

**SOCIAL MEDIA IMPACT ON PROFESSIONAL AND PROFILE LEVELS OF DENTAL STUDENTS AND INTERNS IN SAUDI ARABIA****<sup>1</sup>Dr. Aliyaa Zaidan, BDS, and <sup>2</sup>\*Dr. Rayan Bahabri, BDS, DDS, CAGS.**<sup>1</sup>Intern, College of Dentistry, Taibah University, Madinah Munawwarah, KSA.<sup>2</sup>Dean of Hospital and Administration, Assistant Professor, Department of Operative, Dentistry, College of Dentistry, Taibah University, Madinah Munawwarah, KSA.**\*Corresponding Author: Dr. Rayan Bahabri, BDS, DDS, CAGS.**

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**ABSTRACT**

**Backgrounds:** Social networking is a web-based channel that people use to communicate with one another and express their thoughts, opinions and experiences. The Internet and social media are the most effective communication methods in Saudi Arabia. **Objective:** To evaluate the impact of using social media on professional and profile level among dental students in Saudi Arabia. **Method:** A cross-sectional study developed via online questionnaire. The survey consisted of four major sections: demographic data, use of social networking, online privacy and profile, and professionalism and social networking. **Results:** A total of 296 dental students and interns in Saudi Arabia responded to the questionnaire. Regarding profile reputation, 40% of the respondents agreed that others to judge their level of professionalism could use their profile information published on social networking websites. The discrepancy among student levels reveals that social media profiles positively influence the acceptance to postgraduate programs ( $P=0.01$ ). **Conclusion:** Social media and online activities can be a double-edged sword with negative and positive impacts on professional and profile levels of dental students in Saudi Arabia.

**KEYWORDS:** Dental students, profile, professionalism and social media.**INTRODUCTION**

The 21st century revealed accelerating changes and intensifying complexity in communication technology. Online social media gained astounding recognition worldwide. Social networking is a web-based channel that people use to communicate with one another and express their thoughts, opinions and experiences.<sup>[1]</sup> The Internet and social media are the most effective communication methods in Saudi Arabia. Based on the report from Hootsuite Digital in 2018 on Western Asia, "the estimated number of Internet users in Saudi Arabia for January, 2018 was 30.25 million".<sup>[2]</sup> There are several social media sites such as Facebook, Twitter, Snapchat, YouTube and Instagram. Facebook is considered the most widespread social media network in the world.<sup>[3]</sup> It is the third most frequently social media site used in Saudi Arabia, after Google and YouTube.<sup>[4]</sup> The growth of internet use depends on different factors, such as increased speed of internet, new applications and programs that depend mainly on the internet, increased numbers of social networking sites, and the widespread prevalence of smartphone devices, personal computers and laptops with low costs, all of which contribute to developing the internet in Saudi Arabia.<sup>[5]</sup> Social media occupies a prominent place among different levels of society in Saudi Arabia. It helps in the educational field

via YouTube and blogs to improve the quality of the education process and increase the student's ability to think and understand.<sup>[6]</sup> In particular, it provides the chance for the students to comment on, discuss and solve problems about new cases in the dental field with their educators. On the other hand, a society's trust and confidence in medicine are based on professionalism.<sup>[7]</sup> There is an unclear difference between personal and professional use of social network among dental students, especially in relation to privacy, safety and attitude.<sup>[8]</sup>

A study done in the United Kingdom in 2010 showed that 52% of undergraduate medical students have embarrassing photos on their Facebook pages, while 54% stated that they observed unprofessional attitudes on Facebook pages by their colleagues.<sup>[9]</sup>

The impact of those social networking platforms on dentistry and dental students is not well established. Therefore, this study aimed to evaluate the impact of using social media at professional and profile levels among dental students and interns in Saudi Arabia.

## MATERIAL AND METHODS

A cross-sectional study was performed by means of online questionnaire in English language using Google Forms (Google LLC, California, U.S.A.). The questionnaires were pretested on 10 students and 5 interns to check the validity. The questionnaire was consisted of four major parts: demographic data (no identifiable information was requested), usage of social media, online privacy and profile, and professionalism and social media, with a total of 19 questions. Most of the questions were with choices answer. After the author's approval, questions were extracted from a previous study titled 'Use and Views on Social Networking Sites of Pharmacy Students in the United Kingdom'.<sup>[7]</sup> The questionnaire concerned dental students and dental interns from the different universities in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, were reviewed by an expert colleague for face validity. Research ethics committee of the College of Dentistry, Taibah University, approved the study. The sample was calculated using a Raosoft (Raosoft, Inc. Seattle, WA) sample-size calculator. For a population size of approximately 8,660 dental students and interns from different universities of Saudi Arabia,<sup>[10]</sup> 368 dental students and interns were selected. The survey questionnaire was distributed through different social media sites and sent by email to the members subscribed to Saudi Dental Society. The questionnaire was configured to allow participants to submit their responses only once. Responses were coded, entered and analyzed by JMP Pro 12 for Macintosh, Version 12 (SAS Institute Inc., NC, U.S.A.).

## RESULTS

Out of 368 dental students and interns from different universities of Saudi Arabia 296 responded to the questionnaire. Among them 30% were male and 70% females. Figure 1 Response rate was 80.5%.

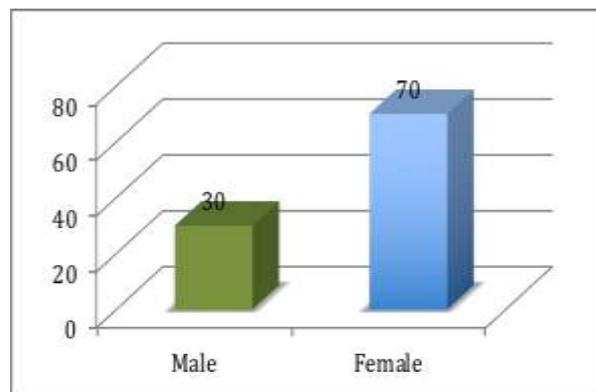


Figure 1: Percentage of participants by gender.

Ninety-eight percent of the participants used social media on a regular basis. Most social media sites used among the participants were Snapchat (85%), Instagram (81%) and YouTube (77%). Figure 2.

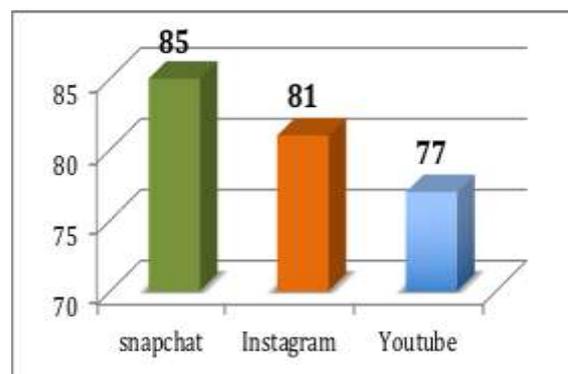


Figure 2: Percentage of most common social media sites used by participants.

Forty-one percent of the participants strongly agreed and 41% agreed that using social media in the dental field is a necessity nowadays. Over all 63% of participants agreed that using social media is an easy way to gain reliable knowledge, while 71% agreed that social media would improve the quality of healthcare.

Table 1: Percentage of participant's agreement about using social media with different domains

Domain	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Nowadays Social media is necessity in dental field	41%	41%	11%	1%	6%
Social media is an easy way to gain reliable knowledge	25%	38%	24%	8%	5%
Social media would improve the quality of healthcare	28%	43%	23%	3%	3%
Using Social media would improve academic performance	24%	40%	33%	3%	0%
Social media adversely affect the reputation if showed by members of the public	7%	35%	36%	16%	6%
Published profile information in social media used to judge the level of professionalism	8%	40%	36%	12%	4%

Furthermore, 64% of the students felt that using social media for academic purposes would improve their performance. Among all of the participants, only 7% strongly agreed and 35% agreed that social media adversely affect the reputation if showed by members of the public. Forty-eight percent of the participants agreed that published profile information in social media used to judge the level of professionalism. Fifty-five percent of the respondents frequently used social media tools to obtain information about subjects or procedures related to the dental field. Twelve percent of male and 23 percent of female dental students and interns agreed that their reputation would be adversely affected if members of the public observed their social media actions. The discrepancy among student levels reveals that social media profiles positively influence acceptance into postgraduate programs ( $P= 0.01$ ).

## DISCUSSION

In these days and ages, people tend to use social media more than ever before. To the best of our knowledge, this study is the first in Saudi Arabia to report the true perception of dental students and interns against the impact of social media on their professional and profile levels. Most of the participants used one or more of the social media platforms. The results showed that Snapchat and Instagram are the most frequently used social platforms when compared to other social platforms. These results contradict the findings published by statista.com in 2016, which indicated that the most common platforms in Saudi Arabia were Facebook and Twitter.<sup>[11, 12]</sup> Younger-aged participants could explain this with interests differing from the whole population. YouTube came in third place, with 77% of the participants using it, and was one of the most important auxiliary educational tools to provide students greater opportunities to watch, learn and comments on new techniques in the dental field. More than half of the respondents frequently used any one of social media tools to obtain information about subjects or procedures related to the dental field. Furthermore, YouTube provided easy access to information and the communication between students and academic staff using social media channels. This finding can be assured, as 38% of participants agreed that using social media is an easy way to gain reliable knowledge. Consequentially, more than half of the participants agreed that using social media would improve their academic performance (Table 1). This finding opposes a Jazan University study, which showed that 57% and 65% of dental students at Jazan University assumed that social media affected their study negatively, and their GPA would increase if they stopped or reduced using social media, respectively.<sup>[11]</sup> Forty-eight percent of the participants agreed or strongly agreed that what they post in their social profile might affect how others judge their professionalism. This suggests that students had concerns about viewers of their profiles and posts. This finding is similar to that found by Hall *et al.*, who found that 45% of the pharmacy students had posted materials that they did not

want academic staff or a potential employer to view. As for gender differences and reputation concerns, more female than male students agreed that their reputation would be adversely affected if their social media actions were observed by members of the public. This same finding occurred with male and female pharmacy students (60.7% vs 71.7%).<sup>[8]</sup> A similar concern regarding a student's social profile and its impact on their postgraduate studies acceptance can be detected, as 35% of the dental students thought that their social media profile might affect their acceptance into postgraduate programs. Indeed, this finding is consistent with what has been published by CareerBuilder.com in 2017<sup>[13]</sup>, as the report showed that 70% of employers use social media to screen applicants.

## CONCLUSION

Social media and online activities can be a double-edged sword with negative and positive impacts on professional and profile levels of dental students in Saudi Arabia. Within the limitations of this study, the majority of dental students believes that social media use will improve their academic performance. Just under half of the dental students feel that social media profile could be used by others to judge their level of professionalism, and have a direct correlation with acceptance into postgraduate programs.

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