice using social media for an academic conference and gave me the opportunity to examine many AERC proposals and studies in different fields of education. I am grateful for this opportunity.

I would also like to thank Dr. Be Stoney for her support and encouragement during my academic study here at K-State. Special thanks goes to Dr. Todd Goodson for keeping his office door open and available for all the times when I needed it. I would like to thank Dr. Roger McHaney for his book, *The New Digital Shoreline*, which added to my understanding and knowledge in my dissertation area. Many thanks go to my former major advisor Dr. Rosemary Talab, who was the first professor to support my academic journey in graduate school. I am forever thankful for her support, advice, and love.

I am also thankful to my lovely family for making my success possible. I will never be able to express my gratitude and love enough to my dear parents. To my great father, Abdulmana, thank you for believing in me more than I believed in myself. Thank you for supporting me to always learn, improve myself, and overcome my fears and doubts. My doctoral degree is my "thank you" gift to you because you are the real hero behind my success. Thanks to my lovely mother, Halimah, for her prayers, support, and love during my academic journey and always. Thank you for being the source of strength, optimism, and courage in my life.

Special thanks goes to my dear husband, Abdullah, who supported and motivated me when I needed it the most. Thank you for encouraging me every step of the way, for making sure that in the process of working hard toward my degree, I never forgot to enjoy life. Your love and support throughout this journey have been appreciated and irreplaceable.

Thank you to my caring sisters and brothers for their continuous encouragement and love. Thank you to my beautiful little daughters, Misk and Tasneem, who have been my motivation, inspiration, and drive. Thank you for your patience and sacrifice while I was busy working on my degree.

Finally, I am thankful to the Saudi Ministry of Education for their great scholarship, and to my country for funding my education during the past seven years.

Dedication

To my caring parents, Halimah and Abdulmana,

Who have made me the person I am today;

To my loving husband and best friend, Abdullah,

Who is always there for me;

To the sunshine of my life, Misk and Tasneem,

Whose smiles shine my days;

With love

I dedicate this dissertation to you.

Chapter 1 - Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative multiple participant case study was to explore the influence of social media on Saudi graduate students who are active social media users. Social media have been influencing Saudi students differently than those in other socio-cultural contexts due to the uniqueness of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) in terms of cultural, political, economic, and social rules. This study contributes to educational technology broadly and understanding the experiences of Saudi graduate students who are active social media users specifically. This study sought to illuminate and clarify understanding the influence of social media use on graduate students in the KSA.

Prequel

Philosophy of Saudi Higher Education

Based on my personal experience, in the KSA, it is not possible to explain Saudi culture without including both religion and politics. Saudi culture, religion, and politics overlap in terms of their influence on higher education. Higher education in the KSA is going through a difficult phase. Despite the achievements made in the first decade of the 21st century in terms of the increasing number of new universities, colleges, and scholarship programs, this system is still unable to compete or have an influence internationally (Al-Isa, 2011). Saudi higher education doesn't have a clear identity, mission, or goals. It is under the authority of status quo, which causes weakness in the system's outcomes. As a result, there is considerable pressure on Saudi higher education to change. Cultural, political, and economic changes that have come about, in large part because of social media, are one source of this pressure (Al-Sehaly, 2016).

Philosophy of Perennialism

I believe that higher education in the KSA focuses on an educational perennialist

philosophy. I reached this conclusion based on my own experience in Saudi higher education, my study and analysis of publications and books about Saudi higher education, and Saudi higher education-related websites and social media accounts. Further, my graduate education in the U.S., specifically the philosophy of education, undergirds my analysis.

Perennialism asserts that "people possess and share a common nature that defines them as human beings" (Gutek, 2004, p. 279). It stipulates that education should not include any new information or knowledge that may soon be outdated or later found to be incorrect. Educational perennialism suggests that whatever lasts for a long, indefinite time recurs and becomes self-renewing (Raditoaneng, 2011) and stresses that "there exists a ready-made body of knowledge; a set of objective truths which is essential for the individual to acquire" (Darling & Nordendo, 2003, p. 293). "Perennialists look to metaphysics, especially to human nature, so they see the purpose of education, the role of school, and the organization of the curriculum as coming from humanity's enduring and universal characteristics" (Gutek, 2004, p. 281). Accordingly, perennialism reflects conservatism of ideas and looks to the past for subject matter in the curriculum (Ediger & Rao, 2003). Perennialism, as Noroozi (2010) explained, deals with a realist philosophical base. Its instructional objectives are to educate the rational person; its main focus is on preserving the past. Thus, as Darling and Nordendo (2003) maintain, "the job of education is, put simply, to transport the divine truth to the human-soul from beyond, for the sake of the salvation of this inner soul" (p. 298). This philosophy stresses that nothing is going to be "discovered as everything is uncovered" (Shakouri, Nazari, & Nazari, 2015, p. 171).

As a result of my analysis and experience, the Saudi philosophy of higher education clearly focuses on religion, history, the laws and principles of science, and works of literature and art. Saudi philosophers and educators believe that these areas are all that students need to

learn and these areas have the power and the potential for solving problems in any area. The focus of the Saudi philosophy of higher education is to teach ideas that are everlasting and to seek constant truths that are fixed, and perennial, as the natural and human worlds at their most essential level do not change (Encarnacion, 2012). According to Gutek (2004), perennialists criticize reliance on experimental science and technology.

Correspondingly, the teacher is the center of education in Saudi higher education. Encarnacion (2012) discusses the teacher-centered nature of perennialist classrooms. The teacher's role is to transfer existing knowledge, information, and skills from one generation to another. Also, the teacher does not have to be concerned about students' interests. This teacher-centered philosophy focuses on curriculum, perennialist activities, classroom leaders, reading, and writing. It doesn't focus enough on creative activities, critical thinking, real life experiences, opinion, research, discussions, or presentations. This teacher-centered perennialist approach represents my educational experience in the Saudi educational system.

Philosophical Contradiction

The philosophy of Saudi higher education as stated on the official website of the Ministry of Education focuses on the importance of education to build knowledgeable citizens under the political and Islamic laws of the KSA. It also focuses on promoting the quality of education by supporting students' creativity and collaboration skills. This stated philosophy, seems to contradict what I experienced in Saudi higher education since in practice, creativity is not encouraged. The reality of Saudi higher education is that it doesn't adhere to its ostensible philosophy, which, as explained by Saleh (1986), is the following:

The KSA follows an Islamic philosophy of education and the seeds of its educational

system are founded in Islam. The word 'Qur'an' itself is derived from the word 'reading'

and the first verse of the Qur'an is a call to read and write. Islam dictates learning to be an obligation of every human man or woman. Education therefore is valued, encouraged and supported by Islam. Islam exalts the human mind and promotes free thought and inquiry when it commands the acquisition and propagation of learning. (p. 18)

The Islamic philosophy of education has been written officially as the main philosophy of education in the KSA since the country was established in 1932. However, my experience was that it was not applied effectively.

Saudi higher education's curriculum, mission, vision, and goals are not practiced effectively in reality. When searching through the Saudi education literature, I found articles about new curricula, rules, and tools in higher education, but when I searched for applications and contacted students and faculty in the KSA, I learned that the information I have is not applicable. The philosophy of Saudi higher education needs to be restated, clarified, validated, and reliably expressed on all Saudi higher education official reports and websites. What Saudi higher education officials are saying they are doing is far from students' real life experience. Students feel that their education is not beneficial in real life and they cannot use or apply it outside of their colleges or universities. The philosophy of education has to be applicable, effective, and relevant to the current situation. Gatto (2005) states:

I've noticed a fascinating phenomenon in my thirty years of teaching: schools and schooling are increasingly irrelevant to the great enterprises of the planet. No one believes anymore that scientists are trained in science classes or politicians in civics classes or poets in English classes. The truth is that schools don't really teach anything except how to obey orders. This is a great mystery to me because thousands of humane,

4

caring people work in schools as teachers and aides and administrators, but the abstract

logic of the institution overwhelms their individual contributions. (p. 21)

In Saudi higher education, students learn how to follow rules, memorize for tests, earn grades, and obey decision makers. Freire (1997) calls that the "banking" concept of education. He explains that the banking concept of education serves the interests of oppression and that the dominant elites utilize the banking concept to encourage passivity in the oppressed. Freire (1997) encourages educators to reject the banking concept entirely and urges them to adopt what he calls "problem-posing" education, which he describes as a concept of consciousness where the teacher and the learner learn and teach with each other. He stated, "They become jointly responsible for a process in which all grow" (p. 80). The people in power and the decision makers in the KSA higher education believe that "schools teach exactly what they are intended to teach and they do it well: how to be a good Egyptian and remain in your place in the pyramid" (Gatto, 2005, p. 14). They force students to walk in one way to arrive at the end point and graduate to follow more rules. They forget that "this was once a land where every sane person knew how to build a shelter, grow food, and entertain one another. Now we have been rendered permanent students. It's the architects of forced schooling who are responsible for that" (Gatto, 2005, p. 100). In the KSA there are many colleges and universities, but true education is missing because the focus is on school building rather than mind building.

In Saudi higher education, "we need to celebrate teaching that enables transgressions, a movement against and beyond boundaries. It is that movement which makes education the practice of freedom" (hooks, 1994, p. 12). People in power would benefit many by accepting the idea of change and sharing power. Religious people should be open to diversity in beliefs and ideas. Educators and specialists would benefit by adopting new methods and producing research.

What prevents freedom and flexibility in higher education "is a theory of social engineering that says there is one right way to proceed with growing up" (Gatto, 2005, p. 68).

Compounding these problems is that many professors and teachers in Saudi universities believe they are like prophets and are never wrong. "More than anything, they seem enthralled by the exercise of power and authority within their mini-kingdom, the classroom" (hooks, 1994, p. 12). This idea comes from the traditional Saudi culture that demands extreme respect and adoration of one's teacher. In turn, the teacher needs to adore and agree with the principal, and the principal's job is to make the decision makers happy. The problem is that most of these people are not interested in the improvement of education. In the KSA, most teachers teach the way they were taught. They don't change or improve their teaching for years. "If we teach today's students as we taught yesterday's, we rob them of tomorrow" (Dewey, 1944, p. 167). The first step toward the solution is recognizing the problem. When educators and decision makers in the KSA recognize that there is a problem, then they will begin working toward the solution.

Background

The History of Education in the KSA

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) was established in 1932 and at that time, it was a poor country. It has gone through rapid changes and become one of the biggest oil producers in the world. The KSA moved from a country with an economy centered on livestock, agriculture, trade, minor industry, and income from "Hajj" and "Umrah," which are pilgrimages of Islam undertaken by Muslims all around the world in a major city in the KSA "Mecca" that has religious and historical background visited by 30 million visitors every year (Albar, 2014), to a rich country in which 90% of its income comes from oil. The KSA now has become a modern

country that adopts every possible technology and tries to compete with first world countries in education, industry, technology, and health care by 2030 based on the new KSA vision.

   Recent pre-oil past. Barely one generation ago, the KSA was a very different place. My mother who is now in her fifties, for instance, endured a difficult childhood, being responsible for looking after 30 sheep at the tender age of nine. She used to walk after her thirty sheep from village to village in the southern region of the KSA near Abha, a picturesque town on the top of Alsarawat Mountains. "I used to walk through the mountains, more than five miles a day, barefoot," she said. There were no schools, electricity, or even cars (Al Rasheed, 2003). People used horses and donkeys for transportation. According to Al Rasheed (2003), this life was the typical Saudi life about fifty years ago. Not all Saudi regions were like that at that time. Life has improved gradually over 20 years, starting in the central areas and spreading to the rest of the country.

   Age of Saudi oil: establishing an educational system. At the time of its inception, the KSA was a poor country, with a weak educational system consisting of 12 schools with 700 students. This situation began to change dramatically after 1938, when oil was discovered in the country. As a result, by 1950 there were 365 schools educating 42,000 students (Simmons & Simmons, 1994). Subsequently, the government established the Ministry of Education, which focused on K-12 educational levels only. Unfortunately, at that time, education was for males only. In 1957, the government realized the importance of establishing higher education for Saudi students instead of sending them abroad. Therefore, King Saud University was established in Riyadh, the capital city of the KSA. In 1959, King Saud discussed the issue of educating women and he sought support from religious scholars. In 1960, the first school for girls was established in Riyadh (Al-Rawaf & Simmons, 1991).

Accessible higher education. Education in the KSA is free to all Saudis and students are paid stipends while participating in any level of higher education. The goal of this stipend is to encourage some people who did not believe that education was important to allow their children to continue in higher education. According to Alamri (2011), after King Saud University was established in 1957, six other universities were established in the KSA over a period of 20 years. As a result of increasing the number of Saudi universities, it was necessary to establish the Ministry of Higher Education. Among the Ministry's specific responsibilities were proposing the establishment of higher educational institutions, creating and administering universities and colleges, communicating among institutions of higher education, coordinating with other governmental ministries and agencies in terms of their interests and needs in higher education, and representing the government abroad in all educational and cultural events through various Saudi cultural and educational offices distributed over 32 countries (SACM, 2011). The Ministry of Higher Education is a centralized authority responsible for directing higher education in accordance with the adopted policy, supervising the development of higher education in all sectors, coordinating among universities especially in the field of scientific departments and degrees, and formulating rules and regulations for compliance by all institutions of higher education (SACM, 2011). Higher education in the KSA has undergone tremendous growth over the past decade. According to Alamri (2011), it has expanded to include 23 government universities, 18 primary teachers' colleges for men, 80 primary teachers' colleges for women, 37 colleges and institutes for health, 12 technical colleges, and 33 private universities and colleges. The Ministry of Higher Education's name was changed to the Ministry of Education in 2015. It is now responsible for K-12 and higher education at all levels.

Connection with the West. The government of the KSA has been sponsoring students with scholarships in certain majors chosen by the government to many destinations in the West from the 1960s until present. The biggest study abroad program started in 2005, when the Ministry of Higher Education established a program called King Abdullah Scholarship Program. The program aims at fulfilling the currently "unmet need for Saudi faculty members and requirements of work markets in the KSA" (Alamri, 2011, p. 89). It provides the means for students to pursue studies at all levels of higher education degrees, from bachelors, masters, to doctorate degrees, in a range of different majors, and includes medical fellowships at the best world universities. Based on a report published on Akhbaar24 news, there are about 124,000 Saudi students over the western world in higher education in different disciplines ("124 Thousand Saudi Students," 2012). The majority of the sponsored students are in the United States of America, United Kingdom, Australia, and Canada. According to a report published on the Saudi Ministry of Education website (2015), the KSA is ranked by UNESCO as the fourth country on the movement of students around the world; the KSA ranked behind China (421,000 students), and India (153,300 students). The KSA is thus ahead of South Korea, Japan, and the United States in student movement percentage around the world. Furthermore, scholarships have been granted regardless of gender since 2005.

Drawbacks in Higher Education

Although amazing progress has been made, Saudi higher education faces many difficulties and issues that need to be resolved. Even though most deans, professors, and faculty members in Saudi universities have received their degrees abroad from free and diverse first world countries all around the world, bureaucracy is a major obstacle in higher education in the KSA. For instance, the system is centralized in the Ministry of Education and there is no clear

venue for changes that can move toward giving universities authority to make their own

decisions and policies (Alamri, 2011). The decision makers in Saudi higher education mostly are

not educators, nor philosophers, nor do they even have an interest in education. They are a

powerful, wealthy, all male group that works in the government. Furthermore, most of the major

decisions in higher education have to be approved by high-level authority, which delays any

development and slows the progress. Some Saudi educators work hard to improve higher

education, but bureaucracy prevents them from changing the current situation. It is difficult and

sometimes impossible to reach decision makers in the KSA higher education to inform them

about current problems and needs. This leads to many issues in higher education. Alamri (2011)

discussed issues that are caused by bureaucracy in Saudi higher education. For instance, the lack

of research funds is a major obstacle. Alamri (2011) also stated that "scientific conferences and

scientific journals are limited or absent in most areas" (p. 90). In addition, administrative

corruption is growing in Saudi higher education (Al-Isa, 2011). For instance, when looking for a

job in higher education, one often needs to know someone who has power in the hiring

institution, no matter one's education and skills. Finally, yet perhaps most importantly, academic

freedom is limited, due to cultural and other boundaries.

Admission Rules and Requirements

Moreover, higher education admissions rules and requirements are complicated and

unrealistic. The procedure of accepting students in higher education is based on their grades in

high school and their scores on two complicated standardized tests that are irrelevant to what

schools teach. Also, universities use the same procedure to choose the major a student can study.

"The lesson of report cards, grades, and tests is that students should not trust themselves but

should instead rely on the evaluation of certified officials because people need to be told what

they are worth" (Gatto, 2005, p. 10). That is the reason that most students don't like what they study, and this can lead to failure in their education and future.

> Whatever an education is, it should make you a unique individual, not a conformist; it should furnish you with an original spirit with which to tackle the big challenges; it should allow you to find values which will be your roadmap through life; and it should make you spiritually rich, a person who loves whatever you are doing, wherever you are, whomever you are with. (Gatto, 2005, p. 67)

Change is needed in admissions rules because they are affecting students' futures and pushing them to study and work in areas against their will, which can affect the quality of workers in the whole country. It is time that we squarely face the realization that traditional perennialist institutional school teaching is destructive to students (Gatto, 2005, p. 17).

Gender Issues

Another issue in Saudi higher education is sexism. In the KSA, the community is gender segregated. The KSA has a complete educational system for women, completely separate from the educational system for men, which goes from first grade through higher education. For non-Saudis, this can be extremely confusing and difficult to understand. Saudi Arabia is often characterized in the West and in some Muslim/Arab regions as one of the world's most oppressive countries toward women. As a Saudi woman, I believe that this is an exaggerated criticism that mostly serves political agendas and reflects Islamophobic ideology. Women's issues in Saudi Arabia are similar to other women's issues in most parts of the world, but it is often misrepresented or misunderstood. Many women worldwide have been denied access to formal higher education because of one reason or another (Ojo, 2012). Based on a study by Janaki (n.d.), women constitute less of the total global productive workforce than men. The main

reason for this poor share is the low literacy level among women. When this major group is educated and empowered, they can contribute to the development of their countries and gain their rights. National policy-makers must ensure that women's access to and participation in education at all stages of their lives is safeguarded and facilitated (UNESCO, 1996).

Even though Saudi higher education is gender segregated and led by men, women have the complete legal right to pursue free higher education. Indeed, education in the KSA is an area in which women have experienced significant progress (Hamdan, 2005). One explanation for women's education as a bright spot in the KSA is its traditionally high value in both Islamic and Arab culture. "Seek knowledge from the cradle to the grave" and "Seek learning even if it is as far away as China" are among the Islamic traditional sayings. The Saudi government believes that they have gone to considerable lengths to increase women's access to education (Almunajjed, 2009).

Although there is a tremendous improvement in women's education in the KSA, Saudi women still face social and cultural difficulties that prevent them from gaining all their rights in higher education (Hamdan, 2005) due to the demanding power of men. Hamdan (2005) stated, "Women's issues in Saudi society and the gender inequalities that are obvious in its education system are institutionalized and difficult to dislodge through individual action" (p. 45). In higher education, men have all the power over women. They make all the decisions, such as hiring faculty, choosing or modifying curriculum, or accepting students. Furthermore, male faculty members have more access to new technology and technology-related training programs in Saudi universities than women (Al-Sarrani, 2010; Kamal, 2013; & Omar, 2016). In Saudi Arabia, and especially in higher education, the issue of gender inequity is significant. Al-Sarrani, (2010); Kamal, (2013); and Omar, (2016), conducted studies that have similar focus to investigate the

concern of faculty in three different universities in the KSA in adopting online learning. One of their major findings was that female faculty don't have the same access to technology and training as male faculty.

Al-Sarrani (2010) studied the adoption of blended learning by science faculty in three departments (Biology, Chemistry and Physics) of Taibah University (n=148, 58.8% response rate). He used a mixed methods design and a non-experimental, cross-sectional survey design. He utilized the Concerns Based Adoption Model as the theoretical framework. Al-Sarrani (2010) found that gender had a significant relationship with the stages of concerns (informational and collaboration) in the KSA. In Al-Sarrani's (2010) study, females expressed a higher degree of concern than males in adopting blended learning. He discussed that women professors in Saudi Arabia were concerned about the need for professional development and concerned about the inequity in the technical facilities between the women's and men's colleges. Al-Sarrani (2010) stated:

> Most of the women that answered open-ended questions stated that they didn't have basic technology tools. For example, "How can we adopt blended learning without Internet in the women's college?" (Al-Sarrani, 2010, p. 151)

In addition, Kamal (2013) conducted a study to investigate faculty concerns regarding the adoption of online teaching at King Abdul-Aziz University. His study investigated faculty professional development needs in adopting online teaching. The data were obtained from 147 faculty members using a non-experimental, cross-sectional survey. The findings indicated a significant difference between gender and faculty concerns in adopting online teaching. Females expressed a higher degree of concern than males at the informational and personal stages in adopting online teaching. According to Kamal (2013), females expressed a higher degree of

concern than males in adopting online teaching because female faculty were concerned about the inequity in technology facilities in the women's colleges. Most of the higher-level administrators at King Abdul-Aziz University are male and the new technologies are usually introduced to male faculty first. Female teachers' voices are not heard by the stakeholders regarding the university's important decisions (Kamal, 2013). To address this concern, he suggested that female faculty should be encouraged to share their opinions regarding the university's online teaching strategy. This difference in concerns may be due to other factors, as well, such as beliefs about gender and women's capabilities. Kamal (2013) suggested that further study that is qualitative in nature is needed to address this issue.

A similar study was conducted by Omar (2016) to examine the concerns of faculty in the College of Education at King Saud University regarding the adoption of online teaching. He then related their concerns to their professional development needs. The data were obtained from 296 faculty members; 43% of the respondents were males and 56% were females. There was a statistically significant difference in respondents' concerns in adopting online teaching based on gender. Female respondents expressed a higher degree of concern than male respondents. The results indicated that when adopting online teaching at King Saud University, female faculty were less informed and less involved than male faculty in the online teaching adoption process. At the same time, female faculty members were more focused on the process and tasks of using online teaching and the best use of information and resources. Issues related to efficiency, organizing, managing, and scheduling were more important to them. Omar (2016) recommended increasing gender equity for productivity purposes through enhanced administrative dialog, access to technology, and targeted training for female faculty. To increase gender equity and access to the use of technology, Omar (2016) suggested increasing female participation in higher

education administration, technology acquisition, decision-making processes, and targeted training. He discussed that every department should conduct departmental reviews to assess the climate for female faculty for adopting online teaching. Female faculty should be encouraged to share their views on the development of a university plan for the adoption of online teaching. Furthermore, it must be ensured that the female campus has an adequate infrastructure for online teaching (e.g., Internet access, computer labs, technical support, training).

Al-Isa (2011) discussed the ignorance of some women's rights in Saudi higher education, even though the number of female students is greater than the number of male students, but the number of male faculty is greater than the number of female faculty. In Saudi higher education, 60% of students are female (Al-Isa, 2011) and 70% of faculty members are male (The Ministry of Education, 2015). There is only one university that is led by women in the KSA, which is Princess Nora University (Al-Isa, 2011). Saudi higher education needs a philosophy that includes equal rights for all citizens, including women. Spring (2008) states, "The denial of equal power to women continues to be a global political problem . . . Consequently, women's education should, in part, be focused on building a political consciousness" (pp. 200-201). Women's inequality is traditionally structured in the Saudi society and it is affecting their educational chances and success. Because the main goal of education is to support learners in their learning process no matter what their gender, culture, religion, or race are, students need diversity and freedom in education. Each learning environment has its own needs and problems and one of the significant problems Saudi education faces is the cultural division of gender. As a result, the virtual world has become a socially progressive force, trying to remove the boundaries, allowing both genders to communicate. Social media are a safe and accessible environment in which

Saudi women can communicate with men, where they have control over the level and type of the communication.

Closed Circuit Television (CCTV). According to Article 155 of the Educational Policy of Saudi Arabia, intermixing of genders is impermissible at all levels of education, except in pre-school (The Ministry of Education, 1969). Male instructors are not permitted to teach female students. However, due to a large shortage of female instructors because of the male power in higher education, some institutions incorporate Closed Circuit Television (CCTV) to deliver education to female students by male instructors so that the law is not violated (Al-Sarrani, 2010; & Mirza, 2008).

CCTV is a TV system in which signals are not publicly distributed but are transmitted between two specific places, on a limited set of monitors. In Saudi Arabia, CCTV is configured to be one-way video and two-way audio. The video and the sound of the male instructor are transmitted to the female students, while only the sound of the female students is transmitted to the instructor. This system should allow the instructor and the students to engage in a dialogue while the students see the instructor but the instructor does not see them, but actually it doesn't. Based on my experience studying in a CCTV environment, students feel distance from the instructor and this environment lacks engagement and interaction in teaching and learning.

Although CCTV has partially solved the problem of the shortage of the female instructors, it is not an effective solution. It is expensive and does not allow the instructor to receive the nonverbal communications from the students because he cannot see them. It has also led to a low level of student participation (Mirza, 2008). Moreover, it is not practical, if not useless, in courses that require a high level of interaction, such as science classes that involve laboratory work.

According to Abdel-Raheem (2014), a former instructor in a women's college in Saudi Arabia, CCTV created disciplinary problems, especially with attendance. Abdel-Raheem (2014) emphasized the constant technical struggle that instructors face when using CCTV. For example, the equipment often broke down, the monitor went off during the lectures, sometimes the instructor could hear the students but they could not hear him, and sometimes the students could hear the instructor but he could not hear them. Finally, he explained that exchanging materials and assignments between the instructor and the students was a cumbersome process. Sometimes the exchange was done through email. Often the female students would ask a male relative to deliver the assignments to the instructor.

Mirza (2008) studied the implications of using CCTV in a gender segregated learning environment in Saudi Arabia. When Mirza used CCTV to teach two classes at the same time, one consisted of male students and the other of female students. Twenty five percent of the female students felt discomfort in speaking through a microphone or telephone, 38% considered the method for calling the instructor time-consuming, 25% did not want to irritate other students by interrupting the instructor, and only 19% did not see any barriers to participation. Although female students valued the use of CCTV in the delivery of education, 94% believed that having an instructor within the same classroom was better for their learning (Mirza, 2008).

Another cultural obstacle that makes online teaching and the use of social media more necessary in the KSA higher education is women's transportation. In the KSA women are not allowed to drive yet. Although the KSA King, Salman bin Abdulaziz, declared on September 26, 2017 the decision of allowing women to drive starting on June 2018, it is impossible to predict if the Saudi community will smoothly accept this change since women driving is denied culturally for many Saudis. It is also customary for the traditional Saudi family to not allow their daughters

to travel alone, even for educational purposes. Consequently, Saudi women have reported time and travel constraints as the top barriers preventing them from pursuing further education (Taleb, 2014). It has been suggested that online teaching and social media use in education can help Saudi women to pursue further education in the convenience of their houses, eliminating the need for a male to drive them to college (Taleb, 2014).

Philosophy of Social Reconstructionism

Perspectival philosophy that focuses on reconstructionist education is needed for Saudi higher education to reconstruct the traditional perennialist philosophy that no longer serves the current generation. Specifically, we need social reconstructionist philosophy, which emphasizes social change to create a better education and society. Reconstructionist educators focus on a curriculum that highlights social reform as the main goal of education (Cohen, 1999). Theodore Brameld (1904-1987) was the founder of social reconstructionism in reaction against the realities of World War II. He recognized the potential for either human annihilation through technology and human cruelty, or the capacity to create a beneficent society using technology and human compassion (Cohen, 1999). Social reconstructionism is the suitable philosophy to face the cultural, political, and social challenges in Saudi higher education. George Counts (1889-1974) recognized that education is the means of preparing people for creating this new social order (Counts, 1978). Social reconstructionists believe that systems must be changed to overcome oppression and improve human conditions. One of the most famous social reconstructionists is Paulo Freire (1921-1997), whose experiences living in poverty led him to champion education and literacy as the vehicle for social change (Freire, 1997). Based on social reconstructionist philosophy, humans must learn to resist oppression and injustice. They should not accept being its victims or oppressors.

Applying social reconstructionist philosophy requires dialog and critical thinking. It also requires developing human awareness to overcome domination and oppression. Rather than "teaching as banking," in which the educator deposits information into students' heads, Freire (1997) saw teaching and learning as a process of inquiry in which the student must invent and reinvent the world. To apply social reconstructionist philosophy to Saudi higher education, education needs to focus on students' experiences and taking social action on real problems, such as discrimination, gender issues, cultural problems, injustice, international terrorism, and inequality. Freedom of learning, inquiry, dialog, and multiple perspectives are strategies for dealing with such issues. Community-based learning and bringing the world into the classroom are also strategies. All these strategies can be applied through using social media as an effective educational platform. Social media in higher education allow student-centered education that focuses on the student in the educational process. Social media give the student the power to explore and search without boundaries. Its platforms provide space for dialog involving students, decision makers, professors, and everyone involved in the KSA higher educational system, which can lead to the needed change.

Social Media in the KSA: Rationale

Social media entered the KSA suddenly in year 2007 (Cummins, 2015). The conservative country used to have only local TV channels as its primary media source. This sudden change has essentially created an uncontrolled revolution in the way social media users in the KSA communicate and think ("A Virtual Revolution," 2014). This movement is being driven by the young generation.

Social media have made tremendous changes in the KSA and students have been the most affected by the use of social media. There are some quantitative studies and data about

social media in the KSA from different perspectives examined in Chapter 2, but qualitative studies that provide in depth understanding of this phenomenon and its impact are lacking. Students in the KSA are using social media as one of their primary educational platforms both to search for knowledge and to share knowledge (Al Khalifa & Garcia, 2013). In addition, students have used it to make business deals, express their political thoughts, discuss issues of religion, and question their culture. Social media are powerful in the KSA in that they have forced changes upon the political system and engaged more students in political life ("A Virtual Revolution," 2014).

Social media are widely used in the KSA informally and formally. Among the top reasons social media are so popular among Saudi higher education students is that most of them have mobile devices, which they can use to access social media anytime, anywhere. In addition, 50% of Saudis are under the age of 35, and 80% of this younger generation have smartphones, according to El Mourad (2014). Saudi Arabia is currently third highest in the world in smart phone usage (Al-Sharif, 2014). Furthermore, higher education is free in the KSA, so students usually don't start working until they graduate from college, often with a master's, or even doctoral degree. In addition, the Internet is accessible and cheap compared to other countries and students have plenty of free time that they can spend using social media. As well as being used informally, social media are also used formally by Saudi organizations, government institutions, universities and schools (Kutbi, 2015).

YouTube in the KSA

Seeking a reprieve from the local bland TV, young Saudis, who make up a large percentage of the country's 28.3 million people, are turning to YouTube for flexibility of expression with more enjoyable content. The number of views for Saudi YouTube shows

produced by the Jeddah-based Production Company called UTURN is about 32 million. Jeddah is the second largest city in the KSA, located on the coast of the Red Sea. It is the major center of the western KSA, with a population of 3.4 million. According to the UTURN (n.d.) official website, UTURN is a pioneer in Arabic online video content. The company started in the KSA as a digital production company in mid-2010 with original YouTube shows. After the initial success of the first batch of shows, UTURN pushed itself to create and collect edgy, relevant, and quality online video content targeting Arab audiences worldwide through innovation and creativity. Abdullah Mando, 27, established the company in 2010 with two college friends. "3al6ayer" or "On the Fly" is an example of a popular Saudi show produced by UTURN. "3al6ayer" is written using a new Arabic chat alphabet, also known as Arabish (mix of Arabic and English words). It is an alphabet used to communicate in Arabic in social media casual communication. It is a character encoding of Arabic to the Latin script and the Arabic numerals for sounds in Arabic that don't have corresponding letters in Western languages. "3al6ayer" addresses Saudi political, social, and cultural issues in a humorous style. According to CNN news, "3al6ayer" is a very popular YouTube show presented by Omar Hussain, a 29-year-old Saudi man (Abu Hajar, 2012). Even CNN, *The New York Times,* and other mainstream international media pay attention to his show. Omar started as a stand-up comedian traveling across the KSA presenting shows and now his main stage is YouTube. His mission is to use his natural comedic senses to examine sensitive social and political issues. "TV is dying a slow and painful death in this region," said Fahad Albutairi, 26, a geophysicist who graduated from the University of Texas at Austin, where he first tried comedy at open-mic nights (Macfarquhar, 2011, para. 3). In 2011, he started another hit Saudi show on YouTube, "La Yekthar" (Macfarquhar, 2011). According to *Reuters*, the KSA is "the biggest user of YouTube per capita in the world" (Smith, 2013, para. 6).

Twitter in the KSA

The KSA has 2.4 million Twitter users, which means 50% of Twitter users in the Arab region are in the KSA and this number is growing every day (Abdurabb, 2014). According to El Mourad (2014), 4 out of 10 Internet users in the KSA have Twitter accounts. "Additional new research says Saudis are also one the world's most active Twitter users. Thirty-two percent of Saudi Internet users are active on Twitter, which means they don't just have an account, they actually use it" (Kagel, 2013, para. 3).

Instagram in the KSA

Instagram is one of the most popular social media platforms in the KSA among undergraduate and graduate students. According to Habash (2015), 8.8 million Saudis are active Instagram users. Additionally, Saudi women continue to be more likely than Saudi men to be Instagram users (Habash, 2015). Higher education students mostly use Instagram for business and advertising. According to BBC News, young women in the KSA face many obstacles in the workplace, not least of which is a ban on women driving, making Instagram an attractive choice for women who wish to start their own business (Saeed, 2013).

Social Media and Terrorism

As there are pros for social media, there are also cons. According to *Al-Sharq*, social media contributes to spreading extremism and terrorism among users in the Middle East (Alakdar, 2016). According to Alromayh (2015), 80% of those who belong to Daesh (ISIS) were recruited through social media. No doubt it is challenging to control the influence of social media on young adults. A young man can be affected by members of a terrorist organization in his own bedroom, through his own mobile phone (Alromayh, 2015). According to *Okaz*, the KSA faces about 90 extremist tweets per minute targeting young adults and trying to influence their

religious beliefs with terrorist ideas (Alshihri, 2015). The KSA has to find ways to face those challenges.

Some Saudi educators recognize the power of social media in education and try to integrate social media in their instruction. The features of social media complement constructivism in teaching and learning that allow learners to create, co-create, and share knowledge with global audiences beyond classroom walls (Seo, 2013). Social constructivism is examined extensively in Chapter 2 as the theory guiding this research. However, even though social media have the opportunity to support educational change in the KSA, many institutions are still wondering how to adapt to these tools (Barnes & Tynan, 2007). A deeper understanding of the influence of social media on students can help educators recognize the power of social media to adopt and better use social media to meet students' needs in teaching and learning.

The Importance of Social Media for Education

In the presence of the Internet, information has become available at any time, allowing people to acquire information related to the cultural, social, political, economic, and educational aspects of their lives. In this era of new technologies and the subsequent knowledge explosion and increased information flow, people need to keep up-to-date with new developments that apply to their careers and interests. Technology widely impacts education. The technological revolution has led to the emergence of new and flexible learning practices as it facilitates learning anytime and anywhere. It caters to different styles of learning and teaching with numerous visual and audio elements. Learning Management Systems (LMS) such as Canvas, provide a technological platform for face-to-face and distance classes for communication and learning. In addition, students can learn formally and informally by engaging in discussions via Twitter or Facebook. They also can learn through YouTube videos, which provide a rich source

of instructional videos in all areas of knowledge. Teaching with technology tools and their features can make learning more interesting and lead students to be more engaged in technology-based learning environments compared with traditional learning environments for many reasons. First, using technology in education such as videos and audio recordings provide a 24/7 tutoring system for students where they can learn and repeat what they learn at their own pace. Second, educational technologies such as online classes are more accessible than face-to-face traditional classes. A student can participate in an online class in the United States while she/he is in the KSA. Third, technology provides flexible ways of learning for students with special needs and second language speakers who face difficulties participating in face-to-face sittings. Based on my personal experience as a second language speaker when I started my master's degree in 2011, I struggled with speaking for presentations or even class discussions. For one of my classes' final presentation, my professor allowed me to present via YouTube video. I filmed myself at home while presenting. I then published it on YouTube. During the final class meeting, I shared my presentation video with my classmates. I felt comfortable presenting in front of the camera. I was able to redo it many times until I ended up with a good presentation.

Collins and Halverson (2009) discussed that in the presence of new technologies, education has been structured around the idea of lifelong learning, where students act as consumers of knowledge through the use of Internet and technology and move away from highly structured schooling institutions. Prensky (2006) argued that since educators have moved into the 21st century, it is now time for education leaders to rise above the daily grind and observe the new landscape that is emerging. He concluded that today, students are native speakers of technology, fluent in the digital language of computers, video games, and the Internet. Students, as digital natives, will continue to develop and change so rapidly that teachers will not be able to

keep up, according to Prensky (2006).

Furthermore, the economic benefits of social media for higher education students are meaningful and make embracing and improving the use of social media worthwhile (Al-Zahrani, 2012), since it is not common to work while pursuing higher education in the KSA. There is lack of job opportunities for students in the KSA, which gives more value to job opportunities provided by social media. Today, with the economic issues in Saudi Arabia because of the decrease in oil prices and the Yemen war, Saudi Arabia is trying to lower financial expenses and cut some of the financial support to development projects in the country (Grennes & Strazds, 2016). Moreover, it has been hard to find jobs in general lately in Saudi Arabia and is becoming even harder not only for students but also for everyone. There are currently 680,000 unemployed Saudis and the number is growing ("The Statistics: More Than," 2016). In fact, some students continue their education by going to graduate schools only because they cannot find jobs. Since education is free, they can continue their education and do their business on social media at the same time. It is easy, mobile, and they don't need a license to start a business on Saudi social media. Twitter, Snapchat, and Instagram have adversely impacted traditional advertisement businesses and business directories of many types in Saudi Arabia (Karoot, 2016). Also, cooking and selling homemade food has become a popular business for higher education students, especially female students. Social media allow higher education students to have a business and master marketing and advertising while they study. Based on my experience in following Saudi active social media users, there are hundreds of undergraduate and graduate students who make thousands of dollars from business in social media. Mostly, they make advertisements for new restaurants, shopping malls, fashion brands, hotels, attractions, and home-based businesses. Since they are followed by hundreds of thousands or even millions of people, their

advertisements are powerful. Therefore, social media solve economic problems among higher education students in the KSA by giving them flexible opportunities to have a business, be independent, and improve their income. There is no doubt that social media are powerful in influencing today's students. Social media merits research to create knowledge for the current generation.

Statement of Research Problem

This research focused on the impact of the social media revolution in the experience of Saudi graduate students who are active social media users. Social media became daily practice for students, which shifts the way students learn and communicate. The social media influence on Saudi students, particularly on Saudi graduate students, is an area that needs to be studied because the field of educational technology in the KSA is lacking such studies. In addition, social media influence Saudi graduate students in a unique way due to the uniqueness of the KSA in terms of economic, culture, politics, and social life. That influence is worthy of in-depth research, which was the goal of this study.

Purpose of The Research

The purpose of this multiple participant qualitative case study was to identify the influence of social media on Saudi graduate students who are active social media users.

Research Questions

To explore the above, it is important to formulate research questions to guide the inquiry process. As Stake (1995) counseled, "Perhaps the most difficult task of the researcher is to design good questions, research questions that will direct the looking and the thinking enough and not too much" (p. 15). Keeping this in mind, the following research questions and sub-questions were articulated.

Overarching Research Questions and Sub-questions

1. What are the experiences of Saudi graduate students who are active social media users (Churcher, Downs, & Tewksbury, 2014)?

   a. How do Saudi graduate students use social media?

   b. How do social media impact Saudi graduate students personally?

2. How do social media influence Saudi graduate students who are active social media users (Mbati, 2013)?

   a. How do social media influence Saudi graduate students in learning?

   b. How do social media influence Saudi graduate students financially?

   c. How do social media influence Saudi graduate students socially?

Methodology

Having an understanding of the influence of social media on Saudi graduate students who are active social media users is why this is a qualitative study. As Glesne (2011) claimed, qualitative researchers "seek to interpret people's constructions of reality and identify uniqueness and patterns in their perspectives and behaviors" (p. 19).

Case study is the study methodology because it allows the researcher to explore individuals or organizations, simple through complex interventions, relationships, communities, or programs (Yin, 2003) and supports the deconstruction and the subsequent reconstruction of various phenomena (Baxter & Jack, 2008). Case study is the qualitative research method that best fits the nature of this study primarily because of the uniqueness of the KSA. According to Creswell (2007), case study can focus on one individual, several individuals, a group, an activity, or a program, as long as the case is bounded and unique. This approach is valuable for education and social science research to understand phenomenon in a social context because of its

flexibility and rigor. It is the best approach that provided deep and detailed understanding of the reasons why social media impact the KSA students differently than those in other socio-cultural contexts and why social media use among these students ranks higher than the average in most countries.

According to Yin (2003) a case study design should be considered when: (a) the focus of the study is to answer "how" and "why" questions; (b) you cannot manipulate the behavior of those involved in the study; (c) you want to cover contextual conditions because you believe they are relevant to the phenomenon under study; or (d) the boundaries are not clear between the phenomenon and context. A case study was chosen because the case is the influence of social media on Saudi graduate students, but the case cannot be considered without the context, the participants' experience in social media from a holistic perspective. It is impossible to have a true picture of the influence of social media on Saudi graduate students without considering the context within which it occurred.

This was a multiple participant qualitative case study that included six Saudi graduate students who are active social media users. Multiple participant case studies, according to Yin (2003), allow a researcher to draw conclusions from groups of cases. Thus, the six cases collectively strengthen the results and increase confidence in the study (Tellis, 1997). Multiple online data collection methods including online observation, in-depth semi-structured interviews via video/voice online meetings, and documentary data were used. A hallmark of case study research is the use of multiple data sources, a strategy that also enhances data credibility (Patton, 2015; Yin, 2003). Data from these sources was coded and grouped in categories and themes in order to be combined in the analysis process and not handled individually. Each data source was one piece of the "puzzle," with each piece contributing to the researcher's understanding of the

whole phenomenon (Baxter & Jack, 2008). Furthermore, social constructivism was the

theoretical framework that framed analysis and interpretation of the data. All six participants

were Saudi graduate students. Patton's (2015) purposeful sampling strategies, which is group

characteristics sampling, was used in selecting participants based on their use and popularity in

social media. The researcher sought to investigate a subgroup whose experiences are likely to be

the same (Polkinghorn, 2005). IRB approval was obtained prior to data collection. Raw data is

secured in my personal computer and will be discarded after completing the study. The

methodology is addressed in depth in Chapter 3.

<div align="center">

Definition of Terms

</div>

Active Social Media User for the purpose of this particular study is defined as,

YouTube, Instagram, Twitter, and/or Snapchat's user who has 200 thousand

followers/subscribers or more.

Digital Natives (millennials) refers to today's students who were born in 2001 through

the present. They are native speakers of technology, fluent in the digital language of computers,

video games, and the Internet (Prensky, 2006).

Formal Learning is described as learning that is institutionally sponsored or highly

structured such as, learning that happens in courses, classrooms, and schools, resulting in

learners receiving grades, degrees, diplomas, and certificates (Cross, 2007; Selwyn, 2007).

Informal Learning is learning that rests primarily in the hands of the learner and

happens through observation, trial and error, asking for help, conversing with others, listening to

stories, reflecting on a daily events, or stimulated by general interests (Cross, 2007; Selwyn,

2007). Livingstone (2001), defined informal learning as "any activity involving the pursuit of

understanding, knowledge or skill which occurs without the presence of externally imposed curricular criteria" (p. 5).

Instagram is a social media platform that was established on 2010 for sharing photos and short videos. It allows users to apply different types of photo filters to pictures with a single click, and then share them with others. While it is a rather basic service, Instagram's simplicity has helped it gain widespread popularity. Facebook acquired Instagram in 2012 (Christensson, 2014).

Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) is a country in Southwest Asia with a population of approximately 28 million people. King AbdulAziz Ibn AbdulRahman Al Saud established the country in 1932. The country covers about 900,000 square miles. Arabic is the official language and Islam is the official religion (Hamdan, 2005).

Snapchat is an application of social media that was established in 2011 for sharing photos, videos, and messages. Users can share media with their followers as a story that can be viewed for 24 hours, after which it is deleted automatically. Also, Snapchat allows private messages. "Once a user views a private message received via Snapchat, it is automatically deleted. This makes the service ideal for sharing quick updates with friends without accumulating media or messages" (Christensson, 2016, para. 1).

Social Media is a 21st century term used to broadly define a variety of networked tools or technologies that emphasize the social aspects of the Internet as a channel for communication, collaboration, and creative expression, and it is often interchangeable with the terms Web 2.0 and social software (Dabbagh & Reo, 2011). Kaplan and Haenlin (2010) define social media as follows:

A group of Internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological

foundations of Web 2.0 and that allow the creation and exchange of user-generated

content. It is a medium for social interaction as a super-set beyond social communication

enabled by ubiquitously accessible and scalable communication techniques. (p. 63)

The term "social media" is interchangeable with two other terms, "social software" and "Web

2.0."

Social Software is defined by Bartlett-Bragg (2006) as the scope of applications, which

enables social connections, group interactions, shared Web spaces for collaboration, and

information exchange in Web based environments. The term social software is the major

component of Web 2.0. Alexander (2006) defines social software as including blogs, wikis,

message-boards, podcasting, mailing lists, video blogs, and social networking.

Twitter is an application of social media that was created in 2006. It is considered a

microblogging platform. According to Guo, Goh, Ilangovan, Jiao, & Yang (2012), microblogs

allow people to post short messages that are displayed on their personal pages in real time via the

Web, SMS, instant messaging clients, and other methods. The postings can then be viewed by

others (i.e., followers). Most microblogging service providers limit the number of post characters

to 140. This short post feature is a distinguishing factor that makes microblogging a unique,

asynchronous, fast mode of communication (Guo et al., 2012).

Web 2.0. refers to technologies with which the possibilities for communication and

collaboration have rapidly increased. Alexander (2006) defines Web 2.0 as a series of tools,

utilities, websites, and applications based around social software and enhanced by the social

connectivity of the World Wide Web.

YouTube according to Christensson (2009), "is a video sharing service that allows users

to watch videos posted by other users and upload video of their own" (para. 1). They can also

comment to videos and subscribe to channels. The service was started as an independent website in 2005 and was acquired by Google in 2006 (Christensson, 2009).

Limitations of the Study

The following were limitations of this study:

1. Lack of prior research on the following areas,

    a. Social media influence on Saudi graduate students

    b. Qualitative research in topics related to social media and education in the KSA

    c. Social constructivism in studies related to social media in the KSA

2. Interviews were conducted via distance using video/audio calling and messaging application, which had disadvantages,

    a. Distractions result in interviewees not being fully engaged dealing with interruptions of which I may not be aware.

    b. Chen and Hinton (1999) argue that participation in the virtual interview requires a higher level of motivation and interest from the interviewee than would be the case in a face-to-face interview.

    c. Five participants out of six were uncomfortable with recording the interviews, which made them cautious in answering some of the interview questions.

3. All participants reported their technology proficiency level as medium to high. None fell into low technology proficiency level.

The study limitations leaded to possibilities. This research focused on filling the research literature gap by providing an in-depth qualitative study that examined the influence of social media on Saudi graduate students via a social constructivist lens.

Delimitations of the Study

The following were delimitations of this study

1. The participants were Saudi graduate students.

2. The participants were four women and two men. The gender distinction matters because of the role of gender in Saudi higher education.

3. Online interviews were conducted and recorded using the same video/audio calling and messaging application.

Significance of the Study

Understanding the experience of Saudi graduate students who are active social media users may provide Saudi education with resources that can benefit educators and help them to better understand students' skills and abilities. This understanding can inform instructors in how to engage the Millennial generation and help them utilize these tools to improve their students' learning: "Teachers can learn what technological equipment they need in their classrooms simply by asking students, and they can lobby to get these items installed in school computer labs and libraries," (Prensky, 2006, p. 10).

Findings of this study may encourage educators in the KSA's higher education institutions to reconsider their attitudes toward the adoption of online technologies such as social media in order to improve their students' learning. Prensky (2006) argued that "recognizing and analyzing the characteristics of the new landscape emerging in the digital age will help the educational leadership with which we should be providing our students, both now and in the coming decades" (p. 9). He emphasized that, "Instructors must find ways to incorporate into the class discussions the information and knowledge that their students acquire outside class in their digital lives" (p. 10). Additionally, understanding how social media influence Saudi graduate

students' educational experience may encourage educators in the KSA's higher education institutions to improve their technical knowledge and skills in order to keep up with their students' technical skills. "Teachers must remember that they are teaching in the 21st century, thus they need to master all the new technologies," (Prensky, 2006, p. 10).

Research findings revealed updated information about the social media applications that Saudi graduate students prefer to use and interact with and how they use and perceive the values of such applications in their learning. Hatkevich (2008) argued that understanding which technologies students need to use in order to support learning is a fundamental challenge within the educational field. Consequently, this study may inform Saudi educators of what social media their students interact with so they can consider how to develop their experiences and knowledge in order to effectively integrate such social media into their teaching environments.

Findings have the potential to inform Saudi educators about how emerging technologies such as social media can help graduate students support their learning based on their own experiences. Prensky (2006) stated,

> We have adopted many aspects of the technology, but just like those who learn another language later in life, we retain an "accent" because we still have one foot in the past. We will read a manual, for example, to understand a program before we think to let the program teach itself. Our accent from the pre-digital world often makes it difficult for us to effectively communicate with our students. (p. 9)

Thus, this study may help educators in the KSA to better understand their students' needs and interests.

Researcher's Positionality

Guba (1994) explained that the main instrument for any naturalistic study is the researcher. I—as the researcher—have an obligation toward my readers to explain my qualifications for doing this study, and to discuss my personal experiences, motivations, and values, because these elements influence the way the study was conducted and reported, and impacted its trustworthiness and authenticity.

With respect to qualifications, during my graduate study I have studied qualitative research with the guidance of well-known scholars in the field, two of whom have published books in the field of qualitative research. I have also had teaching experience in a culturally diverse environment. I currently work as a graduate assistant in a social media and technical support position for the College of Education at K-State. I have studied, worked in, and lived across two different countries and two different cultures.

Regarding motivations and values, my broader interests—as a female Saudi educational technologist teacher and researcher—are in documenting the responses and impact of Western technologies such as social media on my country, specifically on graduate students. My own rich life experiences living and working across the East and the West among friends, neighbors, professors, and colleagues of different races, religions, genders, interests, and backgrounds served to enrich my reflexivity through the research process.

Regarding assumptions, I assumed that social media have a significant impact on Saudis, particularly Saudi students at all ages. For the purpose of my study, the focus was on social media impact on graduate students. I had three major assumptions about my study:

1. Social media have changed the way Saudi students communicate and with whom they communicate by providing accessible platforms of communication that were not

possible before social media, such as reaching decision makers, or communicating between both genders.

2. Social media have provided opportunities for Saudi graduate students to be financially independent, which shifted their perspectives about work and income.

3. Social media are widely used by Saudi students because social media have allowed a space of freedom and variety of acceptable choices that Saudis in general are able to adopt even with their conservative culture.

Organization of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative multiple participant case study was to identify the influence of social media on Saudi graduate students who are active social media users. This dissertation is organized into five chapters. Chapter 1 investigates the historical background of Saudi higher education and the study rationale related to social media. Chapter 2 reviews social constructivism as the study theoretical framework and literature on social media research. Chapter 3 discusses the methodology used to guide the study. Chapter 4 presents the findings of the study. Chapter 5 discusses and interprets the findings.

Chapter 2 - Review of The Literature

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative multiple participant case study was to identify the influence of social media on Saudi graduate students who are active social media users. Before discussing the design of the study in Chapter 3, I first review the theoretical and research literature that informed this research. This chapter represents two sections, which explicates important concepts with which my research is concerned. First, I present the theoretical framework of my research. Social constructivism is presented as the primary theory guiding this study. Furthermore, personal engagement and relationship between the theoretical framework and my research is explained. Second, I address social media research as a technology used in higher education in general and in Saudi higher education in particular.

Theoretical Framework: Social Constructivism

Social constructivism has informed education during the past decades (Schrader, 2015). Social constructivism emphasizes the collaborative nature of learning and the importance of cultural and social context. It is obvious that the rapid advances in media and technology within the last generation should have impacted the pedagogies of social constructivism. The social interactions between students and students, teachers and students, and teachers, and other teachers have changed dramatically. Because our social interaction as human beings has been altered so momentously because of social media and technology, social constructivism pedagogy also must have been altered as a result of this change.

Based on social constructivism, all cognitive functions are believed to originate in, and are explained as products of social interactions. Jean Piaget, who was a scientist that was famous for the work that he did studying cognitive development and learning theories encompassed in

his view of "genetic epistemology," stressed that learners learn and produce knowledge through their active interaction with objects and people upon their experience (Campbell, 2015). On the other hand, Lev Vygotsky, who is known for being an educational psychologist, stressed that learning occurs through social interaction in community activities and locates the learner in the instructions, tools, symbols, artifacts, and language of the learning community (Johnson, 2003).

Piaget (Piaget, 1981) rejected the idea that learning is the passive assimilation of given knowledge. Instead, he proposed that learning is a dynamic process comprising successive stages of adaption to reality during which learners actively construct knowledge by creating and testing their own theories of the world (Piaget, 1981). For Piaget, the process of construction of meaning, learning, and knowledge development required active engagement with the objects and people in the environment (Dewey 1997; Kohlberg 1968; Papert 1999). Piaget relied on Baldwin's (1909) learning concept. Baldwin (1909) examined that knowledge is created through active interaction between the learner and others in the learning environment. Baldwin stated, "The individual is found to be a social product, a complex result, having its genetic conditions in actual social life. Individuals act together, not alone — collectively, not singly" (Baldwin, 1909, p. 211).

Vygotsky (1978), stressed that social constructivism focuses on the social and cultural environment, language, tools, and engagement with peers and with more expert others to explain how learning happens. The motivation for learning and constructing knowledge is essential to the learner. Vygotsky stated, "learning is a necessary and universal aspect of the process of developing culturally organized, specifically human psychological function" (1978, p. 90). For social constructivism, culture is the first element of human learning and development where people learn what and how to think. Furthermore, Vygotsky explained that problem-solving

experiences are essential in constructing knowledge. Problem solving is a task that is usually done with others, usually more expert others. It involves social interaction using language and collaborative activities. Producing knowledge and learning happen through such learning experience and process.

 Social Interaction

Social interaction plays an important role in the process of cognitive development in social constructivism because knowledge is constructed during interactions and dialog in the learning process. Vygotsky (1978), emphasized that social learning, which precedes human development, depends on interaction with the cultural environment (teachers, more experienced peers, learning materials, technology) that provides cognitive resources for students. Therefore, the learning environment should provide a variety of learning materials, experiences, and cognitive activities such as language, cultural history, and social context (Driscoll, 2000). According to Vygotsky (1978), important learning by the learner occurs through social interaction with a skillful "other" (person or technology). The other may model behaviors and/or provide verbal instructions for the learner. Vygotsky (1978) referred to this as "cooperative or collaborative dialog" (p. 77). The learner seeks to understand the actions or instructions provided by the "other," then adopts the information, using it to guide or regulate his/her own performance.

Because my research focuses mainly on the work of Vygotsky, it is important to understand two of the main principles of Vygotsky's (1978) work: The More Knowledgeable Other (MKO) and the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD).

The More Knowledgeable Other (MKO)

The more knowledgeable other (MKO) refers to a skillful "other" that has a better understanding or a higher ability level than the learner in regard to a particular task, process, or concepts. In Vygotsky's social constructivism, the variation in knowing and learning are brought together by the expert other(s) who share(s) their processes of activity to allow the learner to appropriate the better and more complex understanding or knowing system.

The MKO could be a teacher, an expert, or a peer. The MKO also could be a tool or a program like computers, cell phones, websites, video tutorial, and any device or application programmed to have more knowledge than the learner. The key role of the MKO is to facilitate and guide learners through the learning process (Mcleod, 2007).

The Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD)

The concept of the MKO is related to the second important principle of Vygotsky's (1978) work, the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). The ZPD is an important concept that further explains the processes of learning and growth. He views the ZPD as where learning occurs. The ZPD is the distance between what the learner can achieve independently and what can he/she achieve with assistance. Vygotsky (1978) sees the ZPD as the area where the learner needs instruction or guidance allowing him/her to develop skills then used on his/her own. According to Vygotsky (1978), during the learning process, learners move through three stages. First, learners cannot perform the task alone. In the second stage, which is the ZPD, learners are able to master concepts and perform tasks, which they cannot understand on their own, but with the help of the MKO. In the third stage, learners can perform the tasks on their own abilities (Atherton, 2011; Mcleod, 2007). As a result of interaction with the MKO, learners develop skills and strategies effectively (Mcleod, 2007).

Social Constructivism and New Media

New media offered by technology provide possibilities for learning and producing knowledge. Both the cognitive and social perspectives of social constructivism examine the situations, possibilities, and ways for doing so (Cobb, 2005). Students today were born and have lived in a technology-advanced age and time. Schrader (2015), said:

> Today's learners live in a technologically mediated world. I use two meanings of mediated, sometimes with simultaneous meaning as each sense of the word is conflated with another. The first sense refers to when the media itself, the noun, is the intermediary for learning, as with the technology of computers, applications, programs, and the Internet. Another sense of the word mediated is epistemic in nature; that media shapes and moderates our perspective on the world and the way in which we live with the knowledge in it, that is, the way we see knowledge and the way we see ourselves. (p. 28)

For instance, we interact, share our thoughts, and contribute our knowledge about international, social, or political events through commenting on YouTube videos, tweeting on Twitter, posting on Facebook, sharing on Instagram, to thousands or millions of people around the world.

Media shape how the millennials think and learn. According to the Nielsen (2014) report, there are 77 million millennials in the U.S., which is 24% of the U.S. population. The report described them as "the social generation. They're the founders of the social media movement— constantly connected to their social circles via online" (p. 2). They are the "first to come of age with cable TV, the Internet and cell phones" (p. 4) and have it "essentially baked into every millennial's DNA" (p. 7). The Nielsen (2014) report indicated the millennials ranked "Technology Use" first (24%), followed by "Music/Pop Culture" (11%) as most characteristic of them as a generation. An impressive 83% reported they sleep with their smartphones, 74 %

reported technology makes their lives easier, and 54% reported closer relationships with friends and family due to new technology. Millennials check in socially between 20 and 21 hours each month (Nielsen, 2014). These platforms are cultural platforms using language with the power of social interaction and communication that are important in how people produce and construct knowledge.

Social media create opportunities for the advancement of knowledge. "Social media promote the democratization of information and knowledge and allow students, teachers, and everyone else to become content producers rather than just consumers" (McHaney, 2011. p.100). Knowledge occurs through shared activities, through community engagement, dialogue, and communication in a community of shared activity. Students learn to both think and explore within and outside of their own perspective. They also learn to take perspectives of others in important ways that influence social and emotional learning competencies that are attracting significant current attention (Gehlbach, 2010). For example, students comment on the CNN Facebook news page about a cultural issue or political event.

Social media provide benefits related to the traditional learning environment boundaries. Social media offer diverse and larger communities of learners, including learners with disabilities, different types of personalities, ethnicities, religions, gender, or/and interaction styles. "In traditional classrooms care must be taken to attend to those less outspoken, the bullied, the shy, the less popular, or less socially integrated, that is, the non-participants and excluded others" (Schrader, 2015. p. 29). Interacting in such large and diverse communities supports users' interpersonal skills, such as communication, collaboration, and acceptance of others, and relationship development (Gehlbach, 2010). Students with less developed social skills or who may have socially sensitive or awkward interpersonal skills and be less socially

42

integrated face challenges in the classroom, may perceive school more negatively, have lower achievement goals, and may frustrate teachers and friends (Raver, Garner, & Smith-Donald, 2007; Shin & Ryan, 2014).

Furthermore, with technology, the classroom is broader and more flexible. Students can participate via computer or social media, which provides equal access opportunity for each student to participate. Technology offers an effective diverse environment of learners where learners are judged more on the content of their inputs than on their religion, race, socioeconomic status, or other features, which Kegan (1982) referred to as "recruitability" of the person (Schrader, 2015). Mbati (2013) discussed the research shortage on social media users' experiences that use social constructivism and observational learning theories. In her study, she used a qualitative meta-ethnographic approach. The purpose of her research was to "synthesize previous research theses produced internationally, in order to gain understanding into the experiences of lecturers and students regarding online social media applications, social constructivism, and observational learning" (Mbati, 2013. p. 173). Her findings suggested that "discussion forums are ideal for the stimulation of social constructivism and observational learning" (Mbati, 2013. p. 166). Social interaction on social media can overcome the multicultural issues that can affect learning in a traditional classroom such as gender and race issues (e.g., Dweck, 1986; Weiner, 1985).

Social media engage users in the learning process while sharing knowledge and collaborative activities in a flexible time and space. This process creates a community of practice and learning, which provide efficient and effective learning experiences that couldn't have happened without the power of social media. The new and creative ways in which students can show their identities and interact are enabled by the ability of social media to allow users to

create, edit, and share their own content with the world. This flexible open-ended platform supports instant communication to be perpetually shaped by students in a public sphere, producing a sense of individual and collective agency (Dieterle & Clarke, 2008) and opportunities for identity projection (boyd & Ellison, 2007). In conclusion, social media support the fundamentals of social constructivism. Social media allow millennials to construct knowledge and information through social interaction. Social media as a learning environment, provide learning tools, interaction space, and shared languages, which engages learners creatively in the producing and consuming knowledge process as they are and they become more expert (Schrader, 2015). The process of learning in this community is energetic. It is a cognitive and social learning environment.

Social Constructivism from Theory to Practice

Social media provide platforms where students and teachers can construct and reconstruct knowledge. They also can gain and practice important skills to effectively to communicate, represent the self, and interact in social media relationships. Use of social media in education support the development and the achievement of constructive educational goals, such as, the development of awareness, care, understanding others, problem solving, communication, and making ethical decisions (Jones & Bouffard, 2012). Some educators and students may not use social media in their learning and teaching (Cuban, Kirkpatrick, & Peck, 2001), due to many reasons, such as, technology access limitation, lack of training, lack of desire, fear of change, or privacy issues. But avoiding using social media in teaching and learning means missing beneficial opportunities of daily social interactions between social media users in the educational context. Palmer (1998) stated that fears "let us know we are on the brink of real learning" (p. 39). Social media in educational contexts allow deeper interactions among diverse communities of

44

participants, which put social media as a priority technology to use in education. Taking into consideration the perception of today's students as digital natives, McHaney (2011) discussed descriptions of millennials as technology enabled socially networked individuals who are impatient and self-absorbed. The majority of today's students in higher education classes want immediate answers, learn in social settings, and expect to be involved in the decisions and design of their education. Their expectations for individualized learning experiences often are not compatible with what actually happens in many higher education classrooms, often because of, as McHaney (2011) explained, the unfit technological training and lack of instructors' skills and knowledge in integrating technology such as social media for educational purposes.

Churcher et al. (2014) stated, "the very heart of social media is the ability to generate connections" (p. 34). This side of social media use reflects community-level learning. Through social media users and online dialogues, a community of practice forms for educational purposes. Learners can collaborate to find and achieve common goals, reflecting Lave and Wenger's (1991) ideas. "The use of collaboratively constructed and mutually observed videos can be a means of achieving observational learning" (Craig, Chi, & Van Lehn, 2009, pp. 179-180). For example, Churcher et al. (2014) used Vygotsky's (1978) conceptualization of social constructivism in conducting two case studies of instructor uses of social media through a Facebook community of practice and a wiki-based, student-generated exam. Each investigated the pedagogical advantages and disadvantages of using social media in course curricula through the development of social constructivist-based best practices in Web 2.0 course environments. Their findings indicated four main points.

1. Community of practice can be developed via social media creating a sense of ownership among students.

2. "Time and space advantage that social media offer allows instructors to extend the traditional course period beyond the synchronous meeting, allowing students to engage in asynchronous learning" (Churcher et al., 2014. p. 45).

3. The social advantages of using social media in classes that previously may have been taught using the traditional face-to-face teaching techniques (e.g., lecture, discussion, group work) reveal themselves in the shared experiences, discussions and self-disclosure of the students. "Students may learn from one another at their own pace in a potentially less-threatening environment and then process and digest that information on their own" (Churcher et al., 2014. p. 46).

4. Since the teacher is the grade-giver and evaluator of students, he/she "retains the free hand to guide student conversations in certain directions while steering away from others" (Churcher et al., 2014. p. 46).

If, as Vygotsky (1978) stated, "human learning presupposes a specific social nature and a process by which learners grow into the intellectual life of those around them," (p. 88) then the relevancy of social media for pedagogy becomes more apparent. However, like any educational technology, it is important to remember that social media technologies "should not be considered to replace traditional guided instruction (whether online or offline), nor are they to be thought of as a cure-all for unsound teaching methodologies" (Churcher et al., 2014. p. 44). Based on their findings, social media can be used effectively in education for group work, peer teaching, sharing documents, group editing, and other collaborative, novice expert or peer-to-peer learning activities.

Personal Engagement

Social constructivism, as a framework for this study allowed me to ask questions related to the participants' experiences as it relates to social interaction. It also allowed descriptive questions to be asked as related to the influence of social media on the participants as a learning-knowing venue and for personal communication. The use of this framework allowed me to focus on different aspects related to education and provide a clear understanding of other issues such as issues in culture, economics, policy, and gender.

Using social constructivism theory as a framework informed my research due to the focus on the experiences of Saudi graduate students' social media use. Further, social constructivism is appropriate because the purpose of the research questions the changes that social media make in structures of Saudi culture and higher education through the experience of Saudi graduate students who are social media active users.

Social Media Research

Social Media in Higher Education

Social media in higher education institutions. Social media technologies have significant effect on the field of higher education. The explosion of affordable technological devices and applications has the power to affect the way higher education delivers teaching and learning and how students access that learning (McHaney, 2011). According to Lenartz (2013), institutions and individuals have begun experimenting with novel approaches for the use of social media in a wide range of higher educational functions. One of these institutions is the City University of New York (CUNY). CUNY has created a closed social network for faculty, staff, and graduate students to connect the university's campuses and create online communities for members of CUNY (Kaya, 2010).

Another institution is Arizona State University where social media (e.g., Facebook, Twitter, RSS) are used as online emergency alert systems to alert students and staff of emergency situations (Mendoza, 2010). Other examples include London School of Business and Finance that offers Master's in Business Administration materials on Facebook. These materials offer message boards, lectures, and discussions for students to meet their interests and help them register and pay for their course (Kaya, 2010).

University of Nevada is another example of the institutions that utilize social media in higher education. Las Vegas student Devin Valencia won a College Affordability Challenge grant for a Facebook application she designed to help students find financial aid (Pratt, 2011). Valencia's application links financial aid databases to Facebook, allowing students to search for financial aid, refer opportunities to each other, and announce aid they have applied for or received (Lenartz, 2013).

Additionally, Aalborg University in Denmark used an open source social networking environment called "Ekademia" to create online networks within classes, colleges, and across campuses. Those networks are supplied with online collaboration tools (Lenartz, 2013). Ryberg, Dirckinck-Holmfeld, and Jones (2010) conducted a qualitative case study at Alborg University on the use of "Ekademia" among college students. They found that students used the "Ekademia" tools for communication, social interaction, sporting events, and parties' invitations.

At the Michigan State University, Ellison, Steinfield, and Lampe (2007), conducted regression analyses on results from a survey of undergraduate students (N = 286). They studied students' utilization of Facebook as a virtual learning community. Their findings showed that students utilize Facebook to develop and maintain bridging social capital at college. Bridging social capital is when a member of a social network provides "useful information or new

perspectives" (Ellison et al., 2007, p. 1146). The growth and popularity of Facebook among the students combined with the utilization of Facebook to maintain bridging social capital were related with the growth of the utilization of Facebook as a virtual learning community.

Hilscher (2014) argued that in colleges and universities, the use of Facebook is beginning to incorporate actions that were traditionally aligned with the learning communities that were not virtual. This new definition could be described as a way for educators and students to maintain contact while incorporating aspects of traditional learning communities.

Zgheib (2014) conducted a multiple participant case study examining social media use in a higher education institution in North Virginia. She collected data from six faculty members who used social media in their classes via interviews and relevant documents and artifacts, which included syllabi and lesson plans. She further collected data through content analysis of social media activities. Findings revealed that social media have the potential to support teaching and student learning and promote different levels of cognitive and social learning skills. Furthermore, faculty selected social media applications based on their technology features or their popularity among students, and they recommend integrating several media sources in teaching.

However, students' utilization of social media for academic and learning purposes still need further investigation in order to harness such technologies for educational goals and help those digital natives meet their interests. Bonk (2008), O'Reilly (2007), Teng, Bonk, Bonk, Lin, and Michko (2009) discuss that there are more and more people who use YouTube to learn, but there is not much empirical data to understand this phenomenon. In addition to this, Veelo and Damen (2009) concluded that various forms of social media promote and support an independent approach to learning.

Social media and e-learning. In 2012, Hrastinski and Dennen argued that while most learning experiences are a blend of both formal (structured learning) and informal learning (online learning/ personal learning), social media also inherently enable informal learning experiences in higher education. Selwyn (2007) concluded that there is growing evidence that social media are increasingly supporting informal learning at home and in the community and that informal learning are becoming a vital element of education for learners of all ages. Hall (2009) also suggested that formal and informal learning should be connected to optimize learning and that learning is most effective when the learner engages in both formal and informal learning activities. Attwell (2007) suggested that informal learning, which rests primarily in the hands of the learners using social media tools, can be used to supplement formal learning—classroom learning, and play an important role in advancing the understanding of e-learning.

Harrison (2011) examined whether college student participation in a blog helped reinforce classroom learning by extending communication outside class hours. He surveyed 40 college students who participated through the whole semester in a blog activity as a class requirement. Findings of the study revealed that students perceived the use of blogs as an outlet for thinking about class topics beyond the weekly class meetings both individually and in collaboration with peers through blog commentaries. The results reflected that blogging helped students direct their own learning, increased engagement in course materials, and promoted the development of informal learning communities.

Ebner, Lienhardt, Rohs, and Meyer's (2010) case study examined whether the use of microblogs facilitated process-oriented learning and subsequently informal learning in higher education. The case took place at the University of Applied Sciences of Upper Austria. Thirty four students and two lecturers worked with the microblogging facility for six weeks. Ebner et al.

(2010) observed participants for six weeks. During this time, 11,214 posts were tracked and analyzed on the microblogging platform. Findings of the study revealed that students used microblogging for private informal communication as well as for more formal project-oriented communication to support social interaction in group work. Informal communication facilitated through microblogging was also an important factor in encouraging students to adopt more formal uses of microblogging. In the continuous adoption of social media by the net generation, several studies have concluded that social media have positive impacts on students' learning.

According to Huang, Denice, and Sun (2013), the effect of Web 2.0 technologies on learning could be derived from three categories of applications. The first category mainly supports reading and writing activities in a reciprocal and collaborative manner. Technologies in this category include blogs and wikis. The second category supports learning in a highly interactive and complex environment. In these environments, learners must interact with other learners and the interactive system in order to explore and obtain new information. Learners through this category practice a great degree of control in the decision-making process. Examples of Web 2.0 application that support this category are online games and immersive learning environments such as Second Life. The third category is often known for its social support for users through a variety of media representations. Some technologies that support this category include social networking sites and online videos sharing applications.

Online community. In a study about whether online users in social media considered "community," Chayko (2008) conducted online interviews with 87 participants who self-identified as active users of social media in order to explore their perspectives of mediated social dynamics. Although she did not use the word "community" in her interview questions, her interviewees frequently used it to describe their online experiences, saying things like "I feel I

am part of a tight-knit community" and "You can definitely feel the community on the board" (Chayko, 2008, p. 212). Furthermore, 97% of her interviewees reported using online or social networking technology for some practical useful purposes. Participants reported using technology for learning, information gathering, and scientific and academic inquiry. They used online and mobile technologies to locate a piece of information at the exact moment. Chayko (2008) also indicated that people both seek and provide information to one another in massive amounts. Most of her participants reported that they could get answers to their questions and pursue knowledge and information anywhere at any time.

YouTube. Bonk (2008) stated that, "it is clear that the use of YouTube videos in instruction is linked to educational and psychological research" (p. 5). In a survey of over 1,000 undergraduate students about YouTube videos as an educational approach, Bonk's (2008) findings indicated that "short videos of 1-4 minutes are ideal" for in class teaching and learning (p. 32). Students prefer informative, humorous, current, and engaging YouTube videos. Bonk further discussed that YouTube videos provide a context for learning and increase learners' retention of information through visual and audio information rather than the traditional text books. YouTube videos also enable learners to share learning experiences through reflection on the subjects. In addition, YouTube videos endorse learners' participations since learners actively create, watch, share videos, and exchange their reflections (Bonk, 2008).

Wikis. Wikis are another example of social media that allow students to interact with each other synchronously and asynchronously, collaboratively solve problems at their own pace, provide immediate feedback to each other, clarify misunderstandings, and construct their knowledge objects (Huang & Nakazawa, 2010). Jenkins (2009) also argued that participants use social networking sites such as Wikipedia or alternative reality gaming to complete their tasks

and develop new knowledge while collaborating with one another. This collaboration produces a new culture of participation through learning by using technologies, which Jenkins called "participatory culture." This participatory culture emerges as the culture absorbs and responds to the explosion of new media technologies that make it possible for average consumers to archive, annotate, appropriate, and recirculate media content in powerful new ways.

Furthermore, according to a nationwide survey by the Pew Internet and American Life Project (2007), more than a third of American adult Internet users (36%) consult Wikipedia. Wikipedia is considered a social media platform. There have been ongoing arguments about the reliability of information on Wikipedia. Still, the Pew Internet Project (2007) survey shows that Wikipedia is far more popular among the well-educated than it is among those with lower levels of education. For instance, 50% of those with at least a college degree consult the site, compared with 22% of those with a high school diploma. And 46% of those age 18 and older who are current full or part time students have used Wikipedia, compared with 36% of the overall Internet population. Wikipedia attracted six times more traffic than the next closest site in the educational and reference websites categories (Rainie & Tancer, 2007).

Critical thinking. Debating ideas and writing comments through social media develop the learners' critical thinking skills and help them to freely express themselves. Chiu (2009) claimed that it is necessary to help students engage in critical thinking online by asking students to evaluate the information obtained from Wikipedia. His claim is based on his qualitative study findings using two focus groups of college students from an English as a Foreign Language (EFL) reading class that used online chat in Taiwan. The first focus group was held during the 10th week of academic semester, after the first synchronous online chat. The second focus group was at the end of the semester. His findings further indicate that "it is clear that the online

discussion forum and accompanying shepherding served as a 'security veil' to enable students to cross the affective/cultural boundaries from the 'harmony and silence' zone to critical participation" (Chiu, 2009, p. 53). In addition, Chayko (2008) —whose research was discussed earlier— contended that social networking technologies enable users to become more critical learners as well. When learners use numerous resources and share these resources they develop a deeper, more focused approach to learning. Cress and Kimmerle (2008) concluded from their experimental design applied to groups of college students with five to ten participants in each group about using wiki for learning, that the wiki structure and the contributing process require users to participate and critically evaluate information, to synthesize information objects with different formats, and to work independently and collectively with peer contributors.

Literacy. Moreover, social media technologies develop students' literacy in some aspects and enrich learners' vocabularies and language skills. When youth interact via Facebook, for instance, with other people whose vocabularies or grasp of English is different from their own, they may encounter words or slang they do not understand. Encountering these different words and slang terms might encourage them to broaden and increase their overall vocabulary and understanding of other cultures.

Chayko (2008) discussed that it has been proposed that children who use abbreviations while texting on their phones or communicating via social networking sites learn language skills in accessible, enjoyable ways. Chayko concluded that children who text more often score better than their counterparts on reading, writing, and even spelling tests. Ito et al. (2010) identified certain literacy practices that youth in this era have been central participants in defining: casual forms of online speech, social norms for how to engage in social networking, and new genres of media representation such as machinima, mashups, remixes, video blogs, and Web comics.

Online video games. Gee (2003) encouraged educators to move beyond traditional teaching and standardized testing toward educational environments where students are "active, critical, and reflective producers of knowledge, from fast and easy educational models toward materials that challenge and engage students in a meaningful way" (p. 180). Gee found the principles of learning in video games as being similar to learner-centered, social cognition teaching practices. He explained how supportive and empowering the gaming community is for students and how it provides models for project-based educational environments.

Huang, Huangh, and Tschopp (2010) published a study that focused the relationship between motivational processing and outcome processing in an online instructional game. They surveyed 264 undergraduate students after playing the Trade Ruler online game. Based on the data collected by their survey, a regression analysis showed a significant correlation between motivational processing (attention, relevance, and confidence) and the outcome processing (satisfaction). Haung et al. (2010) claimed that online games are able to provide sustainable motivational support that not only initiates the learning process but also engages learners through iterative learning cycles.

Other scholars claimed that social media such as virtual worlds (e.g., Second Life) help students to develop their language skills (Boellstorff, 2008; Colby & Johnson, 2013). Seo (2013) explained that when students use Second Life for learning, the ability to connect with other students who are native speakers has a clear advantage over interactions to include multiple channels of communication, through audio or text, and it uses the virtual world to try a place that is not really present. Second Life as one online social media allows language learners to connect with people from the target language, to practice their speech and writing abilities, and to imitate what takes place during regular conversations using virtual reality.

Jamaludin, Chee, and Ho (2009) performed a mixed methods study about knowledge construction through active play in Second Life (SL). The study included 45 pre-university students from two different classes. The participants were surveyed on issues related to ethics, morality, and religion in SL. Jamaludin et al. (2009) presented the results from two types of data analysis: a macro quantitative analysis and a qualitative analysis of the students' open-ended responses. The findings indicated that students valued the experience in the immersive virtual environment in SL. They concluded that online immersive virtual environments, such as SL provide an exploratory way for students to participate. Through role playing, students perceived strong support for developing argumentative knowledge in Second Life.

Social media in Saudi higher education. Social media in the Saudi Arabia has been used by universities for purposes such as "communication, classroom setup, professional development of faculty, and marketing" (Al-Khalifa & Garcia, 2013, p. 67). It is also used for collaboration and sharing ideas and opinions between staff and students and considered a facilitator of learning. According to Jalal and Zaidieh (2012), in the field of education, social networking sites offer students the opportunity to connect with other students, educators and alumni, both within and outside their current institution. They also stated three opportunities in using social media in Saudi higher education, namely: (1) providing participation through virtual classrooms, chat rooms and meetings by video; (2) offering repetition of information through their sites and giving the opportunity for learners to retrieve the information immediately or later and; (3) allowing access to courses available in their sites, allowing the learner to follow up online at any time deemed appropriate, and overcoming the limitations of space and time in the educational process.

In fact, Samira Al-Utibi, a blind student from King Saud University (KSU), College of Languages & Translation, has mentioned that individuals with vision disability are able to use Twitter through the use of smart devices with a voice-over capability that convert their tweets into writing (as cited in Aifan, 2015). Indeed, technology is made for everyone and can be utilized depending on the needs of each member of society.

Furthermore, social media in Saudi higher education is used to build community within each institution. All 25 Saudi public universities have Twitter accounts where faculty, administrators, and students communicate. Sillius, Kailanto, and Tervakaraki (2011) noted that social media enhance learning systems, which encourages students to share their ideas, express their opinions, and build a community. Selwyn (2011) stated that social media are frequently characterized as promoting teamwork, entertainment, and creativity, which facilitates an environment that is promoted as more open rather than closed, and bottom-up rather than top-down. In addition, social media provide flexible learning systems where faculty and students have the freedom to communicate. Frias and Montano (2012) stressed that allowing the user to comment in an open-minded environment has a positive effect in encouraging the students to share their views on the websites' contents, resources, and opinions. At King Abdul-Aziz University, Mrs. Hayat Alguraibi reported that she designed a Facebook page with her students who enrolled in social studies courses to post and exchange opinions, slogans, and posters that her students designed to convey ideas related to some social issues in Saudi society (as cited in Aifan, 2015). Aydin (2012) argued that the rise in usage of social media in general and Facebook in particular is being utilized in great numbers by college students.

Al-Khalifa (2008) tested the effectiveness of Twitter for keeping her students connected to the blog for her "Introduction to Operating Systems" class. One of her class requirements is to

have a Twitter account to receive class announcements, reminders, and news posted on the class

blog. The class included 190 undergraduates. According to Al-Khalifa (2008), by the end of the

semester, she surveyed the students regarding their Twitter experience. The results of the survey

showed that 93% of the students preferred receiving tweets announcements over visiting the

class blog every day for updates. Overall, the students were satisfied with the experience. 76%

said it was excellent, 22% said it was acceptable, while 2% only said it was useless. Most

importantly, 93% of students were willing to use Twitter if offered by future courses.

Kutbi (2015) conducted a survey study about the perceptions of undergraduate female

students in a Saudi university about social media as an educational tool. Participants were 25

female students at a Saudi University. The study revealed that participants had a positive

perception of the use of social media as an educational tool. "Reasons were ranged between

personal, educational, social, and technical" (Kutbi, 2015, p. 64). The most interesting finding is

that 84% of the participants preferred the use of Twitter among all other social media sites. This

high percentage links to the fact that Saudi Arabia ranks highest as a user on Twitter worldwide,

having the most active users in the world (The Social Clinic, 2013).

In addition, Al Madhouni (2011) conducted a study to investigate the effectiveness of

using instructional blogs in improving Al Qassim University students' academic achievement,

and also their attitudes towards the instructional blogs. The quasi- experimental research design

based on pre-post experiment design for two groups (experimental and control) was also used.

The experimental group studied the selected chapters using the instructional blogs while the

control group students studied the same content through the traditional lecture method. The

findings showed a significant difference among the two groups: the experimental group scored

higher than the control group in the academic achievement test about the innovative instructional

technology chapter, individualized instruction, the comprehensive achievement test, and the attitude scale.

An additional study was conducted by Alhashem (2015) investigating social media use and acceptance among health educators in Saudi Arabia. A cross-sectional design was used to determine the relationships among the specified factors related to the study. The participants included 320 health educators who were surveyed online. The findings called for greater use and acceptance of technologies for health-related purposes in health care and in health education facilities. The study stressed the positive and important role of social media in health education.

Another recent study investigated factors and barriers affecting undergraduate students' attitudes toward using social media in King Abdul-Aziz University by Aifan (2015) with the focus of understanding when and how social media can best be used to support learning. Five hundred participated in an online survey. The findings reveal that students have positive attitudes towards using social media in learning. The most frequently used social media application by students was WhatsApp with which students have the highest experience. Students reported facing two major barriers in social media; (a) some of the social media contents are against the students' religion, and (b) concerns about privacy and security issues in using social media.

However, as online classes increase at Saudi universities and social media continue to emerge, it is important to understand how these technologies change Saudi culture of education and learning, and how Saudi students perceive these emerging tools that have altered their learning practices and culture. According to Oblinger (2005), it is important for educators to understand that the Net Generations are forerunners of change. Their early exposure to technology has had effects on their habits and expectations of learning and is changing the culture and norms of society.

Investigating which social media technologies Saudi students use or expect to be included in their learning environments to support their learning is imperative. Spanier (2000) concluded that rather than college faculty assuming what the students need and want from technology to enhance online learning, faculty should be aware of the technologies students perceive as beneficial in learning environments. Instructors who teach in these environments need to know how to use these tools effectively in order to enhance their teaching and help their students support their learning. "Faculty need to have a greater perception of the Net Generation technology expertise and how student learning is connected with technology; this is a vital component for higher education," according to Lohnes and Kinzer (2007, p. 7).

As online classes and electronic learning continue to grow in the Saudi universities, helping Saudi students and instructors overcome the challenges of incorporating and utilizing social media technologies effectively into the teaching and learning environments to assist students support their learning is a critical goal. Additionally, understanding Saudi students' experience as active users of social media and how social media influence their experience requires further studies and investigation in order to harness these technologies successfully into students' learning environments and help teachers in Saudi Arabia understand their students' needs and interests. This understanding will help teachers to think of methods of how to incorporate emerging tools such as social media into their teaching environments in order to support students' formal learning.

Social Media and Saudi Culture

Although many of the studies have been conducted in Western countries related to the changes that social media have brought about to people's lives in general and particularly in the education field, few have been administered in the Arabic world. Studies have revealed that

social media have continued to emerge and grow in Arab countries. "The number of Facebook users has risen significantly in most Arab countries, most notably so in the countries where protests have taken place," as cited by Dubai School of Government (2011). It is clear that social media have played a significant role in the political side of some of the Arabic countries such as Tunis, Egypt, and Syria. Social media completely changed people's beliefs in such countries. Social media such as Facebook, Twitter and YouTube participated in the Arab Spring uprising and revolutions, helped people alter their ways of thinking, influenced their minds, and perspectives toward life. According to a study done by the Dubai School of Government (2011) titled, Civil Movements: The Impact of Facebook and Twitter, "the growth of social media in the region and the shift in usage trends have played a critical role in mobilization, empowerment, shaping opinions, and influencing change. A critical mass of young and active social media users in the Arab world exists today" (p. 24). The study analyzes the accessibility and the usages of Facebook and Twitter —the two major social media sites— based on data collected from 22 Arab nations as well as Iran, and Turkey during the first three months of 2011.

Though the impact of social media on the Arab social and political fields cannot be denied, there are few studies investigating the effect of social media on the Arabic educational culture and field. As Saudi Arabia is one of these countries and is a conservative and closed society, studying changes and impacts of incorporating social media technologies into Saudi educational culture is a crucial one. This study becomes vital, especially in this era where we cannot deny that our students are in the virtual worlds using social media in their everyday practices and activities. According to Caruso, Nelson, and Salaway (2008), as technologies emerge, Net Generations enthusiastically adopt them as soon as they perceive the benefits that these technologies will provide for them.

Rogers (2012) concluded that technology adoption always brings about cultural change. Thus, an adoption decision is, in the sociological sense, a change in normative expectations (i.e., rules for behavior). Adoption, therefore, is not always a simple process, wherein the new technology is incorporated within the society with little change to structure and culture. Sometimes, structure and culture must change considerably to adopt, and the public requires assurances from opinion leaders to make such a change. However, as social media are Internet Web-based tools and applications, where they provide new platforms for people to interact and communicate, studying the changes these tools brought about to the Saudi social and educational culture is imperative.

One of these changes is that in a conservative society such as the Saudi one, where sharing personal photos online is prohibited or at least unwelcomed from most of its families, and in particular for Saudi women, one's personality becomes more public through the adoption of social media technologies. Consequently, investigating how Saudi students and instructors see these tools are changing the Saudi culture of education and learning. Such studies are crucial in these days where we cannot ignore the truth that our children become more and more attached to technologies and our youth are already in these virtual worlds using these emerging social tools.

Contribution of the Study

The primary aim of this study is to identify the influence of social media on Saudi graduate students who are active social media users. To date, most studies on educational technology have focused on the perceptions of undergraduate students and faculty on social media adoption in Saudi higher education. Previous studies further examined social media as an educational tool in classroom settings in Saudi Arabia. Importantly, the majority of studies used quantitative or mixed methods.

In this study I shifted the focus to the influence of social media on graduate students' experiences not only from an educational perspective but also from all aspects related to students. By aiming to provide in-depth understanding through a qualitative case study, my research focused on the learner through a holistic view. Additionally, most studies related to social media and education originate from Western backgrounds. As such, this research may add important findings to the field of educational technology in Saudi Arabia.

Summary

Chapter 2 provided a review of research literature on social media technologies and learning. I accordingly identified previous studies and how they informed my study. Also, I organized all topics and subtopics in order to be compatible with the research purpose and questions. Theoretical background and framework were explained. Additionally, to provide a better understanding of the use of social media in education, this chapter described details related to social media research in higher education in general and in Saudi higher education in particular.

Chapter 3 - Methodology

Introduction

This qualitative multiple participant case study was designed to investigate the influence of social media on Saudi graduate students through the experiences of six Saudi graduate students who are active social media users. Social constructivism is the theoretical framework. The qualitative research design fits the nature of the study. Moreover, "human behavior, unlike that of physical objects, cannot be understood without reference to the meaning and purposes" (Guba & Lincoln, 1994, p. 106). In reviewing this study, readers will gain an understanding of how social media influence Saudi graduate students. Through this interpretation, others will receive insight into how social media influence today's learners among different cultures and places, which, in turn, changes the way they think and learn.

Chapter 3 is organized in the following manner: (a) overview of qualitative research design, (b) purpose of the research, (c) research questions, (d) research design and rationale, (e) selection of participants, (f) research site, (g) data collection, (h) data analysis, (i) trustworthiness of the data, and (j) summary.

Overview of Qualitative Research Design

Qualitative research is a field that represents a variety of research methods that explore information to gain deep understanding of a problem or issue from the point of view of individuals or groups who experience that problem. Qualitative research is "any kind of research that produced findings not arrived by means of statistical procedures or other means of quantification" (Creswell, 2007; Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p. 17). "Qualitative researchers typically begin their project seeking not to test pre-formulated hypothesis but to discover what people think and how and why they act in certain social settings" (Schutt, 2016, p. 121). The

diverse qualitative approaches seek to answer different kinds of research questions and use different analytic tools (Malterud, 2001; Polkinghorne, 2005). The kind of data and manner in which it is collected varies according to the design (Polkinghorne, 2005). Furthermore, Creswell (2014), explains that in qualitative research, "the final written report has a flexible writing structure" (p. 295).

The Core Characteristics of Qualitative Research

Qualitative researchers move to the field and engage people who experience the issue in the same environment to collect data in the natural setting. "It is through observing and participating in natural settings, listening to the word of others" (Schutt, 2016, p. 120). Furthermore, the researcher is the key instrument in qualitative research. Qualitative researchers collect data themselves through examining documents, observing behavior, or interviewing participants to have more information. They do not depend on questionnaires that are created by them or other researchers. In addition, qualitative researchers usually use more than one data collecting method, such as interview, observation, focus groups, and review of documents. They use inductive and deductive data analysis: In an inductive process, the researcher organizes the data into themes. "Researchers tend to develop ideas inductively, try to understand the social context and sequential nature of attitudes and actions, and explore the subject meanings that participants attach to events" (Schutt, 2016, p. 135). In a deductive process, the researcher uses theory to deeply analyze the data and to see if more data is needed. These processes continue until analysis is completed. Moreover, a qualitative researcher learns about the issue from the participants' point of view about the problem. Reflexivity is an important aspect in qualitative research. The design "should be a reflexive process operating through every stage of a project" (Maxwell, 2013, p. 2). Personal background, culture, and experiences affect a researcher's

reflexivity and hold potential for shaping researcher interpretation. Finally, qualitative researchers try to develop a complex, holistic picture of the problem or issue through the study.

Qualitative Research Approaches

According to Creswell (2007), there are five approaches in qualitative research: (a) narrative research, (b) phenomenology, (c) grounded theory, (d) ethnography, and (e) case study. In some sources, historical research is considered a qualitative research approach. The five main qualitative research approaches are described in detail below.

First, narrative research focuses on exploring the life of individuals. "Narrative inquiry is based firmly in the premise that, as human beings, we come to understand and give meaning to our lives through stories" (Trahar, 2009, para. 4). It draws from the humanities including anthropology, literature, history, psychology, and sociology (Connelly & Clandinin, 2006). The unit of analysis can be one or more individuals. Second, phenomenology focuses on identifying the essence or the invariant theme of a phenomenon as experienced by people (Thompson, Locander, & Pollio, 1989). It draws from philosophy, psychology, and education (Creswell, 2014). The unit of analysis is several individuals that have shared the same experience. Third, grounded theory focuses on developing a theory grounded in data from the field. Its purpose is understanding people's experiences or issues within its contextual details (Charma, 2006). It draws from sociology. The unit of analysis is studying a process, action, or interaction involving many individuals. Fourth, ethnography focuses on studying and interpreting people based on their culture (LeCompte & Preissle, 1993). It draws from anthropology and sociology. The unit of analysis is studying a group that shares the same culture. Finally, case study focuses on developing an in-depth contextual study of person, people, issue, or place to provide an in-depth understanding of a case or cases (Yin, 2003). It draws from psychology, law, political science,

education, and medicine. The unit of analysis is studying an event, a program, an activity, an individual, or more than one individual.

Regardless of the approach, all qualitative researchers tend to follow the basic process, i.e., introduction, purpose, questions, data collection methods, and analysis (Creswell, 2007). The area to be researched determines the inquiry methods. The lives of people are the areas qualitative methods are designed to study. Qualitative inquiry deals with human experiences from which people make sense. According to Polkinghorne (2005), "A primary purpose of qualitative research is to describe and clarify experience as it is lived and constituted in awareness" (p. 138). Qualitative research seeks depth and to learn the subtle nuances of life experiences (Golafshani, 2003). Therefore, the data gathered for studying experiences need to be first-person or self-identified by the participant's own experience (Polkinghorne, 2005). Thus, research produces findings from real-world settings where the phenomenon of interest unfolds naturally (Patton, 2015). The ability for qualitative data to describe fully a phenomenon is an important consideration not only from the researcher's perspective, but from the reader's as well (Hoepfl, 1997). According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), "If you want people to understand better than they otherwise might, provide them information in the form in which they usually experience it" (p. 120). Qualitative data reports thick detail and insights into the participants' lived experiences (Stevenson, 2004).

Purpose of The Research

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to identify the influence of social media on six Saudi graduate students who are active social media users.

<center>**Research Questions**</center>

The following are the two overarching research questions that guided this study, followed by five sub-questions for more guidance to keep the study within the case scope.

Overarching Research Questions and Sub-questions

1. What are the experiences of Saudi graduate students who are active social media users (Churcher et al., 2014)?

    a. How do Saudi graduate students use social media?

    b. How do social media impact Saudi graduate students personally?

2. How do social media influence Saudi graduate students who are active social media users (Mbati, 2013)?

    a. How do social media influence Saudi graduate students in learning?

    b. How do social media influence Saudi graduate students financially?

    c. How do social media influence Saudi graduate students socially?

<center>**Research Design of the Study and Rationale**</center>

The first procedure a researcher must consider is to determine what kind of research approach is appropriate to the research purpose and questions. For this research, a case study approach is appropriate because social media in the KSA is a bounded and unique case represented through the experience of six individuals to examine the influence of social media on Saudi graduate students who are active social media users. The following addresses the study methodology in detail.

Case Study

Case study is the primary methodology for this study. In this study, I largely follow the model of Robert Stake and Robert Yin, two well-known experts in case study research within the

field of educational research. Stake (1995) defines case study methodology as the study of the particularity and complexity of case, coming to understand its activity within important circumstances and its embeddedness and interaction with its contexts. Yin defines case study research "as an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context and in which multiple sources of evidence are used (Yin, 2003, p. 23).

Determining the Case. "Case" refers to a specific, bounded, complex, functioning, purposive, integrated system not an abstract process but a concrete object with a boundary and working parts. "The parts do not have to be working well, the purposes may be irrational, but it is a system" (Stake, 1995, p. 2). Miles and Huberman (1994) defined the case as, "a phenomenon of some sort occurring in a bounded context. The case is, in effect, your unit of analysis" (p. 25). I determined the case after asking myself what I want to analyze. Do I want to analyze individuals, program, or process? Answering these questions helped me to further delineate my case. Since I am interested in focusing specifically on the experiences of Saudi graduate students in social media, the case is focusing on an analysis of individuals and their experiences. Furthermore, Stake (1995) stressed the importance of understanding that case study research is not sampling research. We do not study a case primarily to understand other cases, but rather our first obligation is to understand this one case. He discusses that irrespective of whether the actual amount of time we spend concentrating on the case is as little as a day or as long as a year or more, we concentrate while we are engaged in case study (Stake, 1995).

Binding the Case. Yin (2003) and Stake (1995) have suggested that placing boundaries on a case can prevent answering a research question that is too broad or a topic that has too many objectives for one study. Ways to bind a case include: by time and place (Creswell, 2014); by time and activity (Stake, 1995); and by definition and context (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

Binding the case ensures that the study remains reasonable in scope (Baxter & Jack, 2008). This study focused on the experience of six Saudi graduate students who are active social media users. The boundaries of this study were time, place, activity, context, and definition. First, the time was January through June of 2017. Second, the activity was social media. Third, the context was Saudi graduate students' experience. Finally, the definition was six Saudi graduate students who are users of one or more of the following social media sites, YouTube, Instagram, Twitter, and Snapchat who have 200k followers or more. These boundaries indicate what was studied in the scope of the research.

Explanatory Intrinsic Case Study. Since research questions for this study were best answered using a qualitative case study and the case and its boundaries have been identified, it is time to consider the type of this case study. The selection of a specific type of case study design was guided by the overall study purpose. Yin (2003) and Stake (1995) used different terms to describe a variety of case studies. Yin categorized case studies as explanatory, exploratory, or descriptive. He differentiated between single holistic case studies and multiple case studies. Stake identified case studies as intrinsic, instrumental, or collective. This study was explanatory based on Yin's (2003) categories because it focused on explaining the influence of social media on Saudi graduate students through their experiences. Since Saudi Arabia has a unique situation in different aspects that leads to using social media differently among Saudis, this study aimed to explain that phenomenon.

Furthermore, based on Stake's (1995) case study types, this study was intrinsic because I have interest in this case to better understand the influence of social media on Saudi graduate students. As Stake (1995) explained, sometimes we become curious or interested about a case, not because by studying it we necessarily learn about other cases or about some general problem,

but because we want to learn about that particular case. In other words, we have an intrinsic interest in the case itself. In fact, "the more intrinsic our interest in the case, the more we will restrain our curiosities and special interests and . . . try to discern and pursue issues critical to the case itself" (Stake, 1995, p. 4).

In addition, this study was a holistic case study because it was unique. It was unique because it aimed to study the situation of Saudi graduate students' experiences in social media in its own context. Their experiences are not similar to other students in other socio-cultural contexts who use the same social media. The uniqueness of this study originated from the uniqueness of the KSA's culture, education, politics, economics, and social life. My main objective in conducting this study was not to propose theory regarding the influence of social media on graduate students in the KSA, but to understand what is happening in regard to the KSA's higher education among graduate students who are active social media users.

Considering all the above, case study was the research method best suited to my study because it is more than simply conducting research on a single individual or situation, but rather it has the potential to deal with simple through complex situations. "It allows the researcher to answer the how and what questions, while taking into consideration how a phenomenon is influenced by the context within which it is situated" (Baxter & Jack, 2008. p. 556).

Selection of Participants

In a unique and complicated social site like the KSA and a complex case like social media, it is expected to find different types of participants, each having their own beliefs, functional attributes, and interests. I used one of Patton's (2015) purposeful sampling strategies, which is the group characteristics sampling. More specifically, I used the key informants, key knowledgeable, and reputational sampling. The sampling characteristics were Saudi, graduate

students, and active social media users. Two discernible groups related to this case are Saudi females and Saudi males (the gender distinction matters because of the distinction's role in the KSA culture). Each of these participants merited interviewing, because each has unique experiences and perspectives to share regarding the case. By her/himself, each individual was not able to provide a holistic picture of the case and its issues, but, in combination, their multiple perspectives allowed me to obtain a more multifaceted and complete understanding of the case.

Interviewee groups and sub-groups for this case were as follows:

1. Saudi Women:

   a. A doctoral student in nursing with 3.7 million followers on Instagram

   b. A doctoral student in computer science with 400 thousand followers on Instagram

   c. A doctoral student in education with 350 thousand subscribers on YouTube

   d. A doctoral student in nutrition and food science with 260 thousand followers on Instagram

2. Saudi Men:

   a. A doctoral student in engineering with 1.6 million followers on Instagram

   b. A master's student in education with 265 thousand followers on Instagram

Research Site: Social Media as a Research Platform and as the Object of the Study

Social media were the platform for data collection for this study. Social media allowed me to develop new interpretations of classic qualitative data collection approaches: observations, interviews, and documentary data (Salmons, 2012). According to Martinez (2016), the Internet, with an estimated 2.4 billion users worldwide, has much to offer researchers both as a research platform and as a research object. As the Internet becomes more and more integrated into our everyday lives, the importance of applying and adapting research methodologies to virtual

communities increases. Focusing on social media as a major platform of the Internet can help researchers in recruiting groups of participants from a large population of people with characteristics that would be difficult or impossible to find in face-to-face settings. Developing mobile Internet technologies and social media applications allow researchers to reach a wider audience range (Gilliam & Brindis, 2011; Pascoe, 2011; Project HealthDesign, 2012). In this study, social media were the environment within which I studied human behavior; specifically how Saudi graduate students who are active social media users use social media and how social media impact them. Social media sites were the data collection platforms that were suitable for the nature and the purpose of this study.

Social media were used for data collection as follows:

1. Providing ways to pre-screen and carefully choose the participants who enriched the study.

2. Conducting online observation to naturally observe communications among the participants in social media since social media were the research setting and the social environment that were observed for the purpose of this study.

3. Conducting and recording the online interviews with participants via video/audio calling and messaging application, which was Imo.

4. Collecting documentary data from participants' profiles and past data from social media websites to code and analyze a rich amount of data.

Data Collection Methods

This case study on social media and its impact on the KSA graduate students consisted of in-depth data collection methods through multiple online sources of information. Stake (1995) characterized his approach to case study research as capitalizing "on ordinary ways of getting

73

acquainted with things" (p. 49). With the researcher being the primary research instrument, data gathering for the study began, informally, before me —as the investigator— voiced an explicit commitment on my part to conduct it. Stake said: "A considerable proportion of all data is impressionistic, picked up informally as the researcher first becomes acquainted with the case" (p. 49). These impressions were refined and replaced later through the research process with data gathered using formal qualitative inquiry techniques by observing online communication and interaction in social media related to the case; by interviewing key participants connected to the case; and by analyzing documents and other artifacts relevant to the case. Wolcott (1999) used three terms for these important activities of qualitative case study: enquiring, experiencing, and examining. Paul Willis (1977) discussed how such a qualitative interpretive approach is suited to studying cultural issues:

> These techniques are suited to record the cultural level and have a sensitivity to meanings and values as well as an ability to represent and interpret symbolic articulations, practices and forms of cultural production . . . They can allow a degree of the activity creativity and human agency within the object of study to come through into the analysis and the reader's experience. This is vital [because] I view the cultural not simply as a set of transferred internal structures – as in the usual notions of socialization – nor as the passive result of the action of dominant ideology downwards – as in certain kinds of Marxism – but at least in part as the product of collective human praxis. (p. 3)

In order to present the case, I began by conducting online observations in social media and then gathered narratives from a variety of participants through in-depth semi-structured interviews. In addition, to supplement and triangulate these narratives, I collected and reviewed relevant documentary artifacts via participants' social media accounts. Experts such as Stake

(1995) and Wolcott (1999) suggested that, in the conduct of case study, observations should precede the interviews.

Observations. Experiential observations by the researcher were vital in building a better understanding of the case. Such observations provided valuable insights of the case. Also, they helped modify and add questions to the participants' interviews. Observations in case study can be both formal and informal. Informal observation can happen anytime, anywhere during the investigation of the case in order to "develop vicarious experiences for the reader" (Stake, 1995, p. 63). Formal observation is planned for selected situations and interactions related to the research purpose and questions identified in the beginning of the case. In this case, observations were, as characterized by Wolcott (1999), "non-participant participant observations" (p. 48).

Online observations. Observations for this case were conducted in and through social media, which were accessible, flexible, valuable, and reliable ways of observation for the nature of this case. In addition, it is impossible to observe human behavior and interactions in social media through face-to-face settings. Marwick (2013) used the term "digital, or virtual, observation" referring to the practice of observing and/or participating in a particular online group or community over a period of time (Hine, 2000; Miller & Slater, 2000). Given the traditional definition of a field site as a space, "the stage on which the social processes under study take place" (Burrell, 2009), many such researchers have investigated bounded online "places" such as webinars, social media live stream, or multi-player games (Boellstorff, 2008; Kendall, 2002; Nardi, 2010).

Unlike classic observational research, online posts allow researchers to not only see how people are reacting to events but also to potentially gain insight into the meaning behind

their reactions – a depth of knowledge that has previously been nearly impossible to

accomplish through on-site classic observation. (Smith, 2016. para. 7)

Online observation is a method employed to study interactions in virtual communities such as

social media users in their natural setting. The multitude of activities (e.g., social interaction,

production and development processes) that may be observed in these communities makes them

relevant research-wise (Norskov & Rask, 2011).

In some cases of online observations, the observational data can be equivalent to the

recorded data, since the social interaction and behaviors may exist in a written form (Norskov &

Rask, 2011), such as observing live Twitter feeds, and comments on Instagram live videos.

Consequently, data are easily separated from interpretation, which is rarely the case in on-site

traditional observation (Alder & Alder, 1994). This had a positive impact on dependability in

making online observations for this study.

Twitter, Snapchat, and Instagram observations. For the purpose of this study, I

observed the participants' behavior and interaction on Twitter, Snapchat and Instagram.

Twitter's popularity has made it a rich research site for scholars and researchers interested in

online interaction, information, and a plethora of other subjects (Marwick, 2013). "Twitter can

be used as the primary place to observe interactions between people over a period of time"

(Marwick, 2013, p. 109). Furthermore, it is important for the researcher to have clear boundaries

of the observed digital site on Twitter (Marwick, 2013). Several approaches can be taken in

determining the boundaries of Twitter as a field site. For example, a project could "follow" a set

number of subjects who have been identified as a group with shared criteria in public well-

known Twitter accounts. Following this approach, participants' accounts were observed. "Taking

into consideration that when tracking interactions between participants, and any Twitter users,

conversations must be persistently rebuilt by way of exploring several previous messages that form the conversation threads" (Bougie, Starke, Storey, & German, 2011, p. 5). Another way to bind a group on Twitter is to track the use of hashtags (Marwick, 2013), which was used to observe participants' Twitter accounts. In addition, Snapchat and Instagram live videos are rich sites that were used for observing participants' behavior and interactions for the purpose of this study.

Interviews. Semi-structured interview protocols (see Appendix B) for conducting the study were formulated, which are suitably structured and flexible at the same time. I followed Patton's (2015) interview question formulation guidelines, focusing on experience and behavior questions, opinion and values questions, feeling questions, knowledge questions, and background and demographic questions. Distinguishing these types of questions helped me to be clear about what was being asked and helped the interviewees respond appropriately (Patton, 2015). By interviewing, I investigated each participant's experience in social media and how social media influenced them. The information provided by the participants was ever-evolving as multiple online interview sessions took place using Imo video/audio calling and messaging application. Questions were further developed as answers were provided. I observed the participants while engaging in conversation. Each participant was interviewed individually from January 2017 through June 2017. Five out of six participants were interviewed three times. The initial interview was an hour-and- a-half; the second and third interviews proceeded in the same manner as the first. Due to her tight schedule, one participant was interviewed twice for about one hour each time. The interviews were audio-recorded using an audio application.

Documentary Data. To ensure triangulation, documentary artifacts from the virtual representations of the site served as additional sources of data to support and question the

inferences made by the investigator on the basis of interview and observation data. Useful documentary social media data were collected during this study including textual posts, pictures and videos shared by participants on social media, and social media history artifacts.

Data Collection Procedures

Observations were conducted first. After observations, interviews took place and documentary data were collected. The participants were first contacted via their social media accounts and emails. Verbal agreement from them was received to participate in this study. Upon proposal approval and IRB approval, consent forms were sent to participants. After the participants agreed and signed the consent forms, data collection started (see Appendix B for interview protocol). The interviews were recorded using features of iPhone voice memo recording. Recorded interviews were transcribed using a word processor. Audio recordings will be deleted after the study is done. Transcribed interviews were saved and secured in a file on my personal computer and locked with a passcode to ensure confidentiality. The researcher only has access to raw data. All raw data will be deleted after three years from the time it was collected.

Protection of Human Subjects. The Institutional Review Board (IRB) ethical principles and federal regulations in regard to internet-based research were followed for this study to protect private information and the privacy of participants. I had completed the IRB training. Participants were given a consent form (see Appendix C) with the information needed to make an informed decision about whether or not to participate in the research study. All participants agreed to participate and signed the consent forms. IRB approval was gained (see Appendix A). The participants were informed that their identities and interview data would be kept confidential by the researcher. Furthermore, participants did member checking and deleted and modified some of their responses.

Data Managing. As indicated earlier, data were saved in a secure file on my computer. I placed each individual participant's transcription, observation notes, and documentary data in an individual secured folder, labeled by pseudonym.

Data Language. English is the primary language for data collection and consent forms. All participants speak fluent English. Participants communicate on social media using Arabic, English, and Arabish. The researcher has the ability to translate when Arabic was used during the process.

Timeline. Data collection, analysis, and dissertation writing were from January 2017 to September 2017. Final defense is scheduled for November 6, 2017.

Data Analysis and Interpretation

Data analysis consisted of listening to all of the interview audio recordings during transcription of each interview. Listening to the recordings provided familiarity with the data early in the process. Following that, focusing on the research questions and sub-questions, while reading interview transcripts, observation notes, documentary data several times, provided better understanding of the data.

After transcribing interviews, all data was coded both manually and by using the NVivo coding software, which is the practice of assigning a label to a section of data (Given, 2008). Using NVivo coding helped organize qualitative data and identify clear, short, descriptive phrases that were detailed and meaningful. Furthermore, the aim of creating NVivo codes was to ensure that concepts stay as close as possible to the participants' own words or use their own terms because they capture key elements of what are being described (King, 2009). Observation notes were coded manually based on the research questions and social constructivism. After identifying codes, the codes were grouped into categories. Finally, themes emerged from the

categories to answer the research questions. I intended to identify these themes and concepts using an indigenous approach, i.e., the categories are identified by the terms used by the participants. Patton (2015) explained how indigenous concepts are particularly useful in inductive analysis. He indicated that people create categories to make sense of their world. I chose to use the language of the participants as they described the themes that emerged. This approach aided in a better understanding of the case from the participants' perspectives.

This method of analysis is called inductive to deductive qualitative data analysis (Patton, 2015), which involved identifying codes, themes, and categories from the data and then relating them to the literature and the theoretical framework to make sense of the data and to insure the appropriateness of the inductive data analysis. "When engaging in deductive analysis, the data are analyzed according to an existing framework" (Patton, 2015, p. 541). Qualitative data analysis is typically inductive in the early stages, especially when figuring out possible codes, categories, and themes. After that, analysis became deductive to determine the extent to which data contributed to existing literature and theory (Patton, 2015).

Vygotsky-based social constructivism was used to analyze and interpret the findings of the research in an effort to understand and make sense of the impact of social media on education through the participants' experience as graduate students and active social media users. Social constructivism is against the idea of "truth" and objectivity. It stressed instead the idea that "truth" is constructive. It also emphasized that objectivity weakens our creativity and ability to think and produce knowledge from multiple perspectives that enriches our understanding and provide us with new outcomes (Lavrakas & Roller, 2015). While analyzing data, social interaction in social media was examined as the main stage of the learning process. Vygotsky (1978) emphasized that social learning, which precedes human development, depends on

interaction with the social environment that provides cognitive resources for learners. Furthermore, social media were viewed in this study as the More Knowledgeable Other (MKO) that participants used to gain and share knowledge. The concept of the MKO is related to the second important principle of Vygotsky's (1978) work, the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), which guided the analysis as well by helping the researcher to understand the process of learning and growth in the participants' experience in social media. According to Vygotsky (1978), during the learning process, learners move through three stages. First, learners cannot perform the task alone. In the second stage, which is the ZPD, learners are able to master concepts and perform tasks, which they cannot understand on their own but can with the help of the MKO. In the third stage, learners can perform the tasks on their own (Atherton, 2011; Mcleod, 2007). Based on social constructivism, ZPD in this study happened in the virtual space of social media where social interaction occurs with the MKO.

Additionally, triangulation of analysis was used. Triangulation, according to Patton (2015), is ideal in conducting qualitative research in that the process allows for independent reviewers to examine data that had been collected by the researcher. These co-analysts in this study were two doctoral students who were enrolled in an advanced qualitative methods course. Independently, the students analyzed and identified themes that they saw in the data. I then compared their findings to my own analysis. This triangulation was invaluable to my study in that it verified and added confidence in the themes that emerged.

Trustworthiness of the Approach

A key issue in qualitative research is trustworthiness (Rubin, 2000). Establishing trustworthiness of the data integrates both rigor and subjectivity, which can be achieved by accurate analysis and interpretation of collected data (Eisner 1991; Lincoln & Guba, 1985;

Morrow, 2005; Whittemore, Chase, & Mandle, 2001). Lincoln and Guba's (1985) evaluation criteria are the "gold standard" used by qualitative researchers (Whittemore et al., 2001, p. 527). To ensure trustworthiness so that unexpected bias does not creep into the study (Anfara, Brown, & Magione, 2002; Baxter & Eyles, 1997), the following criteria were addressed:

1. Credibility

2. Transferability

3. Dependability

4. Confirmability

Credibility

Credibility is the most important principle for guiding qualitative studies. Credibility refers to internal consistency (Baxter & Eyles, 1997; Morrow, 2005). However, credibility depends less on sample size than on the richness of the data gathered (Patton, 2015). Credibility is based on the concept that there is no single reality but rather there are multiple realities. Therefore, since multiple realities are assumed, there is not a definite manner to distinguish between things like 'cause', 'effects', and 'truth' (Baxter & Eyles, 1997, p. 513). Yin (2003) noted the importance of appropriate procedures for the case being studied. Thus, for this study specific procedures were used. The procedures for this research were:

1. Familiarity with the culture of participating organization. As suggested by Lincoln and Guba (1985), the researcher spent prolonged engagement with the participants in order to establish a relationship of mutual trust.

2. Sampling of individuals to serve as participants. Some ways to select participants include random sampling, convenience, and purposeful sampling. Purposeful sampling is most often used in qualitative research. It stresses the search for

"information-rich cases" (Baxter & Eyles, 1997, p. 513). Thus, for this multiple

participant case study in which multiple voices were sought to gain greater

knowledge of a larger group, purposeful sampling was used. The emphasis is

confidence that the participants are typical of members of a broader group (Shenton,

2004).

3. Criterion sampling also was used in the study. Criterion sampling was used in order

   to have a representative group of the phenomena being investigated (Glaser, 1978;

   Sandelowski, 1995). The sampling criteria were Saudi, graduate students, and active

   social media users from both genders.

4. Triangulation is one of the most powerful techniques for strengthening credibility.

   Methodological triangulation was used to ensure credibility. Methodological

   triangulation means using more than one data collection method to collect similar

   data (Stake, 1995). After categorizing data and identifying themes, I used

   methodological triangulation "to increase confidence" (Stake, 1995. p. 114) in my

   findings and interpretation. Observation, interviews, and document review were

   conducted for this case study to allow data triangulation "to gain the needed

   confirmation, to increase credence in the interpretation, and to demonstrate

   commonality of an assertion" (Stake, 1995, p. 112). This triangulation is valuable to

   this study in that it validated and verified the themes that emerge. Furthermore,

   triangulation of analysis was used as explained earlier.

5. Building rapport ensures honesty by the participants. Each participant was given the

   opportunity to refuse to participate in the study to ensure the data was collected only

   from those who were genuinely willing to take part in the study to offer data honestly

and freely. Researchers can accomplish this by first, taking time to get to know the participants prior to the interview, second, allowing the participant to select a time and date for interview (Irwin & Johnson, 2005); third, asking each participant to select the video/audio platform she/he prefers; finally, allowing them to choose the way they want their interview recorded.

I entered the study while the relationships, levels of trust, and power were not compromised since the participants and I are all Saudi graduate students. Rapport helped me to balance the power dynamic between the participants and me (Gaglio, Nelson, & King, 2006; Marx, 2001) to develop relationships with the participants to "get good data—thick, rich, description and in–depth, intimate interview data" (Harrison, MacGibbon, & Morton, 2001, p. 323). Rapport was developed at the beginning of the study through casual conversations. Reciprocity was the method used to develop rapport. This established the process of "mutual give and take" (Harrison et al., 2001, p. 325). Thus, I shared with the participants the benefits of the study and their contribution to the limited literature currently available specific to social media and Saudi graduate students. In addition, the final transcripts were available for member checking with each participant to ensure clarity. The following were strategies used for the study:

1. Frequent peer debriefing sessions occurred between my major advisor and me. The debriefing kept me on track by revealing data and interpretations to the principal investigator in order to point out possible sources of misinterpretations and themes or voices that do not fit the case.

2. Member checking was used to insure credibility. Each participant was asked to review a draft of his/her collected data for accuracy. Participants were "encouraged to provide alternative language or interpretation" (Stake, 1995) when needed.

Transferability

Transferability refers to the degree to which findings fit into contexts outside the study (Hoepfl, 1997; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Morrow, 2005), i.e., elements of the research produced in one context may be transferred to others. Thus, transferability requires providing rich, thick description of the collected data. It is important that sufficient thick description of the case under investigation be provided for the reader to have a proper understanding. In other words, enough detail is provided in the text in order to evoke emotions and feeling for the reader (Shenton, 2004). Because I sought to determine the influence of social media in Saudi graduate students who are active social media users, participants' selection could not be random or by chance. Thus, criteria were based on purposeful criterion sampling, a group whose experiences were likely to be the same: (a) Saudi graduate students, (b) male and female, and (c) active social media users. I sought participants and recruited participants based on the criteria. Six participants were identified who agreed to participate in the study.

Dependability

Dependability includes the consistency with which the same constructs may be matched with the same phenomena. However, it is concerned mainly with documenting the research systematically (Baxter & Eyles, 1997; Morrow, 2004; Patton, 2015). Thus, the research process should be reported in details to enable a future researcher to repeat the study. The in-depth detail allows the reader to develop a thorough understanding of the methods and their effectiveness (Shenton, 2004). This study includes thick and detailed sections on the research background,

development, design, implementation, analysis, findings, and interpretations in order to achieve the dependability.

Confirmability

Confirmability focused attention on the investigator and the interpretations (Baxter & Eyles, 1997; Morrow, 2005; Shenton, 2004). It may be defined as, "the degree to which findings are determined by the respondents and conditions of the inquiry and not by the biases, motivations, interests or perspective of the inquirer" (Baxter & Eyles, 1997; Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 290). A key criterion for confirmability is the researcher's admission of personal predispositions and assumptions (Shenton, 2004). Since biases are inevitable, I—as the researcher— maintained objectivity through the use of triangulation and participants' stories to reduce the effect of researcher bias. As mentioned in Chapter 1, I stated my preexisting biases and assumptions. Methodological triangulation was used to ensure confirmability.

Summary

This research was a qualitative multiple participant case study. The trustworthiness of the research was established through (a) credibility, (b) transferability, (c) dependability, and (d) confirmability. In order to establish credibility, I sought to demonstrate an accurate picture of the phenomena under study. To allow transferability, ample detail was provided of the context of the fieldwork. To meet dependability, I reported in detail to enable a future researcher to repeat the study. Finally, confirmability was established by demonstrating the findings that emerged from the data and not the researcher's own bias or predispositions.

This chapter included (a) overview of qualitative research design, (b) purpose of the research, (c) research questions, (d) research design and rationale, (e) selection of participants,

(f) research site, (g) data collection, (h) data analysis, (i) trustworthiness of the data, and (j) summary.

Chapter 4 presents the study findings. It includes the following sections: (a) demographic data of the six participants; (b) personal portraits of each participant; (c) findings of the case study by research questions and emerging themes, and (d) summary of the chapter.

Chapter 4 - Findings

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative, multiple participant case study is to identify the influence of social media on six Saudi graduate students who are active social media users. The six participants of this case study were selected because they share similarities but also have differences in their experiences with social media. This chapter presents the findings of the study using a social constructivist analysis and interpretation. The following research questions and sub-questions provided a framework for the study:

1. What are the experiences of Saudi graduate students who are active social media users (Churcher et al., 2014)?

   a. How do Saudi graduate students use social media?

   b. How do social media impact Saudi graduate students personally?

2. How do social media influence Saudi graduate students who are active social media users (Mbati, 2013)?

   a. How do social media influence Saudi graduate students in learning?

   b. How do social media influence Saudi graduate students financially?

   c. How do social media influence Saudi graduate students socially?

This chapter has four sections: (a) demographic data of the six participants; (b) personal portraits of each participant; (c) findings of the case study by research questions and emerging themes, and (d) summary of the chapter.

Each participant was interviewed in English individually from January 2017 through June 2017. All participants were interviewed via video/audio calling and messaging application, which was Imo. Five out of six participants were interviewed three times. The initial interview

was an hour-and- a-half; the second and third interviews proceeded in the same manner as the first. Due to her tight schedule, one participant was interviewed twice for about one hour each time.

The interview questions were semi-structured and open-ended (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The interviews were recorded using iPhone Voice Memos and then transcribed. Each participant was given a draft copy of the transcript to member check for accuracy. Each participant had the option to delete, correct, and clarify any information shared. Four of the six participants offered minor corrections. Two participants deleted several comments made during the interview.

Demographics

Table 4.1 provides the following demographic characteristics for each participant: (a) self-identification, (b) birthplace, (c) age, (d) academic level, (e) major, (f) whether the participant is a recipient of a scholarship for graduate school, (g) socioeconomic status (SES) (self-reported), (h) whether the participant is bilingual in Arabic and English, (i) marital status, (j) spouse educational level, (k) number of children, (l) number of parents, (m) highest education level of parents, (n) technology proficiency level (self-reported), and (o) most used electronic device.

Table 4-1 Demographic Information for Participants

Pseudonym	Muna	Aisha	Hana	Areej	Ahmad	Ali
Self-identification	Saudi	Saudi	Saudi	Saudi	Saudi	Saudi
Birthplace	Saudi Arabia	Saudi Arabia	Saudi Arabia	Saudi Arabia	Egypt	Saudi Arabia
Age	33	35	37	38	32	33
Academic Level	PhD	PhD	PhD	PhD	PhD	MS
Major	Nursing	Nutrition and Food Science	Education	Computer Science	Engineering	Education
Scholarship	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

Socioeconomic Status (SES) (self-reported)	High	Middle	Middle	High	Middle	High
Bilingual English and Arabic	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Marital Status	Married	Married	Divorced	Married	Married	Married
Spouse Highest Educational Level	MS	BS	N/A	PhD	BS	BS
Children	3	3	2	5	2	1
Parent(s)	2	2	2	2	2	2
Highest Education Level of Parents	Father: BS Mother: High School	Father: BS Mother: BS	Father: BS Mother: High school	Father: MS Mother: BS	Father: BS Mother: BS	Father: BS Mother: BS
Technology Proficiency Level (self-reported)	Medium	Medium	Medium	High	High	Medium
Owned Electronic Devices	• MacBook Pro • 2 iPad Pro • 4 iPhones7	• MacBook Pro • iPad Pro • iPhone6s • Sony Alpha A9 Camera	• MacBook Air • Galaxy S8 • iPhone7 • iPad	• iMac Pro • MacBook Pro • 2 iPhones7 • iPad Pro • Apple Watch2	• iMac • MacBook Pro • Galaxy S8 • iPad Pro • Spectacles Snapchat Glasses	• MacBook Pro • iPad Pro • iPad mini • 3 iPhones7

Providing demographic information about the participants introduces the participants to the readers and allows readers to have holistic understanding of the participants' background. All participants in the study were self-identified as Saudis. All participants were born in Saudi Arabia but one was born in Egypt. The average age of the participants is 34 years old. All participants currently attend U.S. universities as graduate students in different majors. Five of them are doctoral students and one is a master's student. All participants are recipients of a scholarship from the government of Saudi Arabia to pursue higher education in the U.S. Three of the participants stated they considered their status as wealthy, and the other three considered themselves middle class. All participants considered themselves bilingual in Arabic and English.

All participants come from two parent homes. Of the participants' mothers, two have a high school degree and the rest have bachelor's degrees. Five fathers have bachelor's degrees and one has a master's degree.

<center>**Personal Portrait of Participants**</center>

This section provides descriptive demographics of the six participants. The information was collected during interviews, observations, and their social media content analysis. The personal portraits of the six participants are provided in the section below.

Personal Portrait: Muna – "prideful, unrestrained"

Muna identified herself as a proud Saudi woman during the initial interview. She identified her socioeconomic status as high. She was born in Saudi Arabia. Muna comes from a two-parent home. She is the sixth child of 9 brothers and 2 sisters. Her parents are Saudis and raised them in a conservative environment based on religion and culture. She got married after college to a wealthy engineer. Her husband is a liberal Saudi Muslim. Muna's life changed after she got married. She chose to live a less conservative life than those with traditional views. She has three children.

She moved to the U.S. to continue her higher education with her husband and three children. She got her master's degree from a well-known university. She is currently a doctoral candidate. She enjoys her life in the U.S. and is grateful to the government of Saudi Arabia for the scholarship she received. She expressed her deep love and loyalty for Saudi Arabia while reflecting on her disagreement with many rules and restrictions regarding the culture.

She is proud of her achievement. "I attend one of the strongest ten universities in the world," Muna said. She described herself as a smart and hardworking graduate student. She buys a new phone, iPad, and computer every year. She has a phone for each social media account. "A

<center>91</center>

phone for snapchat, a phone for Instagram, and a phone for Twitter, and one for my personal calls and texts" Muna said.

Personal Portrait: Aisha – "ideal student"

Aisha was born in Saudi Arabia. With a quick laugh, she said "of course I consider myself a Saudi woman." Aisha comes from a two-parent middle class home. Aisha has three older brothers. She also has one older sister and two younger sisters. Aisha's parents are well educated. Education is a priority for her parents. Her parents didn't allow her to marry her fiancé until she graduated from college despite having been engaged since high school. They wanted to be sure that she didn't become overwhelmed by the responsibilities that come with marriage.

She moved to Canada shortly after she got married to pursue her master's degree in nutrition and food science. Three years later she moved to the U.S. to start her PhD in the same major. Her passion for nutrition and food science started when she was a child because of her mother. Aisha kept a smile on her face while she explained how her mother used to feed them healthy food and teach them how to make healthy choices. She considered herself lucky to have the opportunity to study abroad. "I am an A student," Aisha said. Her family has high expectations for her and she wants to make them proud. Aisha buys technology devices when she needs them. She manages her social media sites via her phone, laptop, or iPad. She considers herself a self-taught professional photographer. She loves taking pictures and videos and sharing them on social media.

Personal Portrait: Hana – "critical thinker"

Hana identified herself as a Saudi woman. She was born in Saudi Arabia in a middle class family. She comes from a two-parent home and is the youngest of five sisters and three brothers. Her father has a college degree and her mother finished high school. She got married

after high school and has two sons. She continued college and earned her master's degree in Saudi Arabia. She then had the opportunity to continue her PhD in the U.S. Because of ongoing problems, she got divorced. She thinks life now is much better. "My ex-husband never supported my education but I didn't quit" Hana said.

She has a passion for education. She believes that education is the only way to improve life in Saudi Arabia and overcome difficulties that came from some cultural rules and traditions. She can't wait to finish her degree and go back to Saudi Arabia to help improve education. For the great opportunity of studying abroad, she believes she owes service to her country.

Personal Portrait: Areej – "ambitious woman"

Areej identified herself as a Saudi woman. She comes from a two-parent family with a high socioeconomic status. She was born in Saudi Arabia. Areej is the fifth child of nine siblings. Areej has four brothers and four sisters. Areej's parents are well educated and her grandparents are educated as well. They all hold at least bachelor's degrees. She lived in the U.S. in the 1980s as a child when her father was a master's student at an American university. Four of her siblings were born in the U.S. but they currently live in Saudi Arabia and don't anticipate moving to the U.S. She got married while in college to a wealthy man, the son of a corporate figure and billionaire. She has five sons.

Even though she has everything she wants financially, Areej has a dream of being a well-known computer scientist. She came to the U.S. to continue her higher education. She is enjoying being a doctoral student at a well-known university in computer science. She has had six scientific articles published in the most reputable computer science journals. She recently received a diploma in information security and Internet crimes.

Personal Portrait: Ahmad – "adventurer"

Ahmad was born in Egypt while his father was diplomatic representative at the Saudi embassy in Egypt. He comes from a two-parent home. His now-retired father was a diplomat who worked at many Saudi embassies, giving the family the opportunity to live in many countries around the world. Beside English and Arabic, he speaks French and Japanese but doesn't consider himself fluent in them. He is the oldest of nine siblings. He received a scholarship from the Saudi government for a bachelor's degree in electrical engineering and after he graduated, he received a scholarship upgrade for a master's and PhD in the same major and the same US university. He is currently a doctoral candidate. He got married after college and has a son and a daughter.

He loves exploring new cultures. He is used to traveling and being around people from different races, languages, and backgrounds. He wants to keep exploring the world and enjoys new findings. He considers himself addicted to technology. He is always interested in learning about new phones, tablets, computers, cameras, watches, etc.

Personal Portrait: Ali – "change agent"

Ali self identified himself as Saudi during the initial interview. He was born in Saudi Arabia. Ali comes from a middle class, two-parent home. He is the middle child of five girls. Education is very important to his parents. Ali got his bachelor's and master's degrees in education from a Saudi University. He then got a government scholarship for his PhD in education as well. He is currently a PhD student in the U.S. He got married when he started his doctoral degree two years ago and has one daughter.

Ali emphasized many times during the initial interview that his goal is to help change the Saudi educational system for the better by encouraging Saudi educators to focus on research. He

believes that research is the only way to understand our needs, strengths, and weaknesses in education.

<div align="center">**Findings by Research Questions and Emerging Themes**</div>

After combing through and triangulating the interview transcripts, observation notes, and participants' social media content, I identified codes and then grouped them into six categories. Two themes emerged from the categories related to the research questions. Third theme emerged from the data and was not directed by the research questions. The overarching research questions, sub questions, themes, and categories are listed in Table 4.2. The following are the themes and categories. The codes are explained in narrative under each category.

Research Question 1 (RQ1): What are the experiences of Saudi graduate students who are active social media users (Churcher et al., 2014)?

Research Sub-question (SQ):

SQ1. a. How do Saudi graduate students use social media?

SQ1. b. How do social media impact Saudi graduate students personally?

Theme 1 (T1): Social Media Experience

T1 Categories:

T1. a. Planned Versus Unplanned Fame

T1. b. Social Media Preferred Sites, Activities, and Topics

Research Question 2 (RQ2): How do social media influence Saudi graduate students who are active social media users (Mbati, 2013)?

Research Sub-question (SQ):

SQ2. a. How do social media influence Saudi graduate students in learning?

SQ2. b. How do social media influence Saudi graduate students in financially?

SQ2 c. How do social media influence Saudi graduate students socially?

Theme 2 (T2): Social Media Influence

T2 Categories:

T2. a. Educational Influence

T2. a. 1. Formal Teaching and Learning

T2. a. 2. Informal Learning

T2. b. Financial Influence

T2. c. Gender Issues in Social Media

Theme 3 (T3): Changes Brought by Social Media

Table 4-2 Research Questions, Emerging Themes, and Categories

Overarching Research Questions	Research Sub Questions	Emerging Themes	Categories
RQ1. What are the experiences of Saudi graduate students who are active social media users (Churcher et al., 2014)?	SQ1. a. How do Saudi graduate students use social media? SQ1. b. How do social media impact Saudi graduate students personally?	T1. Social Media Experience	T1. a. Planned Versus Unplanned Fame T1. b. Social Media Preferred Sites, Activities and Topics .
RQ2. How do social media influence Saudi graduate students who are active social media users (Mbati, 2013)?	SQ2. a. How do social media influence Saudi graduate students in learning? SQ2. b. How do social media influence Saudi graduate students financially? SQ2. c. How do social media influence Saudi graduate students socially?	T2. Social Media Influence	T2. a. Educational Influence T2. a. 1. Formal Teaching and Learning T2. a. 2. Informal Learning T2. b. Financial Influence T2. c. Gender Issues in Social Media

		T3. Changes Brought by Social Media	

RQ1: What are the experiences of Saudi graduate students who are active social media users (Churcher et al., 2014)?

T1: Social Media Experience

SQ1. a. How do Saudi graduate students use social media?

T1. a. Planned Versus Unplanned Fame

Muna - Unplanned Fame

Late in 2012 Muna started using Instagram. She used to share short videos via Instagram of her three-year-old daughter who speaks fluent Arabic and English; she also shared videos of her two sons. Her daughter's videos went viral. "It is possible to become famous accidentally," Muna said. As a result of her social media activity, Muna faced social media attacks, which in turn have made her more famous. Social media activists who believed she was abusing her children's privacy by using their personal lives for her benefit launched hashtags against Muna that went viral. The campaign reached the highest trend in Twitter at that time in Spring 2012 criticizing her activities in Instagram. In reflecting on this experience, Muna said:

> Even though a large number of my followers don't like me as a person, they still follow me. I receive negative comments always, but I really don't care because my followers' numbers keep increasing and the price of advertisements on my accounts keep increasing too (Laughing).

Muna continued sharing her children daily life on social media and her followers' number still increases.

Aisha – Planned Fame

Aisha planned her fame by working on her photography skills. She gave careful attention to each picture or video she shared. She started on Instagram by sharing pictures of her daily diet that she based on her master's research findings. She named it the Saudi Protein Diet. The pictures and information she shared attracted followers. She also asked other active Saudi social media users to advertise her account, and one of those who advertised for her account was Areej who is one of the study's participants. She said, "I gained 70 thousand followers after Areej's advertisement". Aisha's social media accounts provide beneficial information regarding healthy life style, which seems to be the reason of her fame.

Hana - Planned Fame

Hana wanted to be active in social media and wanted her voice to be heard, so she started a blog in 2010 and a YouTube channel. She wanted to focus on social and cultural issues. Hana said:

> I tried to understand my audience and choose topics that would attract their attention. My personal story is in the introduction of my blog because I believe people like to follow someone they feel they know. You can't be famous if you want to keep everything in your life private. My audience has the right to know me very well.

Her blog posts and YouTube videos relate to the Saudi community with humor, which makes her blog and YouTube channel enjoyable. She used her blog to gain followers by linking to her YouTube channel, Snapchat, Instagram, and Twitter accounts on the blog homepage. Her YouTube channel broadcast short episodes of her well-known comedian series. Her followers are increasing and she is becoming more popular in Saudi Arabia.

Areej - Unplanned Fame

Through her Instagram account, Areej documents her jet setting lifestyle. She shares pictures and videos from home, school, and trips. Areej's sumptuous life attracts followers because it is unusual for many. Her followers can see things and places they may not see otherwise. What makes her account interesting is that although she is wealthy and can get everything she wants, she doesn't want to be idly rich. She usually shares motivational videos and posts that encourage her followers to be ambitious and hard working by sharing reflections on her daily life while she goes to school.

Ahmad - Planned Fame

Ahmad has had a passion for acting since he was a child. His dream is to be a well-known actor in Saudi Arabia. He was planning to go to drama and acting school for his bachelor's degree, but he faced objection from his parents so he went to engineering school. Nevertheless, he has been working to reach his dream of acting. He has produced short films, mainly comedies, on YouTube with his friends. He is usually the main actor, the producer, and writer. One of his friends directs the short films. Gradually, Ahmad's YouTube subscribers' number has increased. He was noticed by a well-known Saudi producer and asked to act in a movie series on a Saudi channel as a secondary actor. "Finally someone recognized me," Ahmad said. Ahmad was thrilled in the beginning but soon realized that he was always being cast as a secondary actor. "I know I deserve better!" Ahmad said. He decided to go back to filming his own videos/short films and share them on not only YouTube but also Instagram until one goes viral. Ahmad explains,

> My number of Instagram followers doubled and I gained more YouTube subscribers. I
> soon succeeded and my dream came true. MBC – a popular channel in the Middle East –
> talked about my hit film on the news and they interviewed me to talk about it. I can't

99

describe how I felt. I am glad I didn't give up my passion and I kept fighting. I became

successful by myself on my own channel, all thanks to social media!

Ahmad continues sharing videos and short films and his fame continues to spread among Saudis.

Ali - Unplanned Fame

Ali used to teach at a KSA elementary school, and his social media fame began when he

asked his colleagues and students' parents to follow his Snapchat coverage of school events and

activities. He then started sharing his opinions about curriculum, assessments, facilities, etc., and

asked his followers for their opinions and suggestions. He eventually drew the attention of the

Ministry of Education officials who then finally addressed some of these issues. He was proud to

tell me that due to one of his Snapchat posts, ministry officials ordered the entrance change to the

school to be wheelchair accessible. After that, his followers grew dramatically. He said, "I don't

really know the exact reason. Maybe someone active on social media recommended my account

to his/her followers." He then started to receive invitations from other schools to use his

Snapchat account to draw attention to an issue or event they were having. Ali's followers'

number is growing because his social media content is related to people's life and concerns.

SQ1. b. How do social media impact Saudi graduate students personally?

T1. b. Social Media Preferred Sites, Activities, and Topics

Table 4.3 presents the number of followers/subscribers for each participant. Snapchat

doesn't reveal the number of followers, so those who use snapchat daily are considered active in

this study. Following the table, a narrative of each participant's preferred social media site(s),

activities, and topics is presented.

Table 4-3 Participants' Social Media Followers

	Instagram	Snapchat	Twitter	YouTube
Muna	3.7M	Active Daily	400K	N/A

Aisha	260K	Active Daily	Private Account	N/A
Hana	92K	Active Daily	131K	350K
Areej	400K	Active Daily	Private Account	N/A
Ahmad	1.6M	Active Daily	Private Account	150K
Ali	265K	Active Daily	70K	N/A

Muna

Muna has over 3.7 million followers on Instagram and 400,000 followers on Twitter. She is very popular on Snapchat as well. She receives thousands of messages daily on Snapchat, which indicates that she has a large number of followers. She uses Snapchat to share about her daily life at home and school. She also uses it for advertisements.

Muna uses Instagram mainly for advertisements. Her followers don't like this and often leave comments such as "you are very greedy," "your content is boring," and "all you care about is money." Every now and then, she posts pictures and short clips of her children.

She uses Twitter for formal posts. She tweets and retweets about academic topics and issues. She also shares political tweets. Muna explains that she doesn't tweet anything against the politics or cultural rules of the KSA even though she doesn't like or agree with a lot of them because she believes that social media is not the right platform to solve and discuss such issues. She considers the Saudis who critique the rules and politics of the KSA on social media disloyal. She said:

> Our country gives as a lot, such as free education, free health insurance, no taxes, and a lot of things that most people around the world dream of. I know there are many issues related to our culture and rules that need to be changed but social media sites are not the right place to do that because we don't want people from all around the world trying to intervene in our internal issues. You know what I mean (smile). You know how many

people around the world don't really care about our rights; they only care about taking our wealth and destroying our culture and religion.

Aisha

Aisha has 260,000 Instagram followers. Also, she is active on Snapchat. Her posts, pictures, and videos are mainly about her family, her passion for photography, and her interest in dietetics. She said, "I have no interest in politics or sensitive issues like culture. I prefer to use social media to improve myself as a photographer, an educator, and a dietitian. I also want my followers to enjoy and learn from my accounts."

Hana

Since 2011, Hana has had a well-known YouTube channel with 350,000 subscribers. Her channel has forty episodes of her series of light comedy. It is similar to stand-up comedy but with a virtual audience. She talks about political, social, educational, and cultural issue in a sarcastic style. Two of her episodes got about 1.8 million views. One was about racism in the KSA and the other was about Saudi women's rights. For Hana's Instagram, Snapchat, and Twitter are sub-platforms for her media activities and fame. She has 92,000 Instagram followers and 131,000 Twitter followers. She uses Snapchat for covering her daily life in at home, at school, and with her kids.

Areej

Areej has 400 thousand Instagram followers. She is active on Snapchat. She shares her research, food, trips, and advertisements on a daily basis both on Instagram and Snapchat. Her Twitter account is private.

Ahmad

Ahmad has 1.6 million Instagram followers and 150,000 YouTube subscribers. Ahmad's social media accounts reflect diverse interests. On Instagram, he posts pictures and videos of his daily life, vacations, school, classes, conferences, books, and short comedian clips. YouTube is his main platform for sharing professional short films and videos. He has 13 YouTube channels for classes he used to teach when he was an instructor at a Saudi university before he came to the U.S. to get his PhD. Ahmad mostly uses Snapchat to communicate with his followers on a daily basis. He captures the details of his daily life at school and at home via Snapchat.

Ali

Ali started his media activities on Snapchat. He then created an Instagram account, which has 265,000 followers. He has 70,000 Twitter followers. Ali doesn't share a lot of his personal life on social media. All of his social media accounts are about issues and topics related to education in the KSA.

In conclusion, all participants are active in Instagram and Snapchat. Muna, Hana, and Ali are active in Twitter. Only Hana and Ahmad have active YouTube channels. Their activities and topic in social media vary based on their goals as explained earlier.

RQ2: How do social media influence Saudi graduate students who are active social media users (Mbati, 2013)?

T2: Social Media Influence

SQ2. a. How do social media influence Saudi graduate students in learning?

T2. a. Social Media Educational Influence

Participants discussed many ways social media enhances education. They experienced formal and informal education in social media. Social media can be a supportive and efficient platform for formal teaching and learning in classroom settings or in online classes. Furthermore,

social media provides an informal learning space for its users' knowledge and skills

development. Table 4.4 summarizes participants' responses regarding social media's educational

influence.

Table 4-4 Social Media Educational Influence

Formal Teaching and Learning (YouTube)	Informal Learning (All Social Media Sites)
Easy to use and integrate	Collaboration and teamwork
Creates an online learning community	Creativity
Allows and promotes discussion	Critical thinking
Platform for mobile learning	Flexibility and adaptability
Improves note-taking skills	Global and cultural awareness
Promotes comprehension of complex concepts	Information literacy
Allows learners to make their own YouTube videos	Leadership
	Oral and written communication skills

T2. a. 1. Formal Teaching and Learning

The participants experienced formal learning via social media. One of Muna's professors

in medical school who practices in a clinic when he's not teaching has a public account in

Snapchat where he shares daily videos from the clinic. He encourages his students to follow him.

According to Muna,

After he gets patients' approval, he takes us through surgeries, shows us how he monitors

patients' recovery and progress, and films himself while he educates patients and their

families on disease prevention and after hospital treatment. I learn a lot from his

Snapchat.

When Hana was teaching as an instructor in a Saudi university, she had to cancel a

week's worth of classes to attend a conference in Canada. Before leaving, she confirmed that her

students all used Instagram and scheduled three meetings with them via Instagram's live video feature.

At the end of each day at the conference I started a live video in Instagram to talk to my students about what I learned and whom I met. I also interviewed experts at the conference during those videos about different topics related to my classes. I asked them to talk to my students. My students loved it. It was a neat and beneficial experience.

Aisha, Areej, Ahmad, and Ali agree that YouTube is the best social media platform for teaching and learning. When combining and analyzing their reasoning, I found seven reasons:

Easy to use and integrate

Ahmad stated,

Adding YouTube videos to your courses' Learning Management System (LMS), or even sending it to students via email, or playing it to students in class is an easy and affordable task. You can use it to introduce a topic, explain activities, motivate students, film your teaching, or simply extend the information taught in class. For example, I used to create a YouTube channel for each class I taught. I filmed all my teaching in classes and put it on my channels. Students loved it. They left me positive feedback in the comments section.

Creates an online learning community

Aisha noted that everyone has a voice in YouTube. Using it as a social learning platform offers teachers the opportunity to build a strong online learning community where everyone can comment, contribute, and share their comments, opinions, and ideas.

Allows and promotes discussion

Areej believes that YouTube videos are particularly effective facilitators for analysis especially if instructors choose them carefully or even create them themselves. Ahmad stated,

After viewing a YouTube video, you can encourage online discussion by asking students to add their personal insights: What did they like about the video? Was there anything they didn't understand? How did the video relate to their personal experiences and feelings? You can also ask them to share other YouTube video references to extend the discussions. This activity increases interest and engagement levels by presenting different perspectives. It can be applied in face-to-face or online classes.

Platform for mobile learning

Ali explains how uploading teaching content to YouTube makes it available throughout the YouTube website, which means that students can access it on the go via their smartphones and tablets. It doesn't matter how small the screen is; a person can use YouTube as a platform for not only searching online video resources, but also sharing presentations and inviting students to take an active part through their commenting.

Improves note-taking skills

Note-taking skills are important both for students and instructors. The ability to analyze information and focus on important points helps manage information overload that can result from Internet use. Ahmad said,

Using YouTube videos as part of your teaching encourages students to develop their note-taking skills by viewing, rewinding, and replaying the YouTube video material until they have fully grasped its essence and key points. You can even create online assignments based on this, for example by asking your learners to describe in a few words what they have just seen on a video in a specific frame.

Promotes comprehension of complex concepts

Ahmad further explained how certain subjects could be difficult to explain. Using YouTube as a virtual library to support class content by providing students with access to its videos allows instructors to better illustrate complex concepts, procedures, and ideas, especially in online classes. He said,

> Videos are ideal for demonstrating steps and, especially in corporate training, walking your students through a process via a video clip can be truly effective. Visual contexts help learners to easily acquire and retain knowledge, as well as develop specific skill sets because demonstration is the most effective way to get information across.

Allows learners to make their own YouTube videos

Ahmad used to ask his students to be involved in a video production as part of an online group assignment. Ahmad explained how that activity helped them to not only use the important information they have learned, but also develop and enhance their visual literacy and creativity. Ahmad said,

> Consider providing them with clear guidelines to know exactly what is expected of them, as well as the necessary resources. You can also use their YouTube videos to encourage feedback exchange among students, which promotes discussion and boosts knowledge retention.

Based on the participants' experiences, Snapchat and Instagram are helpful platform for teaching. YouTube was discussed as the most beneficial social media platform for formal teaching and learning.

T2. a. 2. Informal Learning

Informal learning has massive potential to give meaning, relevance, and context to the ideas that formal learning offers in classroom sittings. Social media can have enormous benefits in terms of informal learning. Hana discussed how social media allow students to be involved in political issues since social media are used by politicians and leaders not only in the KSA but also from all around the world. Students have access to all political views and they can be involved in discussions, which increases their knowledge and understanding of current political issues.

Areej discussed how social media helps spread the idea of voluntary work and community services. Now students gather in groups via social media to plan charities and help needy people in the KSA. Furthermore, students can use social media to contact book authors, scientists, researchers, writers, politicians, artists, religious scholars, and other well-known people who are difficult or even impossible to reach via other methods. Also, students learn on a daily basis by following those people and benefiting from their ideas and experiences that they share through their social media accounts. Ahmad stated,

> I was honored to meet many scholars, politicians, business owners, and millionaires, thanks to social media. Some of them contacted me and invited me either for advertisement purposes or just because they liked my accounts and wanted to be friends with me and some I contacted them to ask questions about their publications or to work on research. They responded to me immediately, maybe because I have a lot of followers.

Social media enables students to express their ideas, beliefs, or thoughts through a written post, drawing, picture, video, or comment. My participants stressed that social media supports most skills that students at the college and graduate levels need to gain and improve. Out of their lengthy answers, I identified eight skills that my participants believe social media supports.

Collaboration and teamwork

Ahmad was part of a Twitter awareness campaign against violence and child abuse in the KSA. The campaigners who started this project were Saudi graduate and undergraduate students who met virtually via Twitter. People interacted widely with the hashtag by tweeting and retweeting about children's rights and issues in the KSA. Campaigners kept mentioning politicians, lawyers, and educators in the campaign tweets until they took part in the campaign and responded to questions and intervened in more than 35 child abuse cases that were shared on Twitter.

Creativity

Photography has always been fundamental to social media. Aisha said with laughter, "I didn't discover the photographer inside me until I became famous on social media." Aisha's photos and videos on Instagram are of professional quality. She uses modern, professional cameras. Aisha said:

I rarely use my phone for taking Instagram photos and videos. Pictures are very powerful. A picture can reflect thousands of words and many feelings. There is a story behind each picture and video I share on Instagram. The positive feedback I often get from my followers encourages me to be a more creative and professional photographer. I learn everything related to photography through social media by following well-known photographers and watching YouTube tutorials.

Critical thinking

Social media provides a wide platform for anyone to publish information that spreads so fast that it can't be controlled or deleted. Muna explains that this worries some people who have grown up in societies like the KSA and can't accept that one can say or publish something

without the approval of any sort of authority, such as a parent, a husband, a teacher, a manager, a politician, a religious figure, etc. It also worries those who accept social media but are aware of the dangers that come with and the difficulty of managing and controlling the freedom of social media and the false information that can easily spread. Muna had an experience with advertising for a scam company; she said she was contacted via Instagram by a person who had faked his identity and requested her to advertise for a financial investment company on Instagram, providing her with forged documents. She said she was paid a lot of money to advertise for them. A month later she received many angry messages and comments from her followers expressing that they had been scammed and their money stolen. She sent her brother to the Ministry of Commerce to investigate the company, which revealed that the company did not exist. She then realized that she needed to be more careful before trusting anyone on social media. Muna said,

> I learned from my experience in social media that I have to be critical in choosing my posts and viewing other accounts' posts because wrong information is not always shared with negative intentions. Sometimes it is the result of a misunderstanding, or sometimes it is a joke that keeps spreading and people take it seriously, and sometimes there is a real will to deceive or harm.

Ali suggested that we can't control information sharing and publishing in social media but we can increase users' awareness. He stated, "We have to check the information sources, question the information credibility, compare with other sources. In short, social media users have to think critically." Ali further explained that critical thinking is important to the functioning of our society in the era of social media. He stressed that "if we want to trust people, our students, employees, staff, and their ability to make the right decisions in this context, we

should first teach them and teach ourselves to question anything we hear, anything we see, and anything we read."

Flexibility and adaptability

Areej discussed the flexibility and adaptability of social media. She explained that unlike traditional media, such as print, radio, or television, which have limitations on the changes that can be made to published materials without incurring costs and time, social media provide the flexibility and adaptability to add, edit, or delete published posts at a moment's notice with minimal set-up or resources. Areej added that not only is the platform of social media flexible and adaptable, but the user of social media also learns to be flexible. He elaborated:

> With all the thousands of comments I get daily, I became very flexible and open minded. Those comments vary between praise and admiration to insulting and negativity. I also get questions about my life, work, and school that are repetitive and I keep answering them over and over again. To be famous in social media and to increase your followers' number and to be able to have influence on the public, you have to be extremely flexible and patient.

Global and cultural awareness

Based on her experience in social media, Hana stressed that people usually gain cultural and language awareness through their own experiences and communication: by studying, working, and raveling, but in the age of social media, they can gain additional knowledge on languages and cultures through social media. She said with a smile,

> I have followers and I follow people from every continent on earth, mostly Arabic and English speakers because I usually post in those two languages, but as you know Arabic has many accents and mostly each Arabic country or group of countries have their own

version of Arabic. I had an embarrassing incident that happened to me once with my Instagram followers from Sudan. While I was doing a live video on Instagram and responding to my followers' questions and comments, one of the followers asked me about a natural product for skin that she said is very popular in Sudan but that I had never heard about. So, I asked my followers about it and I kept repeating the name until the followers told me that the term I was using was a vulgar, sexual term in Sudan. I then realized it was a rude prank. I was very embarrassed and I blocked the follower that planned this inappropriate prank. I learned after that to be careful with everything I say or write in social media.

Users of social media have to be careful and aware that they are writing, chatting, and sharing pictures and videos with other users who are members of different cultures, speak different languages, and have different background. For this study's participants, using common languages like English and Arabic usually bridges language barriers, but there is not any common or general culture in their social media accounts.

Information literacy

Areej reflected on the fact that information is pouring out all the time through social media. "We don't need to watch the news anymore. Why would we have to pay for a cable news station when we can get the news for free through Twitter, Facebook, or YouTube? It is even better on social media because you can read the audience comments and understand how people from different countries interpret the news" she said. Ali discussed how we remember bits and pieces of an article that we read or a video we watch, but we can remember who tweeted or which YouTube channel broadcast it and then we can access it again when needed.

Leadership

"I view social media as a personal toolbox for improving my practice of leadership," Ayshe said while she explained how social media improved her leadership skills. She added, "I'm the leader of my accounts that contain about 400 thousand followers. I always work and plan to increase my followers, to keep my accounts informative, beneficial, organized, and entertaining, to be wise, patient, diplomatic, polite, careful, open minded and flexible in communicating with my followers." All those leadership skills are important in the age of social media.

Oral and written communication skills

This study's participants mentioned that social media supports users' oral and written communication skills because all written, recorded, or captured posts or video shared on social media get criticized, analyzed, and evaluated by followers. The participants believe this is beneficial to improving oral and written skills. Along these lines, Areej added:

> We need to help our students see their posting, texting, tweeting on social media as real writing. It is writing because it is their voice and this is the point of writing regardless of the platform. When we show the importance of formal and informal communication as practiced on social media, students will be encouraged to practice positive digital citizenship and improve their writing skills.

In conclusion, the participants' experiences and discussion showed benefits for social media in informal learning. There are no limits or one way for learning in social media as discussed above. Collaboration, creativity, global awareness, critical thinking, leadership, written, and oral skills can be developed and enhanced through the use of social media.

SQ2. b. How do social media influence Saudi graduate students in financially?

T2. b. Financial Influence

All of this study's participants advertise on their Instagram and Snapchat accounts. They all have hired coordinators to organize their advertisement schedule and do the communications. They advertise for products, restaurants, activities, and services in the KSA while they are here in the U.S. All of the participants go to the KSA once a year during summer or winter break. They all do advertisements while they are there as well. Muna is the highest paid among the participants. The cost of advertising on her Snapchat is $6000 for six minutes of advertising and on Instagram it is $3000. Muna hired a lawyer for her social media accounts. One of his responsibilities is to review all of Muna's advertising contracts to be sure that everything is legal. The average advertisement cost for the rest of the participants is $3000 for six minutes on Snapchat and $1500 for each Instagram post.

Ahmad believes that hosting advertisements through social media is a great financial opportunity for graduate students who are busy with school and research. "I can make a lot of money and save a lot of time." He then said, "Social media is one of the most important marketing platforms in terms of developing important names in the KSA. Our followers trust us and this is the reason for our success in advertising." In this regard, Muna said,

> Despite the high prices of many of us, however, the ads launched by our names never fail and the advertisers are happy to pay us because they are absolutely sure that our names are able to market their products with dazzling success, which returns to them the value of our advertisement cost in double.

SQ2 c. How do social media influence Saudi graduate students socially?

T2. c. Gender Issues in Social Media

One of Hana's blog articles was about women's issues in Saudi Arabia. Specifically, it was about the issue of the male guardian. She shared a link to the article on all her social media accounts. Her audience highly interacted with the article by sharing, commenting, and liking the posts. In her article, Hana wrote,

Personally, I do not suffer at all from the complications of the male guardian. My father, may Allah bless him, shared with me his username and password in case I need to renew my passport and renew my travel permission. Furthermore, my relationship with my ex-husband and the father of my two sons is very good, so I don't have a problem when I travel with my kids out of the country. My only problem is being prevented from driving; otherwise, I am a very happy and lucky Saudi woman. I do not personally feel the crisis of the male guardian. Does this mean that the problem does not exist only because I do not suffer from it? This is a very selfish statement. I do not want to repeat the mistakes of the older generation of women when they gave up their basic rights using excuses such as "The man should be dominant in his house" or "Woman should obey her husband no matter what." Most of us grew up hearing such ideas. It is because of those women that we are in 2017 still discussing our basic rights.

Hana filmed two episodes of her well-known program on her YouTube channel: "Searching for Male" and "Rights." She said,

This is my way to express my opinion, in addition to some Tweets and articles here and there, but the question remains, why isn't solving these issues effectively not a priority for our community? Why do we leave these issues to western countries to talk about while they don't even understand or care about our needs? They only want us to look bad

in front of the whole world. Why do we allow ourselves to be chewed in the mouths of other people by not giving women their simple rights and then we get mad when the world makes fun of us? I know that everything will be resolved but I'm hoping it is coming soon. I am very optimistic of the government's 2030 vision. I see the future brighter and my social media accounts are my platform to do my fair share toward my country and my people by trying to educate, support, entertain, and defend them in the virtual world of social media.

Muna believes that Saudi women are the luckiest women on earth. She said —in a view that contrasts with other female participants and my own experience— "I don't see any gender issues in the KSA. We get paid the same as men. We are respected by men. We have all our rights and even more." Ahamad and Ali thought that social media allows more communication and openness between men and women in the KSA. Ali said, "It is acceptable now to communicate with women through social media." Areej believes that social media allows both men and women in the KSA to express their problems and rights. She said, "I read meaningful discussions mainly on Twitter between both genders on issues related to women's rights (laughing) and even men's rights."

T3. Changes Brought by Social Media

All the participants had similar information/opinions about changes brought by social media to the KSA. This theme emerged from unanticipated findings that were not led by the research questions. Unexpected findings in qualitative research that can't be categorized under the research questions and main themes, strengthen the research (Patton, 2015). The participants agreed that social media started a new era in Saudi Arabia in terms of the communication and interaction of Saudis with the rest of the world. Muna said, "Saudis mainly use social media to

be informed of what's going on around the world. They also use it to communicate with family, friends, and colleagues." My participants stressed that social media is frequently used in Saudi Arabia for advertising and marketing. Hana stressed that social media changed the way Saudis interact with social, cultural, and political issues. "Now anyone can express their opinion about our habits and beliefs that come from our outdated cultural rules." "Saudis are using social media for planning events, searching for jobs, learning, teaching, and finally for fun," Ali explained. Furthermore, Muna said,

> Social media brought a freedom platform to Saudis that they were not used to. Some of them don't use that freedom appropriately. They abuse it. I am glad we now have the Cyber Crimes Law that controls any kind of cyber-bullying. Also, we have amazing cyber security attorneys who can bring anyone who abuses their freedom in social media to court. I ignore many of the harsh comments I get on social media but I have more than ten lawsuits against social media users who send me demeaning private messages and/or have made negative, abusive, insulting, and threatening comments on my Twitter and Instagram accounts. I am excited because they will have to pay me a lot of money (Laughing).

Despite the negativity, Muna's number of followers keeps increasing, and she believes that one of the reasons for this is because she is different. "I'm an untraditional Saudi woman who is still Saudi but lives a western lifestyle. I love my country and obey its rules but I like to be free." She discussed how Saudi social media users follow the person who provokes them and shocks them.

> I one time shared a video of myself for the first time without my hijab and with full make up. I had to delete it two days later because of the social media attacks and strong opposition that I received. I received thousands of harsh messages and comments. Not

117

only me but also my husband, father, and brothers received messages from Saudi social

media users telling them that they have to do something to control my behavior. They

also created a twitter hashtag that was widely shared asking people to stop following me

because I insulted the culture and I mispresented Saudi women. But guess what

(laughing), my number of followers increased after this incident by 300,000 Instagram

followers and about 100,000 Twitter followers.

Aisha also had thoughts regarding the issue of how social media use in the KSA has

changed things,

It is hard to be popular in a community like Saudi Arabia. One mistake can destroy

everything. I try to stay away from any sensitive political or cultural issues. I try as much

as I can to be neutral in issues that can cause controversy or arguments among my

followers.

Ahmad discussed three reasons for the popularity and rapid growth of social media in the

KSA: freedom of expression, exposure of oppression and corruption, and entertainment. Ahmad

said, "Saudi society is largely conservative and it is often difficult for individuals to express their

views on official channels or in public; thus, they go to social media to express themselves freely

often anonymously."

In conclusion, the participants' experience reflected that social media brought opportunities to

the KSA in terms of communication, freedom, knowledge, and entertainment.

Summary of the Chapter

Interpretation involves making sense of the data. During this process, I stepped back to

look at the larger meaning of the data. The data revealed the participants' experiences as active

social media users. The findings in this chapter portray information on the impact of social media

on learning and learners and support the tenets of social constructivism in relationship to learning. The participants' experiences attest that learning is created through active engagement with knowledge and social interaction.

Table 4.1 provided descriptive demographics for the six participants and included: (a) self-identification, (b) birthplace, (c) age, (d) academic level, (e) major, (f) whether the participant was a recipient of a scholarship for graduate school, (g) socioeconomic status (self-reported), (h) whether the participant is bilingual, (i) marital status, (j) spouse educational level, (k) number of children, (l) number of parents, (m) highest education level of parents, (n) technology proficiency (self-reported), and (o) most used electronic device.

The personal portrait section familiarized the reader with each participant. The information was collected during interviews, observation, and from participants' social media accounts. Background on each participant included self-identification, birthplace, birth order, and number of siblings. Additionally, information about family, education, and socioeconomic status was detailed.

The three emerging themes were summarized. The themes are: (1) the experience of Saudi graduate students who are active social media users, (2) the influence of social media on Saudi graduate students who are active social media users, and (3) changes brought by social media Two categories emerged from the data under the first theme. The categories are (a) planned versus unplanned fame, (b) social media preferred sites, activities and topics. In addition three categories and two sub categories emerged from the second theme: (a) educational influence, which has two sub categories —i. formal teaching and learning and ii. informal teaching—; (b) financial influence; and (c) gender issues in social media.

Chapter 5 includes the following sections: (a) summary of the study, (b) discussion and interpretation of the findings, (c) conclusions, (d) recommendations for practice, and (e) recommendations for future research.

Chapter 5 - Discussion

This chapter includes the following sections: (a) summary of the study, (b) discussion and interpretation of the findings, (c) conclusions, (d) recommendations for practice, and (e) recommendations for future research.

Summary of the Study

Social constructivists believe that reality is constructed through human activity. Members of a society together invent the properties of the world (Kukla, 2000). This study investigated the experience of Saudi graduate students who are active social media users to understand how social media influence them. The overarching research questions and sub-questions guided the study and provided the findings through case study methodology described in Chapter 3. The semi-structured interviews allowed the participants to tell their realities and lived experiences in social media (Delgado, 1989). Observations of their communication in social media allowed me to have an initial understanding of the participants before the interviews. It allowed me also to triangulate data during and after the interviews. The participants' social media content allowed further triangulation and provided evidence of data.

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to identify the influence of social media on Saudi graduate students who are active social media users, using inductive and deductive analysis (Patton, 2015) to identify codes, categories, themes, and to determine the extent to which data support the fundamentals of social constructivism as the theoretical framework for this study. According to Polkinghorne (2005), "A primary purpose of qualitative research is to describe and clarify experience as it is lived and constituted in awareness" (p. 138). Thus, qualitative research allowed me to investigate the lived experiences of the participants

(Golafshani, 2003). Social constructivism provided the framework for analysis and interpretation to explore the intersection of social media platforms and education.

This study is a multiple participant case study because the area to be investigated determines the inquiry method (Polkinghorne, 2005), using interviews, observation, and documentary data. Multiple participant case studies, according to Yin (1981), allow a researcher to draw conclusions from groups of cases. Thus, the six participants in this case collectively strengthen the results and increase confidence in the study (Tellis, 1997).

Purposeful sampling was used to determine participant selection criteria based on group characteristics sampling (Patton, 2015). In a multiple participant case study, sampling should be focused on a group whose experiences are likely to be the same (Polkinghorn, 2005), which is represented in this study by: (a) Saudi, (b) graduate students, and (c) active social media users. To obtain participants for this qualitative multiple participant case study, social media was used to select and contact them. Six potential participants were identified for the study. I approached the participants via their social media accounts and emails, explaining the purpose of the investigation. All six potential participants agreed to be part of the study. The interview questions were sent to the participants via email prior to the interviews. Interviews were scheduled via email at times and video/audio calling and messaging application convenient for the participants. The interviews were audio recorded. The audio recordings were then transcribed and sent to participants to member check for accuracy. The participants had the option of omitting or changing any information shared. The data were collected first and then organized into manageable files. Second, the transcripts were read several times to make sense of the whole before breaking it into initial codes manually and using NVivo coding software. Third, themes

were developed through the use of coding and categorizing. Finally, the data from interviews, observations, and documents were analyzed and presented as follows:

Research Question 1 (RQ1): What are the experiences of Saudi graduate students who are active social media users (Churcher et al., 2014)?

Research Sub-question (SQ):

SQ1. a. How do Saudi graduate students use social media?

SQ2. b. How do social media influence Saudi graduate students personally?

Theme 1 (T1): Social Media Experience

T1 Categories:

T1. a. Planned Versus Unplanned Fame

T1. b. Social Media Preferred Sites, Activities, and Topics

Research Question 2 (RQ2): How do social media influence Saudi graduate students who are active social media users (Mbati, 2013)?

Research Sub-question (SQ):

SQ2. a. How do social media influence Saudi graduate students in learning?

SQ2. b. How do social media influence Saudi graduate students in financially?

SQ2. c. How do social media influence Saudi graduate students socially?

Theme 2 (T2): Social Media Influence

T2 Categories:

T2. a. Educational Influence

  T2. a. 1. Formal Teaching and Learning

  T2. a. 2. Informal Learning

T2. b. Financial Influence

T2. c. Gender Issues in Social Media

Theme 3 (T3): Changes Brought by Social Media

The findings were presented in depth in Chapter 4. Following are the discussion and interpretation of the findings, conclusions, recommendations for practice, and recommendations for future research.

Discussion and Interpretation of the Findings

As discussed in Chapter 2, many studies have emphasized the use of social media in education (Lenartz, 2013), but there is lack of studies that focus on the influence of social media on Saudi graduate students. Furthermore, there is lack of educational research that examines the use of Instagram, and Snapchat. Al-Khalifa (2008) and Kutbi (2015) conducted two studies in Saudi Universities examining the effectiveness of using Twitter in teaching and learning, but their sample was undergraduate students. In addition, there are some studies in the literature that examined the use of YouTube for educational purposes. Bonk (2008) conducted a survey about using YouTube as an educational tool. The study sample was undergraduate students. In addition, Zgheib (2014) studied Saudi faculty use of social media in teaching. My study aimed to address the gap in the literature by providing qualitative data that focuses on Saudi graduate students. It also aimed to contribute to the research technology field by studying Instagram and Snapchat in addition to YouTube and Twitter.

As social media is becoming increasingly ubiquitous among millennium learners, educators see the potential benefits of using these tools for academic and non-academic purposes (Hughes, 2009; Nellison, 2007). The experience of this study's millennial participants corroborates these findings, and it contributes new findings related to the use of Snapchat and Instagram since the participants are unique. Their uniqueness comes from their popularity in

social media and from their educational situation as Saudi graduate students who are currently pursuing their higher education in the U.S. It also comes from the uniqueness of the KSA in terms of economics, culture, politics, and social life. Furthermore, this study contributes to the qualitative research field in Saudi Arabia, which is currently lacking such studies. It also contributes to the educational technology research in the area of social media since there is limited research on how social media impacts students and, in particular, how social media influences students' learning experience (Hew, 2011; Mix, 2010). Two main themes emerged from this study's data to answer the overarching research questions. A third theme emerged from the data not related to the research questions. The first theme concerns the experience of Saudi graduate students who are active social media users. Under the first theme, two categories were identified. Discussion of T1 and its categories follows.

T1. Social Media Experience

In order for higher education to be effective, educators have to understand students, their interests, how they think, how their generation is different, and what they are good at (Al-Khalifa & Garcia, 2013). To have a good understanding of the participants' experiences as active social media users, one must know how their activity and fame started. This enables readers to have some understanding of what interests social media users.

Three of the participants actively planned for and sought their fame and the rest accidently became well known on social media. The participants' stories show that they became well known and gained significant numbers of followers because they shared on their social media accounts one or more of the following: socially unacceptable content, health related content, professional photography, advocacy for human rights issues, wealthy and luxurious lifestyles, entertainment content, and corruption issues related to the audience. Posting on those

areas made them well known in the KSA, which brought opportunities and challenges to their lives.

For the purpose of this study, participants' activity and data on Twitter, Instagram, YouTube, and Snapchat were examined because those sites are where they are the most active. Furthermore, these social media sites are the four most used social media platforms among people in the KSA (Abdurabb, 2014). Understanding how the participants used each social media site helped clarify the nature and features of each site, which is important to identify which platform is the best for learning and teaching.

Twitter

The study's participants use Twitter mostly for posting about educational and political issues because Twitter's limit of 140 characters appeals to millennials, who often do not have the time or the desire to read or write long text. They prefer to capture the essence, and using Twitter in education is helpful for them in this regard. "Twitter has been embraced by the higher education community" (McHaney, 2011. p. 109). It is widely used in academia all across the world (Al-Khalifa, 2008; Mendoza, 2010; & Kutbi, 2015). Students, journalists, actors, politicians, leaders, and sports people alike use Twitter (Aifan, 2015). From a social constructivist standpoint, Twitter can be an effective and efficient platform for social interaction with the More Knowledgeable Others (MKO), the result of which is learning and sharing knowledge (Mcleod, 2007). As shown through the participants' experience as graduate students, Twitter can be used for teaching graduate students as a secondary mode of communication to bond a class community using unique class hashtags, which are used to find and connect with groups of interest (Alhashem, 2015). In higher education classes, "Twitter can be used to develop a sense of community by relaying important information to students" (McHaney, 2011.

p. 109). Both instructors and students can easily and quickly tweet details of assignments, announcements, or plan changes using Twitter. They can also include links to online sources. This way everyone can forward ("retweet") or respond to the tweet. Therefore, Twitter encourages students' collaboration. Email seems to have become an old-fashioned method of collaboration for millennials. Now instructors can assign students to use Twitter in order to work on collaborative assignments. In this way, the instructor can intervene at any point, provide advice/comment, or share a link. Moreover, subscribing to relevant hashtags can bring many important topics for discussion to class. Instructors can discuss with students' relevant issues for class that they would like to follow on Twitter, and then they can decide together what hashtags everyone should follow. Doing this ensures that there will always be an interesting topic to discuss and debate in class. Al-Khalifa (2008) tested the effectiveness of Twitter for keeping her undergraduate students connected to the blog for her class. One of her class requirements is to have a Twitter account to receive class announcements, reminders, and news posted on the class blog. According to Al-Khalifa (2008), she surveyed the students regarding their Twitter experience at the end of the semester. The results of the survey showed that 93% of the students preferred receiving tweets announcements over visiting the class blog every day for updates. Using Twitter in education provides a form of socialization and encourages students to speak up for the issues they believe in.

Instagram

Instagram is the social media site where most of the study's participants got their start. Instagram is mainly a visual site, but users can add written content in the form of photo or video captions. Instagram has a live video feature that allows posters to receive real-time comments from their audience. Instagram can be used for educational purposes. The study participants'

experiences reflect the power of Instagram in supporting their spatial, linguistic, interpersonal, and intrapersonal intelligence and skills. Nugent (2013), stated,

> Spatial intelligence is referred to as 'visual thinking.' While it usually involves vision it also incorporates abstract and analytical abilities that go beyond merely seeing images. Recognizing the image, knowing its relationship to surrounding objects and displaying the organizational structure of a thought are all involved in spatial intelligence. (para 3)

This intelligence can be encouraged effectively through Instagram use because of the platform's emphasis on visual content.

Furthermore, Instagram can support linguistic intelligence (Nugent, 2013). When users upload pictures/videos, their followers will likely respond verbally or at least textually. In this way, instructors can upload pictures/videos related to their classes and ask students to make observations or provide specific types of feedback. This is a way to encourage students to use their language skills at different levels. Additionally, as reflected in the participants' experiences, Instagram can build and improve the ability of users to comprehend desires, motivation, and the intentions of others in trying to increase their number of followers, which supports users' interpersonal skills. Finally, participants agreed that Instagram improves their intrapersonal intelligence by giving them the ability to understand themselves and appreciate their fears, feelings, and motivations.

YouTube

The study findings show the effectiveness of YouTube in education. Two of the participants have YouTube channels that they use as a primary platform for their informal and formal teaching and learning. Even the other participants who don't have YouTube channels reflected on the importance of YouTube as a source of learning. When analyzed through the lens

of social constructivism, YouTube is a type of MKO that allows for the construction of knowledge (Mcleod, 2007): "YouTube is an art medium; a technology which allows listeners to become singers, watchers to become actors and consumers to become producers creating new original works and supplementing existing ones. It allows everyone to have a voice that can be heard and face that can be seen" (Cayari, 2011, p. 24). Based on the study's findings, active YouTube channel owners have a powerful influence as they interact with their viewers, many of whom are students. The system in which viewers comment, message, share and interact with a YouTube channel owner reflects the current and future behavior of students because student use it as a source of information. Based on the nature of social media and specifically YouTube, these content creators must be significantly active and connected to their viewers. This was found also by Cayari (2011): "The users of technology shape the technology's purpose of the technology, which shapes the user's culture" (p. 2). Through YouTube, students have the ability to navigate communities and explore their selves and their identity by being able to reach and watch people and information from all around the world. "YouTube viewers gain new skills and explore their identity as they navigate the community and participate in its activities" (Chau, 2010, p. 68). Untraditionally, they become attracted and connected to some YouTube channel owners who may become idols or mentors to them. The importance of YouTube comes from its effectiveness as an educational platform. Researcher Berk (2009) explained how using videos in higher education classes improves presentations and encourages faculty to add learning outcomes to their teaching such as "grab students' attention, focus students' concentration, generate interest in the class, draw on students' imagination, improve attitude toward content and learning and to make learning fun" (p 2). According to a study of teachers' use of YouTube in

the classroom, "More than 80% of survey respondents tapped into online sites such as YouTube for video to use in their teaching" (Tinti-Kane, 2013, p 2).

Snapchat

Paying attention and staying focused are abilities that every instructor wishes for their students. It may be hard for students in higher education classes where they can use their phones and tablets in classes. Based on my personal experience, most, if not all, students in all my graduate classes constantly peeked at their laptops or phones where they had their social media accounts opened. "So, as the adage goes: If you can't beat them, join 'them" (Lee, 2016, para. 1).

The participants' experiences with Snapchat are an example of social media's power in attracting students' attention in teaching and learning. Many instructors reason that if the majority of students are using it, they should too. Snapchat has around 100 million users worldwide, and 77% of post-secondary students use it daily (Lee, 2016). Michael Britt, a professor at a college in New York, started using Snapchat in Fall 2015. He shared Snapchat videos with his students in his introductory psychology class. He shared "snaps" of real-life examples of what he was teaching in class. He did that right before finals, so his students would watch them when they were studying. About 90% of his students watched and used his Snapchat videos to study, he estimates (Will, 2016). Using Snapchat in teaching makes what students learn relevant to their life experience. "The best way to teach new material is to try to personalize it to students' experience" (Lee, 2016). Snapchat makes it possible to push knowledge students' way when they're not in class.

To further understand the study participants' experience with social media, it was essential to explain how they keep their popularity and effectiveness on their social media accounts. Based on their comments and reflections, what keep their followers from unfollowing

and unsubscribing is their (the study participants) continuous communication and constant interaction with the followers. Furthermore, sharing interesting and appealing posts on topics like daily life events, family, advertisements, academic and political issues, hobbies, news, social and cultural discussions, adventures, and issues related directly to the followers' lives attracts followers and opens discussion among them, which keeps their social media accounts live and active. In teaching, the participants' use of social media is successful because they use social interaction platforms that are relevant to students' real-life experience (Aifan, 2015).

The second theme in this study examines how social media influenced participants in many ways including educational, financial, and social influence, which was described in Chapter 4. Under T2, three categories were identified. Discussion of T2 and its categories follows.

T2. Social Media Influence

According to the participants' experiences, social media supports and builds students' skills in traditional school settings, in online learning, and even outside formal learning borders. Banks, Au, Ball, Bell, Gordon, Gutierrez, Heath, et al. (2007) studied learning in formal and informal environments. Their findings indicated that formal learning is only a small part of the lifelong experience of human learning. The role of formal learning is about 19% in the first through twelfth grades, and the percentage is reduced to 8% in undergraduate years and 5% in graduate years (Banks, Au, Ball, Bell, Gordon, Gutierrez, Heath, et al., 2007). These findings reflect the importance of using social media in formal education to meet the interests and needs of graduate students. As students progress from high school to college and graduate school, the role of informal learning becomes more important because students become self-motivated learners and they already have skills that enable them to learn on their own via social media.

Learners gain knowledge as a function of interactions, which is the main aspect of social constructivism (Schrader, 2015). The interactions allow learners to broaden their connections with the more knowledgeable other (MKO), which is a prominent social constructivism principle (Mcleod, 2007). The MKO in social media are content and peer-networks. Social connections and networks are changing the ways we think about knowledge and learning and the ways we organize work and ideas (Schrader, 2015).

Unfortunately, social networks have little or no integration into formal learning environments (Churcher et al., 2014). Learning management systems (LMS), such as Canvas or Blackboard, are the most commonly used learning technology in traditional higher educational settings. The conventional LMS environment provides limited opportunities for online learners to participate in online interactions, such as discussions and chats (Churcher et al., 2014). These interaction activities are normally restricted to one class in one semester. Despite the fact that some social media features have begun to be integrated into newer LMS versions, these features still cannot be implemented fully due to security or privacy restrictions. For example, LMS wikis cannot be shared with viewers outside of the institutions. The connectivity and openness are limited in the current formal learning environment because of the lack of access to external social opportunities.

Using social media as a learning platform has the potential to connect informal learning to the formal learning environment. For instance, social media sites, such as Twitter, Instagram, Snapchat and YouTube, can include members outside the class beyond a semester time length and connect learners with communities, experts in the field, and peers across the world. It also provides engaging platforms to facilitate student-student, student-teacher, and student-content interactions in multimedia formats. This environment of communication, interaction,

involvement, and creation allow users to become more engaged in the learning process, and it encourages users to collaborate on projects in real-world ways. Social media platforms that allow students to connect to educational contexts in new and effective ways beyond the traditional classroom environment have the potential to overcome the borders between formal and informal learning.

In addition, in a higher educational system like that in the KSA, it is not common for students to have paying jobs while they study in college or graduate school. Job opportunities available to students in the American higher education system, such as assistantships, are not available to students in the KSA. One of the reasons is that education is free in the KSA, so students don't need financial assistance to attend. Another reason is that in Saudi culture, students live with their parents until they get married and have their own houses. What Saudis miss, though, is that work is not about income only; it is an important experience that students in higher education need. They need it to be financially independent, build their skills and apply what they have learned. Social media brought financial opportunities to Saudi students that were not available before the social media era. Social media has recently grown beyond existing primarily for social communication and has become a powerful platform that can be used by individuals, institutions, and governments to serve the economy and develop business in various sectors (Duggan, Ellison, Lampe, Lenhart, & Madden, 2015). Based on the participants' financial experience in social media, it is clear that social media brings opportunities to students by providing them with an easily accessible platform for business and advertisement. It is becoming easier, faster, and cheaper to set up new businesses without incurring the costs traditionally associated with start-ups, especially with the dynamic changes in marketing in the era of social media (Duggan, Ellison, Lampe, Lenhart, & Madden, 2015), which gives Saudi

graduate students the chance to start their own businesses while they are still in school. The participants' successful financial experiences with social media reflect the power of informal learning in social media. None of the participants majored in business or marketing, nor did any ever even take classes in these areas. They learned how to advertise and how to attract and gain the trust of consumers through experience. They faced some difficulties but it taught them skills of communication, problem solving, and critical thinking that can't be easily gained in traditional classroom settings.

Moreover, the literature stressed the role of social media in allowing students to express political, cultural, and social issues that may be difficult to discuss elsewhere (Aifan, 2015; Al-Khalifa, 2008; Kutbi, 2015). The findings of this study are evidence of the freedom and the cultural and social opportunities that social media can provide. For example, the participants expressed that it was impossible to discuss in public cultural issues such as gender issues in the KSA before social media. Social media help overcome the boundaries between genders by providing an acceptable way to communicate and allowing them to engage in discussions. Those discussions increased social awareness among the Saudi community in regard to social and cultural issues. Furthermore, as shared by the participants, social media has helped loosen strict cultural rules, pushing the older generation to accept changes and giving the space to millennials to shape their way of life.

T3. Changes brought by Social Media

The participants' activity on social media reflects the high level of Saudis' engagement on social media. The KSA has one of the most active social media communities in the world due to the country's demographics: more than half the population is under the age of 35 (Saeed,

2013). It's the preferred way for young Saudis to communicate with each other and with corporations and government (Omar, 2016).

Social media in the KSA allows the public and especially millennials to be informed about political issues and discussions because social media is used by politicians and law makers, which helps to bring different political viewpoints closer together and convey different political viewpoints to the public (Aifan, 2015). Moreover, social media is used in the KSA in voluntary and community work (Zgheib, 2014). Thanks to social media, volunteerism became widely practiced by many, which leads to increasing charity in society and solving many community problems. Social media raises awareness of the community through the social media awareness campaigns carried out by concerned parties in the KSA or by individuals who have suffered from a particular problem, injustice, or oppression. This raises awareness among the society and encourages decision makers to solve community problems. In addition, social media users can easily approach researchers, authors, scientists, politicians, artists, and religious scholars in the KSA, which brings many new opportunities and benefits to social media users. Furthermore, it is now possible for all people in the KSA to express their feelings, thoughts, beliefs, and concerns in writing, drawing, photographing, filming, recording, or any other way supported by the various social media platforms.

Conclusions

To better understand the experience of Saudi graduate students who are active social media users, this study examined their social media use in the context of education through a social constructivist analytical lens (Churcher et al., 2014). The use of this lens allowed me to focus on different aspects related to education and provided a deeper understanding of other issues such as those related to culture, economics, policy, and gender. Social media engaged all

the participants in the education process to share activities in a virtual synchronous or asynchronous time and space. The processes and products of social interaction can be drawn together to create a community of learning (Vygotsky, 1978). This community provides more creative and in-depth learning than could happen without social media's power to bring together a diversity of mindsets in shared activity, providing rich opportunities for learning as shown by the participants' experiences. Based on the discussion of the findings, it is clear that social media provide a social constructivist learning environment. A social constructivist learning environment is the environment represented in the context of social constructivism, which describes a way of knowing in which students or learners construct their new understanding and knowledge during the process of social interaction with others (Mcleod, 2007). Vygotsky (1978), discusses that by interaction and help from more knowledgeable others (MKO), which can be teacher, peers, or tool, learners could develop more profound comprehension than their individual capacity. The discrepancy between the abilities displayed independently and with social support is defined as the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). Significant guidance from more knowledgeable peers, tools, or experts is believed to elevate student abilities within the ZPD. According to social constructivism, learning occurs when students share background information and participate in the give and take of collaborative and cooperative activities. While they are negotiating the meaning, they are constructing their own knowledge. Social constructivism places the emphasis on students rather than instructors. Students learn best when they actively construct their own understanding through social interaction with the MKO. They are encouraged to discover their own solutions and to try out ideas. The responsibility of the instructor is to facilitate the students' learning process around a particular content. Instructors

should design and structure learning activities so that students can exercise their capabilities in knowledge formation (Churcher et al., 2014; Schrader, 2015).

The principle of social constructivism promotes students' deep understanding and creativity. Social media platforms allow instructors to consistently embed social constructivism into the learning process. Online communication can stimulate the slow thinkers and those reluctant to engage in face-to-face discussion to participate. The asynchronous mode of online communication provides participants with more time to think and an equal right to share their thoughts. Meaningful and active online discussion among students can result in an effective knowledge sharing and cognitive development. Social media can also provide access to rich sources of information and promote productive interaction with contents. These features are feasible for initiating social constructive learning environment. The findings of this research further support the following aspects central to social constructivism (Vygotsky, 1978):

(a) Learning in social media is created through active engagement with knowledge;

(b) Learning in social media is created through social interaction with objects, experts, and peers, and

(c) Social media provide social constructivist learning environment where social interaction occurs.

The participants' experiences proved the power of social media. Social media has shaped how they learn, teach, interact, and communicate. Social media provides them with interactions that create for them opportunities with the advancement of their knowledge. Knowledge occurs through shared activities, through community engagement, dialogue, and communication in a community of shared activity (Vygotsky, 1978). The study participants have learned to both think and explore within and outside of their own perspective. They also take the perspectives of

others in important ways that influence their social and emotional learning competencies that are attracting significant current attention (Gehlbach, 2010).

As the participants' experiences reflected, social media offers opportunities related to classroom boundaries and the social components of new media use in the KSA. Social media use creates new and larger communities of learners, reaching a broader field and more diverse learners not only in the KSA but also around the world. This may include those with disabilities, different types of personalities, ethnicities, religions, gender, and/or interaction styles. "In traditional classrooms care must be taken to attend to those less outspoken, the bullied, the shy, the less popular, or less socially integrated, that is, the non-participants and excluded others" (Schrader, 2015. p. 29). Informal and formal learning and skills are important components of learning and sociocultural adaptation that were examined through the participants' experience in social media use. These skills include social compliance, cooperation, and the development of positive, effective relationships (Gehlbach, 2010).

Recommendations for Practice

The study findings have shown the power of social media among millennials. To benefit from this powerful platform, higher education institutions should integrate and adopt the use of social media as an educational teaching and learning tool. Since the higher educational system in the KSA is a central system that is led by the Ministry of Education, it is possible to set regulations and rules for adopting social media by the KSA universities and colleges. It is important for the KSA Ministry of Education to develop a strategy and set goals for adopting social media in Saudi higher educational institutions. They then should select the social media platform that serves their plan. Social media in higher educational institutions should empower and support individual departments within each institution while adhering to use guidelines and

developing a consistent voice across platforms if using more than one. Graduate students should have job positions in such projects to benefit from their technology experiences as millennials.

The participants' experiences show that millennia students are different than previous generations because of their technological knowledge. They are used to fast, short, updated information. They are powerful, independent self-learners. Instructors in the KSA should pay attention to the ability of millennials to choose the best learning styles that meet their needs and interest. The study findings suggest that in the KSA higher education setting, social media can be used to improve communication between students, instructors, and the surrounding community. While different types of communication tools are available in traditional learning settings, the advantage of using popular social media platforms among Saudis such as YouTube, Twitter, Instagram, and Snapchat is that most students arrive on campus as fluent users of these social media platforms. Whether or not instructors in the KSA adopt social media as an education platform, chances are their students already have created class-specific social media groups to share course information or communicate with other students outside of class.

Recommendations for Future Research

More qualitative studies on social media in education are recommended for future research. A similar study is needed to investigate the use of social media among higher education faculty in the KSA, strategies they use to integrate social media in formal learning, concerns they have, and their strategies to mitigate those concerns. There exists a need to pursue in-depth studies to identify the opportunities and challenges of using social media in formal education and investigate how educators can make this change happen.

Furthermore, it is recommended to use the themes of this study to develop a quantitative survey study that will expand this study to a mixed methods research design. Gathering both

quantitative and qualitative data will mitigate the weaknesses inherent to using each approach by itself. Triangulation will be applied by using mixed methods, which will allow the results to be generalized.

This study aimed to explain the influence of social media on Saudi graduate students who are active social media users. The focus was to provide new information in areas that lack studies. The participants' experiences reflected the importance and effectiveness of social media in education.

References

"124 Thousand Saudi students studying abroad." (2012, November 16). *Akhbaar24.* Retrieved

from http://akhbaar24.argaam.com/article/detail/117292/124--ألف-مبتعث-ومبتعثة-بأمريكا

وبريطانيا-وكندا-الاندماج-واللغة-أبرز-تحدياتهم

A virtual revolution: Social media in Saudi Arabia. (2014, Sep 13). *The Economist, 412*, 57.

Retrieved from http://search.proquest.com.er.lib.k-

state.edu/docview/1561998631?accountid=11789

Abdel-Raheem, A. (2014, August 31). Saudi women in education. *The Jerusalem Post.* Retrieved

from http://www.jpost.com/Opinion/Saudi-women-in-education-373026

Abdurabb, T. K. (2014, June 27). Saudi Arabia has highest number of active Twitter users in the

Arab world. *Arab News*. Retrieved from http://www.arabnews.com/news/592901

Abu Hajar, M. (2012, March 07). *CNN interview with "3al6ayer" star Omar Hussain*. Retrieved

from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0PvfAWXaQmg

Adler, P. A., & Adler, P. (1994). Observational techniques. In Norman K. Denzin & Yvonna S.

Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of qualitative research* (pp. 377-392). Thousand Oaks: Sage.

Aifan, H. A. (2015). *Saudi students' attitudes toward using social media to support learning.*

Available from ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global. (Order No. 3713504)

Alakdar, M. (2016, February 17) Defeating extremism and terrorism starts from social media. *Al-

Sharq.* Retrieved from http://www.al-sharq.com/news/details/403806

Alamri, M (2011). Higher education in Saudi Arabia. *Journal of Higher Education Theory and

Practice, 11*(4) 2011.

Albar, O. (2014, October 27). Increasing number of Makkah visitor to 30 million yearly. *Okaz.*

Retrieved from http://www.okaz.com.sa/new/Issues/20141027/Con20141027731331.htm

Alexander, B. (2006). Web 2.0: A new wave of innovation for teaching and learning. *EDUCAUSE Review, 41*(2), 32-44.

Alhashem, A. M. (2015). *Social media use and acceptance among health educators in Saudi Arabia.* Available from ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global. (Order No. 3715985)

Al-Isa, A. (2011). *Higher education in Saudi Arabia: The journey of finding identity.* Riyadh, Saudi Arabia: Dar Alsaqy.

Al-Khalifa, H. S. (2008). Twitter in academia: a case study from Saudi Arabia. *eLearn Magazine, 2*(9). doi:10.1145/1454105.1454109

Al-Khalifa, H. S. & Garcia, A. R., (2013). The state of social media in Saudi Arabia's higher education. *International Journal of Technology and Educational Marketing, 3*(1), 65-76.

Al Madhouni, F. (2011). The effectiveness of using instructional blogs in improving Qassim university students' achievement and their attitudes towards them. Paper presented at the Conference of Electronic Learning and Distant Education. Al-Riyadh, Saudi Arabia.

Al-Mabdain, I (2015, March 31)). Social media networks evolution of economics and business. *Al-Ghad* . Retrieved from http://www.alghad.com/articles/861604-دراسة-شبكات-السوشيال-ميديا-تطور-الاقتصاد-والأعمال-التجارية

Almunajjed, M. (1997). *Women in Saudi Arabia today*. United States: Martins Press.

Al-Rasheed, M (2003). *A history of Saudi Arabia.* Cambridge, United Kingdom Cambridge University Press.

Al-Rawaf, H. & Simmons, C. (1991). The education of women in Saudi Arabia. *Comparative Education*, *77*, 187-295.

Alromayh, A. Y. (2015, March 23). Terrorism in social media sites. *Al-Jazirah.* Retrieved from http://www.al-jazirah.com/2015/20150323/ar2.htm

Al-Sarrani, N. (2010). *Concerns and professional development needs of science faculty at Taibah University in adopting blended learning* (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from K-State Research Exchange.

Al-Sehaly, H. (2016, March 16) Social media sites in Saudi Arabia: Space of fun and freedom. *Aljazeera.net.* Retrieved from http://www.aljazeera.net/news/reportsandinterviews/2016/3/16/-مواقع-التواصل-بالسعودية-مصادر-الحرية-والترفيه

Al-Sharif, M. (February 10, 2014). Rein in the Saudi religious police. *New York Times.* Retrieved from http://www.nytimes.com/2014/02/11/opinion/rein-in-the-saudi-religious-police.html?_r=1

Alshihri, M. (2015, February 26) Six thousands Twitter account targeting Saudi Arabia by 129.000 tweets in average per day. *Okaz.* Retrieved from http://www.okaz.com.sa/article/976323/الرأي/

Al-Zahrani, A. (2012, November 23). Marketing in social media attract young adults. *AlMadina.* Retrieved from http://www.al-madina.com/node/415726

Anfara, K., Brown, K., & Magione, T. (2002). Qualitative analysis on stage: Making the research process more public. *Educational Researcher, 31*(7), 28-38.

Atherton, J. S. (2011). *Learning and teaching: Constructivism in learning.* Retrieved from http://www.learningandteaching.info/learning/constructivism.htm

Attwell, G. (2007). The personal learning environments: The future of eLearning*? eLearning Papers, 2*(1), 1-8.

Aydin, S. (2012). A review of research on Facebook as an educational environment. *Association for Educational Communications and Technology, 60*, 1093-1106.

Baldwin, J. M. (1909). The influence of Darwin on theory of knowledge and philosophy. *Psychological Review, 16*(3), 207–218.

Banks, J., Au, K., Ball, A., Bell, P., Gordon, E., Gutierrez, K., Heath, S., et al. (2007). *Learning in and out of school in diverse environments.* Retrieved from http://www.life-slc.org/knowledge-base/report-learning-in-and-out-of-school-in-diverse-environments

Barnes, C. & Tynan, B. (2007). The adventures of miranda in the brave new world: Learning in a Web 2.0 millennium. *ALT-J: Research in Learning Technology, 15*(3), 189-200.

Bartlett-Bragg, A. (2006). *Reflections on pedagogy: Reframing practice to foster informal learning with social software.* Retrieved from http://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/viewdoc/download?doi=10.1.1.472.2265&rep=rep1&type=pdf

Baxter, J., & Eyles, J. (1997). Evaluating qualitative research in social geography: Establishing 'rigour' in interview analysis. *Royal Geographical Society*, *22*(4), 505-525.

Baxter, P., & Jack, S. (2008). Qualitative case study methodology: Study design and implementation for novice researchers. *The Qualitative Report, 7*(13), 544-559.

Berk, R. A. (2009). Multimedia teaching with video clips: TV, movies, YouTube, mtvU in the college classroom. *International Journal of Technology in Teaching and Learning*, *5*(1), 1-21.

Boellstorff, T. (2008). *Coming of age in second life: An anthropologist explores the virtually human*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Bonk, C.J. (2008). *YouTube anchors and enders: The use of shared online video contents as a macrocontext for learning.* Paper presented at the American Educational Research Association (AERA), New York, NY. Retrieved from http://www.publicationshare.com/SFX7EED.pdf

Bougie, G., Starke, J., Storey, M. A., & German, D. M. (2011). Towards understanding Twitter use in software engineering: Preliminary findings, ongoing challenges and future questions. In *Proceedings of the 2nd International Workshop on Web 2.0 for Software Engineering* (pp. 31–36). Retrieved from http://dl.acm.org/citation.cfm?id=1984707

boyd, d. m., & Ellison, N. B. (2007). Social network sites: Definition, history, and scholarship. *Journal of Computer Mediated Communication, 13*(1), 210-230.

Burrell, J. (2009). The field site as a network: A strategy for locating ethnographic research. *Field Methods*, *21*(2), 181-199.

Campbell, B. (2015). *Piaget's cognitive theory* [Prezi Presentation]. Retrieved from http://libanswers.dominican.edu/faq/27428

Caruso, J. B., Nelson, M. R., & Salaway, G. (2008). The ECAR study of undergraduate students and information technology. Retrieved from http://net.educause.edu/ir/library/pdf/ERS0808/RS/ERS0808w.pdf

Cayari, C. (2011). The youtube effect: How youtube has provided new ways to consume, create, and share music. *International Journal of Education & The Arts*, *12*(6), 1-28.

Charmaz, K. (2006). *Constructing grounded theory: A practical guide through qualitative analysis*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.

Chau, C. (2010). Youtube as a participatory culture. *New Directions for Youth Development, 128*, 65-74.

Chayko, M. (2008). *Portable communities: The social dynamics of online and mobile onnectedness.* Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.

Chen, P. and Hinton, S. M. (1999) Real-time interviewing using the world wide web. *Sociological Research Online, 4*(3).

Chiu, Y. J. (2009). Facilitating Asian students' critical thinking in online discussions. *British Journal of Educational Technology, 40*(1), 42-57.

Christensson, P. (2009). YouTube definition. *The Tech Terms Computer Dictionary.* Retrieved from http://techterms.com/definition/youtube

Christensson, P. (2014). Instagram definition. *The Tech Terms Computer Dictionary.* Retrieved from http://techterms.com/definition/instagram

Christensson, P. (2016). Snapchat definition. *The Tech Terms Computer Dictionary.* Retrieved from http://techterms.com/definition/snapchat

Churcher, M. A., Downs, E., & Tewksbury, D. (2014). "Friending" Vygotsky: A social constructivist pedagogy of knowledge building through classroom social media use. *The Journal of Effective Teaching, 14*(1), 33-50.

Cobb, P. (2005). Where is the mind? A coordination of sociocultural and cognitive constructivist perspectives. In C. T. Fosnot (Ed.), *Constructivism: Theory, perspectives and practice* (pp. 39–57). New York, NY: Teachers College Press.

Cohen, L. (1999) *Philosophical perspectives in education.* Retrieved from http://oregonstate.edu/instruct/ed416/PP3.html

Colby, R. & Johnson, M. (Eds.). (2013) *Rhetoric/composition/play through video games: Reshaping theory and practice.* New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan.

Collins, A., & Halverson, R. (2009). *Rethinking education in the age of technology: The digital revolution and schooling in America.* New York, NY: Teachers College, Columbia University.

Connelly, F.M., & Clandinin, D. J. (2006). Narrative inquiry. In J. L. Green, G. Camilli & P. Elmore (Eds.), *Handbook of complementary methods in education research* (3rd ed), (pp. 477-487). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Counts, G. S. (1978). *Dare the school build a new social order?* Southern Illinois University Press.

Cress, U., & Kimmerle, J. (2008). A systematic and cognitive view on collaborative knowledge building with wikis. *Compute-Supported Collaborative Learning, 3*, 105-122.

Creswell, J. (2007). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Creswell, J. W. (2014). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches* (4th ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.

Cross, J. (2007). *Informal learning: Rediscovering the natural pathways that inspire innovation and performance.* San Francisco, CA: Pfeiffer.

Cuban, L., Kirkpatrick, H., & Peck, C. (2001). High access and low use of technologies in high school classrooms: Explaining an apparent paradox. *American Educational Research Journal, 38*(4), 813–834.

Cummins, J. I. (2015). Social media, public opinion, and security cooperation in Saudi Arabia. Retrieved from http://www.iscs.dsca.mil/documents/research_projects/cummins.pdf

Dabbagh, N., & Reo, R. (2011). Impact of Web 2.0 on higher education. *Technology integration in higher education: Social and organizational aspects,* 174-187. Doi: 10.4018/978-1-60960-147-8.ch013.

Darling, J. & Nordendo, S. E. (2003). *Progressivism: The philosophy of education.* Oxford: Blackwell Publishing.

Delgado, R. (1989). Storytelling for oppositionist and others: A plea for a narrative. *Michigan Law Review, 87*(8), 2411-2441.

Dewey, J. (1944). *Democracy and education*. New York, NY: Macmillan.

Dewey, J. (1997). *How we think*. Mineola, NY: Dover.

Dewey, J. (1997). *My pedagogic creed*. New York, NY: E. L. Kellogg & Co.

Dewey, J. (2009). *Democracy and education: An introduction to the philosophy of education.* USA: Feather Trail Press.

Dieterle, E., & Clarke, J. (2008). Multi-user virtual environments for teaching and learning. In M. Pagani (Ed.), *Encyclopedia of multimedia technology and networking* (2nd ed.). Hersey, PA: Idea Group, Inc.

Driscoll, M. (2000). *Psychology of learning for instruction*. Needham Heights, MA: Allyn & Bacon.

Dubai School of Government (2011), *Arab social media report.* Retrieved from http://journalistsresource.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/08/DSG_Arab_Social_Media_Report_No_2.pdf

Duggan, M., Ellsion, N., Lampe, C., Lenhart, A., & Madden, M. (2015). Social media update 2014. *Pew Research Center*. Retrieved from http://www.pewinternet.org/2015/01/09/social-media-update-2014/

Dweck, C. S. (1986). Motivational processes affecting learning. *American Psychologist, 41*(10), 1040–1048.

Ebner, M., Lienhardt, C., Rohs, M., & Meyer, I. (2010). Microblogs in higher education - A change to facilitate informal and process-oriented learning? *Computers in Education, 55*(1), 92–100.

Ediger, M., & Rao, D. B. (2003). *Philosophy and curriculum*. New Delhi: Discovery Publishing House.

Eisner, E. (1991). *The enlightened eye: Qualitative inquiry and the enhancement of educational practice*. New York, NY: MacMillan Publishing Company.

Ellison, N., Steinfield, C., & Lampe, C. (2007). The benefits of Facebook "friends": Social capital and college students' use of online social network sites. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication, 12*(4), 1143-1168.

El Mourad, H. (2014, June 19). The Saudis are at the forefront among social media users. *Arabian Business.com*. Retrieved from

http://arabic.arabianbusiness.com/technology/2014/jun/19/364372/

Encarnacion, L. K. (2012). *Perennialism* [Slide Share Presentation]. Retrieved from

http://www.slideshare.net/KathleenLat/perennialism-15112944

Fatany, S. (2012). The influence of Saudi social media. *Saudi Gazzette*. Retrieved from

http://www.saudigazette.com.sa/index.cfm?method=home.

regcon&contentid=20120728131344

Freire, P. (1997). *Pedagogy of oppressed*. New York, NY: The Continuum.

Frias, E. R., & Montano, J. A. (2012). *Exploring the use of social network sites on accounting education: A social constructivist approach.* Retrieved from

http://www.asepuc.org/banco/25.pdf

Gaglio, B., Nelson, C., & King, D. (2006). The role of rapport: Lessons learned from conducting research in a primary care setting. *Qualitative Health Research, 16*(5), 723-734.

Gatto, J.T. (2005). *Dumbing us down: The hidden curriculum of compulsory schooling (2nd ed.)*. Gabriola Island, BC, Canada: New Society Publishers.

Gee, J. (2003). What video games have to teach us about learning and literacy. *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy, 48*(2), 179-181.

Gehlbach, H. (2010). The social side of school: Why teachers need social psychology. *Educational Psychology Review, 22*(3), 349–362.

Gilliam, A., & Brindis, C. (2011). Virtual sex ed: Youth, race, sex, and new media. *Sexuality Research and Social Policy, 8*(1), 1-4.

Given, L. M. (2008). *The Sage encyclopedia of qualitative research methods.* Los Angeles, CL: Sage Publications.

Glaser, B. G. (1978). *Theoretical sensitivity: Advances in the methodology of grounded theory.* Mill Valley, CA: Sociology Press.

Glesne, C. (2011). *Becoming qualitative researchers: An introduction*. Boston, MA: Pearson.

Goffman, E. (1959). *The presentation of self in everyday life.* Garden City, NY: Doubleday.

Golafshani, N. (2003). Understanding reliability and validity in qualitative research. *The Qualitative Report, 8*(4), 597-607.

Grennes, T. & Strazds, A. (2016). The Saudi Arabia oil shock: Crisis and opportunity for economic reform. *EconoMointor.* Retrieved from http://www.economonitor.com/blog/2016/06/the-saudi-arabia-oil-shock-crisis-and-opportunity-for-economic-reform/

Groenewald, T. (2004). A phenomenological research design illustrated. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods, 3*(1), 1-26.

Guba, E. (1994). Essential elements in a naturalistic thesis proposal. Unpublished manuscript, Indiana University.

Guba, E., & Lincoln, Y. (1994). Competing paradigms in qualitative research. In N. Denzin & Y.

  Lincoln (Eds.) *Handbook of qualitative research* (2nd Ed), (pp. 105-115). Thousand

  Oakes, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.

Guo, Y., Goh, H. D., Ilangovan, K., Jiao, S., & Yang, X. (2012). Investigating factors

  influencing non-use and abandonment of microblogging services. *Journal of Digital*

  Information Management, 10(6), 421-429.

Gutek, G. L. (2004). *Philosophical and ideological voices in education.* Boston, MA: Pearson

  Education, Inc.

Habash, M. (2015 September 8) The Saudi user on social media sites. *Tech World.* Retrieved

  from http://www.tech-wd.com/wd/2015/09/08/social-network-in-ksa/

Hall, R. (2009). Towards a fusion of formal and informal learning environments: The impact of

  the read/write Web. *Electronic Journal of e-Learning, 7*(1), 29–40.

Hamdan, A (2005). Women and education in Saudi Arabia: Challenges and achievements.

  International Education Journal, 6(1), 42-64.

Harrison, J., MacGibbon, B., & Morton, M. (2001). Regimes of trustworthiness in qualitative

  research: The rigors of reciprocity. *Qualitative Inquiry,7*(3), 323-345.

Harrison, D. (2011). *Can blogging make a difference?* Retrieved from

  https://campustechnology.com/articles/2011/01/12/can-blogging-make-a-difference.aspx

Hatkevich, B. A. (2008). *Motivational factors of the traditionalist, baby boomer,*

  generation x, and generation y student enrolled in a community college (Order No.

  304830819). Available from ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global.

Hew, K. F. (2011). Students' and teachers' use of Facebook. *Computers in Human*

  Behavior, 27(2), 662-676.

Hilscher, J. (2014). A case study examining how students make meaning out of using Facebook as a virtual learning community at a Midwestern university. *Dissertation Abstracts International Section A: Humanities and Social Sciences, 47*(10).

Hine, C. (2000). *Virtual ethnography*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Hoepfl, M. (1997). Choosing qualitative research: A primer for technology education researchers. *Journal of Technology Education, 9*(1), 47-63.

hooks, b. (1994). *Teaching to transgress*: *Education as the practice of freedom*. New York, NY: Routledge.

Hrastinski, S., & Dennen, V. (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), 3-8.

Huang, D., Denice, H., & Sun, Y. (2013). Gender divide and acceptance of collaborative Web 2.0 applications for learning in higher education. *Internet and Higher Education, 16*, 57-65.

Huang, W. H., Huangh, W. Y., & Tschopp, P. (2010). Sustaining iterative game playing process in DGBL: The relationship between motivational processing and outcome processing. *Computers in Education, 55*(2), 789-797.

Huang,W. H., & Nakazawa, K. (2010). An empirical analysis on how learners interact in wiki in an online graduate level learning technology course. *Interactive Learning Environment, 18*, 233-244.

Hughes, G. (2009). Social software: New opportunities for challenging social inequalities in learning? *Learning, Media and Technology, 34*(4), 291-305.

Irwin, L., & Johnson, J. (2005). Interviewing young children: Explicating our practices and dilemmas. *Qualitative Health Research, 15*(6), 821-831.

Ito, M., Baumer, S., Bittanti, M., boyd, d., Cody, R., Herr-Stephenson, B., …Tripp, L. (2010). *Hanging out, messing around, and geeking out: Kids living and learning with new media.* London, England: MIT Press.

Jalal, A., & Zaidieh, Y. (2012). The use of social networking in education: Challenges and opportunities. *World of Computer Science and Information Technology Journal, 2*(1), 18–21.

Jamaludin, A., Chee, S., & Ho, L. (2009). Fostering argumentative knowledge construction through enactive role play in Second Life. *Computers in Education, 53*, 317-329.

Janaki, D. (n.d.). Empowering women through distance learning in India. *Mother Teresa Women's University*. Retrieved from
http://pcf4.dec.uwi.edu/viewpaper.php?id=329&print=1

Jenkins, H. (2009). *Convergence culture: Where old and new media collide*. New York, NY: New York University Press.

Johnson, D. W. (2003). Social interdependence: The interrelationships among theory, research, and practice. *American Psychologist, 58*(11), 931-945.

Jones, S. M., & Bouffard, S. M. (2012). Social and emotional learning in schools: From programs to strategies. *Social Policy Report, 26*(4). Retrieved from
http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED540203.pdf

Kagel, J. (2013 November 18). The world's most avid YouTube viewers are in Saudi Arabia. *Fast Company.* Retrieved from http://www.fastcompany.com/3021832/fast-feed/the-worlds-most-avid-youtube-viewers-are-in-saudi-arabia

Kamal, B. (2013). *Concerns and professional development needs of faculty at King Abdul-Aziz University in Saudi Arabia in adopting online teaching.* (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from K-State Research Exchange.

Kaplan, A.M., & Haenlein, M. (2010), Users of the world, unite: The challenges and opportunities of social media, *Business Horizons, 53*(1). 61.

Karoot, A. (2016). *How to strategically choose the best social media site for your business?* Retrieved from http://www.qarout.me/articles/67-اختيار-شبكات-التواصل-لشركتك.html

Kaya, T. (2010). CUNY social network mixes scholarship with Facebook-style friendship. [Blog article]. Retrieved from http://www.chronicle.com/blogs/wiredcampus/cuny-social-network-mixes-scholarship-with-facebook-style-friendship/27266

Kegan, R. (1982). *The evolving self.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Kendall, L. (2002). *Hanging out in the virtual pub: Masculinities and relationships online*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

King, A. (2009). NVivo coding. *The Sage encyclopedia of qualitative research methods*. Los Angeles, CL: Sage Publications.

Kohlberg, L. (1968). The child as a moral philosopher. *Psychology Today, 2*(4), 24–30.

Kennedy, G., Krause, K., Gray, K., Judd, T., Bennett, S., Maton, K., Dalgarno, B., & Bishop, A. (2006). Proceedings from: *The 23rd annual Conference of the Australasian Society for Computers in Learning in Tertiary Education.* Sydney, Australia: Sydney University Press.

Kukla, A. (2000). *Social constructivism and the philosophy of science.* New York, NY: Routledge.

Kutbi, A. (2015). *How undergraduate female students in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia perceive social media as a learning tool: An exploratory study.* Available from ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global. (Order No. 1590741)

Lave, J., & Wenger, E. (1991). *Situated learning: Legitimate peripheral participation.* Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press.

LeCompte, M.D., & Preissle, J. (1993). *Ethnography and qualitative design in educational research* (2nd ed.). San Diego, CA: Academic Press.

Lee, J. (2016). *10 Seconds at a time: A teacher tries Snapchat to engage students*. Retrieved from http://www.npr.org/sections/ed/2016/03/29/467091289/how-teachers-are-using-snapchat

Lenartz, A. J. (2013). All my rowdy 'friends': The use of social media in higher education. *Dissertation Abstracts International Section A: Humanities and Social Sciences.73*(9).

Lincoln, Y. S., & Guba, E. G. (1985). *Naturalistic inquiry*. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage.

Livingstone, D. W. (2001). *Adults' informal learning: Definition, findings, gaps and future research.* Position paper for the Advisory Panel of Experts on Adult Learning, Applied Research Branch, Human Resources Development, Canada.

Lohnes, S. & Kinzer, C. (2007). Questioning assumptions about students' expectations for technology in college classrooms. *Journal of Online Education, 3(*5), 1-6.

Macfarquhar, N. (2011, June 11). In Saudi Arabia, comedy cautiously pushes limits. The New York Times. Retrieved from http://www.nytimes.com/2011/06/12/world/middleeast/12saudi.html?_r=1

Malterud, K. (2001). Qualitative research: standards, challenges, and guidelines. *The Lancet 358*(16), 483-488.

Martinez, A. (2016). *Internet-based research*. Retrieved from

https://www.citiprogram.org/members/index.cfm?pageID=665&ce=1

Marwick, A. (2013). Ethnographic and qualitative research on Twitter. In Weller, K., Bruns, A.,

Puschmann, C., Burgess, J. and Mahrt, M. (eds), *Twitter and Society.* New York: Peter

Lang, 109-122.

Marx, M. (2001). Invisibility, interviewing, and power: A researcher's dilemma. Resources for

feminist research. In M. Q. Patton (Ed.), *Qualitative research and evaluation methods*

(3d Ed.), (pp. 131-152). Thousand Oakes, CA: Sage.

Maxwell, J. A. (2013). *Qualitative research design: An interactive approach* (3rd ed.). Thousand

Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.

Mbati, L. (2013). Online social media applications for constructivism and observational learning.

The International Review of Research in Open and Distance Learning, 14(5). Retrieved

from http://www.irrodl.org/index.php/irrodl/article/view/1579/2709

McHaney, R. (2011). *The new digital shoreline: How Web 2.0 and millennials are*

revolutionizing higher education. Sterling, VA: Stylus.

Mcleod, S. (2007). *Simply psychology; Vygotsky.* Retrieved from

http://www.simplypsychology.org/vygotsky.html

Mendoza, N. P. (2010). University launches updated online emergency alert system. *The State*

Press. Retrieved from http://www.statepress.com/node/10561

Miles, M. B., & Huberman, A. M. (1994). *Qualitative data analysis*: *An expanded source book*

(2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Miller, D., & Slater, D. (2000). *The Internet: An ethnographic approach*. New York, NY: Berg.

The Ministry of Education. (1969*). Education policy in Saudi Arabia.* Retrieved

https://www.mohe.gov.sa/en/default.aspx

The Ministry of Education. (2015). *King Abdullah scholarship program.* Retrieved

from https://www.mohe.gov.sa/en/studyaboard/King-Abdulla-

hstages/Pages/introduction-a.aspx

The Ministry of Education. (2015). *Higher education statistics* [Data File]. Retrieved from

http://www.moe.gov.sa/ar/Ministry/Deputy-Ministry-for-Planning-and-Information-

affairs/HESC/Ehsaat/Pages/default.aspx

Mirza, A. (2007, June). *Utilizing distance learning technologies to deliver courses in a

segregated educational environment*. Paper presented at the World Conference on

Educational Media and Technology, Vancouver, Canada.

Mirza, A. (2008). Students' perceived barriers to in-class participation in a distributed and gender

segregated educational environment. *The Electronic Journal of Information Systems in

Developing Countries, 35*(7), 1–17.

Mix, K. K. (2010). *Online social networking: Exploring the relationship between use of Web-

based social technologies and community college student engagement*. ProQuest, UMI

Dissertations Publishing.

Morrow, S. (2005). Quality and trustworthiness in qualitative research in counseling psychology.

Journal of Counseling Psychology, 52(2), 250-260.

Nardi, B. (2010). *My life as a night elf priest: An anthropological account of World of Warcraft*.

Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press.

Nellison. (2007, December 11). ECAR: Facebook as a teaching tool? Blog. Retrieved from

http://nellison.blogspot.com/2007/12/ecar-facebook-as-teaching-tool.html

Nielsen. (2014). *Millennials: technology = Social Connection.* Retrieved from

    http://www.nielsen.com/us/en/insights/news/2014/millennials-technology-social-

    connection.html

Noroozi, N. (2010). *Evolving philosophies of modern education in Iran: Examining the role of*

    wonder (Unpublished Master's Thesis). McGill University, Montreal, Canada.

Norskov, S. V., & Rask, M. (2011). Observation of online communities: A discussion of online

    and offline observer roles in studying development, cooperation and coordination in an

    open source software environment. *Forum: Qualitative Social Research, 12.* Retrieved

    from http://www.qualitative-research.net/index.php/fqs/article/view/1567/3225#gcit

Nugent, P. (2013). *Spatial intelligence*. Retrieved from http://www.brainmetrix.com/spatial-

    intelligence/

Oblinger, D. G. (2005). Educating the net generation. *Educause*. Retrieved from

    http://net.educause.edu/esem052.

Ojo, O, D. (2012). Educating women prisoners in Africa through open and distance learning

    mode: An empowerment process. *International Women Online Journal of Distance*

    Education, 1(3), 2147-0367.

Omar, S. (2016). *Concerns and professional development needs of faculty at King Saud*

    University in Saudi Arabia in adopting online teaching (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved

    from K-State Research Exchange.

O'Reilly, T. (2007). What is Web 2.0: Design patterns and business models for the next

    generation of software. *Communications & Strategies, 65*, 17-37. Retrieved from

    http://mpra.ub.uni-muenchen.de/4578/

Palmer, P. J. (1998). *The courage to teach: Exploring the inner landscape of a teacher's Life*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass Publishers.

Papert, S. (1999). *Papert on Piaget*. Retrieved from http://www.papert.org/articles/Papertonpiaget.html.

Pascoe, C. J. (2011). Resource and risk: Youth sexuality and new media use. *Sexuality Research and Social Policy, 8*(1):5-17.

Patton, M. (2015). *Qualitative research and evaluation methods* (4th ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publication, Inc.

Pew Internet and American Life Project. (2007). *Teens and social media: The use of social media gains a greater foothold in teen life as they embrace the conversational nature of interactive online media* [Data file]. Retrieved from http://www.pewinternet.org/files/old-media/Files/Reports/2007/PIP_Teens_Social_Media_Final.pdf.pdf

Piaget, J. (1981). *Intelligence and affectivity: Their relationship during child development.* In T. A. Brown & C. E. Kaegi (Eds. & Trans.). Palo Alto, CA: Annual Reviews.

Polkinghorne, D. (2005). Language and meaning: Data collection in qualitative research, *Journal of Counseling Psychology, 52*(2), 137145.

Pratt, T. (2011, April 8). Graduate uses Facebook to find financial aid. *Reuters.* Retrieved from http://www.reuters.com/article/us-college-facebook-idUSTRE7373EX20110408

Prensky, M. (2006). Listen to the natives. *Educational Leadership, 63*(4), 20-23.

Project HealthDesign: Rethinking the Power and Potential of Personal Health Records. (2012). "iN Touch." [Weblog article]. Retrieved from http://www.projecthealthdesign.org/projects/current_projects/intouch

Raditoaneng, W. N. (2011). Problems encountered in the teaching of religious education: A case

study in Botswana. *Western Journal of Black Studies, 35*(1), 22-38. Retrieved from

http://search.proquest.com.er.lib.k-state.edu/docview/1018071308?accountid=11789

Rainie, L. & Tancer, B. (2007). Wikipedia users. *Pew Research Center.* Retrieved from

http://pewinternet.org/Reports/2007/Wikipedia-users/Data-Memo.aspx

Raver, C. C., Garner, P. W., & Smith-Donald, R. (2007). The roles of emotion regulation and

emotion knowledge for children's academic readiness: Are the links causal? In R. C.

Pianta, M. J. Cox & K. L. Snow (Eds.), *School readiness and the transition to*

kindergarten in the era of accountability. (pp. 121-147). Baltimore, MD: Paul H Brookes.

Rogers, E. M. (1960). *Social change in rural society: A textbook in rural sociology.* In J. F.

Cuber (Ed.). New York, NY: Literary Licensing, LLC.

Roller, M R., & Lavrakas, P. J. (2015). *Applied qualitative research design: A total quality*

framework approach. New York, NY: Guilford Press.

Rubin, A. (2000). Standards for rigor in qualitative inquiry. *Research on Social Work Practice,*

10(2), 173-178.

Ryberg, T., Dirckinck-Holmfeld, L., & Jones, C. (2010). Catering to the needs of the "digital

natives" or educating the "net generation"? In M. J. W. Lee, & C. McLoughlin (Eds.),

Web 2.0 based e-learning: Applying social informatics for tertiary teaching. (pp. 301-

318). Hershey: PA: IGI Gloibal.

SACM, (2011). Saudi Arabian Cultural Mission to the U.S. Retrieved from www.SACM.org

Saeed, A. (2013, December 9). The Saudi artist with one million Instagram followers. *BBC*

News. Retrieved from http://www.bbc.com/news/blogs-trending-25261427

Saleh, M. A. (1986). Development of higher education in Saudi Arabia Higher Education. *Higher Education, 15*(1986) 17-23.

Salmons, J. (2012, November 16). Deep data: Digging into social media with qualitative methods. (Weblog Article). Retrieved from http://nsmnss.blogspot.com/2012/11/deep-data-digging-into-social-media_16.html

Sandelowski, M. (1995). Sample size in qualitative research. *Research in Nursing & Health, 18,*179-183

Schrader, D. E. (2015). Constructivism and learning in the age of social media: Changing minds and learning communities. *New Directions for Teaching and Learning, 144,* 23-35.

Schutt, R. K. (2016). *Understanding the social world: Research methods for the 21st century*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publication.

Selwyn, N. (2007). *Web 2.0 applications as alternative environments for informal learning: A critical review.* Retrieved from http://www.oecd.org/edu/ceri/39458556.pdf

Selwyn, N. (2011). *Social media in higher education*. Retrieved from http://www.educationarena.com/pdf/sample/sample-essay-selwyn.pdf

Seo, K. (2013). *Using social media effectively in the classroom: Blogs, wikis, twitter, and more.* New York and London: Routledge; Taylor and Francis.

Shakouri, N., Nazari, O., & Nazari, S. N. (2015). An attempt to empower teachers in education: An epistemological look. *Theory and Practice in Language Studies, 5*(1), 170-175. Retrieved from http://search.proquest.com.er.lib.k-state.edu/docview/1686396282?accountid=11789

Shenton, A. (2004). Strategies for ensuring trustworthiness in qualitative research projects. *Education for Information, 22*, 63-75.

Shin, H., & Ryan, A. (2014). Friendship networks and achievement goals: An examination of selection and influence processes and variations by gender. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence, 43*(9), 1453–1464.

Sillius, K., Kailanto, M., & Tervakari, A. M. (2011). Evaluation the quality of social media in an educational context. *International Journal of Emerging Technologies in Learning, 6*(3), 21–27.

Simmons, C., & Simmons, C. (1994). English, Israeli-Arab and Saudi Arabian adolescent values. *Educational Studies, 20*(1), 69-87.

Smith, B. (2016 April 7). 7 Fascinating ways researchers are using social media. *MakeUseOf.* Retrieved from http://www.makeuseof.com/tag/7-fascinating-ways-researchers-using-social-media/

Smith, M. (2013 November 18). Young Saudis getting creative on YouTube. *REUTERS.* Retrieved from http://www.reuters.com/article/us-saudi-youtube-idUSBRE9AH0GY20131118

The Social Clinic. (2013). The state of social media in Saudi Arabia 2013. [Blog article]. Retrieved from http://www.thesocialclinic.com/saudi-arabia-ranks-first-on-twitter-worldwide/

Spanier, G. (2000), Five challenges facing American higher education. *Executive Speeches, 14*(6), 19-25.

Spring, J. (2008). *Wheels in the head: Educational philosophies of authority, freedom, and culture from Confucianism to human rights* (3rd ed.). New York, NY: Routledge.

Stake, R. E. (1995). *The art of case study research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

The statistics: More than 680.000 unemployed men and women in Saudi Arabia. (2016, July 18).

    Akhbaar24. Retrieved from http://akhbaar24.argaam.com/article/detail/292355/الإحصاء-

    أكثر-من-680-ألف-عاطل-و عاطلة-عن-العمل-بالمملكة

Stevenson, R. (2004). Constructing knowledge of educational practices from case studies.

    Environmental Education Research, 10(1), 30-51.

Strauss, A., & Corbin J. (1990). *Basics of qualitative research: Grounded theory procedures and*

    techniques. Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.

Taleb, H. (2014). The potential for integrating a distance learning initiative into the curriculum

    of a Saudi female private college. *Journal of Modern Education Review, 4*, 282–298.

Tellis, W. (1997). *Introduction to case study. The qualitative report, 3*(2), 1-13.

Teng, Y., Bonk, C., Bonk, A., Lin, M., & Michko, G. (2009). *Create motivating YouTube videos:*

    Using dual coding theory and multimedia learning theory to investigate viewer

    perceptions. Paper presented at the American Educational Research Association (AERA),

    San Diego, CA.

Thompson, C. J., Locander, W. B., & Pollio, H. R. (1989). Putting Consumer Experience Back

    into Consumer Research: The Philosophy and Method of Existential-Phenomenology.

    The Journal of Consumer Research, 16(2), 133-146.

Tinti-Kane, H. (2013, April 3). *Overcoming hurdles to social media in education.* Retrieved from

    www.educause.edu/overcoming-hurdles-social-media-education

Trahar, S. (2009). Beyond the story itself: Narrative inquiry and autoethnography in intercultural

    research in higher education. *Qualitative Social Research, 10*(1) Retrieved from

    http://search.proquest.com.er.lib.k-state.edu/docview/61722704?accountid=11789

UNESCO. (1996). *Higher education and women: Issues and perspectives*. Retrieved from

http://www.unesco.org/education/educprog/wche/principal/women.html

UTURN. (n.d.). *About UTURN*. Retrieved from http://www.uturn.me/i/about.php

Veelo, K., & Damen, H. (2009). *Use of social media in higher education*. Retrieved from

http://www.terena.org/activities/aspire/ws1

Vygotsky, L. S. (1962). *Thought and language*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Vygotsky, L. S. (1978). *Mind in society: The development of higher psychological processes*.

Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Weiner, B. (1985). An attributional theory of achievement motivation and emotion.

Psychological Review, 92(4), 548–573.

Whittemore, R., Chase, S., & Mandle, C. (2001). Validity in qualitative research. *Qualitative

Health Research, 11*(4), 522-537.

Will, M. (2016). *Teachers are starting to use Snapchat. Should you? Retrieved from*

http://blogs.edweek.org/teachers/teaching_now/2016/06/teachers_snapchat_guide.html

Willis, P. (1977). *Learning to labor: How working class kids get working class jobs.* New York,

NY: Columbia University Press.

Wolcott, H. F. (1999). *Ethnography: A way of seeing*. Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira Press.

Yin, R. (1981). The case study as a serious research strategy. *Knowledge: Creation, Diffusion,

Utilization, 3*(1), 97-114.

Yin, R. K. (2003). *Case study research: Design and methods* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA:

Sage.

Zgheib, G. (2014). *Social media use in higher education: An exploratory multiple-case study.*

Available from ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global. (Order No. 3625174)

Appendix A - IRB Approval Letter

KANSAS STATE | University Research Compliance Office
U N I V E R S I T Y

TO: Kay Ann Taylor   Proposal Number: 8578
      Education, Curriculum and Instruction
      Bluemont Hall

FROM: Rick Scheidt, Chair
      Committee on Research Involving Human Subjects

DATE: 12/14/2016

RE: Proposal Entitled, "The Influence of Social Media on Saudi graduate Students: An Explanatory
      Case Study"

The Committee on Research Involving Human Subjects / Institutional Review Board (IRB) for Kansas State
University has reviewed the proposal identified above and has determined that it is EXEMPT from further
IRB review. This exemption applies only to the proposal - as written – and currently on file with the IRB.
Any change potentially affecting human subjects must be approved by the IRB prior to implementation and
may disqualify the proposal from exemption.

Based upon information provided to the IRB, this activity is exempt under the criteria set forth in the
Federal Policy for the Protection of Human Subjects, **45 CFR §46.101, paragraph b, category: #2,
subsection: ii.**

Certain research is exempt from the requirements of HHS/OHRP regulations. A determination that
research is exempt does not imply that investigators have no ethical responsibilities to subjects in such
research; it means only that the regulatory requirements related to IRB review, informed consent, and
assurance of compliance do not apply to the research.

Any unanticipated problems involving risk to subjects or to others must be reported immediately to the
Chair of the Committee on Research Involving Human Subjects, the University Research Compliance
Office, and if the subjects are KSU students, to the Director of the Student Health Center.

Appendix B - Interview Protocol

Prior to Interview

The participants will be briefed on the following prior to the study:

1. The purpose of the research

    I. To share experiences in social media.

2. The procedures of the research

    I. Interview primary source of data collection

        i. Photos

        ii. Video/audio meetings

        iii. Electronic mail

    II. Member checking

        i. Participants have opportunity to review transcripts, make additions, and/or

        modifications to ensure participant said what they meant to say

        ii. Initial coding of transcripts

        iii. Analysis of categories and themes

3. The risks, if any, and benefits of research

    I. Risk

        i. None to participants

    II. Benefits of research

        i. Contribution to limited research on social media influence on Saudi graduate students

        ii. Contribution to the lack of qualitative research about social media in the KSA

        ii. Opportunity for educators in Saudi higher education to view social media through a

        different lens

4. The voluntary decision to withdraw from the research at any time

5. The procedures that will be used to identify and protect confidentiality. Anonymity will be

provided to protect confidentiality (Groenewald, 2004, p. 10)

Both me and the participants will sign two copies of the consent form, one for researcher and

another one for each participant. This process will be done via email. The participant will be

given a copy of the interview questions in advance.

Conclusion of Interview

At the conclusion of the interview:

1. Thank participant

2. Schedule second meeting

3. Immediately after interview in private place

   I. Record notes

   II. Complete observation check list

5. Listen to participant interview

6. Transcribe immediately after each interview

7. Check in with primary researcher to update on progress of study

Appendix C - Interview Questions

Time of Interview:

      Begin:

      Ending time:

Date:

Place:

Interviewer:

Interviewee Pseudonym:

Overarching Research Questions

1. What are the experiences of Saudi graduate students who are active social media users (Churcher et al., 2014)?

2. How do social media influence Saudi graduate students who are active social media users (Mbati, 2013)?

Research Sub-questions

    a. How do Saudi graduate students use social media?

    b. How do social media impact Saudi graduate students personally?

    c. How do social media influence Saudi graduate students socially?

    d. How do social media influence Saudi graduate students financially?

    e. How do social media influence Saudi graduate students in learning?

Background/Demographic Questions

The background section will be sent to the participants via email prior to the first interview.

1. Tell me about you and your family.

a. How old are you? Where were you born?

b. Where did you grow up?

c. Where do you currently live?

d. What is your major?

e. Do you receive a scholarship?

f. Please tell me about your immediate family.

g. What are your parents' educational backgrounds?

2. Self-Description

a. How would you describe yourself?

b. What is your marital status? If married what is your spouse educational level?

c. Please tell me about any children you have.

d. What is your socioeconomic status?

e. How do you see yourself changing in the future?

3. Technological Background

a. What electronic devices do you have?

b. How do descried your technology level?

First Interview

Social Media Experience

1. Tell me about when you start using social media?

   Probes:

   a. What objectives, goals or hopes do you have?

   b. What influenced you?

   c. Did you plan to be popular? Why or why not?

2. If I followed your social media accounts, what would I find (Patton, 2015)?

   Probes:

   a. What language(s) do you use?

   b. What topics do you mostly focus on?

   c. Which social media platform do you use the most?

   d. Which social media platform has the biggest number of your followers?

3. Tell me about the time when you started to realize that your social media account/s became very popular?

4. How do you see social media impacting the way people communicate/interact/express their ideas/believes/values/opinions in Saudi Arabia?

5. How does it make you feel to be a popular Saudi woman/man in a culture like the Saudi culture?

6. The studies indicated that social media popularity has been increasing lately in the KSA, what do you think?

Social Media and Learning

1. Which social media can be used for learning? How?

2. How do you use social media in formal learning?

3. How effective are social media for formal learning?

4. Based on the literature, social media can be a platform for formal and informal learning, how do you use it for informal learning?

Second Interview

Social Media Financial Influence

1. I know you do advertisement in your social media accounts. What would you share about it?

2. Assume that I want you to advertise for my home based bakery business in your social media accounts, what is the process that I should go through?

   Probes:

   a. How much do I have to pay?

   b. How do companies/brands reach you for advertisement through social media?

   c. Which social media platform has features that can be best used for advertisement? Why?

Opportunities and Challenges in Social Media

1. There are always challenges and opportunity in being popular. What opportunities do social media provide to you?

2. What challenges you have faced in social media?

3. Describe a time when unexpected thing(s) happened to you in social media, if possible.

For Women:

4. What do you think about showing images of yourself in social media?

   Probes:

   a. How did you decide to show or not show images of yourself?

   b. What are the consequences?

For Men:

5. Some women chose to show images of themselves. What is your opinion about that?

Third Interview

Followers in Social Media

1. Describe your followers. What should I know about them?

2. What impact/influence do you think you have on your followers?

3. What do you think your followers expect from you?

4. What influence would you like to see happening on your followers through your social media accounts (Patton, 2015)?

5. Suppose I want to increase the number of my followers in social media, what advice do you give me?

6. Your followers consider you a public figure in social media. How did that affect you personally?

Closing Questions

1. I want you to describe your experience in social media in three words/phrases.

2. Ok, you have given me a lot of information about your experiences in social media, opinion, feelings, and knowledge. Now I would like to ask you what are your recommendations for educators in Saudi Arabia about using social media in formal education?

3. If you have the power to change things about higher education in the KSA in regard to using social media, what would you make different (Patton, 2015)?

4. Any thing else you want to say?

Appendix D - Letter of Consent

Project Title: The Influence of Social Media on Saudi Graduate Students: An Explanatory case study

Researcher: Asma Alhamadi, Doctoral Candidate in Curriculum and Instruction at Kansas State University

Faculty sponsor and Principal Investigator: Dr. Kay Ann Taylor , PhD/Associate Professor and the Director of Curriculum and Instruction Graduate Programs at Kansas State University, Manhattan, Kansas, The United States of America.

Purpose:

The purpose of this qualitative case study is to identify the influence of social media on Saudi graduate students who are active social media users.

Introduction:

You are being asked to participate in a research study being conducted by Asma Alhamadi for her doctoral dissertation under the supervision of Dr. Kay Ann Taylor. You are being asked to participate in two to three 60 to 90 minute interviews regarding social media use and influence. Please read this form carefully and ask any questions of the researcher before agreeing to participate in the study. You may contact the researcher Asma Alhamadi at misk15@ksu.edu.

Procedures: If you agree to participate in this study, the following will occur:

- Meet via any audio/video communication application for interview

- The interview will be audio/video recorded

Voluntary Participation:

Participation in this study is voluntary. At any time during your participation, you may withdraw.

Confidentiality:

All data will be numerically coded. No other form of identification will be utilized. Only the researcher will have access to the data. Each participant will be represented by pseudonym.

Risk/Benefits:

Participating in this research poses no risks beyond those associated with everyday life. Participants will be numerically coded to ensure confidentiality. There are no direct benefits from participation but it is anticipated that the results from this study will contribute to the limited research on social media influence on graduate students and to the lack of qualitative research in social media in the KSA. Also, it may inspire educators in Saudi higher education to view social media through a different lens

Contacts and Questions:

If you have any questions about this research, please feel free to contact:

Asma Alhamadi at misk15@ksu.edu

Dr. Kay Ann Taylor at ktaylor@ksu.edu

If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant, you may contact

- Rick Schidt, Chair, Committee on Research Involving Human Subjects, 203 Fairchild Hall, Kansas State University, Manhattan, KS 66502, (785) 532-3224

- Cheryl Doerr, Associate Vice President for Research Compliance, 203 Fairchild Hall, Kansas State University, Manhattan, KS 66502, (785) 532-3224

Participant Name:

Participant Signature: **Date:**

Witness to Signature (project staff):   **Date:**