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Al-Quds University**



**The Influence of Social Media on Health Behaviors
among University Students in the Gaza Strip**

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**The Influence of Social Media on Health Behaviors
among University Students in the Gaza Strip**

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Thesis Approval

The Influence of Social Media on Health Behaviors among University Students in the Gaza Strip

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Dedication

To whom they strive and never stint what they own to push me in the successful path.

To my beloved family. To my parents, both of you have motivated me to climb the life stairs wisely and patiently.

To my sisters, you are always a source of inspiration and encouragement.

To my sons, Khaled and Abdelrahman, to my princess Joury, you have supported me a lot.

To the soul of my husband.

To all those who encouraged, supported and helped me all the way.

I dedicate this research for all of them

Nadeen Baderaldeen El Redaisi

Declaration

I certify that this thesis submitted for the degree of master is the result of my own research, except where otherwise acknowledged, and that this thesis or any of its parts has not been submitted for higher degree to any other university or institution.

Signed:

Nadeen El Redaisi

Date:...../...../.....

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Abstract

Social media is increasingly becoming very popular among university students, where university students spend a substantial amount of their time using social media; however, little is known regarding whether such use is associated with positive or negative effects on their health behaviors. This study explores the influence of social media on health behaviors of university students in Gaza.

The design of the study is a methodologically triangulated one. The quantitative component was carried out, through a face-to-face questionnaire with 411 participants who were studying at local universities in Gaza at the time of data collection. Convenient systematic sample was used to survey students exiting the selected universities. A structured interviewed questionnaire was used for data collection and the response rate was (75%). In addition, five key informant interviews were conducted with relevant service providers and policy makers. Moreover, six focus group discussions with university students were conducted. Quantitative data were analyzed using the SPSS software and the qualitative data were analyzed using open coding thematic technique.

Findings show that of the participants, 98.1% owned a mobile, 51.6% used Facebook for texting. The most commonly in use application by the respondents is Facebook followed by Instagram, (89.3%), (68.1%), respectively. The results show that having Instagram profile was more common among females (76.3%) than males (59.2%) and the variations were statically significant. Nearly half of the respondents are usually active on social media in the evenings. The majority of participants use social media for keeping in touch with friends (81.8%).

A considerable proportion of participants use the internet (34.5%) and social media (31.9%) as a common source for getting health information. Nearly half of participants had accessed health and lifestyle related information from Facebook. Similarly, half of participants said that social media had positive effects on their health behaviors. Physical activity and nutrition were the most interesting themes for the participants to get information about (45%), (24.3%) respectively. Of the respondents, 54% reported adapting some healthy behaviors after using social media. Moreover, 49.9% of respondents quitted some bad behaviors after using social media. With regard to nutritional behaviors, 40.3% of participants said that social media had positive effect on their eating habits. Regarding psychosocial status, Internet (43.3%) and social media (33.3%) were also used for accessing psychosocial status related information, 39.4% reported that social media had promoted their psychosocial status. Only 19.5% of participants reported that social media contributed to combating smoking. Facebook encouraged smoking (reported by 61.3% of the participants) and at the same time it helps in combating it (67.4%). Only 14.3% of participants said that social media decrease drug and substance abuse. Regarding sleeping, nearly half of participants reported that social media decreases sleeping hours, 47% indicated that they skip sleeping hours because of using social media, 50.2% agreed that using social media at a late time hinders the academic achievement. YouTube had positive effect on physical activity as reported by 59% of participants and on PSS (38.2%), while Facebook had the most positive effect on nutrition (61.9%), smoking (35.4%), drugs (33.4%) and health information seeking behaviors (67.4%). However, Facebook had the most negative effect on sleeping (41.7%).

The study provided important information about the use of social media by the university students in Gaza and flags an important missed opportunity for using social media to positively influencing health behaviors. Youth specific health related information can be effectively communicated via social media applications particularly through using face book and Instagram.

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List of Abbreviations

DM	Diabetes Mellitus
ERP	Enterprise Resource Planning
FGD	Focused Groups Discussions
GAGE	Gender and Adolescence: Global Evidence
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GS	Gaza Strip
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
ILS	New Israeli Shekel
KII	Key Informant Interviews
Km	Kilometer
MD	Median
MOH	Ministry of health
MOHE	Ministry of Higher Education
MTIT	Ministry of Telecommunications and Information Technologies
N	Number
NCDs	Non-communicable Diseases
PCBS	Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistic
PNA	Palestinian National Authority
PSS	Psychosocial Status
SMS	Short Messaging Service
sq	square
Std	Standard Deviation
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNRWA	United Nations Relief and Works Agency for the Refugees of Palestine in the Near East
USD	United States Dollar
WB	West Bank
WHO	World Health Organization