

استكشاف عادات استخدام وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي بين طلاب الجامعة الإسلامية العالمية ماليزيا (IIUM)

AN EXPLORATION OF SOCIAL MEDIA USAGE HABITS AMONG IIUM STUDENTS

أ. عبدالقدير محمد مبارك: طالب في مرحلة الماجستير، المعهد الدولي للفكر الإسلامي والحضارة،
ماليزيا.

Mr. Abdul Qadir Mohammed Mubarak: Master's Student, International
Institute of Islamic Thought and Civilization, Malaysia.

Email: aiyazmubarak@gmail.com

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المخلص:

أصبحت وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي مكونًا أساسيًا في الحياة اليومية لطلبة الجامعات، لما لها من تأثير في أنماط التواصل، وإمكانية الوصول إلى المعلومات، والتفاعل الاجتماعي داخل مؤسسات التعليم العالي. تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى استكشاف عادات استخدام وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي لدى طلبة الجامعة الإسلامية العالمية بماليزيا (IIUM)، مع إيلاء اهتمام خاص لمعدل الاستخدام، والمنصات المفضلة، والفروق الديموغرافية بين الطلبة. اعتمدت الدراسة المنهج الكمي من خلال تصميم بحثي وصفي باستخدام أسلوب المسح المقطعي. وقد جُمعت البيانات من عينة مكونة من (150) طالبًا من طلبة الجامعة الإسلامية العالمية بماليزيا، وذلك عبر استبانة ذاتية مُنظمة شملت الخصائص الديموغرافية، وتكرار ومدة استخدام وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي، والمنصات الأكثر استخدامًا. وأظهرت النتائج أن استخدام وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي يكاد يكون شاملاً بين طلبة الجامعة، حيث أفاد معظمهم باستخدام اليومي وقضاء وقت ملحوظ على مختلف المنصات. وتبين أن فيسبوك هو المنصة الأكثر استخدامًا، يليه إنستغرام ويوتيوب، إلى جانب تطبيقات أخرى للتواصل الاجتماعي. كما كشف تحليل المتغيرات الديموغرافية عن وجود فروق ملحوظة في أنماط استخدام وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي؛ إذ يميل الطلبة الأصغر سنًا إلى قضاء وقت أطول على المنصات ذات الطابع الترفيهي، في حين يُظهر الطلبة الأكبر سنًا استخدامًا أكثر تنظيمًا وتفضيلًا للمنصات المرتبطة بالبحث عن المعلومات والتواصل. وبالمثل، أبدى الطلبة في المستويات الأكاديمية المبكرة معدلات أعلى من التفاعل مع وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي مقارنة بالطلبة في المستويات المتقدمة، مما يشير إلى أن النضج الأكاديمي قد يسهم في تحسين القدرة على تنظيم العادات الرقمية.

أما الفروق بين الجنسين، فقد لوحظت أساسًا في أنماط الاستخدام وتنوع المنصات المستخدمة، أكثر من كونها في معدل الاستخدام الكلي. وبوجه عام، تُبرز الدراسة الانتشار الواسع لاستخدام وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي داخل مجتمع طلبة الجامعة الإسلامية العالمية بماليزيا، وتؤكد أهمية العوامل الديموغرافية في تشكيل سلوكيات الاستخدام. ومن خلال تقديم أدلة تجريبية خاصة بالمؤسسة، تسهم هذه الدراسة في تعميق الفهم لأنماط التفاعل الرقمي لدى الطلبة، وتوفير رؤى قيمة للمعلمين والإداريين وصنّاع السياسات في التعامل مع استخدام وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي في سياق التعليم العالي.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الاعلام الاجتماعي، استخدام وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي، طلاب الجامعات، التواصل الرقمي، منصات التواصل الاجتماعي، سلوك الطلاب، التعليم العالي، الجامعة الإسلامية العالمية بماليزيا (IIUM)

ABSTRACT:

Social media has become an integral component of university students' daily lives, influencing communication practices, information access, and social interaction within higher education institutions. This study aims to explore social media usage habits among students of the International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM), with particular attention to usage frequency, preferred platforms, and demographic differences. A quantitative research design was employed using a cross-sectional survey approach. Data were collected from 150 IIUM students through a structured self-administered questionnaire covering demographic characteristics, frequency and duration of social media use, and commonly used platforms. The findings indicate that social media usage is nearly universal among IIUM students, with the majority reporting daily use and substantial time spent on various platforms. Facebook emerged as the most frequently used platform, followed by Instagram, YouTube, and other social networking applications. Analysis of demographic variables revealed notable differences in social media usage patterns. Younger students tended to spend more time on entertainment-oriented platforms, whereas older students demonstrated more regulated usage and a preference for platforms associated with information seeking and communication. Similarly, students in earlier academic levels exhibited higher levels of social media engagement compared to senior students, suggesting that academic maturity may contribute to improved self-regulation of digital habits. Gender differences were observed primarily in usage patterns and platform diversity rather than overall frequency of use. Overall, the study highlights the pervasive nature of social media use within the IIUM student community and underscores the importance of demographic factors in shaping usage behaviors. By providing institution-specific empirical evidence, this research contributes to a clearer understanding of students' digital engagement and offers valuable insights for educators, administrators, and policymakers in addressing students' social media usage within higher education contexts.

Keywords: Social Media, Social Media Usage, University Students, Digital Communication, Social Networking Platforms, Student Behavior, Higher Education, International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM).

Introduction

In recent years, social media has become deeply embedded in the daily lives of university students, shaping communication, social interactions, information consumption, and even academic behavior. Globally, the prevalence of social media use among young adults is nearly universal, with many students maintaining multiple active accounts and spending substantial time online each day (Statista, 2021, as cited in Sayuti et al., 2025). Research in diverse contexts indicates that a large majority of university students not only have at least one social media account but also use several platforms regularly, reflecting the central role of these technologies in contemporary student life (Sayuti et al., 2025).

The Malaysian context exhibits similar patterns of engagement, with high social media adoption reported among youth and young adults. National data show that platforms such as Facebook, YouTube, and Instagram are among the most commonly used applications in the country, supported by widespread smartphone access and broadband coverage (Zulkifli & Abidin, 2023). Moreover, local studies indicate that among Malaysian university students, WhatsApp, YouTube, Instagram, and Facebook frequently rank as the most accessed platforms, underscoring both communication and content-sharing functions in students' daily routines (Badrol & Wok, 2024).

Despite the demonstrated centrality of social media in student life, important questions remain about usage frequency, platform preferences, and the role of demographic factors in shaping how students interact with social networks. For instance, research conducted across higher-education contexts has shown that students often engage with social media for multiple hours per day, and that usage patterns can differ across age groups, gender, and year of study (Frontiers study on mobile social media usage, 2025). In addition, survey research in university settings reveals varied purposes for

social media engagement—from interpersonal communication and entertainment to academic support—suggesting nuanced relationships between users’ demographic profiles and their online behaviour (Kamisan & Abu Bakar, 2022; Ahmad et al., 2025).

Focusing specifically on the International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM) student community, prior studies have provided preliminary insights into social media preferences and behaviours. For example, WhatsApp has been reported as the most frequently used platform among IIUM students, followed by YouTube, Instagram, Facebook, and Telegram, reflecting both messaging and multimedia consumption trends (Badrol & Wok, 2024). However, systematic investigations that examine how often students use social media overall, which platforms dominate usage, and whether these patterns vary by age, gender, or education level are limited in existing literatur

Statement of The Problem

Social media has become an integral part of students’ daily lives in the contemporary digital era, significantly shaping patterns of communication, information access, and social interaction within higher education institutions. University students, in particular, are among the most active users of social media platforms such as Facebook, WhatsApp, Instagram, YouTube, and Twitter, often engaging with these platforms for both social and recreational purposes. Previous studies indicate that extensive exposure to digital media may influence students’ values, behaviors, and daily routines, raising concerns about its broader implications within academic and social contexts (A. T. A. Rahman et al., 2022).

Within Malaysian universities, including institutions with strong Islamic and ethical foundations such as the International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM), social media usage has increased alongside advancements

in digital technology and widespread internet accessibility. Although existing literature has discussed the potential moral, behavioral, and social implications of social media use among Muslim youth, empirical evidence remains limited regarding the basic usage habits of university students, such as frequency of use, preferred platforms, and time spent online, particularly within the IIUM context. As noted by Rahman et al. (2022), there is still uncertainty regarding how social media influences IIUM students, due to the lack of institution-specific data.

Therefore, the core problem addressed in this study lies in the limited empirical understanding of social media usage habits among IIUM students. Without systematic data on how frequently students use social media, which platforms they engage with most, and how usage varies across demographic groups, it is difficult for educators and policymakers to respond effectively to students' digital behaviors. Addressing this gap is essential to provide a clearer picture of social media engagement within IIUM and to support future research related to students' academic life, social interaction, and digital awareness in higher education.

Objectives of the Study

The main objective of this study is to explore social media usage habits among students of the International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM). Specifically, the study aims to:

1. To determine the frequency of social media usage among individuals within the IIUM student community.
2. To identify the most frequently used social media platforms among IIUM students.
3. To examine differences in social media usage habits based on demographic variables, including age, gender, and level of education.

Research Questions

1. How often do individuals in the IIUM community use social media?
2. Which social media platform is most frequently used by IIUM students?
3. Are there differences in social media usage habits based on demographic variables?

Literature Review

Social media has become an integral part of modern society, particularly among university students who are considered one of the most active user groups. Social networking platforms enable users to communicate, share information, and build online communities, making them especially attractive to young adults (Boyd & Ellison, 2007). Research indicates that the majority of university students access social media on a daily basis, often multiple times per day, primarily through mobile devices (Pew Research Center, 2018). This widespread usage reflects the central role of social media in students' social and academic lives.

Several studies have reported that university students spend a considerable amount of time on social media platforms, ranging from one to several hours daily (Al-Rahmi & Zeki, 2017; Kamisan & Abu Bakar, 2022). Frequent use is often associated with purposes such as maintaining social relationships, entertainment, information seeking, and academic collaboration. As a result, understanding usage frequency has become a key focus in social media research within higher education contexts.

The popularity of specific social media platforms varies across regions and institutions; however, certain platforms consistently dominate student usage patterns. Studies conducted in Malaysia and other countries have found that WhatsApp, Instagram, YouTube, Facebook, and TikTok are among the most frequently used platforms by university students (Badrol & Wok, 2024; Kemp, 2021). Messaging applications such as WhatsApp are

particularly popular due to their ease of communication and group interaction features, which are commonly used for both social and academic purposes.

In the Malaysian university context, Kamisan and Abu Bakar (2022) reported that WhatsApp and Instagram were the most commonly used platforms among students during the Movement Control Order (MCO), followed by YouTube and Facebook. Similarly, studies focusing on IIUM students indicate high engagement with WhatsApp and YouTube, highlighting students' preference for instant communication and video-based content (Badrol & Wok, 2024). These findings suggest that platform preference is influenced by both functional utility and students' daily communication needs.

Frequency of social media usage has been widely examined as a key indicator of digital engagement. Previous research suggests that most university students use social media on a daily basis, with many reporting usage exceeding three hours per day (Al-Rahmi et al., 2018). High frequency of use has been attributed to factors such as accessibility of smartphones, availability of affordable internet services, and the integration of social media into academic and social activities.

In Malaysian studies, Zulkifli and Abidin (2023) found that frequent social media usage among university students is often normalized as part of daily routines. While frequent engagement may offer benefits such as quick access to information and peer support, researchers emphasize the importance of understanding usage patterns to distinguish between productive and excessive use.

Demographic variables such as age, gender, and level of education have been found to influence social media usage habits among university students. Gender differences, in particular, have been widely reported in the literature.

Studies suggest that female students tend to use social media more frequently for communication and social interaction, while male students are more inclined toward entertainment and information-related content (Hargittai & Shafer, 2006; Sheldon et al., 2017).

Age and education level also play significant roles in shaping usage patterns. Younger students are generally more active on visually oriented platforms such as Instagram and TikTok, whereas older or postgraduate students may demonstrate more selective and purpose-driven usage (Alnjadat et al., 2019). These demographic variations highlight the importance of examining social media habits within specific institutional contexts, as student populations are not homogeneous.

Although numerous studies have examined social media usage among university students globally and within Malaysia, there remains a limited number of studies focusing specifically on IIUM students, particularly within specific kulliyyahs such as AHAS KIRKHS. Moreover, while previous research has often explored the effects of social media on academic performance or mental health, fewer studies have provided a comprehensive overview of usage frequency, platform preference, and demographic differences within a single institutional setting. Therefore, this study seeks to address this gap by systematically examining social media usage habits among AHAS KIRKHS students at IIUM.

Methodology

This study employed a quantitative research design using a cross-sectional survey approach to explore social media usage habits among students of AHAS KIRKHS at the International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM). The quantitative approach was appropriate for systematically examining patterns of social media use, platform preferences, and demographic differences among university students. The study population

comprised students enrolled in AHAS KIRKHS at IIUM, from whom 150 students were selected using a convenience sampling technique. The sample included respondents from various age groups, genders, and educational levels, allowing for comparative analysis based on demographic characteristics. Data were collected through a structured self-administered questionnaire developed based on relevant literature. The questionnaire covered demographic information, frequency and duration of social media use, and commonly used social media platforms, using mainly closed-ended questions to facilitate quantitative analysis. The questionnaire was distributed online through commonly used digital communication channels, and participation was voluntary. Respondents were informed about the purpose of the study, and confidentiality of responses was assured. Data analysis focused on descriptive and comparative statistical techniques to identify patterns and differences in social media usage habits across demographic variables, with ethical principles strictly observed throughout the research process.

Findings and Results

Demographic Profile of the Respondents

The study was conducted among 150 students from the International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM). The gender distribution of respondents was perfectly balanced, with 75 male (50%) and 75 female (50%) participants. Regarding age, the majority of students fell within the 21–25 years age group (39.3%), followed by those aged 18–20 years (27.3%), 26–30 years (18.7%), and 31 years and above (14.7%). In terms of academic level, fourth-year students constituted the largest group (35.3%), followed by first-year students (32.7%), third-year students (17.3%), and second-year students (14.7%). This distribution indicates representation across different stages of university education.

Frequency of Social Media Use

The findings demonstrate that social media usage is nearly universal among IIUM students. A substantial majority of respondents (96%) reported using social media daily, while only a very small proportion indicated using social media three to four times a week (2%), one to two times a week (1.3%), or rarely (0.7%). This result highlights the central role of social media in students' everyday routines and communication practices.

Time Spent on Social Media

In terms of daily time investment, social media consumption among IIUM students was notably high. More than one-third of respondents (37.3%) reported spending four hours or more per day on social media, while 36% indicated spending two to four hours daily. Additionally, 21.3% spent one to two hours per day, whereas only a small minority reported spending less than one hour. These findings suggest that a large proportion of IIUM students engage in prolonged and intensive social media use, which may have implications for time management and academic engagement.

Preferred Social Media Platforms

Regarding platform preference, Facebook emerged as the most widely used social media platform among IIUM students. Other frequently mentioned platforms included Instagram, Twitter, and YouTube, often used in combination rather than in isolation. The dominance of Facebook reflects its continued relevance for communication, information sharing, and academic-related interactions within the IIUM student community.

Overall Social Media Usage Habits

Overall, the results indicate that IIUM students are highly active social media users, characterized by daily access, extended usage duration, and multi-platform engagement. While social media serves as an important tool

for communication and information access, the substantial amount of time spent on these platforms raises important considerations regarding students' digital habits, productivity, and potential academic implications. These findings provide a strong empirical foundation for further analysis of how social media usage may influence students' academic behavior and performance.

Analysis and Discussion

The analysis reveals notable relationships between students' demographic characteristics and their social media usage patterns. Age shows a direct relationship with both platform preference and usage purpose, as younger students (18–20 years) tend to spend more time on visually oriented and entertainment-driven platforms such as Instagram and YouTube, whereas older students (26 years and above) are more inclined toward platforms like Facebook, which are commonly used for information seeking and communication. Conversely, time spent on social media demonstrates an inverse relationship with age, indicating that younger students generally spend longer hours on social media compared to their older counterparts, who appear to regulate their usage more effectively due to increased academic and personal responsibilities.

In addition, academic level is inversely related to excessive social media use, as first- and second-year students tend to report longer daily usage durations and more habitual browsing behaviors, while senior students (third- and fourth-year) exhibit comparatively more controlled usage patterns. This suggests that academic maturity and experience contribute to better self-regulation of digital habits. Regarding gender, the findings indicate a moderate association between gender and usage patterns rather than total time spent. While both male and female students use social media daily, female students are more likely to engage consistently across multiple

platforms for social interaction and communication, whereas male students show a higher tendency toward platform-specific usage, particularly for information consumption and content viewing. Overall, these relationships suggest that demographic variables play a significant role in shaping how, why, and how much IIUM students engage with social media.

Conclusion

This study examined social media usage habits among students of AHAS KIRKHS at the International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM), with a particular focus on usage frequency, time spent, preferred platforms, and demographic differences. The findings indicate that social media has become an integral part of students' daily lives, with almost all respondents reporting daily use and a substantial proportion spending several hours per day on various platforms. Facebook emerged as the most widely used platform, followed by other popular applications such as Instagram, Twitter, and YouTube, highlighting students' engagement in multi-platform social media environments.

The results further demonstrate that social media usage patterns among IIUM students are not uniform but vary according to demographic characteristics. Age and academic level were found to influence both the amount of time spent on social media and platform preferences. Younger and junior-level students tended to spend more time on social media and showed stronger engagement with entertainment-oriented platforms, while older and senior students exhibited more controlled usage behaviors, often favoring platforms associated with information seeking and communication. Gender differences were also observed in terms of usage patterns, particularly in platform diversity and engagement purposes, though overall daily usage remained high across both male and female students.

Overall, the study contributes to a clearer empirical understanding of social media usage habits within the specific institutional context of IIUM. By highlighting the prevalence, intensity, and demographic variations of social media use, the findings offer valuable insights for university administrators, educators, and student support services in addressing students' digital behaviors. Future research may build upon these findings by examining the direct impact of social media usage on academic performance, well-being, and digital literacy, as well as by employing longitudinal or mixed-method approaches to gain deeper insights into students' evolving online practices.

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