



Media and Social Media for Security and Reducing Crime: Saudi Secondary School Students' Perspectives

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Abstract

This exploratory study aimed to investigate the role of media and social media on security and reducing crime. Mixed-methods approach with two sequential phases, a qualitative stage followed by quantitative phase, was adopted. Semi-structured interviews and then structured questionnaires were used to collect data from Saudi secondary school students – the first phase included 15 students and the second phase included 390 students. Results showed that there were five factors related to security and reducing of crime. The role of using social media in media security presented the highest figure ($M = 2.55$ out of 3; $SD = .80$). Even though the role of media in implementing security in its comprehensive concept showed the lowest figure ($M = 2.24$ out of 3; $SD = .71$), it is still a high average. This stressed the importance of media and social media in reducing crime and increasing security among Saudi youth.

Keywords: Media; Social Media; Security; Crime.

1. Introduction

A number of studies have researched the relationship between media, its new and old applications, and security [e.g. 1, 2, 3]. Similarly, Saudi researchers have investigated this association such as Esmael [4] who found a correlation between media and security. To link media with the extremist groups, Bu Saadah and Mohamed [5] found that Al Qaeda uses social media to send 71% of its messages compared with traditional methods such as lectures and speeches, whereas ISIS uses social media for 55%.

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Unfortunately, the research investigating the influence of media security on Saudi youth who use social media is limited [6], and this is the focus of the current paper. Previous studies have researched media, social media, security, and reducing crime from different angles. In 2018, there were three survey studies investigated this within the Saudi society. Abdul Majed [7] studied how social media influence students' privacy. This sample includes intermediate and secondary school students (255 males and 146 females) in Riyadh. Results show that 56% of them spend more than three hours daily using social media, 79% of them have more than one account on these media, some of them face electronic extortion. The researcher stressed that the lack of awareness and not understanding the risks of these media from the students and their parents are the reasons for this insecurity. Ganim [8] researched the role of social media in the spread of intellectual deviations. The sample includes 411 undergraduates. The main findings show that the most used social media are: Twitter (36.3%), Snap Chat (17.8%), and YouTube (13.6%). The participants agreed that intellectual deviations are spread in these media and that social media is used to send incorrect messages. The study recommended that using many methods to observe social media and block any sites that go against Islamic values and Saudi culture.

Al Harbi [9] studied social media and its relation to community participation. The researchers used a structured questionnaire on a sample of 683 last-year undergraduates. Results show that the students agreed that community participation help in spread accurate, and secure, information on social media. In addition, Saudi youth on social media help in expressing the general opinion and reinforce security. The study recommended to activate social control and define control systems to watch social media and to deal with the insecure participations in the media.

All these three studies are in line with the current study that the role of media and social media is related to security and crime. Using media negatively would help in, for instance, spread rumours and learn different methods of crime. Methodologically, these all are cross-sectional studies, which questionnaire was the only used tool. In contrast, the current study adopts a mixed-methods approach using questionnaire and interviews (as will be discussed further in the materials and methods section).

In addition, and from the current researcher's experience with his students and his work in social and psychological counseling, it was found that many learners use different types of media. A number of these students are influenced by traditional media (such as TV) and new media (like social media) especially with the availability and abundance of media applications on smart devices. Particularly when taking into consideration that mobile phone penetration rate is 181.6% of Saudi population, i.e. most Saudis have at least one mobile [10]. This has its impact on the students' behaviours and moral values. For example, although social media opens the doors to communicate with others around the world, its addiction would lead the young users (children and teenagers) to have low communication skills and isolation from their real social environment [11-13]. It was also found that social media influences individuals' lives in a way that does not leave enough space to secure their privacy and in a way that reduces their life quality [14, 15]. Therefore, the current paper tries to answer the following research question:

What is the role of media and social media on security and reducing crime from Saudi secondary school students' perspectives?

2. Materials and methods

The current paper used mixed-methods approach with sequential phases to explore the role of media and social media on both security and reducing crime. In the first phase, qualitative data was collected by using semi-structured interviews on 15 students from one secondary school. They were selected purposively, as the students’ counsellor named the learners who used their smart phones for long periods (i.e. more than two hours daily) and who have already discussed this issue (using their devices intensely) with the counsellor. The aim of these interviews was to explore the students’ perspectives about the role of media and social media on security and crime. In addition, the themes that were extracted from the qualitative data were used in developing a structured questionnaire. In the second phase, quantitative data was collected from 390 students, who were all in the same school. They filled in a three-point Likert scale questionnaire (agree, sometimes agree, disagree) which was developed by the researcher. The questionnaire was developed to measure five factors, and its construct validity (using confirmatory factor analysis) and reliability using Cronbach’s alpha, as Table 1 shows.

Table 1: Factor loadings and construct validity

n	Factor	items	Cronbach α	Factor loadings’ range
1	Role of social media in internal security	1-9	.78	.433 - .549
2	Role of media in implementing security in its comprehensive concept	10-16	.71	.674 - .789
3	Role of distributing security information in different media	17-22	.82	.397 - .609
4	Role of using social media in media security	23-28	.69	.544 - .673
5	Role of social media on media and in forming the general opinion	29-34	.73	.683 - .812

The measurement model fit the data well (CFI = .909; TLI = .900; RMSEA [90% confidence interval] = .049 [.047-.051]; SRMR = .058).

3. Results

To answer the research question: What are the impacts of media and social media on security and reduction of crime from Saudi secondary school students’ perspectives? The researcher used descriptive statistics, i.e. mean, standard deviation, and percentages, Table 2 shows these figures.

As can be seen from Table 2, all the means are high, as they all are out of 3. In addition, each percentage represents the total percentage of the items in a factor. This also shows high levels of the role of media and social media in general on security and reduction of crime. The positive role of using social media in media security, in particular, shows the highest figure (M = 2.55; SD = .80), and even though that role of media in implementing security in its comprehensive concept presents the lowest figure (M = 2.24; SD = .71), it is still a high mean. Figure 1 illustrates this.

Table 2: Factor loadings and construct validity

Factor	Rank based on mean	M(SD)	%
Role of social media on media and in forming the general opinion	3	2.37(.70)	78
Role of using social media in media security	1	2.55(.80)	84
Role of distributing security information in different media	2	2.50(.64)	83
Role of media in implementing security in its comprehensive concept	5	2.24(.71)	74
Role of social media in internal security	4	2.32(.70)	88

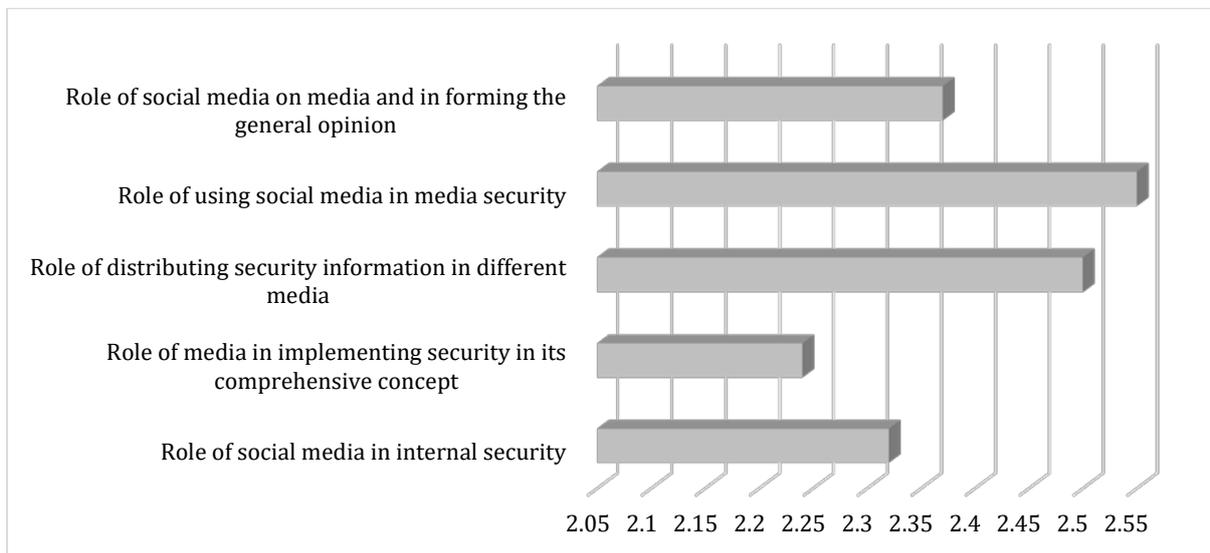


Figure 1: Mean of each factor

4. Discussion

The current findings show that media and, specifically, social media have a noticeable influence on security and the reduction of crime. This is in line with a number of studies that investigated the role of transparency and security of media, as well as predicting crimes [e.g. 16, 17, 18]. Matthew, Adam [19] argued, along with similar lines, that it is possible to observe and help in awareness in social media by, for instance, facing rumours and various riots. They discussed the riots that happened in the UK in 2011 as an example when social media was used to educate people and make them aware about these riots, which maintained security. In addition, Abdul Majed [7] is also in agreement with the current finding, especially that their results showed that 56% of Saudi students use social media for more than three hours every day. This, of course, reflects the significant influence of social media. The current sample, Saudi students (16 – 18 years old) intensely use social media and they show clear signs of awareness of using this type of media as well as smart devices, as the interviewed students

discussed in the first phase of this study.

With respect with the second high mean, which was for the role of distributing security information in different media, it is in line with Al Harbi [9] findings that social media playing an important role in social criticism within society and this reinforce security by spreading correct information about security. To compare this with the current sample, the students show clear awareness to have security spokesman who continually talks to people in addition to not spreading any security information so criminals do not take advantage of it.

Regarding the role of social media on media and informing the general opinion, it is in consent with a number of studies such as Al Harbi [9] who discussed the fact that community participation for Saudi youths through social media plays a significant role in activating social criticism, expressing the general opinion, and reinforcing security.

Concerning the role of social media in internal security, this finding in line with Ganim [8] results that the most common intellectual deviations in social media were spreading rumours, wrong news, and intellectual extremism; and that Saudi Arabia should adopt many methods to observe and control social media. In agreement with this, the current sample knows that most rumours and lies are in social media. Actually, a number of participants clarified that some types of social media are used to commit crimes.

Even though the role of media in implementing security in its comprehensive concept presents the lowest mean, yet it still high (2.24 out of 3). Balous [20] discussed that security is related to media, and media has its positive and negative impacts simultaneously. The current participants reported that they know the benefits and the drawback (and risks) of using social media. They also show that social media has exposed many crimes from different types.

5. Limitations

Several limitations should be considered. The current data is cross-sectional which does not take into consideration, if any, changes over time such as the role or influence of media and social media on security and reducing crime over time. Another limitation, the current sample includes secondary school students, so including different age groups such as teenagers from age 12 until their late twenties may highlight the most affected group of young people by social media and by crime and crime security. However, even within these limitations, the current data provides a strong hint that there are a number of related factors to media, social media, and security that would contribute to more understanding of the topic.

6. Conclusion

This exploratory study investigated that role of media and social media on security and reducing crime. The qualitative data helped in exploring the main themes that reflected this role, and it helped in forming the questionnaire. The quantitative data showed that there were five factors and they reflected the role of media and social media in forming the general opinion, in media security, in implementing security, and in internal security. The statistics showed high means for all the five categories, which demonstrated the significant role of

media and social media on crime security.

7. Recommendations

Although this is cross-sectional research, its findings might be used for initial steps in further investigations. The current study has a number of recommendations that may help in this. First, using all types of media in security awareness and in increasing of the security culture especially from the related sectors such as the Ministry of Media. Second, it is important to increase the policies of blocking pornographic sites and non-national webpages that help in raising the levels of crimes by King Abdulaziz City for Science and Technology. Third, it is important to observe the rumours on social media and confront it by an effective security media on different social media – which should be activated by specialised national departments or committees. Fourth, It is important to improve national security through social media by reinforcing famous figures and private and public sectors that are well known in their positive role in the media. Fifth, it is important to develop research on the risks and benefits of using social media. This also should include developing research in this area in universities and research centres as well as providing research grants to study this. Sixth, and finally, it is important to benefit from fields of volunteerism and Saudi youths who are active in social media positively in reinforcing the awareness and culture of security in media.

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