PERCEPTIONS OF USING SOCIAL MEDIA NETWORKS AMONG SPECIAL EDUCATION TEACHERS IN THE KINGDOM OF SAUDI ARABIA

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Abstract

This study investigates the perceptions of using social media networks among special education teachers in the kingdom of Saudi Arabia. The sample population of this research consists of 160 special education teachers (100 males and 60 females) specialized and trained only for teaching students with intellectual disability and enrolled in the Education Department in Riyadh, kingdom of Saudi Arabia. The instrument used to gather data from the participants included a self-designed online questionnaire. Results showed that Saudi special education teachers always used social media network for personal purposes. Twitter was the highest application which used by those teachers. Generally, they revealed a positive perception towards the use of social media networks. The study recommends more studies in this area so as to closely understand how and why special education teachers utilize or not social media in their classes in order to develop best practices for implementing social media in teaching and learning special education classes in the kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

Keywords: Saudi Arabia, Social Media Networks, Special Education Teachers.

1. Introduction

The use of social media networks has increase since the growth evolution in internet technology. Many studies have noticed the great impact of using social media networks in different fields and particularly in education field. This is because social media networks are becoming less complex, more accessible and easier to share text, audio, video, images, podcasts, and other multimedia communications. These networks goes beyond the limitations of teachers communication through providing access to various books, references, journals and research papers (Kumar, 2012). Kettunena, Sampson and Vuorinen (2015) reported that social media networks assisting teachers by offering them platforms counselling services between them, their students, and their parents. These platforms keep counsellors updated about recent research relevant to educational field and assist the teachers to gain more understanding of learning issues that they face every school day. Social media networks defined as “a group of technologies that facilitate social interaction, make possible collaboration, and enable deliberation across stakeholders” (Bryer and Zavatarro, 2011, p. 327). There are several networks included in social media a such as Twitter, Facebook and You Tup, which offer people chances to engage and interact with one another in simple and multiple ways.

Despite the fact that social media networks is broadly used among individuals worldwide, it is not investigated and understood among special education teachers who specialized and trained only for teaching students with intellectual disability (ID) in the kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA). To be more specific, most studies that tackled using social media networks concentrated on normal students and their teachers in schools and universities. However, few studies have addressed using social media by special education teachers (Khasawneh, 2019). Furthermore, it is not clear what their perceptions towards the use of social media networks in KSA (Alim, 2017). Therefore, the aim of this study is to investigate how special education teachers use social media networks and what are their perception towards it. The findings of this study will expand our knowledge about the use of social media networks by special education teachers and offer a clear picture of their perception towards these networks. This will help stakeholders to be aware about the

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differences between special education teachers' usage of social media networks before designing their training programs. Presenting such findings will also enable special education teachers to help students in practicing and developing their social networks skills to support the learning process. The study guided by the following questions:

- 1) To what extent do teachers use social medial networks?
- 2) What are teacher's perceptions towards using social medial networks?

2. Literature Review

2.1 Special Education in KSA

There were no special education services in KSA before 1960, until the first services provided to students with visual impairment who were studying in the evenings to use Braille in one of the schools in Riyadh, KSA (Althabet, 2002). In 1974, General Directorate for Special Education (DGSE) was established for planning and improving special education programs across the country (Al-Ajmi, 2006). This was the first step to pay more attention by the Saudi government to special education programmes in KSA. DGSE was responsible for organising and supporting programmes for all students with disabilities which include students with hearing or visual disabilities, learning disabilities, (ID), speech impairments, autism, behavioural disorders, physical disorders and several other disabilities, as well as for students who are gifted and talented (Al-Ajmi, 2006; Al-Mousa, 2010; Alotaibi, 2015).

KSA was the first country that applied the concept of inclusion for students with disability in public schools. The first successful integration conducted in Al-Hofuf in 1984 and the second one was in 1989 in kindergarten placed in King Saud University in Riyadh. In the late 1990s, the integration of students with special needs into public schools started to expand across the country (Al-Mousa, 2010). According to the Ministry of Education of Saudi Arabia (2018), the number of public schools that include students with a disability increased from 66 in 1996 to 8,099 in 2016. The increase attributed to a change in legislation at the beginning of 2000, which sought to maintain the rights of and equality between people with disabilities and other people in the society. For example, a Disability Code was passed in 2000, which established equal access to free and proper educational, medical, social, psychological and rehabilitation services through public institutions (Alfaraj & Kuyini, 2014).

ID defines as a "significant limitations both in intellectual functioning and in adaptive behaviour, which covers many everyday social and practical skills. This disability originates before the age of

18" (American Association on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities, 2010, p. 1). The first institution for teaching students with ID established in 1970 and supporting 10 students. Fifteen years later, there were 827 students enrolled in institutions for students with ID across the country (Althabet, 2002). The assistance of students with ID continues to increase in KSA in both institutions and in public schools. In the institutions, the students typically have severe ID and multiple disabilities, while the public schools generally include students with mild and moderate ID in what is categorised as 'self-contained' classrooms in elementary, intermediate and high schools (Al-Mousa, 2010). In 2008, there were 11 institutions across KSA which accommodated 1,244 students with ID, and 2,307 self-contained classes in public or regular schools across KSA which accommodated a further 11,805 students with ID (Alnahdi, 2013). According to Alnahdi (2014), 58% of all KSA special education institutions are for students with ID.

2.2 Social Media Networks in KSA

The emergence of social media networks over the last decade has undoubtedly affected the way people around the world interact with each other, as well as the way they access the abundance of wealth of information that surrounds them and their societies (Allam & Elyas, 2016). Many countries worldwide including KSA have seen the advantages of the independence and freedoms offered through social media networks and value the opportunity that they have in their hands. It is appear that Saudi citizen, to be more specific, payed more attention to social media networks. Fatany, (2012) reported, "Saudis citizen are the most active social media users in the Arab region, with an estimated 393,000 using Twitter and nearly four million using Facebook and YouTube" (p. 1). However, this number has increased during the recent years, from 8.5 million to 12.8 million users, and most recently, the number reached 18.3 million users, equivalent to 58 % of the population of KSA. Smart phones constitute the largest platform in logging into social networks, with 260 minutes a day as an estimated average of logging per person using smart phones. Facebook and Twitter dominate with the largest number of social media users in KSA, where Facebook users reached 11 million users, while the number of Twitter users amounted to 9 million users. YouTube witnessed a high view rate, where 7 million Saudi users watched YouTube video clips at a rate of 105,900 per hour a day (Ministry of communication and information technology of Saudi Arabia, 2019).

2.3 Saudi Educational Studies in using Social Media Networks

Al-Qahtani, Hanadi (2018) explored the competencies of special education teachers in applying learning technology by social media network, and which was the most helpful social media networks for the students with special needs. The questionnaire involved 112 special education teachers in KSA aged between (25 to 45), with years of experience from (1 to 10). The participants of the study reported benefits of using social media in their training programs to increase their efficiency because it contains information in various fields. They also believed that social media play a vital and positive role in education field generally and in the field of special education in particular. Alfageer, Aldawodi, Al Queflie, Masud, Al Harthy, Alogayyel, & Qureshi, (2018), investigated the level and source of knowledge and attitude of primary school teachers about attention-deficit and hyperactivity disorder (ADHD). The sample involved in this study was 141 male teachers at 17 primary schools in Khashm-Alaan district, KSA. The quantitative study found that the majority of the teachers had either very good (13%) or good (59%) knowledge about ADHD. The participants stated different tools or platforms to gain information about ADHD such as internet, social media, and television. However, the major source of this information about ADHD was internet 64 (49%), followed by social media 45 (34%).

Almusam, (2016) investigated the impact of social media on education in KSA and the United States. The comparative study between KSA and the United States teachers found that Social media usage by females is much lower in KSA due to the strict Islamic culture. Schools will not embrace the use of social media unless the Saudi government makes this a high priority.

Alabdulkareem, (2015) explored science teachers' and their students' views of the current use of social networks, the use of the web, views of the impact of social media on education and views of possible impact of official use of social media on teaching and learning on Saudi middle school. The quantitative study involved 63 science teachers and 782 students in middle public schools in Riyadh, KSA. The study found that smart phones are the best possible device to enhance the use of social media in education. WhatsApp was been used as a main tool by teachers and their students, with 100% for the teachers, and almost 73% for the students. Even though the teachers and their students are keen to use social media in education because they consider it as enhancement tool for their teaching and learning skills, their real practice is

significantly low. The reason was both the teachers and their students believed that the purpose of using of social media is for socialisation only.

Allam & Elyas, (2016) investigated the perceptions of using social media as an English Language Teaching (ELT) tool among English Foreign Language teachers (EFL) in KSA. A quantitative approach was used to collect a descriptive data from 75 EFL teachers, (35 males and 40 female participants), in two Saudi tertiary institutions. According to the findings, the majority of the participants believe strongly in the educational values and benefits of using social media as an ELT tool in the EFL classes. However, the participants express a hesitation to adapt and use social media in the EFL classes because it might cause distraction among the students. They also believed that the current curriculums do not support social media as an ELT tool. Albalaw, (2017) conducted a study aimed to discover the status of social media use by mathematics teachers in the classroom and what are their perception of using social media in teaching. A quantitative method involved 142 mathematics teachers (82 male and 60 female) in Tabuk, KSA. According to the results, the participants revelled a moderate use of social media in their teaching with no specific purpose. However, female teachers were more significantly using social media than male teachers. Both male and female teachers believed positively in the significance role of using social media in their teaching.

In higher education, Alrshedi (2012) explored the degree to which the faculty members at the University of Hail use social media in their teaching. The sample was 157 faculty members, representing 10% of the faculty population. The quantitative study found that the faculty members used social media use in a moderate degree. In addition, no significant differences has found between the participants regarding their gender and experience. Alim, (2017) conducted a study to understand the use of twitter for teaching purposes in Saudi universities. The study developed a questionnaire was distributed to 100 lecturers in Saudi universities in order to explore their experiences and opinions regarding Twitter use in teaching. The study found that the top three teaching purposes Twitter was used for were: sharing resources, posting important information and enabling students to ask questions. The lecturers showed positive experiences of using Twitter in teaching, which was focused on: accessibility, the dissemination of important information, student engagement, and the sharing of opinions and ideas.

Haque, & Al Salem, (2019) conducted a mixed method study to explore the impact of Social Media on students' attitudes towards the process of learning EFL from the learners' perspectives in the Department of English Language at Najran University in KSA. In the self-designed online electronic questionnaire, 228 undergraduate students (153 females and 75 males), were involved, while in the semi-structured interviews, 19 students were included after they agreed to participate. According to the findings, the participants believed that social media strongly improves their understanding of English. In addition, the students reported that these networks influenced their attitudes towards English positively because they considered them as a perfect platform to improve their English skills. However, the results did not show any statistically significant difference between gender and the student's attitudes towards learning English through social media.

Based on an examination of past Saudi context, there is very limited research on the use of social media in special education specifically (Khasawneh, 2019), and on education generally (Alabdulkareem, 2015). Moreover, no previous studies have attempted to investigate the use of social media by teachers specialized and trained only for teaching students with intellectual disability in Saudi schools. The current study, therefore, addresses this issue by focusing on those teachers and intend to identify their perception towards social media networks.

3. Methodology

Research Design

This is a descriptive study of an exploratory nature in which the data collected by using a questionnaire, developed by the researchers. Creswell (2003) suggests that exploratory studies are most advantageous when "not much has been written about the topic or the population being studied" (p. 30).

Sample and Sampling Strategies

The population targeted for this study consisted of male and female Saudi special education teachers who were qualified to teach students with ID in the capital city of Riyadh in KSA during the 2019 – 2020 academic year. According to the Ministry of Education of Saudi Arabia, (2018), there were 900 Saudi special education teachers in the Riyadh region qualified to teach students with ID. These teachers were deemed to be specialised in ID by holding at least a Bachelor degree qualification in special education, specifically trained for teaching students with ID. To be included in the study teachers needed to both hold the qualification and be working with ID students in public schools and

institutions, including stand-alone classes for students with ID, which supervised by the government.

The current study used convenience sampling as a sampling strategy to select the participants to increase the guarantees accuracy, precision, and a good representation of the population (Gall, Borg, & Gall, 1996). The purpose for choosing this strategy was for two reasons. First, large sample sizes are desirable in quantitative studies to add power to statistical analyses. Second, this sample constituted almost 20% of the relevant Saudi teacher population, which was approximately 4,411 in the ID field in KSA (Ministry of Education of Saudi Arabia, 2018).

Instrument

As mentioned earlier, the questionnaire was designed by the researcher based on the literature review in Saudi and western context. The questionnaire is comprised of a total of 15 items distributed into three parts A,B and C. Part A contain Demographic information and part B include teachers' use of social media networks. Part C, consist of teachers' perceptions towards using social media networks which has 10 Likert scale items with five Likert-type responses. These items in this scale were graded as; "strongly disagree = 1", "disagree = 2", "natural = 3", "agree = 4", "strongly agree = 5" (Creswell, 2013; Singh & Mangat, 2013). The online questionnaire hosted on the website Google@ and then downloaded from www. Google.com, to a Microsoft (MS) Excel@ 2013 format, after all the participants have completed it.

Translation

Before the questionnaire presented to special education teachers in Arabic language, first the researcher translated it into Arabic. Then, a certified translator, who was fluent in both English and Arabic, assisted the researcher to compare the Arabic and English versions to achieve credibility. Based on this comparison, a few items and wordings of the Arabic version has modified, and the final Arabic versions were then prepared for use in the study.

Validity and Reliability

Validity refers to the extent to which an instrument measures what it is designed to measure. This is a critical consideration in all forms of research (Creswell, 2012; Gay et al., 2011). To establish confidence in the validity of the instruments, a KSA panel of five people familiar with the use of technology and with teachers' responsibilities and their activities in schools were invited to review the questionnaire items to make sure that each was relevant to the aims of the study and that all were

clearly worded. Reliability, which refers to the degree to which an instrument consistently measures whatever it is measuring (Gay et al., 2011), is a very important property of any measurement scale (Miller, McIntire, & Lovler, 2011). Therefore, a questionnaire considered to be reliable, if a value of Cronbach's alpha is 0.7 or above (Kline, 1993; 2010). According to Table 1, test reliability coefficients in Cronbach's alpha way reached (0.923) and this means that the test is highly reliable. In addition, Table 2 shows that the values of correlation coefficients between the phrase and the total degree of axis (Teachers perceptions towards social media networks) to which paragraphs belongs are moderate and high values, ranging between (0.609) and (0.843), and all are positive (Miller, McIntire, & Lovler, 2011). This means that there is an internal consistency, reflecting high truth to the phrases of the scale.

Table (1) Test Reliability coefficient

Test validity coefficient	Cronbach's alpha
	0.923

Table (1) Pearson correlation coefficient

s	Pearson Correlation	s	Pearson Correlation
1	0.709**	5	0.812**
2	0.609**	6	0.817**
3	0.770**	7	0.786**
4	0.823**	8	0.843**

**Significant about the level of significance 0.01 and less

Procedure

The records indicated that there are approximately 2,178 students with ID, who been assisted by 900 Saudi special education teachers in 63 public schools in Riyadh region (Ministry of Education of Saudi Arabia, 2018). Based on these information, all the 63 schools has been targeted, after the researcher obtained approval from the Ministry of Education in KSA to ask the principals of the schools to distribute the online questionnaire to all special education teachers. Therefore, the 900 participants all were selected by the principals and invited to complete the online questionnaires. 160 special education teachers complete the online questionnaires in approximately one month.

4. Results

Part One: Demographic Information

1- Gender

Table (3)

Gender	Frequency	Percent
Female	60	37.5
Male	100	62.5
Total	160	100.0

Table (3) clarifies the distribution of study participants according to gender variable. The results of the table demonstrate that the majority of participants (100) representing 62.5% of the whole study sample are (male), while (60) representing 37.5% of the whole study sample are (female).

2- Age range

Table (4)

Age	Frequency	Percent
20-24	8	5.0
25-29	33	20.6
30-34	27	16.9
35-39	23	14.4
40-44	31	19.4
50>	38	23.8
Total	160	100.0

The results of Table (4) demonstrate that the majority of participants (63.8%) were aged from (25-29), (40-44) and (over 50) years.

3- Qualification

Table (5)

Qualification	Frequency	Percent
bachelor	118	73.8
master	37	23.1
PhD	5	3.1
Total	160	100.0

The results of Table (5) demonstrate that the majority of participants (118) representing 73.8% of the whole study sample are (bachelor), followed by master and PhD.

Part Two: Teachers use of social media networks (Question 1)

1- Are you familiar with the use of social media networks

Table (6)

Familiarity with the use of social media networks	Frequency	Percent
Yes	157	98.1
No	3	1.9
Total	160	100.0

The results of Table (6) demonstrate that the majority of participants (157) representing 98.1% of the whole study sample (use social media networks), while (3) representing 1.9% of the whole study sample (don't use social media networks).

2- What type of social media networks you are using Table (7)

Type of social media networks	Frequency	Percent
Twitter	110	70.1
You Tube	45	28.7
Facebook	2	1.3
Total	160	100.0

The results of the Table (7) demonstrate that the majority of participants (110) representing 70.1% of the whole study sample (use twitter), followed by (45) representing 28.7% of the whole study sample (use YouTube), whereas (2) representing 1.3% of the whole study sample (use Facebook).

3- How often you use social media networks Table (8)

How often you use social media networks	Frequency	Percent
Always	88	56.1
Often	60	38.2

Table (10) the responses of study respondents on the items of axis Teachers perceptions towards social media networks

s	Items	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Mean	Sd	Rank	Responses
		F	F	F	F	F				
		%	%	%	%	%				
1	Social media has an important part to play in teaching and learning generally	1 0.6	6 3.8	22 14	94 59.9	34 21.7	3.96	0.76	2	Agree
2	Social media increases cooperation between teachers and staff members	1 0.6	26 16.6	29 18.5	77 49	24 15.3	3.64	0.97	6	Agree
3	Social media provides update to the teachers regarding the use of technology in schools	1 0.6	10 6.4	22 14	74 47.1	50 31.8	3.99	0.91	1	Agree
4	Social media provide a network platform for teachers to share their teaching experience	1 0.6	15 9.6	22 14	79 50.3	40 25.5	3.91	0.90	3	Agree
5	Social media offers neat presentation of the lesson and helps the teacher stick to planned lessons.	0 0	15 9.6	41 26.1	78 49.7	23 14.6	3.66	0.86	5	Agree

Sometimes	9	5.7
Total	160	100.0

The results of Table (8) demonstrate that the majority of participants (88) representing 56.1% of the whole study sample (always use), followed by (60) representing 38.2% of the whole study sample (often use), and finally (9) representing 5.7% of the whole study sample (sometimes use).

4- Which purpose you use social media networks for Table (9)

Purpose for using	Frequency	Percent
Professional use	36	22.9
Personal use	121	77.1
Total	160	100.0

The results of Table (9) demonstrate that the majority of participants (121) representing 77.1% of the whole study sample (use it for personal purpose), while (36) representing 22.9% of the whole study sample (use it for professional purpose).

Part Three: What are teachers' perceptions towards social media networks (Question 2)

In order to answer What are Teachers perceptions towards social media networks, the frequencies, percentages, means, standard deviations and ranks of the responses of study respondents have been calculated on the following axis.

s	Items	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Mean	Sd	Rank	Responses
		F	F	F	F	F				
		%	%	%	%	%				
6	Social media assists teachers in mental preparation of the lesson.	1	23	43	73	17	3.53	0.89	8	Agree
		0.6	14.6	27.4	46.5	10.8				
7	Social media offers continuous student-teacher communication outside the educational field	1	23	42	65	26	3.54	1.01	7	Agree
		0.6	14.6	26.8	41.4	16.6				
8	Social media support my teaching activities in school	1	20	27	76	33	3.77	0.94	4	Agree
		0.6	12.7	17.2	48.4	21				
	Mean						3.75	0.69		Agree

The results of teachers' perception towards social media networks are displayed in Table (10). Clearly, the table shows that there is a convergence at the responses of participants on the axis (teachers' perception towards social media networks). The general mean on the statements of axis is (3.75), and this mean is put at the fourth class of the five scale, whose average ranges from (3.41 to 4.20) refers to (agree) degree. In addition, the statements concerning teachers' perception towards social media networks arranged in view of the respondents themselves regarding its degree in a descending order as the following:

1. Participants' responses on statement (3) which states "Social media provides update to the teachers regarding the use of technology in schools" appears at 1st position with (agree) degree. The mean is (3.99) and standard deviation (0.91).
2. Participants' responses on statement (1) which states "Social media has an important part to play in teaching and learning generally" appears at 2nd position with (agree) degree. The mean is (3.96) and standard deviation (0.76).
3. Participants' responses on statement (4) which states "Social media provide a network platform for teachers to share their teaching experience" appears at 3rd position with (agree) degree. The mean is (3.91) and standard deviation (0.90).
4. Participants' responses on statement (8) which states "Social media support my teaching activities in school" appears at 4th position with (agree) degree. The mean is (3.77) and standard deviation (0.94).
5. Participants' responses on statement (5) which states "Social media offers neat presentation of the lesson and helps the teacher stick to planned lessons" appears at 5th position with (agree) degree. The mean is (3.66) and standard deviation (0.86).

6. Participants' responses on statement (2) which states "Social media increases cooperation between teachers and staff members" appears at 6th position with (agree) degree. The mean is (3.64) and standard deviation (0.97).
7. Participants' responses on statement (7) which states "Social media offers continuous student-teacher communication outside the educational field" appears at 7th position with (agree) degree. The mean is (3.54) and standard deviation (1.01).
8. Participants' responses on statement (6) which states, "Social media assists teachers in mental preparation of the lesson" appears at 8th position with (often) degree. The mean is (3.53) and standard deviation (0.89).

5. Conclusion and Recommendation

This study aimed to explore the perceptions of using social media networks among special education teachers in KSA. From the data analysis carried out, it seems that the participating teachers always used social media network for personal purposes. In addition, Twitter was the highest application which used by those teachers. Generally, they revealed a positive perception towards the use of social media networks.

This short study can be expanded further to include more participants from different areas in KSA. The study also recommends more studies in this area so as to closely understand how and why special education teachers utilize or not social media in their classes in order to develop best practices for implementing social media in teaching and learning special education classes in KSA. Finally, the ministry of education should take into consideration teachers' perception towards social media network before designing their training programs officially.

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