The Use of Social Media as a Tool for Learning: Perspectives of Masters in Educational Technologies students at Bisha University, Saudi Arabia

استخدام وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي كأداة للتعلم: وجهات نظر طلاب الماجستير في تقنيات التعليم في جامعة بيشة ، المملكة العربية السعودية

Written by:
Omar Abdullah Alshehri[38]
https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0713-1153

Abstract

The current research examines the attitudes towards the use of social media sites to support the learning process among Master's in Educational Technologies students at the University of Bisha in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, including perceptions of educational benefits as well as disadvantages and barriers. Forty two students participated in this study and completed a web-based survey. The findings revealed a largely positive attitude toward the usage of social media sites in the classroom, attributing to it many advantages, such as increasing the quality and efficiency of communication between students and teachers, greater access to information, as well as stronger social connections and ease of collaboration among classmates. However, the participants also mentioned cyberbullying, privacy issues and distractions as some difficulties associated with using these tools.

Keywords: Saudi Arabia, social media in education, Attitudes, Benefits of social media use, Barriers to social media use.

الملخص

يبحث البحث الحالي في المواقف تجاه استخدام مواقع التواصل الاجتماعي لدعم عملية التعلم لدى طلاب الماجستير في تقنيات التعليم في جامعة بيشة في المملكة العربية السعودية ، بما في ذلك تصورات الفوائد التعليمية وكذلك العيوب والحواجز. شارك اثنان وأربعون طالبًا في هذه الدراسة وأكملوا استطلاعًا على شبكة الإنترنت. كشفت النتائج عن موقف إيجابي إلى حد كبير تجاه استخدام مواقع التواصل الاجتماعي في الفصول الدراسية ، وعزت إليها العديد من المزايا ، مثل زيادة جودة وكفاءة الاتصال بين الطلاب والمعلمين ، وزيادة الوصول إلى المعلومات ، فضلاً عن روابط اجتماعية أقوى وسهولة التعاون بين زملاء الدراسة. ومع ذلك ، ذكر المشاركون أيضًا التنمر عبر الإنترنت وقضايا الخصوصية والمشتتات باعتبارها بعض الصعوبات المرتبطة باستخدام هذه الأدوات.

الكلمات المفتاحية: المملكة العربية السعودية؛ وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي في التعليم ؛ الاتجاهات؛ فوائد استخدام وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي ؛ معوقات استخدام وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي.

Introduction

As an instructor of educational technology courses at Bisha University (BU) in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA), I have observed the large extent to which students rely on social media sites (SMS) in almost all aspects of their lives. The situation is similar in other Saudi institutions of higher education (Alshehri, 2020). SMS, especially Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, WhatsApp, have become an integral part of the daily lives of their users and have transformed the way individuals throughout the world, including in the KSA, interact and communicate. This integration of SMS in people's daily lives is only likely to continue to grow.

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[38] Assistant Professor of E-Learning in the Department of Educational Technologies, College of Education. University of Bisha, Saudi Arabia.

The statistics on internet penetration and social media use in KSA support this observation. According to the Data Reportal (2021), the rate of internet penetration in KSA was 95.7% in January 2021 with 33.58 million internet users, an increase of 1.3 million users (+4.2%) since 2020 (Data Portal, 2021; Data Portal, 2020). In addition, there are very high rates of social media use specifically. This is especially the case with YouTube, with active users exceeding 24.71 million users, the highest use per capita in any country in the world (Data Portal, 2020). With 24.37 million users, WhatsApp was the second most popular app in Saudi Arabia, followed by Facebook with 20.99 million users. According to the same report, Saudi Arabia has the highest proportion of Twitter users in the Arab world, with 18.96 million users (Data Portal, 2020).

However, what I have also observed in the classroom is the scarcity of student use of SMS to support them on their educational paths, including among students in the Master's in Educational Technologies program. This is despite the commitment of the Saudi government and the funds being allocated to the integration of technology, including SMS, in education in order to facilitate and enhance the teaching and learning process. One of the strategic goals of the vision of the KSA for the year 2030 (Vision 2030) is dedicated to education in the kingdom, including strengthening educational curricula and methods; creating a more stimulating educational environment to encourage creativity and innovation; and building students' basic values and talents to meet the needs of national development and the requirements of the labor market.

There are important implications to the widespread access to and use of technology for the field of education. SMS, according to Naguib et al. (2018) and others, alters how people learn, share knowledge, collaborate with peers and professors, and generate innovative ideas. SMS can favorably help to teaching and learning, according to empirical studies undertaken in various parts of the world. (Naguib et al., 2018; Alshehri & Lally, 2019; Alyoussef, Alamri & Al-Rahmi, 2019; Lin et al., 2020). Given the great influence of modern technology and SMS on the current generation of youth in Saudi Arabia (KSA), the Saudi higher education sector must adapt to this reality and capitalize on the potential of these technologies as effective tools in education.

This study aims to contribute to the latter objective as well as resolve the contradiction that

I have observed in the classroom between the heavy reliance of students on SMS in their daily lives and apparently little use of these tools for learning. As a starting point, the current study focuses on the students themselves and their perceptions and attitudes. More specifically, it seeks to uncover the attitudes of Educational Technologies students at the UB towards the use of SMS to support learning, in relation to both the educational potential of SMS and the challenges and barriers. Understanding students' attitudes would provide tutors and university administrators valuable information that would support the effective integration of SMS as tools of teaching and learning. In addition, this study would supplement and expand the still relatively small body of research on students' attitudes to the use of SMS in education in Saudi universities.

This study poses the following main research question:

- What are the attitudes of Master's in Educational Technologies students at the UB towards the use of SMS to support learning?

More specifically, the study addresses the two following research objectives:

- What are student perceptions of the advantages and educational benefits of using SMS for learning?
- What are student perceptions of the disadvantages of using SMS for learning and the potential barriers to their effective integration in education?

Literature Review

Before discussing the research I conducted, I will present a review of the most relevant literature, starting with the educational uses of SMS before moving on to a discussion of student engagement with SMS, their perceptions of the educational advantages of such sites and, finally, the disadvantages of and barriers to the use of SMS in education as identified by scholars and students participating in various empirical studies. The studies discussed in this section originate from various parts of the world although I also focus in each section on studies conducted in KSA.

SMS and their educational uses

Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) define social media as a set of interactive sites that strengthen the relationships of one person to another within a

group. SMS are increasingly being recognized by educational institutions across the world for their role in enhancing the educational experience. This includes facilitating teaching and learning (Collins & Halverson, 2018), supporting communication, collaboration, and critical thinking (Zgheib, 2014) improving teaching quality, making educational content available, motivating students, and fostering collaborative learning. (Manca & Ranieri, 2013).

Nowadays, most students own the latest technical devices and use them transparently, whether in education or other fields (Jukes et al., 2010). Technology offers them a variety of learning tools, allows them to connect with their peers and their teachers, encourages critical thinking, and improves speaking and academic writing skills (Saha and Karpinski, 2018). However, not all students may have the necessary skills to use these new technologies or be able to access them.

In a study conducted by Dickie and Meier (2015), they found that SMS, including Facebook, can play an essential role in classrooms in higher education. They argue that "the evidence given reinforces the idea that such networks have untapped potential capable of making a significant contribution to the learning and teaching process" (p .1). In the past ten years, there has been much scholarly attention devoted to the specific ways in which social media platforms can contribute to, support and enhance learning (van Dijck, 2013). The specific educational benefits highlighted in these studies include their potential to connect and enhance communication among students, between students and tutors as well as with experts in the field; their usefulness in providing access to valuable information; their contribution to strengthening student skills, including expressive, creative and creative thinking skills; increasing student motivation and engagement and promoting greater independence and self-learning among students.

In a study conducted by Lin et al. (2020), the researchers found that SMS sites allowed the creation and sharing of information, the exchange of ideas, the seeking and provision of peer support, and users' engagement in discussions on an unlimited variety of topics (Lin et al., 2020). In another study, Imlawi et al. (2015) note that students use SMS to develop diverse skills, attitudes, and hobbies and advance their educational development through sharing links, engaging in online learning, and seeking jobs. Furthermore, scholars such as Basu (2017) believe that integrating SMS into education encourages educational independence, self-learning and self-motivation, and that these tools can become an integral part of learners' experiences (Basu, 2017). SMS can be used in education to create a learning environment that enables students to interact and exchange with their colleagues, access educational programs, and communicate with experts on various topics (Al-Khalifa & Garcia, 2013). Bergmann & Sames (2008) found that technology can enhance teaching by allowing teachers to spend class time interacting with students rather than delivering traditional lectures, as the latter can be sent by video to learners beforehand.

In a study they conducted at the Balochistan University of Information Technology, Jogezai et al (2021) found that SMS are being used as social learning resources for students, providing opportunities for validation and admiration of creative work, peer alumni support, and college task-related aid. Roopchund, Ramesh and Jaunky (2019) discovered that using SMS in classroom instruction in Mauritian higher education increased student engagement, assignment quality, and a sense of control over their education. In a similar vein, Blankenship (2011) argues that social media helps learners learn because it promotes "more engagement, higher curiosity, and students assuming more control and responsibility for their education" (p. 40).

In Saudi Arabia, the use of SMS for education is still in its infancy. However, some Saudi Arabian institutions have started to capitalize on the educational uses of SMS. For example, during lectures, tutors would play YouTube videos while Twitter and WhatsApp have been used as open channels for students, instructors, and professionals to ask questions and receive responses.

Several research in the Saudi context have documented the frequent use of SMS, especially WhatsApp, YouTube, and Twitter by the current generation and the influential role they are playing in education. They are being used to build personal relationships, cooperate with other learners, exchange opinions and experiences, develop critical thinking skills, and obtain feedback by teachers (Alshehri & Lally, 2019; Naguib et al., 2018; Hashim et al., 2019).

Student engagement with SMS and perceptions regarding their educational benefits

A number of research studies have examined the use of SMS among students for educational ends as well as their attitudes towards the integration

of SMS in teaching and learning and the educational benefits they perceive. Over 1,600 publications were surveyed, and 396 documents were studied using bibliometric analysis from the Scopus database to investigate students' use of social media as a language learning environment by Barrot (2021). He found that students use social media for learning abundantly but in an incidental and informal way and have positive attitudes towards the use of these applications in education. Their diverse and flexible communication affordances, vast geographical spread, and the big number of active users were credited with this result (Barrot, 2021).

Some studies have investigated the degree of social media use and the most popular apps among students in the Arab Gulf region specifically, with findings showing varying amounts of social media use at various colleges, with Facebook, YouTube, and Twitter being the most popular and frequently used apps. Guraya et al. (2018) conducted a quantitative study in one Kuwaiti and two Saudi Arabian medical schools, finding that the majority of students used SMS for educational purposes such as sharing educational content and lectures, and that these tools were beneficial. According to another quantitative study conducted by Alsurehi & Youbi. (2014), the usage of social networking programs, particularly Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, and WhatsApp, is fairly common among students in Saudi Arabia.

Rajeh et al. (2021) conducted a quantitative study on SMS use among 1034 students at three governmental dentistry schools in Saudi Arabia. According to the findings, students use WhatsApp (97.5%), Snapchat (90.5%), Twitter (85.2%), and Instagram (83.4%) to search for general information (63.3%), dental learning (70.8%), exchanging general ideas (63.1%), and community general conversation (63.1%). In their opinion, the most significant benefits of using social media in learning was that they enabled them to get information on a number of subjects and access new resources, made education more engaging, and enhanced their creativity, innovation, and research abilities.

As is clear from the featured research studies, students tend to have a predominantly favorable opinion of SMS as tools for facilitating learning, encouraging cooperation, enhancing critical thinking, and supporting brainstorming sessions (Wingo, Ivankova, and Moss, 2017; Alshehri & Lally, 2019). In another study, Bista (2015) conducted a quantitative study at a public institution in the southern United States to

explore undergraduates' impressions of using Twitter as a teaching tool. The participants claimed they enjoyed using Twitter, feeling that it provided them with the space and opportunities to participate in academic activities such as getting real-time course information, asking mentors questions, and sharing beneficial information with their peers. In a similar manner, Henderson and Aston (2017) discovered that 1658 undergraduate students from two Australian universities were enthusiastic about using digital technologies (e.g., SMS, multimedia and mobile phones) to 'organize their work and manage academic demands,' as well as support creative collaborative and hyper-connected practices (p. 7). Returning to the Saudi context, Hashim et al. (2019), Saudi students felt that using SMS for learning allowed them more flexibility in accessing online resources, allowing them to work and learn more autonomously than in traditional approaches to learning.

Students' perceptions regarding the disadvantages of and barriers to using SMS for learning

While students' sentiments toward SMS in education are generally good, they do not always have positive experiences with these tools. In a number of studies, they identify a number of disadvantages or obstacles to the effective utilization of current technologies. In a quantitative study conducted by Rajeh et al. (2021) among students in 3 governmental dental schools in Saudi Arabia, predominant issues raised by the students were SMS acting as distractions from studying, the increased time spent on these sites and their addictive potential and concerns over no direct contact with the instructors. The students' concern over distraction echo those of scholars such as Lederer (2012); Haand and Shuwang (2020) and Chen et al. (2020) who argue that using social media can be a source of distraction in the classroom. According to Lederer (2012), "Facebook and Twitter divert students' attention away from what's happening in class and are ultimately disruptive to the learning process" (p. 1).

Having said that, the most commonly raised concern in the literature is privacy. Jones and Soltren (2005) conducted a statistical analysis of Facebook data of University of Oklahoma students. They found that over 70% of users actively upload enormous amounts of very personal and private information, such as age, gender, location, and interests, and show

contempt for privacy settings and maintaining the terms of service on Facebook.

While concerns over privacy and personal information on SMS appear to be universal, researchers still need to be aware that privacy means different things to different people and cultures around the world. In Saudi society, privacy is an especially sensitive issue, particularly for women. Furthermore, it is both a social and personal concern. In a broad sense, any action taken by individuals, whether positive or negative, will have an impact not just on those individuals but on their families. The actions of any of its members could bring pride or shame upon the entire family (Alsolamy, 2017). This makes it especially critical for Saudi users of SMS to protect their privacy.

Alsurehi & Youbi (2014) conducted a study to look into the use of SMS among Saudi students. The findings revealed that privacy and security issues continue to be a major barrier to male and female students using social media for educational purposes. Due to fears of defamation and harassment on social media, most women in Saudi Arabia do not use their real names or personal images on their profiles on SMS. In another study conducted by Alshehri (2020), the female participants stated that they use nicknames or pseudonyms and symbolic photos to promote themselves online for the same reasons. They wanted to be able to freely use SMS without suffering any negative effect on their academic or social status.

Another concern that emerged from studies conducted by researchers in Saudi Arabian, Asian, and American contexts relate to the nature of material posted on social media profile pages. This includes material that violates user privacy, discussions of illegal behavior, jokes about religion, and pornographic and sexual material (Gao et al. 2012; Odom et al., 2013; Rashid, 2017)

In some studies, student expressed concerns not about the perceived disadvantages of SMS but about the barriers that stand in the way of their effective integration in teaching and learning. One such barrier is the lack of necessary understanding or experience among both teachers and students. In some cases, the tutors are not knowledgeable on the optimal use of new technologies in their classrooms. In other cases, it may be students who lack this knowledge. For example, Malaysian students at an Australian institution evaluated online debate as "difficult and boring" due to their lack of familiarity with

this type of learning environment (Chew, 2015, p. 591).

Previous studies in the KSA have examined the use of SMS for learning, and the aim of this study is to add to the existing literature, especially with regards to the use of SMS for learning from the perspective of students from an emerging university such as the UB. The current study investigated Saudi Arabian students' current use SMS for learning, as well as their assessments of their educational benefits and concerns about their use in education. In this way, the study was able to create a comprehensive image of the subject from all angles.

Methodology

In order to investigate the current use of and attitudes towards the use of SMS for learning among Master's of Education Technology students in the College of Education at the UB, I chose a quantitative method, more specifically a web questionnaire, for data collection. The questionnaire was created taking into account existing literature on the topic and the study's setting. The study was conducted between September and November 2021.

At the start of the questionnaire, I explained the research objectives before asking participants to voluntarily take part in the study after providing their consent. Participant were asked to click on an icon to indicate that he/she agreed to voluntarily participate in this study. Otherwise, he/she will not be able to proceed with the survey. Participants were told that their personal information would be used for research purposes only and that they could withdraw from the study at any time.

The questionnaire, itself, was divided into three sections: 1) demographic data and data related to social media use and access (e.g., use of social media in education, gender, age, social media application used, and means of access to SMS such as laptop, smartphone, iPod/ iPad, or computer). 2)I used Yes-No answers to see whether they agreed with various statements presenting common ideas related to the educational advantages of SMS use for learning with a focus on potential to facilitate access to knowledge as well as communication with peers, tutors and experts (8 items). 3) I used Yes-No answers to see whether they agreed with various common ideas related to the educational disadvantages of SMS use for learning (4 items).

While the literature identifies a range of educational benefits to the use of SMS, I decided to focus, in the second part of the questionnaire on several main aspects, mainly benefits related to enhanced communication, greater self-reliance and access to information. In relation to the first aspect, I have often noted that Saudi students tend to be shy and hesitant to communicate with peers and teachers while also being dependent on their teachers. As for the second aspect, it relates to the rich information that SMS provide access to, which can be harnessed to improve and develop student education. As for the third part of the questionnaire, the statements addressed the main disadvantages and barriers mentioned in relevant studies.

Before conducting the study, institutional permission was obtained from the College of Education at the UB. I held a meeting with the Dean of the college of education, and the research aim, content, and method were explained to him. An announcement was made on the first page of the college website and the link to the survey was posted there. Prior to the questionnaire distribution phase, there was a validation process in which various specialists from the College assessed the content of the questionnaire. Later, the questionnaire was pre-tested with a small set of respondents.

The target of the study was Master's students in the College of Education at the UB, due in part to my special interest in them as their instructor. More importantly, they are potential future educators who will go on to teach students themselves. Accordingly, I was interested in investigating whether they were aware of the importance of these tools in the current digital age, and their potential to act as sites of information, enhance the learning experience, improve their mental and social skills of students, broaden their horizons and them culturally.

In this regard, the College of Education is the first nucleus of the UB established in the year 1985, and it aims to prepare qualified personnel to work in public and private educational institutions, to raise the professional efficiency of teachers, and to guide faculty members, students and administrative staff in the translation of educational and Islamic values to positive behavior that emanates from the Islamic faith. The college has a number of departments including one dedicated to educational technologies and offers a number of diplomas, Bachelor's and Master's degrees in various educational specializations including in Educational Technologies. The college of Education has nearly 150 employees, 100 of whom are faculty members, who come from the KSA, Africa, the Middle East, and Asia. Both Arabic and English are used as languages of instruction.

The University of Bisha is considered an emerging university by virtue of its recent establishment. The University of Bisha is located in the southern region of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Bisha, one of the oldest cities in the Arabian Peninsula and the Asir region, is the source of its name. King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz Al Saud ordered the transition of King Khalid Institution's branch in Bisha and the surrounding regions into an autonomous university in April 2014. "University of Bisha" was the name given to this new university. It is a public university that receives funding from the Ministry of Education, which represents the government. This study will help students, faculty members, and administrators at the University of Bisha to know the opinions and attitudes of graduate students towards using social networking sites to support the learning process. They tend to use these techniques in all their practical and educational tasks.

The population of this research was Master's of Educational Technologies students who were registered in 2019, 2020, and 2021, regardless of gender or age., The questionnaire link was sent to 42 students (29 males and 13 females) who responded and consented to completing the questionnaire. None of the responses obtained were ruled improper or invalid due to the nature of the questions included in the questionnaire, all of which were necessary for completion (participants could not move to the next section without first completing the current one).

The data collected was analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) software. To address the research questions, descriptive statistics such as frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations were employed, as well as correlation tests and One-Way ANOVA. Cronbach's alpha was 0.89, indicating strong reliability, and the questionnaire's dependability was also tested.

To analyze the demographic data, present an overview of its distribution, and get broad patterns for all responses, the researcher used descriptive statistics with frequencies and percentages. The study's basic statistical ideas revealed which scores were the most and least frequent. To help clarify metadata using tables,

SPSS V.21 was employed. These questions were investigated using descriptive statistical tests. This type of study provides frequencies and percentages.

Parametric techniques analyses were not acceptable in this data set since the normality requirements were not met. Non-parametric tests were utilized as a consequence since they do not rely on assumptions about basic population characteristics and distribution. They were utilized to investigate if there were statistically significant differences in SMS learning usage based on gender, age, and the device that provided SMS access. Non-standard variance tests allowed me to evaluate if there were any significant differences in the use of SMS in the educational process across the sample groups in each category, and to call attention to those differences.

To begin, the Mann-Whitney test (often known as the t-TEST) was used to examine if any statistically significant differences existed between the variables of social media use, gender, and social media access. In non-normative statistics, the Mann-Whitney test is the most acceptable method for detecting differences between independent samples (MacFarland & Yates, 2016).

The questionnaire was then subjected to the non-normative Kruskal-Wallis test. The Kruskal-Wallis test is a nonparametric rating-based test that can be used to see if two or more groups (age, use of SMS) have significant differences. The Mann-Whitney U test is an extension of the one-way ANOVA that allows the comparison of more than two independent groups.

Results

The socio-demographic data indicated that 69% of the participants were male, while 31% were female. The 22-25 years of age made up the largest percentage of the sample (50%). Moreover, 56.9% of the students owned smartphones, while 30.6% owned a laptop.

Furthermore, the vast majority of the participants in the study had social media accounts (95.2 %) with WhatsApp (24.8%), YouTube (19.9%), Twitter (18.0%), Facebook (17.4%), Instagram (13.7%), and Snapchat (6.2%) being the most popular SMS among students. This is most likely a result of the large extent of their spread, the ease of their use, as well as the techniques that they adopt.

Moreover, the survey found that the rate of social media usage in education among students was extremely high, as shown in Table I. (94.6%). This result confirmed the opposite of my impression of student use of SMS in the classroom.

Table 1.
Participants' Demographic Information.

Variables	Frequency	Percent
Use of social media for learning		
Yes	38	94.6
No	4	5.4
Total	42	100%
Means of access to SMS		
Smartphone	21	56.9
Laptop	10	30.6
Computer	6	6.9
iPod/ iPad	5	5.6
Total	42	100%
Sex groups		
Male	29	69
Female	13	31
Total	42	100%
Age groups		
22- 25 years old	21	50
26- 28 years old	17	40.5
29- 32 years old	3	7.1
33 years old and above	1	2.4
Total	42	100%
SMS used		

WhatsApp	12	24.8
YouTube	9	19.9
Twitter	8	18.0
Facebook	7	17.4
Instagram	4	13.7
Snapchat	2	6.2
Total	42	100%

(Source: Own authorship)

Table 2 reveals that items 1 & 2 were the most often reported benefits, with frequencies and percentages of (n=40, 95.2 percent, n=38, 90.5 percent, respectively). Participants agreed that SMS is important (item 1) and plays a role in information dissemination among students (item 2). Participants said that one of the major benefits of SMS was that it allowed them to share course-related messages, photos, graphics, sounds, and video files (item 3) with frequencies and percentages of (n=37, 88.1%). With frequencies and percentages of (n=20, 49%), over half of the sample (n=26, 61.9 percent) agreed that SMS facilitate collaborative learning with other learners (item 4) and that these tools lessen students' reliance on their teachers (item 5) However, less than half of the respondents (n=21, 49%) agreed that accessing these sites in the classroom lessens students' dependency on their professors (item 8).

This finding suggests that SMS provides a high-quality learning environment and an acceptable learning environment for learners to exchange knowledge, ideas, and experiences in order to advance their academic level. They also have significant positive evaluations of SMS's role in aiding efficiency in obtaining feedback, boosting collaborative learning, and encouraging self-learning and more independence among students.

Table 2.
Perceptions of Participants Regarding Educational Benefits of SMS

Statements	Answers	Frequency	Percentage
I think that SMS are important for learning	Yes	40	95.2
	No	2	4.8
	Total	**42**	**100%**
I believe that social media application participates in the dissemination of knowledge among learners	Yes	38	90.5
	No	4	9.5
	Total	**42**	**100%**
I believe that SMS enable me to publish different multimedia related to the course content (e.g., texts, images, graphics, sounds, and videos files)	Yes	37	88.1
	No	5	11.9
	Total	**42**	**100%**
I believe that SMS provide instant feedback on my course's questions which help to solve educational problems that may occur.	Yes	32	76.2
	No	10	23.8
	Total	**42**	**100%**
I feel that SMS support collaborative learning with other learners	Yes	29	69
	No	13	31
	Total	**42**	**100%**
I think that using social media in teaching is effective in supporting students' learning processes	Yes	26	61.9
	No	16	38.1
	Total	**42**	**100%**
I feel that SMS support self-learning	Yes	26	61.9
	No	16	38.1
	Total	**42**	**100%**
I think that using social media in teaching decreases the dependency of students on their instructors	Yes	21	50
	No	21	50
	Total	**42**	**100%**

(Source: Own authorship)

Although the majority of Master's of Education in Education Technologies students have overwhelmingly favorable views of the use of SMS to aid the educational process, they expressed a number of concerns that could potentially limit their use of these platforms in the classroom. As shown in Table 3, the participants found distraction to be the most significant disadvantage to the use of SMS in education (item 1) with frequencies and percentages of (n=29, 89.9%) and that some of the content on SMS opposes Islamic religious teachings (item 2) with frequencies and percentages of (n=29, 89.9%). In addition, over half of the sample felt concerned about the dangers of cyberbullying (item 4) with frequencies and percentages of (n=26, 61.9%) and privacy issues (item 3) with frequencies and percentages of (n=24, 59.9%).

Table 3.
Disadvantages of Using SMS for Learning.

Statements	Answers	Frequency	Percentage
Social media usage could distract students' focus away from academic learning	Yes	29	89.9
	No	13	10.1
	Total	**42**	**100%**
Some contents of social media oppose Islamic religious teachings	Yes	29	89.9
	No	13	10.1
	Total	**42**	**100%**
I feel concerned about the dangers of cyberbullying when using social media	Yes	26	61.9
	No	16	38.1
	Total	**42**	**100%**
I am concerned about privacy issues related to the use of social media tools	Yes	24	59.9
	No	18	40.1
	Total	**42**	**100%**

(Source: Own authorship)

Differences in students' perceptions based on study variables

The Mann-Whitney test and the Kruskal-Wallis tests were used to see if there are statistically significant differences in the actual use of SMS and perceived advantages and disadvantages of these platforms in the educational process, based on the variables of gender, age, device providing social media access, and social media use for education. The results are shown in the table (4) below.

Table 4.
Mann-Whitney Test and Kruskal-Wallis Test.

		Use of SMS for learning	The perceptions of students regarding the advantages of using SMS for learning	The perceptions of students regarding the advantages of using SMS for learning
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	Gender	.604	.468	.928
	Age	.006	.000	.008
	Social media access	.002	.000	.015
	Social media use	.081	.196	.498

The Mann-Whitney test showed that there was a statistically significant difference in students' perceptions in terms of the variables of age and access to social media. On the other hand, there was no statistically significant difference in the variables of sex and use of social media for education. Statistically, perceptions were significantly higher for age group (22-25 years = n = 21, 50.0%) followed by age group (26-28 years= n = 17, 40.5%) while age group (33 and above = (n = 1, 2.4%) at the lowest percentage of using SMS in the classroom environment.

In general, younger students perceived a greater use of SMS in the educational process, finding that it enriches the study process; enhances students' abilities, encouraging them to participate and express their opinion; encourages dialogue, and promotes collaborative group work.

Furthermore, the Kruskal-Wallis test results (see Table 5) revealed that there were statistically significant differences in students' perceptions of the benefits of using SMS in the educational process based on age, with perceptions statistically significantly more positive among students whose r age ranged between (22-25 years = n = 21, 50.0 percent) years, followed by the age group (26-28 years = n = 17, 40.5 percent). In general, the majority of students who responded perceived SMS as having significant benefits when used correctly in the learning process. They believed that by using these platforms, students would be more motivated to learn and that collaborative learning with other students would be easier.

At the same time, the statistics showed that the age group (33 and above, n = 1, 2.4%) had negative perceptions of the use of SMS in the educational process and considered that its harms outweigh its benefits in the classroom.

The Kruskal-Wallis test found that there are statistically significant differences in students' perceptions based on the type of social media access (see Table 5). Students were statistically substantially more positive about using smartphones to browse social media (n=21, 56.9%), followed by laptops (n=10, 30.6 percent). The majority of students who responded perceived SMS as having a positive impact when used correctly in the learning process.

At the same time, statistics showed that students are not inclined to use SMS via iPod/iPad (n=5, 5.6%). Perhaps the availability of smart devices in addition to the laptop made many students not care about using the iPad because the smartphone accompanies the student everywhere and helps students complete the required tasks with ease. Providing requirements for the effective use of iPad and computers in capitalizing on SMS in education may increase students' enthusiasm to expand their use in the classroom.

Table 5.
Kruskal-Wallis Test.

Variables of the study	Age	Percent
Use of SMS for learning	22 - 25 Years	50%
	26 - 28 years	40.5%
	29 - 32 years	7.1%
	33 years or more	2.4%
The perceptions of students regarding the advantages of using SMS for learning	22 - 25 Years	50%
	26 - 28 years	40.5%
	29 - 32 years	7.1%
	33 years or more	2.4%
The perceptions of students regarding the advantages of using SMS for learning	22 - 25 Years	50%
	26 - 28 years	40.5%
	29 - 32 years	7.1%
	33 years or more	2.4%
	Social Media Access	**Percent**
Use of SMS for learning	Computer	6.9%
	Laptop	30.6%
	Smartphone	56.9%
	iPod/ iPad	5.6%
The perceptions of students regarding the advantages of using SMS for learning	Computer	6.9%
	Laptop	30.6%
	Smartphone	56.9%
	iPod/ iPad	5.6%
The perceptions of students regarding the advantages of using SMS for learning	Computer	6.9%
	Laptop	30.6%
	Smartphone	56.9%
	iPod/ iPad	5.6%

Table 6.
The Correlations between the study variables.

		Use of SMS for learning	Advantages of using SMS for learning	Disadvantages of using SMS for learning
Gender	Pearson Correlation	.071	-.061-	-.039-
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.581	.635	.760
	N	63	63	63
Age	Correlation Coefficient	-.390-**	-.517-**	.393**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.002	.000	.001
	N	63	63	63
Social media access	Correlation Coefficient	-.432-**	-.445-**	.352**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.005
	N	63	63	63
Social media use	Pearson Correlation	.256*	.162	-.084-
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.043	.204	.515
	N	63	63	63

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).
*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

From the results of the Pearson Correlation test in Table 7, it can be concluded that there are no statistically significant differences based on gender on whether students use SMS in the educational process as well as their perceptions of the advantages and disadvantages of these sites. The test, on the other hand, revealed that there are statistically significant differences between the variables of SMS use in general and SMS use for learning (.043). Furthermore, the test found that there are statistically significant differences in students' opinions of the extent to which social media sites are employed in the educational process based on age and devices used to access social media (.390), in addition to perceptions of the advantages (.517) and disadvantages of using those social platforms in the classroom environment (.393). This indicates that the higher the age, the less that SMS and the devices used to access these sites are used in the educational process and the greater the perception that that these sites have no educational advantage and that they mainly distract students from focusing on lessons.

Discussion

Unlike my impression in the classroom, the students participating in this study had almost all utilised at least one SMS in education. As the result results indicate that students believe that these tools provide a means to transform the traditional passive classroom into an interactive space that fosters collaboration, reflection, dialogue and independence, the question becomes how can these tools be further integrated to enhance the teaching and learning process? These include a greater and more central use of SMS to share educational programs and content as well as a channel for communication among students, between students and teachers and with people specializing in specific topics from all over the world. However, this needs to be done in a systematic as opposed to the haphazard way it is currently done with the integration of SMS in education being guided by the teachers and in a consistent manner across courses.

Almost all the students had positive feelings about using social media as a learning aid in school with frequencies and percentages of (n=38, 94.6). Given that they live in a world of internet and SMS penetration for so much of the time, it is possible that this familiarity contributed to the students' positive perceptions of using SMS in education.

The most popular SMS was WhatsApp, which was followed by YouTube. Instagram and Snapchat, on the other hand, were the least popular social media platforms among students. This outcome is consistent with previous research which found that the highest two sites used by learners whether for personal or professional reasons are WhatsApp and YouTube (Guraya et al. 2018; Alshehri and Lally 2019).

The majority of students believed that their self-learning and collaborative learning abilities are aided and enhanced by using SMS in the

classroom. In this manner, they are similar to peers whose attitudes toward social media technologies in education have been investigated in similar results in various parts of the world (Bista 2015; Gao et al. 2012; Guraya et al. 2018; Naguib et al. 2018; Saha and Karpinski 2018; Zgheib 2014). However, although they represent a small minority, not all students (n=4, 5.4 %) had positive feelings about using SMS for learning. This finding is reminiscent of the results of a study conducted by Due to a lack of familiarity with this type of learning environment, Malaysian students at an Australian institution had negative opinions about utilizing SMS in education, according to Yee (2015).

According to the findings, there were statistically significant differences in students' judgments of the benefits of using SMS in the educational process based on age, with younger students' perceptions being much more positive. In average, younger students thought SMS was used more frequently in the educational process. This is in line with Alshehri's findings (2020).

These findings provide a new dimension to our understanding of the effectiveness of modern technologies like SMS in terms of creativity, cooperation, and interactivity, all of which are essential goals of higher education in the twenty-first century (Alshehri 2020 & Henderson et al. 2017). According to the findings, 90.5 % of students say that SMS is a useful tool for supporting their learning, facilitating connections with peers, disseminating knowledge among learners, and making learning a more integral part of their daily activities. This finding is congruent with findings from Saudi studies (Alshehri 2019; Alshehri and Lally 2019; Guraya et al. 2018; Wingo et al. 2017), which found that SMS improve students' learning development and academic performance.

The results revealed that most of the study participants (88.1%) believed that SMS enabled them to create different multimedia related to the course content (e.g., texts, images, graphics, sounds, and videos files). This finding is in line with results from studies undertaken at other Saudi universities (Gao et al. 2012; Naguib et al. 2018; Alshehri and Lally, 2019), which indicated that students used SMS to share files that contain information relating to their courses, exchange images, graphics, and videos to get more experiences and information by cooperating with other learners. It has become easier for students to post, tweet, film a clip, create a video and disseminate information to a specific group or the public through these many networks. All of this served as motivation for them to include these platforms in their teaching and learning activities.

According to the study results, 50% of students believed that using SMS in the educational process decreases students' reliance on tutors and encourages self-learning and autonomy. When learning is driven by the student's own needs, interests, motivations, and preferences, as is the case when using social media platforms, personalization becomes essential to the learner and learning becomes a personal undertaking (Gruzd et al. 2018). It is fortunate for the current generation that it was born with the emergence of modern technologies, which undoubtedly contributed to the development of their digital skills and made them able to enhance their self-learning through employing these technologies and skills in fruitful ways. However, the other half of the sample believe that the teacher is irreplaceable or indispensable to provide lectures and guidance, whether or not they rely on technology. They believe that a teacher guides students and provides them with the necessary information that contributes to the development of their knowledge and learning skills instead of dispensing with the teacher and relying completely on technology.

One of the most important outcomes of this study is that most learners feel that using SMS to enhance collaborative learning with other students is beneficial. In this regard, the majority of students (69%) agreed that using SMS to encourage student involvement and collaboration with their peers to share and discuss content is an effective way to do so. This is in exact agreement with prior studies' findings, which came to the same conclusion (Alsurehi & Youbi. 2014; Henderson et al. 2017; Saha and Karpinski 2018). Students would be able to support collaborative learning, communicate and learn from one another.

Despite the advantages of using SMS for education, Saudi students expressed some reservations about using SMS for learning. According to the findings, the majority of the students (89.9%) were concerned that SMS was a distraction in the classroom and could create a lack of focus, preventing meaningful discourse. Other research (Lederer 2012; Odom et al. 2013; Alshehri and Lally 2019; Haand & Shuwang, 2020; Chen et al. 2020) has indicated that students are discouraged from using SMS in the classroom due to the disruptions it causes.

According to the findings, the majority of the participants had a good understanding of the function that SMS play in today's digital age. However, 89.9% of the participants reported that some SMS content contradicts Islamic religious principles. This result is consistent with those of Alshehri (2020) & Rajeh et al, (2021) that mentioned that most users stated that some social media content contradicts Islamic religious beliefs. As a result. it is critical to tell students that the development of these new technology has facilitated access to fresh information in a variety of sectors while being consistent with their values and religious beliefs. As a result, increasing awareness and giving various training courses that clarify guidelines, instructions, or consent forms for the use of these learning sites, or contacting professionals who can help set them up and get them in place. Also, students must protect their personally identifiable information and its confidentiality and understand the cookies of the sites they use and review any pictures shared before posting.

Although students have predominantly positive perception of SMS use for education, privacy was another frequently mentioned threat. This could have implications in terms of limiting their use of social media platforms. When using social media in the classroom, most of the participants in this survey (59.9%) expressed concern regarding privacy. This finding is consistent with prior research (Alshehri 2020; Alsurehi & Youbi 2014; Manca and Ranieri 2013), which found that the most major hurdles to accessing social media platforms, particularly among female students, are privacy and security concerns.

Saudi students may be especially concerned about their privacy due to their society's customs and morals based on the application of Islamic teachings of treating people with good morals and respecting the privacy of others. In a restricted and conservative society like Saudi Arabia, there is growing concern about how SMS allows Saudis to obtain and use other people's personal information, as well as how this information is shared. This is an issue that higher education institutions, administrators, teachers, and researchers must pay particular attention to. Greater need to be done to protect students' privacy, and educational institutions can play a critical role in providing students with the fundamental skills required for the safe and effective use of digital technologies. In particular, training about privacy, managing one's online identity, controlling their privacy settings and the dangers of sharing personal information with strangers is required (Prescott,

2014; Saini & Abraham, 2015; Misman et al., 2019; Alshehri, 2020). As Bolkan (2015) argues, "it is critical to provide teachers with digital citizenship training so that they can teach kids about the need of maintaining their online integrity. A single blunder can have long-term consequences " (p.13). Universities and instructors can play a similar role in a Saudi Arabian context.

Cyber-bullying has also been identified as a significant obstacle to students' usage of SMS for educational purposes. According to the data, 61.9 percent of students were concerned about the dangers of cyberbullying, which can lead to serious psychological consequences like reputation damage, depression, anxiety, severe isolation, and even suicide. According to Lederer (2012), around 22% of Dominican University students in the United States have experienced online abuse, with 25% of this group reporting harassment through social media platforms. As a result, students will require considerable training on how to successfully use these modern technologies in the educational process, similar to the above-mentioned privacy training. Additionally, educational institutions should create policies and measures to handle cyberbullying, such as a special department to handle complaints related to cyberbullying.

Conclusions

The goal of this study was to investigate the attitudes and perceptions of Master's of Education Technologies students toward using SMS for learning in the College of Education at the UB. This study concluded that students have positive attitudes towards SMS use for learning because they believe these tools are effective in supporting students' learning processes, supporting collaborative learning with other learners, decreasing the dependency of students on their instructors while promoting self-learning, contributing to the dissemination of knowledge among learners, and allowing instructors to provide instant feedback on courses' questions, although they also indicated some concerns such as cyber-bullying, distraction, inappropriate content and privacy.

These data can assist UB teachers in gaining a clear understanding of the degree of SMS use among university students, as well as the most used and favored SMS. The study's findings have implications for using SMS to help alleviate the challenge of spatial gender segregation in the Saudi school system while also upholding Islamic standards. In the university setting,

teachers and students of all genders can communicate virtually during online teaching and learning sessions. It is important to remind that the finding of this study revealed that there was no statistically significant difference in the variables of gender.

In the KSA, the lecturing technique is the most common type of instruction, in which students have no choice except to listen to and memorize the material provided by the teacher (Bergmann & Sames, 2008). As a result, explicitly incorporating SMS into academic situations at UB would result in a significant shift in teaching methods and learning styles. SMS would enable collaborative learning, allow students to develop and improve content, and improve students' communication and self-learning skills, according to this study. Students would be more likely to use SMS for education if they were more aware of the benefits.

Considering the findings of the study, the researcher suggests activating the use of SMS in the educational environment in order to develop and develop collective cooperative work among students to keep pace with the technologies of the digital age in which the current generation of students has grown up. Finally, the researcher suggests training students and teachers on the skills of dealing with SMS and using them optimally to develop their academic achievement.

The findings of this study open the door for the exploration of new issues. This includes conducting studies to reveal the tangible effects of SMS, especially with regard to student cooperation and social interaction among them in the learning environment. Also, the negative effects of SMS Also, Also, it is possible to investigate the negative effects of SMS and how it affects the students' impairment due to their preoccupation with following these websites and their addiction to using them for long hours and thus affecting their academic achievement.

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