EFFECT OF SOCIAL MEDIA ON NATIONAL SECURITY OF THE UNITED ARAB EMIRATES

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EFFECT OF SOCIAL MEDIA ON NATIONAL SECURITY OF THE UNITED ARAB EMIRATES

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ABSTRAK

Media sosial telah merevolusikan interaksi sosial sehingga mempengaruhi setiap hari berkaitan ekonomi, sosial, politik, keselamatan dan kestabilan di Emiriah Arab Bersatu dan dunia amnya. Beberapa teori, termasuk *cute cat theory*, telah dicadangkan menguruskan peningkatan media sosial seperti yang dialami di MENA beberapa tahun lalu. Matlamat utama kajian ini adalah untuk menyiasat ancaman penggunaan media sosial terhadap kecenderungan tingkah laku awam di UAE dan cara ancaman ini boleh disederhanakan dengan membina teori impak sosial kuasa nombor, kekuatan dan kesegeraan. Peserta kajian dipilih secara teliti dan objektif dari Universiti-Universiti Persekutuan di UAE, dan pendekatan analisis serba boleh menggunakan IBM SPSS Statistic dan SMART PLS telah diguna pakai. Kajian mendapati bahawa penggunaan media sosial ditakrifkan oleh pengaruh, interaksi, keintiman dan dimensi penglibatan. Ini memberi kesan ketara kepada sikap pengguna media sosial tetapi tidak menjejaskan kawalan tingkah laku yang dilihat. Selain itu, tiga kuasa SIT utama turut mempengaruhi sikap dan kawalan tingkah laku yang dirasakan. Kekuatan kuasa sosial telah menyederhanakan peranan penggunaan media sosial dalam kawalan tingkah laku yang dirasakan secara negatif, manakala kuasa sosial nombor menyederhanakan hubungan antara sikap dan penggunaan media sosial secara separa dan negatif. Agensi penguatkuasaan undang-undang UAE dan aktor kerja sosial adalah disyorkan untuk membina hubungan asal antara penggunaan media sosial dan tingkah laku, sambil menggunakan kekuatan teori kesan sosial untuk menafikan pengaruh media sosial yang tidak diingini.

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ABSTRACT

Social media has revolutionised social interactions thereby influencing day to day economic, social, political and also the security and stability in United Arab Emirates and the world in general. A number of theories, including the cute cat theory, have been proposed for management of uprising through social media as experienced in MENA a few years ago. The primary aim of the study is to investigate the threat of social media usage to public behavioural propensities in the UAE and how these threats may be moderated by building on the social impact theory forces of number, strength and immediacy. The participants of the study are carefully and objectively selected from UAE Federal Universities, and a versatile analytical approach using the IBM SPSS Statistic and SMART PLS is adopted. The research found that social media usage is defined by influence, interaction, intimacy, and involvement dimensions. These significantly impacts the attitude of social media users but does not affect the perceived behavioural control. Moreover, the three main SIT forces significantly influence attitude and perceived behavioural control. The social force of strength moderates the role of social media usage in perceived behavioural control negatively whilst the social force of number moderates the relationship between attitude and usage of social media partially and negatively. It is recommended that the UAE law enforcement agencies and social work actors build on the original relationship between social media usage and behaviour, whilst utilizing the social impact theory forces to negate unwanted social media influence.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1   Introduction

Social media has not only changed human social interactions but has significantly revolutionised the way and manner in which businesses are conducted across the globe, presenting opportunities and challenges alike (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). By its very nature, social media represents a new definition of social interactions that lead to more effective collaboration, participation and empowerment across network platforms (Bertot et al., 2010). Virtual communities are formed in seconds, and everyone (social media users) has the chance to share, publish or broadcast information in real-time inexpensively.

As these virtual communities become increasingly accepted into society, laws are enforced to govern all areas where humans interact. Young members of the population particularly engage on these platforms, which serve as a firm source of radicalisation and insurgency (Thompson, 2011). Controlling these platforms, therefore, have key national security implications and falls within the scope of social work. In these developments, the government, in its attempt to safeguard its future interest, pursue key activities in the area of social work practice. The government works through various channels, including religious bodies such as mosques, higher educational intuitions and specially formed government institutions. Thus, National Security is considered an all-encompassing involving all and sundry. Therefore, in this study, National Security is regarded as the process of safeguarding the nations against all forms of internal and external threats to the lives and properties such as terrorism, espionage, war etc.

Nonetheless, in virtual communities, different rules may apply, and traditional security measures appear incompatible. Magro (2012) elaborate that in the event of the Haiti Earthquake in 2010, law enforcement agencies had the opportunity to contact the public quickly and more efficiently through social media than then use of other media form. In other cases, social media has served as grounds for gangs, offenders and other criminal activities (Pyrooz et al., 2015).

Such unwelcome effect of social media that could spurn insecurity needs to be controlled. However, such controls may not be easy and could prove impossible in many situations. Criminal activities in social media require governments' intervention. This may originate in the form of e-government strategy which comprise social media in law enforcement that guarantees openness while combating criminal activities (Bertot et al., 2010). In the United Arab Emirates (UAE), law enforcement agencies are under social and political pressure to renew their commitment to strengthening community relationships while maintaining security and stability (Buhumaid et al., 2016). As social media becomes increasingly ubiquitous, it has gained attention as a way for law enforcement agencies to enhance their image and reputation as community-oriented institutions while continuing to promote public safety and reduce crime (Surette, 2016). Social Media has no doubt become integral to modern communications, and law enforcement agencies continue to monitor this platform as part of the need to ensure national security.

In the bid to redirect social work towards national security improvement, social media presents a chance for law enforcement agents to interrelate with their constituents in a non-enforcement context and to project images consistent with community-oriented policing (WAM, 2018). The platform permits grounds for trust and legitimacy building at the forefront of the quest to address the decades-long call

for more engagement in community-oriented policing (Gill et al., 2014). This approach has been welcomed due to the lack of explicit control over social media platform without inconveniencing the general population. Governments do not have direct control over what happens on social media. The UAE has demonstrated an effort to regulate influencers in the region (Salama, 2018); however, most threats emanate from external sources and ride on virtual platforms where governments do not have explicit control.

The urgency of social work to engage the youth on social media towards national security enhancement has become rather critical due to pro-government activities on these platforms. The social media platforms' use to push political and social agenda has been witnessed globally (O'Keeffe et al., 2011). As witnessed in the Arab Springs (Wolfsfeld et al., 2013), Brexit (Howard & Kollanyi, 2016) and the US 2016 election (Allcott & Gentkow, 2017), social media serves as credible ground for extremists and propagandist to forward their unwelcomed ideologies that translate into attitudinal and behavioural norms, spurring violence and socio-political disruption.

Web-based news website and social media platforms are deliberately set up by pro-government forces to forward harsh political disruptive campaigns against enemy countries. This is a threat that has been acknowledged globally. In the United States of America (USA), Russia continues to be accused of interfering in the US 2016 elections (Kafka, 2018; South China Morning Post, 2018). Until recently, the USA Government continues to accuse the Russians of consistently attempting to divide Americans (South China Morning Post, 2018). Within these developments, social work presents a channel to counter and nullify enemy government campaign. However, the challenge lies in the elusive nature of human-account linkage, the mass engagement of bots on these platforms, and the inability to completely police or

control the virtual public space. These have collectively given rise to what Joseph (2012) terms the cute cat syndrome of digital activism.

The UAE has had its share of interference from some third-party media platforms, which led the Government to strictly apply regulatory measures to these platforms in a bid to ensure national security. However, changing the minds and hearts of the people through social work will help defuse the negative repercussions of social media usage and ensure a more community-friendly law enforcement environment. As the UAE Government restricts other third party and news websites, perpetrators and pro-government agents easily resort to social media where it is much difficult to control. The need to put in place a clearer strategy to curb threats posed by social media platforms beyond mere law enforcement is, therefore, long overdue. In this study, national security entails safeguarding a national from all forms of threats. Social media exposure has been identified as one of such threat. The outcome of this study highlight how the social impact of the forces of number, strength and immediacy moderate the how social media usage influence resulting behavioural tendencies. The role of the social workers is that of social supports to the vulnerable of the society of which the young population constitute a larger chunk. The role of social workers therefore moderate how social media users behave as a result of the social media expose. Such positive moderation will therefore minimise or eliminate the threat the social media usage could pose to national security.

1.2   Background

The UAE and surrounding region are filled with a largely young, technology-savvy population who possess higher levels of education than their parents (Joseph, 2012). In the UAE, the number of social media users number early the entire

population size (Global Media Insight, 2018). Over 99.26% of the total population of the UAE, or 88% of the total population of the Middle East, are social media users (Global Media Insight, 2018). Every day, the average social media user spends 2 hours, 56 minutes on various social media sites (Global Media Insight, 2018).

Among the social media platforms in the region, Facebook ranks highest in terms of penetration; Facebook has over 9.30 million users in the region (Global Media Insight, 2018). This is closely followed by other media platforms such as WhatsApp, Twitter, YouTube, among others. The various media platforms continue to evolve, improving user-friendliness, language support and other enhancements that continue to boost usage; Joseph (2012) posits that the launch of an Arabic interface significantly improved the usage of Twitter in the Middle East and North African (MENA) region.

Social media is a double-edge sword with desirable and undesirable sides (Joo & Teng, 2017; Shahghasemi & Prosser, 2019; Thompson, 2020). Aside from usability and user-friendliness, various social factors influence the usage behaviour of the population on social media platforms. Abokhodair et al. (2017) highlight the consideration of privacy concerns when using social media, whilst Joseph (2012) mention that resentment among the population drives the urge to resort to social media usage. Other studies, including Radcliffe & Lam (2018), have paid critical attention to developments across the Middle East region, whilst Newsom & Lengel (2012) look at the unique role of women in online activism in the Middle East. The role of social media in Arab Springs has particularly attracted great attention (Newsom & Lengel, 2012; Ghannam, 2011; Skinner, 2011; Al-Jenaibi, 2011).

Increased usage of social media in the region comes with uniquely associated concerns and challenges in the social, political and economic endeavours. In an

elaboration of events surrounding the Arab Springs, 2008 public data on plane spotting exposes details on the luxury lives of President Zine El Abidine Ben Ali of Tunisia and his wife. This was later led by a WikiLeaks revelation on corruption within the president's family. An attempt to shut down social media platforms completely has often resulted in widespread riots against the local governments (Joseph, 2012).

In associated developments in Libya, a 2010 video on a bribery request from a street vendor who was later denied attention by a governor and subsequently committed suicide by setting himself ablaze, set lose the Arab Spring revolution (Joseph, 2012). Similar developments occurred in Egypt and Libya, which individually worsened activism in this area. Other countries such as Bahrain and Saudi Arabia were able to suppress the uprising by building on strong regional ties (Joseph, 2012). However, with a similar cultural and social disposition, regional countries have acknowledged the critical role of changing attitudes through social work instead of strict application of laws and regulations.

In global developments, some theories have been proposed on how the surge in social media activism is managed or suppressed, especially in political uprising such as that experienced in the MENA. The UAE, in particular, may be observed to have implemented control measures in line with some of these theories, which demand further attention. One means to this suppression is to restrict information access which leads to debates and the formation of political opinions (Tufekci, 2011). Zakaria (2011) observe that the government has an ultimate responsibility to block, limit and monitor the social media activity. One other theory that has gained popularity in this area is the "*Ethan Zuckerman's cute cat theory of digital activism*" (Joseph, 2012, p.156).

Focusing on the cute cat theory addressed the need to improve national security through social work. The cute cat syndrome help address the challenging and controversial factors associated with the regulation of the internet and social media (Joseph, 2012). As noted, the chance of a public outcry is very high should the government block complete access to a public social platform such as Facebook or Twitter. In light of these developments, governments seem to lose control over activists who dwell on these social media platforms to channel their socio-politically distorting agenda (Zuckerman, 2008). This cute cat theory is a typical scenario of the UAE where the government and law enforcement agencies continue to battle with social platforms like Facebook, Twitter and other channels to enforce content restriction without an outright ban (Glass, 2008).

With no clear path to completely restrict access to these social media sites, which have over 99.32% penetration in the UAE, it is time that community-oriented policing is put to its proper use by encouraging social work from diverse perspectives (Gill, 2014). The government must identify channels of how to approach social media users and counter any insurgency by changing the attitude and behavioural intention even before they become a threat.

The UAE government undertakes special social work activities through religious channels such as mosques and churches. These religious bodies perform significant role in educating the populace on the norms and peaceful traditions of the UAE. Social work is as well undertaken in the universities and other social institutions across the UAE, with the main focus on young adults and other beneficiaries such as the disabled and families. Special institutions such as the General Authority of Islamic Affairs and Endorsements help provide religious lectures and waqf reports to help encourage peaceful teachings.

The present study will help arrive a model instrumental to the implementation of social work towards the overall national security agenda. Investigating this within the context of social media and virtual communities remains instrumental to the quest to prevent radicalisation on social media platforms in the interest of national security.

1.3   Problem Statement

The use of social media in the UAE and surrounding regions have been researched by numerous scholars, including Abokhodair et al. (2017), Joseph (2012), Radcliffe & Lam (2018), Ghannam (2011), Al-Jenaibi (2013), Skinner (2011) and Al-Jenaibi (2011). Most of these papers have focused on the threat posed by social media to the socio-political stability with particular attention to the Arab Springs and surrounding developments. The linkage between political tensions and the use of social media have particularly attracted critical interest (Joseph, 2012; Newsom & Lengel, 2012).

Ultimately, despite the renowned possibilities embedded in the use of social media, huge risks abound (O'Keeffe et al., 2011), and new threats require versatile policy perspectives (Chandramouli, 2011). Despite the importance of social media in global political developments, including the Arab Springs (Wolfsfeld et al., 2013), the 2016 USA Election (Allcott & Gentkow, 2017) and the Brexit Campaign (Howard & Kollanyi, 2016), the minimal amount of empirical research conducted on threats posed by social media to national security is staggering. The lack of studies on threats that looms on social media is alarming, considering current threats posed by these platforms to governments, political bodies, and the society in general (Asongu, Uduji, & Okolo-obasi, 2019).

In the UAE, the use of Web 2.0 by the Government in its smart government agenda is not new (Kuzma, 2010). This platform provides a viable tool for communication, information dissemination and public service delivery. However, social activism resulting from exposure to online media has remained a serious threat to the region (Thompson, 2011; Joseph, 2012). The UAE has made several attempts to control the threat of radicalisation that occurs through social media usage with the introduction of measures, including the Cyber Crimes Law No 5 of 2012 (Sebugwaawo, 2017).

However, the country, like others, is caught in the "cute cat syndrome" where an outright ban of public media platforms will spark uncontrollable public outrage, and a lack of control over these platforms will lead to the same outcome. Though the UAE recorded less National Security threat compared to other Arab nations during the Arab spring, the social media threat cannot be overlooked or waived (Wolfsfeld, Segev, & Sheafer, 2013). Accordingly, a number of studies had attempted to determine the threat of social media exposure to National Security threatening behaviours. The study of Al Naqbi, Al Momani and Davies (2022) explored the influence of the social media as a threat to national security based on the perception of UAE community (youth) members. The study found that social media has the highest and greatest consequence on political, economic, and cultural dimensions. Al-Ali (2019) also explored the responsibility of social media towards national security from terrorism point. These studies were not underpinned by any theory and did not show the behavioural tendencies of the citizens in respect of national security from the social media usage.

The most recent and relevant study is that of Almansoori, Lizam and Usman (2022) who investigated the impact of social media exposure and behavioural

antecedents on fake news sharing behaviour among social media users in Abu Dhabi, UAE. The study considered fake news sharing as a national security threat which must be tamed almost similar to what Alvi and Saraswat (2020) reported as undesirable behaviour. Though the study was underpin by the theory of planned behaviour, it did not, however, consider how such national security threat can be moderated through social forces. The present study attempt to overcome this limitation. Similarly, there are contradictory evidences on the impact of social media exposure on the perceived behavioural control of social media users. While the study of Qin et al. (2018) indicated significant relationship between social media exposure and perceived behavioural control, the study of Almansoori, Lizam and Usman (2022) did not find such significant impact. The present study will therefore add to the understanding of the impact of social media usage on the social media users' behavioural tendencies (attitude and perceived behavioural control).

The study of Alotaibi and Mukred (2022) considered social media bullying leading to suicide as a national security treat in Saudi Arabia. The study also found that the social media usage has significant influence on the behavioural tendencies. An almost similar study was conducted in Malaysia (Shaikh, Rehman, Amin, Shamim, & Hashmani, 2021). The study of Azzi and Dakhane (2022) explored the threat of social media from privacy points in UAE within the lens of ethical and legal perspective. The work of Younies and Al-Tawil (2020) provided some legal perspective on cybercrimes to deter national security threats in UAE. These studies that paid attention to the UAE and the surrounding region, none has tackled the use of social media as a tool by law enforcement agencies to counter social media insurgencies by moderating attitudes and behavioural tendencies. This research gap does not only reside in the UAE but apply to the larger theoretical scope of literature surrounding social media use.

The present study attempts to provide insight on the threats posed by social media on the general population and how law enforcement agencies can counter these threats in a more seamless rather than forceful approach on social media platforms. To arrive at this insight, the present investigation considers the integration of two main theories, namely the theory of planned behaviour (TPB) and the social impact theory (SIT). The integration of theories on a common phenomenon has been considered as an important literature synthesis approach that helps arrive at an operationalised model for empirical observation (Mayer & Sparrowe, 2013).

Scholarly work is yet to be presented on Social Impact Theory from a national security perspective on how to counter the threat posed by social media. The present study builds on two main attitudinal propensity constructs from the theory of planned behaviour; specifically, attitude and perceived behavioural control. The social impact theory originally conceptualised by Latané (1981) builds on three key variables or "forces" of strength, number and immediacy. Holding both theories in place, to curb the negative consequences of social media usage in the area of attitudinal tendencies, law enforcement agencies must build on the SIT forces on a common platform.

The integration of the theory of planned behaviour with other theories is not new. Cho & Richardson (2009) considers the integration of a social phenomenon with the theory, whilst Tavallaee et al. (2017) considers the combination of the theory of planned behaviour with the technology acceptance model. In addition, the theory of planned behaviour and the theory of reasoned action was combined with the technology acceptance model in predicting technology usage by Shareef et al. (2009). Despite these integration efforts, the main gap of the study still remains as no known study has combined the social impact theory with the theory of planned behaviour in the interest of achieving behaviour in conformity to national security. This interaction

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in the form of moderation will help bridge the linkage between actual usage of social media and resulting behavioural propensities with the moderating force of social impact elements. Closing these research gaps is critical through the achievement of the set research aims and objectives. It will also add to the body of knowledge whilst arriving at valuable insight for the UAE Government national security agenda.

1.4 Research Aim and Objectives

1.4.1 Research Aim

The primary aim of the study is to investigate the threat of social media usage to public behavioural propensities in the UAE and how these threats may be moderated by building on the social impact theory forces of number, strength and immediacy.

1.4.2 Specific Objectives

The specific objectives of the study are to:

1.   To conceptualise the primary factors that define social media usage in the UAE.

2.   To investigate the effect of social media usage on perceived behavioural control and attitudes among the UAE social media users.

3.   To assess the moderating effect of the social force of number, strength and immediacy on the relationship between social media usage and resulting behavioural tendencies.

4.   To recommend strategies for the UAE law enforcement agencies on how threats from social media usage can be moderated by utilising the social impact forces of number, strength and immediacy.

1.5   Research Questions

The research questions of the study are established as follows.

1.   What factors define social media usage in the UAE?

2.   What is the effect of social media usage on perceived behavioural control and attitude among the UAE social media users?

3.   What is the moderating effect of the social force of number, strength and immediacy on the relationship between social media usage and resulting behavioural tendencies?

4.   What strategies may be recommended for the UAE law enforcement agencies on how threats from social media usage can be moderated by utilising the social impact forces of number, strength and immediacy?

1.6   Research Scope

The present study covers all social media users across the seven Emirates of the UAE. Considering all seven Emirates is important to draw into context differences in social media usage, behavioural and attitudinal norms that inform a clear social media law enforcement strategy at the Emirate level. According to the latest insight on social media usage provided by the Global Media Insight (2018) in the UAE, close to over 9 million social media users exist in the region using Facebook as the principal media platform with the highest usage levels or engagement (Table 1.1).

The study focuses on the three main federal educational institutions across the region (CHEDS, 2012). These include the Higher Colleges of Technology (HCT), UAE University and Zayed University. HCT particularly has 17 campuses spread across the Emirates. The scope of the study, however, considers the broader users of social media in the region; the main population to whom the results of the present

study are generalised. Facebook serves as the main benchmark for generalisation of data as presented in Table 1.1 even though the survey, however, gathers insight on students in the selected institutions based on their activities on all four main social media platforms of Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and Snap Chat.

Table 1.1 Social Media Users in UAE – Facebook

Emirate	Number of Users	Proportion
Dubai	4,500,000	51.9%
Abu Dhabi	1,500,000	17.3%
Sharjah	1,500,000	17.3%
Al Ain*	450,000	5.2%
Ajman	350,000	4.0%
Ras Al Khaimah	250,000	2.9%
Fujairah	90,000	1.0%
Umm AL Quwain	35,000	0.4%
Total	8,675,000	100%

Source: Global Media Insight (2018)

The use of Facebook as the principal measure of the study population size is due to the high penetration across the UAE. Efforts and new application on social media platforms are aimed at creating common grounds where users can publish or access content on all platforms without having to log into each social media account separately. For this functionality, the Facebook social media platform is usually linked with other media platforms such as Instagram, Twitter and Snap Chat to create a shared platform. The primary purpose of such integration is to publish a single post that would simultaneously appear on all the other media platforms and allow the users to reach a larger audience.

The proportion of social media users across the Emirates informed the stratified proportional sampling technique. The respondents of the study were selected in accordance with the percentage population of social media users in each Emirate, in addition to the proportion of students in the Federal university campuses in each

Emirate. Other insights provided by Statista (2018) and Hanif (2017) match the data presented by Global Media Insight (2018); according to Statista (2018) and Hanif (2017), over 97% of the population of UAE use WhatsApp and over 90% are on Facebook.

Theoretically, the study revolves around the two main theories of the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) and the Social Impact Theory (SIT) as discussed earlier. Both theories have a strong presence in the existing literature and will lead to a rather firm outcome in discussions and interpretations of findings. The integration of both theories is conducted on carefully reviewed methodologies of theory integration. The two theories are integrated based on the cute cat phenomena to inform a critical aspect of the research model under consideration.

1.7 Significance of the study

1.7.1 Benefits of the study in restricting the recruitment and radicalisation of the youth

The social media platforms are new communication channels that may have severe privacy and security concerns. These concerns may also include cyber-attacks through new vectors that cannot be ignored by security agencies and governments. More so, terrorist organisations such as ISIS and AL-Qaeda, criminal gangs, subversive element and non-state actors with bad tendencies use social media regularly to propagate propaganda in order to brainwash, recruit and radicalise the non-suspecting member of the public. Social media is also used by individuals to send alarming messages, false content, and hateful and inciting information to the public concerning the state of national security affairs.

To aggravate the situation is the unanimous nature of social media users. The unanimity of most of the social media users makes it very difficult for law enforcement

agencies to trace and prosecute them (Wang & Sinnott, 2017). Thus, there is a dire necessity to examine the threats of Social Media technology to UAE's national security consequently. This has pose serious challenge to the state in tracing, monitoring and controlling the use and misuse of social media to protect the national security. The present study provides insight on how to intercept such recruitment exercises by hampering the work of bad social media activists.

1.7.2 Benefits to National Security Strategy

Effective strategy is demanded of National security such as monitoring the contents shared on social media as well as the corresponding conversations. This strategy also include countering interferences and propaganda of adversaries, and improving the performance of government institutions and agencies by strengthening their international credibility and geopolitical position (Ragab, 2017).

Such initiatives, however, require sophisticated technologies and are rather costly to bear by global countries. Recent investigations have identified that UAE represents one of the global countries with the highest level of social media penetration (Menon, 2016). The efforts made by the UAE Government to revolutionise policing through social media and other smart policing techniques is, therefore, commendable.

Empowering law enforcement agencies to counter the threat of social media is essential to ensure the effectiveness of the overall security and serenity of the UAE as a country (Ragab, 2017). Social Media poses real threats for the national security of the UAE, and a structural model that depicts the various interrelationships on how to curb these threats is only in the right direction as is sought to be attempted by the present investigation.

1.7.3 Benefits of the study to the closure of the research gap and addition to the literature

One final area worth highlighting is the benefits of the study to the body of knowledge on social media national security approach. It provides a versatile framework that builds on two underlying theories of social impact theory and the theory of planned behaviour. Future researchers can use this platform to pursue a more realistic model of social media national security agenda.

1.7.4 Significance of the Study to Social Work Knowledge and Practice

This study is of utmost importance to social work knowledge and practice. The findings of the research added to the knowledge of the use of social media platforms to aid social work. Accordingly, this knowledge could guide social workers to gain access to colleagues, clients, and other stakeholders through the social media platforms in the form of telephone therapy, videos, video conferencing and social networking. Social work is all encompassing and involves advocacy and counselling to ensure acceptable social norm among citizens in a society. Social workers therefore have active role to play in moderating the social media users' behaviour towards national security menace that can come in diverse ways including terrorism, wars, espionages, suicide, bullying etc. (Maple, Pearce, Sanford, & Cerel, 2017).

The findings of this study show the potential influence social media usage on national security threatening behaviours. This finding therefore add to the social work needs knowledge. The social workers can therefore have more understanding of their role in moderating such relationship. Similarly, Veeran (2013) noted that social work as a value-based profession require that social work knowledge should by socially constructed taking into consideration the cultural relevance of the society. Other studies also alluded the role social media played in social work knowledge

(Hitchcock & Battista, 2013; Mishna, Bogo, Root, Sawyer, & Khoury-Kassabri, 2012) Therefore, by specifying the moderating role that social workers can play in UAE, the social work knowledge is therefore enhanced.

Technology has dramatically enhance social work practices by using social media to make transformative social changes (Berzin, Singer, & Chan, 2015; Boddy & Dominelli, 2017; Saxton, Niyirora, Guo, & Waters, 2015). Social media has shaped how people interact with one another and how the social workers can interact with their clients besides the traditional face-to-face meetings and how to create intentional personas about the effect of social media use (Kimball & Kim, 2013). The findings of this study therefore will enable the social workers with the knowledge to help them maintain the social media realm of how to engage the social media users.

There has been continuous call in the social work literature for the need to examine how social media could inform and assist social work practice, but limited attempt still persist (Best, Manktelow, & Taylor, 2016). This study therefore offered an insight of how social work practice can be used in curbing national security threat through social media usage. The findings of the study highlighted how social media usage impact attitude and behaviour. This finding of the study is very essential to social workers in coming up with ways to deter negative behaviours and poster positive behavioural norms among the citizens.

1.8 Study Organisation

The study is organised into six chapters. Chapter one presents an introduction to the study. It will commence with the background of the study and elaborates on the problem statement or research gap of the study. The research objectives, research questions and hypotheses are presented. The scope and rationale of the study are also

presented in this chapter. Finally, the chapter disposition is presented in detail.

Chapter two will present the literature review in support of the research framework and to place further emphasis on the identified research gap. A systematic literature review will be conducted to exhaust all published papers that tackle the threats posed by social media on national security. The search will primarily focus on the use of the TPB or SIT as theoretical foundations to conceptualise social media threats. The literature on the main theories will also be reviewed, and the two theories integrated to arrive at the final model of the study.

Chapter three will focus on the research methodology of the study. The chapter will present the research philosophy, research design, and strategy, approach and other underlying aspects of the methodological framework of the study. The population and sampling procedures will also be presented, followed by the measurement of variables, instrumentation, data analysis techniques and measures installed to maintain research credibility. Finally, the ethical protocol will be presented together with other limitations of the study.

Chapter four will present the analysis of the collected data to reveal the findings of the research. The chapter begins after the collection of data, as presented in the timetable. As observed, data was be collected principally with the aid of survey questionnaire instrument. The quantitative data was analysed by testing the various hypotheses of the study. IBM SPSS Statistics version 25 and SMART PLS Version3 will be the two main instrumental tools in the analysis using SEM Analytical technique.

Chapter five will present the discussions of findings. The findings of the study pertaining to all the research questions will be viewed in the context of the legal and

regulatory framework of the UAE. These discussions will help arrive at the implications of the study. Implications of findings to both theory and practice will be discussed.

Chapter six will present the conclusions and recommendations of the study. As the final chapter, the conclusions will be presented to highlight the extent to which the main objectives of the study have been achieved following the findings, discussions and implications of the study. Recommendations will also be presented for future researchers who would want to venture into similar observations of the threat posed by social media to national security.

Other recommendations will be offered to law enforcement agencies in the UAE and surrounding regions on how to measure and subsequently curb the threats posed by social media on national security. As part of the recommendations, the study will look at the proposition of a Memorandum of understanding between Facebook and the UAE Government as well as the role of social media in the persecution of criminal offences in the UAE. The political scope of social media will also be observed.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1   Introduction

This chapter reviews the literature on the area of social media and the research model being considered. The chapter commences with a discussion of the theories that serve as the foundation of this study. These include the theory of planned behaviour, the social impact theory, and the cute cat theory of social media. Close attention is offered to how these theories relate to the subject matter or pertain to the main discussion under observation.

After these theoretical observations, attention is given to the operational scope and growth of social media usage, the main social media platforms in existence are discussed, and other social media usage characteristics in line with the first research hypothesis. The next discussions focus on the influence of social media on attitude and behaviour. This helps inform the second and third research hypotheses and paves room for the discussion of the national security threat of social media, the use of social media in the UAE, and laws surrounding social media usage in the UAE.

Towards the final stages of the chapter, the theories of planned behaviour and social impact are integrated on a common phenomenon within the social context to arrive at the three remaining hypotheses. The conceptual framework is then presented by highlighting key research gaps that serve as the unique contribution of the present study to the academic literature.

2.2   Definition and Operational Scope of social media

An exact definition of the term is yet to be widely accepted even though general characteristics of what constitutes social media are known (Al Jenaibi, 2011). Among

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the characteristics of this platform is that it facilitates interaction and in a rather efficient and effective manner. It presents a platform where people of different cultural, institutional, national and social backgrounds meet to interact with no limitation of national borders and international laws on movement, yet at virtually no cost. Weiner (2006) defined social media as an electronic platform that facilitates the transformation of huge amounts of information based on the preference and users' requirement.

Even though the term social media has gained popularity in recent times, the term or idea of its possibility goes back to the 1940s, when Norbert Wiener came up with the term "cybernetics" (Pfaffenberger, 1990, p. 1). A couple of years later, Ted Nelson came up with a definition of social media and termed it as the existence of traditional media on the computer (Nelson, 1990). These definitions have usually considered or acknowledged the interaction between human and computers or computers as a medium of human-to-human communication.

In recent attempts, Powell et al. (2011) defined social media as the democratisation of content with the attributed responsibility to sources globally. On this platform, other people are able to publicise and propagate information which significantly increases the reach of content (Kietzmann et al., 2011). Over the years, a variety of such social media platforms have been operational with varying levels of popularity and functionalities. Whereas sites like Facebook and MySpace permit mainly posting and allocation of content (Kaplan, 2012), Flickr and YouTube mainly support photo and video media (Al Jenaibi, 2013).

The social media network has been widened to include news and online reference sites such as Wikipedia (Al Jenaibi, 2013). The online platforms are

increasingly being considered as a primary and relevant platform where businesses and consumers can meet to interact and debate about genuine concerns. Presently, businesses that do not resort to social media may not stand a chance of competing effectively in their respective markets. Social media has, therefore, become an integral aspect of the corporate marketing strategy and particularly public relations due to its ability to provide a forum-like environment for consumers to air their concerns and for such concerns to be addressed (Gillin, 2008).

Other definitions have considered the application-based perspective where social media is described as a set of Internet-based applications and technological fundamentals of Web 2.0 by building on internet platforms to create, share, and exchange information (Joseph, 2012). According to Joseph (2012), emphasis on user-generated content is emphasised and a unique trait of social media. According to the Organization for Economic Corporation and Development (OECD) (2007), social media is defined by three main qualities. These include the availability of the platform to the general public, a minimal amount of creative effort involved, and the creation of the use of this platform outside of professional routines and practice. Even though this definition excludes emails and texts since they are not available on a network or website platform and are usually privately disseminated, it considers other commercial websites that provide an avenue to interact among a group of professionals, not as part of their professional duties.

According to Joseph (2012), social media may be grouped into different categories. These categories include but not limited to blogs, content communities, dedicated social networking sites, collaborative project platforms, among others, including virtual worlds. A typical example is that Wikipedia may be considered a social media specialist as a global source of information. The platform permits online

collaboration and placement of content shared with the rest of the world, with everyone playing a participating role in the editing of the content. The use of rare, embedded functionality is also becoming popular; an instance is the use of Google Docs to share protest information during the Arab Springs in Egypt.

It is important to emphasise that these sites are versatile and permit the creation and sharing of content with much ease than originally comprehensible. In a few minutes, shared content has the potential to go viral with a combination of interactive content in the form of pictures and videos. The audience on social media platforms is connected in the form of friends who are not essential known in real life but available for information. For businesses, contents are shared with fans on their respective social media fan pages without the need to first obtain consent once the person has subscribed or liked the page of concern (Joseph, 2012). Unlike email and other one-way media platforms such as text messages, the need to obtain permission prior to approach is increasingly becoming a regulation. The use of social media for political activism has been attributed to three main factors (Zuckerman, 2013). These include:

- Ease of use – content can be published by nearly everyone with no background or expertise in information communication technology. Content is supported in multiple languages and permits anonymity.
- Latent Capacity – Due to the presence of non-activists on these platforms, those who share the interest of the activists or have a chance to read such content can share them with ease. This exponentially increased the dissemination power of content. With over 90% of the population of UAE on Facebook, content can reach over 8 million people only in a few hours. Something offline channels would not be able to achieve in several years.