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RESEARCH ARTICLE

POSTING ON FACEBOOK AND ITS RELATION TO FORMING PUBLIC OPINION ON SYRIAN ASYLUM FROM THE POINT OF VIEW OF FACULTY MEMBERS OF JORDANIAN UNIVERSITIES

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ABSTRACT

This research study aims at identifying the relation between posting on Facebook and its connection to forming public opinion on Syrian Asylum from the point of view of faculty members of Jordanian Universities. The community of the study included 23 public and private Jordanian Universities, while the sample of the study consisted of 200 faculty member respondents working at Jordanian Universities. The study findings showed the significant role of posting on Facebook in forming public opinion on Syrian Asylum from the viewpoint of faculty members of Jordanian Universities. It also showed that Facebook pages and walls have a vital role in covering the current events on Syrian Asylum, in addition to presenting several opinions and perspectives with respect to the same issue on Facebook. The findings and results also showed that there were no differences of statistical significance in the average answers of the study sample, consisting of faculty members of Jordanian Universities, attributed to the variables of gender and years of tutoring experience. However, there were differences of statistical significance in the average answers of the study sample attributed to the variable of age. The study recommended that it is vital to recognize issues and topics addressed by Facebook, to provide reliable source information on these issues, and to quote sources of such information, for these play a central role in forming public opinion on Syrian Asylum.

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INTRODUCTION

Media has become an effective and influential tool to establishing various human relations, and is one of the most influential means of forming public opinion and more specifically forming trends of public opinion. It has also become an essential source of public culture for all society segments, with its multiple implications that are accepted by various categories. Thus, social, economic and cultural changes and events have influenced the formation of society attitudes, roles, beliefs, values, behavioral capabilities, and even their lifestyles and interrelationships, yet also through the various means of media and social media (Al-Dulaimi, 2010). Among the issues that have recently become common, is the deep impact of social media such as Facebook on individuals and the society. Universities are among the target groups for these sites, as universities significantly contribute to qualifying individuals who would meet the needs and requirements of the Society. Such individuals constitute a significant segment of social segments that are exposed to social media, specifically Facebook, which is a priority to faculty members of Jordanian Universities.

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Facebook has also become an important source of culture and communication, forming opinions and preparing the audience, as it enjoys multiple advantages, for its vital media and communication role through sound and image, grasping attention and focus through deploying the harmonized audio-visual human senses, which drives users to surf for long hours. Thus, social media, including Facebook have become fundamental and critical to handling social and humanitarian issues, and has become priority for organizations, communities, civil society organizations and specialists of various trends and intellectual tendencies. These organizations have taken the responsibility to raise awareness on how to post on these various sites. The fact that Jordanian citizens are aware of is that population structure has dramatically changed in Jordan due to wars that took place in the regional arena starting from the Arab-Israeli war, liberation of Kuwait campaign, the Iraqi war, and the war in Syria. Moreover, Jordan became a destination for the forced displacement resulting from such wars. The demographic variable has become one of the main internal challenges currently facing Jordan in terms of population and population structure. The main reason behind this is the forced migration (deracination) from neighboring countries and the consequent imbalance in the population sector, notably Syrian refugees, who need the necessary sources of living, especially water and energy,

infrastructure and basic services such as health and education, which put additional pressure on the already scarce resources. Accordingly, researcher is looking to add this study to the previous research and studies that handled Facebook, and its relation to forming public opinion, while concentrating on the major social issue; which is the Syrian Asylum.

The Problem of the Study

The problem of the study stems from a question posed from the researcher on the role that Facebook can play in forming public opinion in the society, in light of the decline in the role of websites in favour of social media, and the impact of social media on the audience, considering that these have become an important factor in creating the necessary requirements to form this point of view, through raising awareness of humans view to society and the world. The content of these sites through newsletters, cultural messages, recreational messages or otherwise, necessarily contributes to forming public opinion. It is known that faculty members of Jordanian Universities are subject to a series of transformations, variables and events at all levels. These transformations necessarily affect the formation of their public opinion, values and behaviours. Social media sites, including Facebook, play an important role in the same. Based on this hypothesis, the problem of the study deals with the possibility of forming public opinion on Syrian Asylum that may occur in political, social and economic practices as a result of posting on Facebook thus affecting the structure of the society.

Importance of the Study

Researching Facebook has given the study an added importance, which calls for putting researchers efforts together to further study and analyze Facebook, with the aim of identifying its effect on Jordanian citizens public opinion of and especially faculty members at Jordanian Universities, who can utilize the results of this study to be able to better deal with such sites.

Objectives of the Study

This study aims at identifying the relation between posting on Facebook and forming public opinion on Syrian Asylum from the point of view of faculty members of Jordanian Universities. It also aims at identifying differences of statistical significance in the average answers of the study sample attributed to the variables of: gender, age and years of tutoring experience.

Questions of the Study

This study attempts to answer the following questions:

First Question: what is the role of Facebook, and its relation in forming public opinion on Syrian Asylum from the point of view of faculty members of Jordanian Universities?

Second Question: are there any differences of statistical significance in the average answers of the study sample attributed to the variables of: gender, age and years of tutoring experience?

Terms Used in the Study

You will find below the meanings of the terms used in this study:

Facebook: a web application, is one of the most known social media sites, and is a social network managed by "Facebook" Company which is a shareholding company.

Forming Public Opinion: the process through which communication and interaction occurs between a group of individuals resulting from sharing a practical social life. The public opinion is affected by various religious, social, economic, psychological and political factors before its it finally formed. Interactive media plays a vital role in forming public opinion.

Faculty Members in Jordanian Universities: a group of faculty members in Jordanian Universities, who lecture in the private and public Jordanian Universities, whether males or females, and of all specialties, regardless of their social level or category, and are picked from the university community.

Study Structures

1. Time Structure: this study was executed in the months of January, 2018 and March, 2018.
2. Location Structure: Private and public Jordanian Universities.
3. Human Structure: faculty members of private and public Jordanian Universities

Study Methodology

This study is a field study that adopted the descriptive analytical method in order to identify the relationship between posting on Facebook and the formation of public opinion on Syrian Asylum from the point of view of faculty members in Jordanian Universities, as well as the existence of differences of statistical significance in the average answers of the study sample attributed to the following variables: gender, age and years of tutoring experience.

Study Population and Sample

The study population consists of 23 Jordanian private and public Universities. The sampling and analysis unit consisted of 8169 faculty members (Accreditation and Quality Assurance Commission for Higher Education Institutions, 2017). These were chosen given the compatibility of this category with the requirements of obtaining the desired results from this study. The questionnaires were distributed in these Universities on faculty members in facilitated manner; 200 questionnaires of which were statistically analyzed.

Study Tool

A linear questionnaire was designed consisting of two parts, as follows:

The First Part: is dedicated to identifying personal data of sample faculty members, including (gender, age and years of tutoring experience).

The Second Part: it included some statements related to aspects of posting on Facebook and its relationship to forming public opinion on Syrian Asylum. Researcher used the three-scale marks (agree 3 marks, neutral 2 marks, do not agree one mark), and the scaling was divided onto three levels (low, average, high) depending on the following equation which is adopted in correction.

Maximum alternatives – minimum alternatives = 1-3 = 0.66

Number of Levels	3
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First Scale: $1 + 0.66 = 1.66$

Second Scale: $1.67 + 0.66 = 2.33$

Third Scale: $2.34 + 0.66 = 3$

Thus, estimations will then be as follows:

1. Less than or equals (1.66) means a low indicator.
2. Greater than or equals (1.67) and less than or equals (2.33) means an average indicator.
3. Greater than or equals (2.34) means a high indicator.

Authenticity of the Study Tool

Researcher has validated the authenticity of the study tool and the study results through submitting the questionnaire on various evaluators, faculty members and experts in media and statistics to evaluate the logical authenticity and validity of the tool to collect data.

Consistency of the Study Tool

The Cronbach-Alpha parameter was used to ensure internal consistency of all questionnaire measurements and paragraphs, which reached 91.7% and is a highly reliable percentage.

Date Collection Methods

Two data collection methods were used which are the primary sources and the secondary sources, as follows:

First: Primary Data: which are data collected through designing a questionnaire, to serve the purpose of the subject of current study.

Second: Secondary Data: which are the available sources of data and information collected for other purposes, from library sources and from previous literature reviews. These data are found in media books, scientific materials, specialized periodicals, bulletins, master and doctoral dissertations, especially those which research social media sites, Facebook and forming public opinion.

Statistical Analyses

The following statistical analyses were used to answer the study questions:

1. Arithmetic averages, standard deviations, degree and rank were calculated to answer the first question, which is related to the degree of responses of faculty members of Jordanian Universities, on paragraphs of the questionnaire as a whole.
2. One Way Anova analysis was used to show differences of statistical significance in the responses of faculty members of Jordanian Universities (the study sample) due to variables of gender, age and years of tutoring experience), that is to answer the second question.

Previous Studies

The study of Mehdi and Al-Qa'im (year 2010) showed that there is a relationship between media, elections and forming

public opinion. The media influence is of social and psychological dimension, and is therefore subject to multiple relations, elements and values. The social structure, its context and symbolic interactions are complex and various, to the extent that it cannot often be subject to study, examination and measurement. Mansour study (year 2012) found out that there are no statistically significant differences in the needs and satisfactions, Jordanian youth attain by using social media according to the gender variable (male and female), while there were differences of statistical significance in cognitive and emotional needs and satisfactions attained by Jordanian youth from the use of these social media sites depending on the variable of extent of use. Al-Dbeisi and Tahat study (year 2013) concluded that the spread of social media among students has become a source to accessing news and information that can influence forming public opinion, and become competitive to traditional media and online journalism. Some information were positive to the extent of promoting national spirit and loyalty. Karbnsky study (year 2015) showed that the grades of university students who are addicted to the Internet and surfing Facebook, the largest social network on the Internet, is much lower than those who do not use such sites. The more time is spent by university students in browsing Facebook, the lower grades they will get. Lastly, Vansoon (year 2017) study found that more than half of the sample adults who use social media sites, specifically YouTube and Facebook, have admitted that they spend more time on social media sites and the Internet as compared to the time they spend with friends or family members.

Definition of Social Media Sites

Social media sites are a system of electronic networks on the Internet, which allow users to create customized sites and then connect through an electronic social system with other members of the same interest, or grouping the same with colleagues or otherwise. Social media sites are a set of sites on the internet that have emerged with the second generation of the "Web", enabling communication between individuals in a virtual social environment that groups them depending on interest or concern (country, university, company). All this is done through direct communication services such as sending messages or viewing the profiles of others and getting to know the news and information they present on their pages or profiles (Jarrar, 2012). The term social communication refers to the process of communicating with people (relatives, colleagues, friends) through electronic sites and services that provide fast and wide access to information. These are sites that offer information and synchronize and interact with you while providing you with information within your network. Thus, they are a method to immediate exchange of information via the Internet (Al-Mikdadi, 2013). Social media sites are defined as a system that includes a set of electronic networks allowing subscribers to create their own sites, and then connecting them through an electronic social system with other members who have the same interests and hobbies (Radi, Y 2013). Mansour (Y 2012) defines social media sites as the social sites that allow users to share files, photos and videos, to create e-blogs, do instant chats, and send messages. There are three main sites or applications in social media networks; "Facebook" "Twitter", and the site of videos "YouTube". Social communication sites are also defined as the internet sites where users can participate and contribute to creating or adding pages on the interactive social media networks which make it possible for users to communicate anytime and

anywhere (Al-Dleimi, 2011). Researcher defines social media sites as all the services created and programmed by major companies to gather the largest number of users and friends, share activities and interests, seek friendships, and search for interests and activities with other people who share intellectual or other interests. Such services offer advantages such as instant conversations, public and private communication, and sharing multimedia in form of voice clips, images, videos, and files.

Facebook

Facebook is a social communication site, which allows individuals and corporates to be present through the site tools and communicate with others within the site or connect through other sites, in addition to establishing contact links with others. Founded in 2004 by Mark Zuckerberg, a Harvard University student, who later became the youngest billionaire in the world, with the purpose of communicating with students in Harvard University, Facebook then spread to other universities in USA, UK and Canada, and turned from a site to highlight self and personal images to a Facebook sponsored and specialized communication site. Facebook has converted from being an application to show private photos and communicate with family members and friends, to a communication channel for e-societies, a podium to present social and political issues and a channel to forming e-political groupings, where real parties on the ground could not form. Facebook has also become a vital marketing channel for thousands of big and small companies to exhibit themselves for their audience. Add to that, the newspapers and other media channels that rely on e-societies to publish news and articles. Thus, Facebook has overridden its social function to turn to a multi-purpose communication channel. It is worth mentioning that Facebook subscribers in 2016 have nearly reached 500 million, and Facebook will surely become the largest e-human assembly application on earth (Al-Mansour, 2012). Researcher defines Facebook as an electronic site for social communication which allows users to create personal profiles to be publicly published, in addition to making relations with others, who can then access profiles.

Forming Public Opinion

Public opinion is the majority of individual or audience opinions. Public opinion is influenced by a set of factors and determinants that contribute to its formation. These factors are various and interrelated. They dynamically interact with one another, meaning that each factor influences and affects the other. Humans in society are influenced by family members, religion, customs, traditions and values, educational institutions, the political system in the country, friends, peers, means of media, groups such as unions, political parties and bodies. Through such channels, many influences arise forming public opinion, and it is difficult to understand the public opinion in a nation, unless we take into account those material and social factors that constitute the personality of a nation, and contribute to the formation of individuals beliefs and tendencies (Al-Dbeisi and Al-Tahat, 2013). Researcher sees that public opinion is the formation of a judgment or idea on a particular subject or individual, or a set of beliefs that can be discussed and might be right or wrong, which belong to a group of members who are in a group or nation and share a common view, regardless of differences in social or cultural class.

Facebook and Forming Public Opinion

Researcher believes that digital means of communication and media become a necessity in everyday life. They are the link between all institutions, components of social structure, and the means used to explaining and presenting what social institutions can offer to other institutions. Digital media play a vital role in forming public opinion, mobilizing groups, and directing them around specific ideas, opinions and trends, no matter how these are geographically dispersed or demographically heterogeneous. The enormous technological developments improved the ability of digital media to bringing more influence onto the audience and directing them to specific opinions and beliefs.

The Theoretical Bases of the Study

Researcher relied on media theories that explain how media can be used to influence forming public opinion. These theories are:

First: Media Dependency Theory: Media Dependency Theory is leading the theories of media influence, and no doubt that the main hypothesis of this theory provides a strong scientific explanation for its appropriate application on crisis media, assuming that the public resort to media to meet their cognitive needs and to shape their behavioral attitudes in certain circumstances. The greater the degree of instability in the society, the greater the exposure of the public to the media (Miliphin and Sandra, 2003).

Second: Uses and Satisfaction Theory: This is the most important factor in the study of public communication audience, through which we can identify the objectives and patterns of use, means of use, audience background and characteristics, and its relevance to the communication medium. This factor is closely related to the process of selective posting, and this process, although not highly controlled, as sometimes posting is done without prior selection, such as what happens on radio and television (Miliphin and Sandra, 2003).

Results of Field Study

Results Relevant to the First Question:

The first question is: What is the role of Facebook and its relation to forming public opinion on Syrian Asylum from the view of faculty members of Jordanian Universities?

To answer this question, the arithmetic averages and standard deviations were extracted. Table (1) shows the sample estimates, which were as follows:

Table (1) shows that the arithmetic average of the questionnaire paragraphs reached (2.116), with a medium degree. This average reflects the role of Facebook in forming public opinion on Syrian Asylum in the view of faculty members of Jordanian Universities. The arithmetic averages of this axis paragraphs ranged between (1.700-2.715). The most important paragraph from the sample point of view was paragraph (20), which came in the first rank stating that "Facebook covers all current events on Syrian Asylum" with an arithmetic average of (2.715), a standard deviation of (.5148) and a high degree.

Table 1. The arithmetic averages, standard deviations, rank and degree of the questionnaire paragraphs, arranged in a descending order

Degree	Standard Deviation	Arithmetic Average	Paragraphs	Serial No.	Rank
High	.5869	2.585	Different ideas and perspectives on Syrian Asylum are presented on Facebook	1	2
Medium	.6872	2.200	Facebook focuses on one aspect or cause of the Syrian Asylum	2	9
Medium	.7539	1.880	Facebook presents the various causes and aspects related to Syrian Asylum	3	17
High	.6802	2.360	Facebook does not mention words and terms of support or opposition to Syrian Asylum	4	4
Medium	.6787	2.040	Facebook presents a balanced view of the causes and consequences of the Syrian Asylum	5	11
Medium	.6533	2.265	Facebook presents honest information and data covering Syrian Asylum	6	8
Medium	.6780	1.950	Facts on Syrian Asylum are presented and published on Facebook	7	15
Medium	.6742	1.760	Sources of information available on Facebook about Syrian Asylum are reliable	8	19
Medium	.7292	1.970	The Syrian Asylum aspects are explained and analyzed and the results of the same are presented	9	13
High	.6872	2.510	The coverage provided on Facebook about the Syrian Asylum is neutral, not biased and not partisan to a specific party	10	3
Medium	.6806	1.845	Syrian Asylum on Facebook is covered in a balanced manner	11	18
Medium	.7250	2.130	Information and data on Facebook about Syrian Asylum refer to their original sources	12	10
Medium	.66027	1.965	There is an interactive participation while covering Syrian Asylum on Facebook	13	14
Medium	.69456	1.700	Photos on Syrian Asylum are directly posted from reality, on Facebook	14	20
Medium	.6612	1.930	Facebook restates all what is related to Syrian Asylum, to keep me always updated	15	16
Medium	.6378	2.265	Facebook presents comprehensive and adequate information on changes on Syrian Asylum arena	16	7
Medium	.7226	2.020	Facebook contributes to prioritizing my concerns on which issue of the Syrian Asylum is of utmost importance	17	12
High	.6757	2.340	Facebook assists me to take a specific stand on Syrian Asylum	18	6
High	.6706	2.350	Facebook contributes to highlighting facts and shaping the agenda of Syrian Asylum	19	5
High	.5148	2.715	Facebook covers all current events on Syrian Asylum	20	1
Medium		2.116	Total Grade of Questionnaire Paragraphs		

Table 2. Results of The Variance Analysis (One Way Anova) Regarding Variances in The Responses of Faculty Members of Jordanian Universities According To The Gender Variable

Variable	Source of Variance	Total Squaring	Degrees of Freedom	Average Squaring	Calculated F Value	Tabular F Value	Sig Level
Gender	Between Groups	.004	1	.004	.052	3.92	.819
	Within Groups	16.868	198	.085			
	Total Variance	16.872	199				

Table 3. Results of The Variance Analysis (One Way Anova) Regarding Variances in The Responses of Faculty Members of Jordanian Universities According To The Age Variable

Variable	Source of Variance	Total Squaring	Degrees of Freedom	Average Squaring	Calculated F Value	Tabular F Value	Sig Level
Age	Between Groups	2.059	2	1.029	13.68	3.92	.000
	Within Groups	14.814	197	.075			
	Total Variance	16.872	199				

Table 4. Results of The Variance Analysis (One Way Anova) Regarding Variances in The Responses of Faculty Members of Jordanian Universities According To The Years of Tutoring Experience Variable

Variable	Source of Variance	Total Squaring	Degrees of Freedom	Average Squaring	Calculated F Value	Tabular F Value	Sig Level
Years of Tutoring Experience	Between Groups	.160	2	.080	.944	3.92	.391
	Within Groups	16.712	197	.085			
	Total Variance	16.872	199				

While paragraph (14) ranked the last stating that "Photos on Syrian Asylum are directly posted from reality, on Facebook" with an arithmetic average of (1.700), a standard deviation of (.6945) and a medium degree of importance.

Results Related to the Second Question

The second question is: Are there statistically significant differences in the average responses of the study sample (faculty members of Jordanian Universities) due to the following variables: gender, age and years of tutoring experience?

To determine the extent of variances in the responses of the study sample, the one way Anova test was used, where the

decision rule provides for accepting the null hypothesis and rejecting the alternative hypothesis if the calculated F value is less than the value of the tabular F and the Sig level; Sig is greater than 05. The following tables (2), (3) and (4) illustrate the obtained results when selecting this hypothesis:

1. Gender

Data appearing in Table (2) show that the calculated F value is (.052) and its tabular value is (3.92). By comparison, it turns out that the calculated F value is less than the tabular value, and according to the decision rule that if the calculated F value is less than the tabular F value; this means that "there are no statistically significant differences in the average responses of the sample members due to the gender variable". This is

confirmed by the Sig level reaching (.819) which is greater than 0.05.

2. Age

Data appearing in Table (3) show that the calculated F value is (13.68) and its tabular value is (3.92). By comparison, it turns out that the calculated F value is greater than the tabular value, and according to the decision rule that if the calculated F value is less than the tabular F value; this means that "there are statistically significant differences in the responses of the sample members due to the age variable". This is confirmed by the Sig level reaching (.000) which is greater than 0.05.

3. Years of Tutoring Experience

Data appearing in Table (4) show that the calculated F value is (.944) and its tabular value is (3.92). By comparison, it turns out that the calculated F value is less than the tabular value, and according to the decision rule that if the calculated F value is less than the tabular F value; this means that "there are no statistically significant differences in the average responses of the sample due to the years of tutoring experience variable". This is confirmed by the Sig level reaching (.391) which is greater than 0.05.

RESULTS

The present study sought to identify the relationship between posting on Facebook and forming public opinion on Syrian Asylum from the view of faculty members of Jordanian Universities. The theoretical framework of the study was based on the media dependency theory, and uses and satisfaction theory. Results related to the first question showed that the role of Facebook in forming public opinion on Syrian Asylum from view of faculty members of Jordanian Universities was significant. It was shown that Facebook has a role in covering all current events on Syrian Asylum, and that different ideas and views on the same are presented on Facebook. The coverage of the Syrian Asylum on Facebook is neutral and not biased, and it turned out that Facebook avoids using words and terms of support or opposition to Syrian Asylum, and contributes to highlighting the facts, shaping the agenda and taking a specific position towards Syrian Asylum. Researcher believes that the role of Facebook in forming public opinion on Syrian Asylum is indispensable, as Facebook provides comprehensive and urgent news, various coverages and useful information on Syrian Asylum, as well as giving the opportunity to exchanging views, commenting and responding as relevant to the Syrian Asylum.

The Results pertaining to the Second Question showed the following:

1. There are no statistically significant differences in the average responses of the study sample (faculty members of Jordanian Universities) due to gender variable.
3. There are no statistically significant differences in the average responses of the study sample (faculty members of Jordanian Universities) due to age variable.
4. There are no statistically significant differences in the average responses of the study sample (faculty members of Jordanian Universities) due to years of tutoring experience variable.

Recommendations

Researcher recommends the following:

1. Recognize the importance of issues and matters addressed by Facebook, and that Facebook shall provide reliable information on these issues, and quote their sources, for their important role in forming public opinion on Syrian Asylum.
2. Facebook shall perform its role in presenting ideas and information on Syrian Asylum, in a manner consistent with the concerns and interests of faculty members of Jordanian Universities.
3. Facebook shall raise issues of interest to all segments of the society with a content that is characterized by persuasion and acceptance, which is able to satisfy society needs and desires, as it is one of the determining factors in forming public opinion on Syrian Asylum.
5. Conduct specialized, in-depth and ongoing studies to understand how public opinion on Syrian Asylum is formed among faculty members of Jordanian Universities, to find out the gaps and deficiencies in the same.
6. Conduct periodical studies and research to evaluate the role of social media in general and Facebook in particular, in forming public opinion on various issues due to the rapid development of such sites.

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