The use of social media and its relationship to national identity among university students

Hassan Al-Saify[1]*, Baneen Ibrahim[2], Abdullah Alahmari[3], Shaimaa Darwish[4]
[1]Mass Media & Communication Department, College of Arts, King Faisal University, Al-Ahsa, Saudi Arabia; habualila@kfu.edu.sa (H.A.S.).
[2]Media Department, College of Arts, King Faisal University, Al-Ahsa, Saudi Arabia; 222402015@student.kfu.edu.sa (B.I.).
[3]Media and Communication Science, College of Arabic Language and Human Studies, Islamic University of Madinah, Saudi Arabia; Alahmari@iu.edu.sa (A.A.).
[4]Department of English Language, Al-Azhar University, Egypt; Shaimaa.Ibrahim@azhar.edu.eg (S.D.).

Abstract: This study investigates the relationship between social media engagement and the formation of national identity among university students in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA), with a specific focus on the student population. Through an exploration of the extent of social media use, underlying motivations, and their impact on various dimensions of national identity, this research provides valuable insights into the perceptions and sense of belonging of young individuals in the digital era. We conducted a descriptive and analytical survey, administering a questionnaire to a sample of 386 KSA university students to ensure the generalizability of the findings within the student population. The study reveals a noteworthy level of social media engagement among KSA university students, driven by diverse motives encompassing cognitive, social, recreational, and educational aspects. Furthermore, it highlights the positive influence of social media on the students' national identity, with statistically significant correlations observed across cultural, emotional, social, and affiliative dimensions. The findings indicate that KSA university students exhibit a sense of pride in Saudi history and traditions, demonstrate respect for national symbols, and possess a stronger sense of national affiliation, potentially influenced by their online engagement. Based on these findings, the study recommends the strategic utilization of social media platforms to enhance support among KSA university students and Saudi youth in general, particularly for matters pertaining to national issues. By actively promoting national values, preserving cultural heritage, and cultivating a sense of belonging through social media, institutions can effectively strengthen the national identity of the younger generation.

1. Introduction

Social media networks have revolutionized the way individuals and communities interact, creating online spaces that facilitate rapid and unrestricted information flow. These platforms tap into the fundamental human need for connection, fostering dialogue, collaboration, and relationship building. As a result, social media has attracted a vast user base, including university students [1].

For university students, social media has become an integral part of their lives, serving as a primary source of information and influencing various aspects of their daily routines. Platforms like Facebook and X compete with traditional media outlets, providing easily digestible snippets of news and information. Students themselves perceive social media as a valuable tool that enhances productivity, knowledge acquisition, and learning efficiency. However, concerns arise regarding the potential impact of the sheer volume and diverse formats of content on these platforms and their influence on student perceptions and understanding [2].

Social media has embedded itself deeply into the fabric of university life. Although we still don't fully understand its long-term effects, both positive and negative, its pervasive presence and projected

growth indicate that it will continue to significantly shape students' time, attention, and even their identity formation [3].

University students' use of social media is believed to most influence aspects of identity. Identity holds a significant place in an individual's life; it is the core of one's personality. Each individual has a unique identity that differs from others, but they converge in a national identity. National identity encompasses values, customs, traditions, social aspects, and broad cultural aspects. Identity is the individual's fingerprint, which includes a set of ideas, emotions, and behaviors derived from early childhood experiences stored in short-term memory [4].

Overall, university students use social media to shape and express their national identities, but we still don't fully understand the nuances of identity construction and the potential drawbacks of social media usage. There is a need for a more comprehensive and nuanced understanding of the relationship between social media and national identity among university students, which will be valuable for researchers, educators, and policymakers seeking to understand and address the complexities of identity construction in the digital age.

This study aims to investigate the influence of social media on national identity among female university students in the Eastern Province of Saudi Arabia. National identity encompasses values, customs, traditions, social aspects, and broader cultural dimensions. It is a fundamental aspect of an individual's personality, representing their unique set of ideas, emotions, and behaviors derived from early childhood experiences stored in their memory. Given the ever-growing influence of social media in the lives of university students, it is crucial to examine the intersection between these digital spaces and personal identity development. This exploration will shed light on whether social media strengthens or shapes national identity, cultivates individual expression, or perhaps does both. The impact of social media on one's sense of self is undeniable and warrants a comprehensive investigation.

1.1. Research Objectives

The key objectives of this study are as follows:

- To quantify the prevalence of social media use among female university students in the Eastern Province of Saudi Arabia.
- To explore the motivations behind female university students' use of social media.
- To investigate the dimensions of national identity among female university students.
- 2012

1.2. Research Significance

This study is significant for several reasons. First, it adds to the existing body of knowledge on the influence of social media on national identity, specifically among female university students. As social media continues to shape communication patterns and social interactions, understanding its impact on identity formation is vital.

Secondly, this study focuses on a specific geographical region, the Eastern Province of Saudi Arabia, providing insights into the experiences and perspectives of female university students within this cultural context. By narrowing the scope, the study can provide context-specific findings that can inform policies, interventions, and educational approaches tailored to this population.

Finally, this research addresses a gap in the literature by examining the dimensions of national identity and their relationship with social media use. By investigating how social media affects national identity formation, the study aims to uncover potential implications for cultural preservation, social cohesion, and individual self-expression.

1.3. Research Questions

The study will address the following questions to guide the investigation: guide the investigation:

- How prevalent is social media use among female university students in the Eastern Province of Saudi Arabia?
- What are the motivations behind female university students' use of social media?
- What are the dimensions of national identity among female university students?
- Is there a relationship between social media use and national identity formation among female university students?

1.4. Hypotheses

The main hypothesis that there is a statistically significant relationship between university students' use of social media and its impact on national identity.

This hypothesis gives rise to the following sub-hypotheses:

Q1: There is a significant relationship between university students' use of social media and the cultural dimension.

Q2: There is a significant relationship between university students' use of social media and the emotional dimension.

Q3: There is a significant relationship between university students' use of social media and the social dimension.

Q4: There is a significant relationship between university students' use of social media, belonging to the nation, and respect for its symbols.

Q4: There is a significant relationship between university students' use of social media and pride in Saudi history and traditions.

1.5. Literature Review

Social media usage among university students has been the subject of several studies, exploring its effects on various domains. For instance, Ibrahim and Al-Qahtani [5]; Al-Zedjali, et al. [6] and Al-Shiti [7] conducted a comprehensive study examining the effects of social media platform usage on university students, exploring cognitive, psychological, social, religious, ethical, and political domains, and their interplay with cultural identity and psychological security. Zhang [8] provides a unique perspective on the role of social media in identity construction, but it does not explore the experiences of university students from a broader range of countries or the potential negative aspects of social media usage.

While their research provides a broad understanding of the effects of social media, it does not specifically focus on the relationship between social media usage and national identity formation among female university students in the Eastern Province of Saudi Arabia.

Different cultural contexts have also studied the impact of social media on society. Al-Agami [9] assessed social media's impact on society, highlighting various aspects such as exposure to sexual content, challenges to family life, awareness of global developments, increased violence, detachment from reality, and opinion formation on current issues. This study, however, does not specifically address the role of social media in promoting national identity among university students or explore the experiences of female university students in the Eastern Province of Saudi Arabia.

Existing research highlights the complex interplay between social media usage, demographic factors, personality traits, motivations, and identity formation among university students. However, there is a gap between female university students in the Eastern Province of Saudi Arabia and their specific experiences with social media in relation to national identity.

Studies by Kircaburun, et al. [10]; Al-MoTawi [11] and Chen [12] suggest that specific platforms and personality traits influence problematic social media use and identity crisis levels. Additionally, López-González [13] points to a correlation between social networking site intensity and overall values among young people.

Cultural influences on social media use are also evident, with Kim, et al. [14] finding differences in motivations between Korean and American students. Al-Haays [15] further emphasizes the diverse online interactions and positive impacts on young personalities.

The broader context of media and identity formation is explored by Musaa'd [16] who highlights the potential of local radio programs to foster national identity. Al-Nagdaat [17] examines the presence of Arabs online and the internet's role in shaping identity and communication.

However, research by Zhang [8] and Al-Agami [9] focuses on different student populations and identity performances, and explores identity construction in broader contexts without specifically addressing university students or national identity.

1.6. The Problem of the Study

Social networking sites have become influential in today's technological landscape, with widespread adoption and diverse applications. Understanding how students engage with these platforms, especially in cross-cultural communication, is crucial. While social media offers positive aspects such as efficient communication and breaking geographical barriers, it also presents challenges, particularly in relation to identity, including national identity. University students heavily rely on social media for information, finding it valuable for enhancing productivity, learning efficiency, and information intake. As social media disseminates diverse information, it has the potential to influence students' perceptions and ideas, impacting identity formation and promoting values like multiculturalism, freedom of expression, and good citizenship in society [18].

This study aims to explore the influence of social media on national identity among female university students in the Eastern Province of Saudi Arabia. This exploration will encompass several key elements.

2. Theoretical Framework

2.1 The Concept of National Identity

National identity refers to the collective sense of belonging, shared values, and cultural affiliations that individuals associate with their nation [19]. It encompasses the cultural, historical, and social dimensions that shape an individual's identification and attachment to their country.

Social Identity Theory provides a relevant lens for understanding the dynamics at play in the relationship between social media and national identity. According to this theory, individuals strive to maintain a positive social identity by associating themselves with groups that enhance their self-esteem and sense of belonging [20]. Individuals have the opportunity to engage with national narratives, symbols, and communities that reinforce their national identity on social media.

Prior research has demonstrated the role of social media in shaping national identity. For instance, studies have shown that social media platforms can facilitate emotional connections and a sense of belonging to one's nation [21]. They also provide a platform for individuals to express and reinforce their cultural identity [22].

2.2 How Does National Identity Affect Individuals' Sense of Belonging?

National identity plays a significant role in shaping individuals' sense of belonging. It influences how individuals perceive themselves in relation to their nation, as well as the extent to which they feel connected and included within their national community. Several studies have explored the impact of national identity on individuals' sense of belonging, shedding light on this complex relationship.

Research by Bilali, et al. [23] demonstrated that a strong national identity is positively associated with a greater sense of belonging and social connectedness. When individuals identify strongly with their nation, they tend to perceive themselves as part of a larger collective, which enhances their feelings of attachment and belongingness.

Furthermore, studies have shown that national identity can provide individuals with a sense of continuity and stability, contributing to their sense of belonging. Van Der Werf, et al. [24] found that a

coherent and positive national identity fosters a sense of belonging by providing individuals with a shared history, culture, and values that they can identify with and relate to.

On the other hand, conflicting or fragmented national identities can create challenges to individuals' sense of belonging. Research by Reicher [25] highlighted that when individuals' national identities are in tension or when they feel excluded or marginalized within their own nation, their sense of belonging can be adversely affected.

Various factors, such as social and political contexts, cultural diversity and historical experiences, can influence the relationship between national identity and individuals' sense of belonging. For instance, studies have shown that inclusive national narratives that recognize and value diversity can promote a stronger sense of belonging among individuals from diverse backgrounds [26].

In conclusion, national identity significantly impacts individuals' sense of belonging. A strong and coherent national identity can enhance feelings of attachment and social connectedness, while conflicting or exclusionary national identities can undermine individuals' sense of belonging. Understanding the complex dynamics between national identity and belonging allows us to further explore strategies to promote inclusive national narrative and foster a sense of belonging for all individuals within a nation.

3. Methodology

Study Design: The study utilized a survey method to gather information about the prevalence of social media use, motivations for use, and national identity dimensions among university students. We employed a correlational survey design to investigate the potential relationship between social media use and national identity dimensions.

Sample: The participants in the study were university students from various colleges, universities, and schools in Saudi Arabia. We selected a stratified random sample from the academic year 2023, which included students from Imam Muhammad bin Saud Islamic University, stratified random sample was chosen from the academic year 2023, including students from Imam King Abdulaziz University, Muhammad bin Saud Islamic University, King Abdulaziz University, Princess Nourah bint Abdulrahman University. These universities were selected to ensure a representative sample that reflects the characteristics of the overall student population in Saudi Arabia. The sample included 386 male and female students.

Table 1.
Sample selection procedure.

Variable		N	%
The college	Practical	162	42.0%
	Theory	224	58.0%
Study stage	Bachelor's	359	93.0%
	Postgraduate studies	27	7.00%
Residence	City	320	82.9%
	Village	66	17.1%
Type	Female students	205	53.10%
	Students	181	46.90%

Table 1 illustrates the sample selection procedure, providing an overview of the distribution of variables. The majority of participants were from the theoretical colleges (58%), pursuing bachelor's degrees (93%) and residing in the city (82.9%), with a slightly higher representation of female students (53.1%).

Questionnaire Development: The study developed the questionnaire based on relevant academic literature and previous research findings related to social media use and national identity. The questionnaire was designed to address established concepts and incorporate existing knowledge

frameworks within the domain of the study. Feedback from specialized faculty members was obtained through an expert evaluation process to refine the content and structure of the questionnaire.

Validity and Reliability: We employed a multi-pronged approach to ensure the validity of the questionnaire o ensure the validity of the questionnaire, a multi-pronged approach was employed. The questionnaire was reviewed by a group of specialized faculty members who provided feedback on its content, structure, and relevance to the research objectives. We incorporated their suggestion to enhance the questionnaires clarity, relevance, and appropriateness.

Internal consistency and validity were assessed using Pearson correlation coefficients. We calculated correlations between each individual questionnaire axis (e.g., degree of use of social media, motives for using social media, dimensions of national identity) and the total score for the entire questionnaire. The resulting correlation values were analyzed to evaluate the cohesion and reliability of the instrument.

Table 2.
Pearson correlation coefficient for the questionnaire axes.

The hub	The first	The second	The third	Total
The first	1	0.040**	0.031**	0.016**
The second		1	0.001**	0.020**
The third			1	0.000**
Total				1

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

Table 2 provides valuable insights into the internal consistency and validity of the questionnaire using Pearson correlation coefficients.

The analysis reveals statistically significant positive correlation between each individual questionnaire axis and the total score. This outcome, exceeding the established threshold of $p < 0.05$, offers strong evidence for the validity of the study tool.

Moreover, we used Cronbach's alpha coefficient to confirm the questionnaire's reliability, and the results were as follows:

Table 3.
Cronbach's alpha test for the reliability of the questionnaire.

The hub	Number of paragraphs	Consistency
Degree of use of social media	3	0.656
Motives for using social media	8	0.629
Dimensions of national identity	24	0.910
Total	35	0.795

Table 3 clarifies that the study tool has a reliability of 0.795, which enhances confidence in the results that the study can reach.

Data Analysis: The collected survey data were analyzed using appropriate statistical methods. Descriptive statistics such as frequencies and percentages were calculated to examine the prevalence of social media use, motivations for use, and national identity dimensions among the participants.

For the correlational analysis, Pearson correlation coefficients were computed to investigate the relationship between social media use and national identity dimensions. The significance level (p-value) was set at $p < 0.05$ to determine statistical significance.

Table 4.
Degree of respondents' use of social media.

Phrase		Response					SMA	Standard deviation
		Always	Mostly	Sometimes	Scarcely	Not use		
I have active accounts on most social media platforms	N	261	93	14	14	4	4.54	0.81
	%	67.6	24.1	3.6	3.6	1		
Use social media regularly everyday	N	205	123	37	19	2	4.321	0.87
	%	53.1	31.9	9.6	4.9	0.5		
Spend at least two hours a day on social media	N	198	67	71	35	15	4.026	1.18
	%	51.3	17.4	18.4	9.10	3.90		

Table 4 provides data on pervasive daily usage, diverse platform engagement (averaging 4.54 per student), and high account verification rates, suggesting a focus on online identity and authenticity. Notably, students dedicate an average of 4.03 hours daily to social media, highlighting the intensity of their involvement.

4. Results
4.1The Main Social Media Platforms Utilized by KSA University Students

Table 5.
The most important sites.

Social media sites	N	%
X	171	44.30%
SnapChat	91	23.60%
Instagram	58	15.00%
Facebook	6	1.60%
The YouTube	19	4.90%
WhatsApp	27	7.00%
Other	14	3.60%
Total	386	100%

Table 5 explains the results that show X's dominance in Saudi Arabia can be attributed to its real-time news and conversation platform. Young people flock to Snapchat for its engaging filters and editing features, making it a close competitor. Instagram's focus on photos and visuals secures its popularity, while WhatsApp and YouTube cater to communication and entertainment needs. Facebook's decline might be due to changing user preferences and competition from other platforms.

Table 6 illustrates that a tapestry of motivations drives social media engagement among university students in Saudi Arabia. Their primary reasons, with average scores exceeding 4, include staying informed about local news (4.516), keeping up with global affairs (4.451), and unwinding with entertainment and casual browsing (4.378). Social networks also play a role in maintaining social connections (4.272) and seeking information from official sources like government agencies (4.119). While educational benefits emerge as a moderate motivator (4.065), engaging in national discussions takes a backseat with an average score of 3.093.

Table 6.
Motives for using social media.

Phrase		Always	Mostly	Sometimes	Little	Scarcely	Average	Standard deviation
Rely on social media to learn about global events	N	257	67	41	21	0	4.451	0.88
	%	66.6	17.4	10.6	5.5	0		
Rely on social media to find out news related to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.	N	245	106	26	7	2	4.516	0.74
	%	63.5	27.5	6.7	1.8	0.5		
Pay attention to following the official accounts of Saudi institutions (Such as the ministry of education, health, media, etc.)	N	194	92	71	10	19	4.119	1.10
	%	50.3	23.8	18.4	2.6	4.9		
Engage in discussions about national issues on social media platforms	N	39	54	99	76	64	3.093	1.40
	%	24.1	14	25.6	19.7	16.6		
Make sure to get the most out of using social media	N	157	100	75	36	18	3.886	1.17
	%	40.7	25.9	19.4	9.3	4.7		
Find out how friends and colleagues are doing through social networks.	N	202	111	55	12	6	4.272	0.92
	%	52.3	28.8	14.2	3.1	1.6		
Social networks are useful in my studies.	N	210	57	73	26	20	4.065	1.21
	%	54.4	14.8	18.9	6.7	5.2		
Use social networks for entertainment and to pass the time.	N	238	72	60	16	0	4.378	0.89
	%	61.7	18.7	15.50%	4.1	0		

Table 7.
The cultural dimension of national identity.

Phrase		Response					Average	Standard deviation
		Strongly agree	OK	Neutral	Not agree	Completely disagree		
Social networking sites helped me change my behavior to be a good citizen.	N	132	118	58	68	10	3.762	1.17
	%	34.2	30.6	15	17.6	2.6		
Social networking sites have shown me the importance of putting the nation's interests ahead of my personal interests.	N	246	106	24	6	4	4.513	0.77
	%	63.7	27.5	6.2	1.6	1		
Social networking sites have contributed to increasing my knowledge of issues of identity, belonging ,and citizenship.	N	151	94	65	58	18	3.782	1.23
	%	39.1	24.4	16.8	15	4.7		

Table 7 shows a positive impact, particularly in the cultural dimension, with an overall average score of 4.018. Students perceive social media as a tool for fostering national pride, with a strong average score of 4.513 for the statement "putting the nation's interest ahead." The study further reveals that students believe social media helps them gain knowledge about identity, belonging, and citizenship (average: 3.782) and encourages positive behavior changes towards good citizenship (average: 3.762).

Table 8.
The emotional dimension of national identity.

Phrase		Response					Average	Standard deviation
		Strongly agree	OK	Neutral	Not agree	Completely disagree		
Social networking sites make me feel that my homeland is deep in my heart.	N	342	36	6	2	0	4.86	0.42
	%	88.6	9.3	1.6	0.5	0		
Social media pushes me to excel in my studies for the benefit of myself, my family, and my great country.	N	306	73	7	0	0	4.77	0.45
	%	79.3	18.9	1.8	0	0		
Social networks made me feel emotionally connected to my homeland.	N	187	122	14	50	13	4.08	1.15
	%	48.4	31.6	3.6	13	3.4		
Social networks do not undermine my confidence in my homeland and my connection to it.	N	196	92	50	37	11	4.10	1.12
	%	50.8	23.8	13	9.6	2.8		

Table 8 exhibits how social media weaves itself into the fabric of national identity for Saudi university students, particularly on the emotional level. For Saudi university students, social media is not just a virtual window to their homeland; it is a bridge to their hearts. Their overwhelming consensus, reflected in an average score of 4.86, is that social networks make them feel "home deep in their hearts." This sentiment echoes further, with strong agreement (average 4.08) that social media fosters emotional ties to their homeland. Even though a smaller majority (74.6%) agree that social media does not erode their existing confidence and connection, the overall picture points to a positive emotional impact on national identity.

Table 9.
Dimensions of belonging to the homeland and respecting national symbols.

Phrase		Response					Average	Standard deviation
		Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Not agree	Completely disagree		
Social networking sites made me feel proud that I am Saudi	N	Three hundred fifty	32	4	0	0	4.89	0.33
	%	90.7	8.3	1	0	0		
I highlight my Saudi identity when dealing with other foreigners, especially on social media sites.	N	217	77	58	29	5	4.22	1.04
	%	56.2	19.9	15	7.5	1.3		
Social networking sites encourage me to show respect to all national symbols.	N	246	91	35	14	0	4.47	0.80
	%	63.7	23.6	9.1	3.6	0		
Interested in learning about the biographies and lives of national symbols through social networking sites.	N	188	84	55	54	5	4.02	1.14
	%	48.7	21.8	14.2	14	1.3		
Social networking sites motivated me to take some national leaders as role models in my life.	N	175	81	70	53	7	3.94	1.16
	%	45.3	21	18.1	13.7	1.8		
Social networking sites encourage me to participate continuously in national events.	N	250	62	61	13	0	4.42	0.87
	%	64.8	16.1	15.8	3.4	0		
Take an interest in following national issues through social networking sites.	N	139	74	114	52	7	3.74	1.13
	%	36	19.2	29.5	13.5	1.8		
I discuss with my colleagues and professors solutions to some national problems.	N	139	95	88	53	11	3.77	1.15
	%	36	24.6	22.8	13.7	2.8		

Table 9 illustrates that for Saudi university students, social media isn't just a digital platform; it's a fertile ground for cultivating national pride. The findings indicate a strong link between social media use and belonging (average score: 4.18), with students expressing pride in their national identity online and offline. "Feeling proud to be Saudi" dominates responses, receiving a perfect score of 4.896, and students readily showcase their Saudi identity in online interactions (average: 4.22). The study further delves into the impact on specific aspects of national identity, finding that social media encourages respect for national symbols, participation in national events, and even interest in national discourse (average: 3.74).

Table 10.
Arithmetic means and standard deviations for the social dimension items.

Phrase		Response					Average	Standard deviation
		Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Not agree	Completely disagree		
I participate in volunteer work of a national nature	N	220	61	72	27	6	4.19	1.06
	%	57	15.8	18.7	7	1.6		
Social media made me believe in national unity as a basis for progress	N	259	86	36	5	0	4.55	0.71
	%	67.1	22.3	9.3	1.3	0		
Social networks do not undermine national cohesion among members of Saudi society	N	210	61	64	46	5	4.10	1.13
	%	54.4	15.8	16.6	11.9	1.3		

Table 10 reveals a remarkably positive sentiment, with an average score of 4.28 reflecting complete agreement with the statements presented. Students firmly believe that national unity is key to progress (average 4.55), readily engage in national volunteer work (average 4.19), and overwhelmingly disagree with the notion that social media weakens national cohesion (average 4.10).

The responses of the study sample members were based on pride in Saudi history and its traditions, as follows:

Table 11.
Arithmetic means and standard deviations for items after pride in Saudi history and its traditions.

Phrase		Response					Average	Standard deviation
		Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Not agree	Completely disagree		
Social networking sites motivated me to read Saudi history.	K	194	62	57	65	8	3.95	1.22
	%	50.3	16.1	14.8	16.8	2.1		
Social media sites show that Saudi values carry all the meanings of goodness and peace.	K	281	88	11	6	0	4.66	0.61
	%	72.8	22.8	2.8	1.6	0		
Social media sites show that my Saudi traditions are of great value.	K	267	81	22	16	0	4.55	0.78
	%	69.2	21	5.7	4.1	0		
The sites made me feel proud of Saudi Arabia's political and social history.	K	240	87	48	11	0	4.44	0.81
	%	62.2	22.5	12.4	2.8	0		
I am keen to help organizations interested in Saudi identity by providing volunteer hours.	K	213	71	75	18	9	4.19	1.05
	%	55.2	18.4	19.4	4.7	2.3		
Social networking sites have contributed to my appreciation of the role of historical figures in serving Saudi society.	K	Strongly agree	96	68	18	0	4.25	0.90
	%	Strongly agree	24.9	17.6	4.7	0		

Table 11 shows that Saudi university students express strong pride in their history and traditions through social media. The findings reveal a strong positive association, with an average score of 4.34 across statements related to pride in Saudi history and traditions. Students readily connect their values to concepts like "goodness and peace" (average 4.66), though actively engaging with historical texts through social media shows slightly less enthusiasm (average 3.95). This implies a firmly established sense of identity that flourishes in the digital environment without facing any adverse effects.

There is a statistically significant relationship between the use of social media and its impact on national identity among KSA university students.

To measure this relationship, the Spearman correlation coefficient was used, and the results were as follows:

Table 12.
The relationship between the use of social media and dimensions of national identity.

Variable		Cultural dimension	Emotional	Belonging to the homeland and respecting national symbols	Social	Pride in Saudi history and Saudi traditions
Use of social media	Correlation	0.788**	0.783**	0.916**	0.637**	0.872**
	indication	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000

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

Table 12 explains how the analysis employed Pearson correlation coefficients to explore the relationship between social media use and each dimension of national identity among KSA university students. The findings reveal statistically significant associations at the p<0.00 level for all dimensions, demonstrating a strong connection between online behavior and various aspects of national identity. Notably, all Spearman correlation coefficients were positive, confirming the hypothesis of a positive relationship between social media engagement and national identity. However, it is worth noting that the correlation coefficient for the social dimension was moderate compared to the others, suggesting a slightly weaker but still significant link.

This analysis provides strong evidence for the validity of the initial hypothesis, highlighting the influence of social media on the multiple facets of national identity among university students. Further investigation could delve deeper into the specific nature and strength of these relationships for each dimension, potentially revealing nuanced influences of different social media platforms and functionalities on various aspects of national identity.

5. Discussion

This study investigated the extent of social media use and its impact on national identity among KSA University students in Saudi Arabia. The findings reveal a remarkably high degree of engagement, with participants spending at least two hours daily on social media platforms and maintaining active accounts on most platforms. These results align with current trends highlighting the ubiquitous presence of social media in the lives of young people, particularly university students, due to its diverse benefits in both personal and professional domains. This aligns with Al-Haays' research on the integration of online interaction into university student lifestyles, facilitated by mobile phone accessibility [15].

The study further explores the multifaceted motivations behind students' social media engagement. These motives range from following local and global news to engaging with national issues and leveraging the platform's academic, social, and entertainment benefits. This diversity reflects the inherent adaptability of social media, catering to various needs and offering a spectrum of opportunities for diverse user categories. These findings resonate with Kim et al.'s study, which identified differences

in social media motivations between American and Korean university students [14]. Additionally, Al-Haays' research aligns with these results, highlighting Omani youth's reliance on Facebook for communication, diverse content, intercultural interaction, and the positive impact of social interaction on personality development.

Most notably, the study demonstrates the positive influence of social media on various dimensions of national identity among KSA university students. Responses ranged from "completely agree" to "agree," with the emotional dimension scoring the highest (4.455), followed by pride in Saudi history and traditions (4.344), the social dimension (4.283), belonging to the homeland and respect for national symbols (4.187), and lastly, the cultural dimension (4.018). We can attribute these findings to the students' awareness of national identity in its various forms, their connection to Saudi social, cultural, and emotional values, and their sense of pride in their historical and cultural heritage.

Furthermore, the study reveals a strong correlation between social media use and the dimensions of national identity. The consistent engagement with social media platforms contributes to the development of national identity, as evident in the students' motivations for using them. These motivations include following national events and issues, leveraging positive aspects of the platforms, and engaging with content representing official institutions within the Kingdom. This may be partly due to the emphasis on official social media presence by various national institutions in Saudi Arabia, providing accurate information and news directly from the source. This approach has the potential to strengthen national identity, particularly in aspects related to societal values, history, and belonging to the homeland. These results align with previous findings by Al-Shiti who identified a correlation between intensity of social media use and values among young people, particularly in acquiring and maintaining social and cognitive values, as well as religious identity [7]. Additionally, Ibrahim and Al-Qahtani [5] study partially aligns with these findings, with religious, moral, cognitive, and political effects listed as the most positive outcomes of social media use, followed by psychological and social implications [5]. Musaa'd's research further supports the notion that social networks aid in strengthening national identity [16].

In conclusion, this study provides compelling evidence for a high degree of social media engagement among KSA university students and its subsequent positive influence on various dimensions of national identity. The diverse motivations behind social media use and the strong correlation between engagement and identity development highlight the complex yet significant role these platforms play in shaping the experiences and perceptions of young people in Saudi Arabia. Further research could delve deeper into the specific functionalities and content preferences within social media that contribute to individual dimensions of national identity, enriching our understanding of this dynamic relationship.

6. Conclusion

This study highlights the high social media engagement among university students in Saudi Arabia. It reveals a vibrant digital landscape where these students actively navigate multiple platforms, investing more than two hours of their day. However, their motivations stretch far beyond mere amusement, encompassing a diverse array of driving forces.

Remarkably, social media emerges as a powerful catalyst for fortifying their national identity. It acts as a conduit, fostering emotional connections that transcend virtual boundaries. It ignites a profound sense of pride in Saudi history, solidifies social bonds, instills reverence for national symbols, and nurtures cultural awareness.

These findings seamlessly align with the tenets of Social Identity Theory, underscoring the remarkable potential of social media platforms in shaping and bolstering social identity formation. It serves as a digital arena where individuals find belonging, intertwining their personal narratives with the collective tapestry of their nation.

The implications of this study are far-reaching. Recognizing the positive role social media plays in cultivating national identity, policymakers and educators can harness its power to further promote cultural appreciation and unity. By fostering responsible digital engagement, we can unlock the

transformative potential of these platforms, empowering the next generation of Saudi Arabian students to forge stronger connections with their national heritage while embracing the global community.

Funding:

Institutional Review Board Statement:

The Ethical Committee of the Deanship of Scientific Research/ King Faisal University, Saudi Aribia has granted approval for this study.

Transparency:

The authors confirm that the manuscript is an honest, accurate, and transparent account of the study; that no vital features of the study have been omitted; and that any discrepancies from the study as planned have been explained. This study followed all ethical practices during writing.

Competing Interests:

The authors declare that they have no competing interests.

Authors' Contributions:

All authors contributed equally to the conception and design of the study. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

Copyright:

References

[1]   T. Sarfi, S. Nosrati, and M. Sabzali, "The impact of the use of social networks on identity: A case study," *Middle East Public Relations Research Journal*, vol. 23, pp. 24-42, 2021.

[2]   H. A. S. Kansara, "The role of social media in promoting the values of good citizenship among the Saudi Citizen," *Al-Qalam Magazine*, vol. 27, pp. 285-308, 2021.

[3]   S. L. Rodriguez and J. M. Blaney, ""We're the unicorns in STEM": Understanding how academic and social experiences influence sense of belonging for Latina undergraduate students," *Journal of Diversity in Higher Education*, vol. 14, no. 3, pp. 441-457, 2021. https://doi.org/10.1037/dhe0000176

[4]   A. M. I. M. Al-Shorbaji, E. A. Khader, and A. H. Mohamed, "The effectiveness of a theatrical program to develop some dimensions of national identity for primary school students," *Specific Education Research Journal*, vol. 63, pp. 51-92, 2021.

[5]   Ibrahim and A. B. S. Al-Qahtani, "Effects on the use of social media relationships with identity," *Educational and Psychological Studies*, vol. 105, pp. 311-374, 2023.

[6]   K. H. Al-Zedjali, A. S. Al-Harrasi, and A. H. Al-Badi, "Motivations for using social networking sites by college students for educational purposes," *International Journal of Social, Education, Economics and Management Engineering*, vol. 8, no. 8, pp. 2551-2554, 2014.

[7]   W. Al-Shiti, "The impact of social networking site usage on the values of female students at Al-Qassim University," *Journal of Arts*, vol. 40, no. 4, pp. 573-626, 2018.

[8]   Y. Zhang, "Chinese international students and social media's role in identity construction and intercultural mediation," *Journal of Intercultural Communication Research*, vol. 49, no. 2, pp. 135-152, 2021.

[9]   M. Al-Agami, "The impact of social media on Kuwaiti society: A double-edged sword," *Journal of Arabian Studies*, vol. 10, pp. 279-297, 2020.

[10]   K. Kircaburun, S. Alhabash, Ş. B. Tosuntaş, and M. D. Griffiths, "Uses and gratifications of problematic social media use among university students: A simultaneous examination of the big five of personality traits, social media platforms, and social media use motives," *International Journal of Mental Health and Addiction*, vol. 18, pp. 525-547, 2020. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11469-018-9940-6

[11]   A. Al-MoTawi, "Twitter use and identity crisis formation among young adults: A study of preparatory year students at Imam Abdulrahman Bin Faisal University," *Middle East Public Relations Research Journal*, vol. 23, pp. 24-42, 2015.

[12]   Y. Chen, "The role of social media in evolving and propagating a Distinct Taiwanese identity," *Journal of Intercultural Communication Research*, vol. 49, no. 2, pp. 153-168, 2021.

[13]   J. López-González, "Bolivian students and the performance of national and cosmopolitan identities on social media," *Journal of Language and Politics*, vol. 20, no. 2, pp. 173-192, 2021.

[14]   Y. Kim, D. Sohn, and S. M. Choi, "Cultural difference in motivations for using social network sites: A comparative study of American and Korean college students," *Computers in Human Behavior*, vol. 27, no. 1, pp. 365-372, 2011. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2010.08.015

[15]   M. Al-Haays, "Exploring online social interaction among Sultan Qaboos University students: A focus on Facebook," *Journal of Human and Society Sciences*, vol. 9, no. 5, pp. 357-371, 2015.

[16]   M. Musaa'd, "The role of media in shaping national identity: Exploring the impact of local radio programs in Saudi Arabia," *Journal of Arabian Studies*, vol. 11, no. 2, pp. 253-277, 2021.

[17]   M. Al-Nagdaat, "Arabs online: Identity, communication, and participation," *Al-Qalam Magazine*, vol. 27, pp. 285-308, 2019.

[18]   S. Baqlouf, "New media and the issue of cultural identity in Algerian society: A field study on a sample of Facebook users in Algeria," *Journal of the College of Arts and Media*, vol. 2, pp. 123-147, 2023.

[19]   A. D. Smith, *National identity*. Las Vegas: University of Nevada Press, 1993.

[20]   H. Tajfel and J. C. Turner, *The social identity theory of intergroup behavior. In S. Worchel & W. G. Austin (Eds.), Psychology of intergroup relations*. Chicago, IL: Nelson-Hall, 1986.

[21]   Y. Koh and Y. Kim, "Engaging with the nation on social media: A comparative study of the United States and South Korea," *International Journal of Communication*, vol. 11, pp. 22-43, 2017.

[22]   S. Banducci, *The role of mass media in shaping public opinion and voter behavior. In The Routledge Handbook of Elections, Voting Behavior and Public Opinion*. London: Routledge, 2017.

[23]   R. Bilali, Y. Iqbal, and A. B. Çelik, "The role of national identity, religious identity, and intergroup contact on social distance across multiple social divides in Turkey," *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, vol. 65, pp. 73-85, 2018. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijintrel.2018.04.007

[24]   F. Van Der Werf, M. Verkuyten, and B. Martinović, "Balancing national and ethno-cultural belonging: State recognition and perceived government performance in Mauritius," *International Journal of Sociology*, vol. 50, no. 3, pp. 163-178, 2020. https://doi.org/10.1080/00207659.2020.1726026

[25]   S. Reicher, "The context of social identity: Domination, resistance, and change," *Political Psychology*, vol. 25, no. 6, pp. 921-945, 2004. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9221.2004.00403.x

[26]   J. H. Liu and D. J. Hilton, "How the past weighs on the present: Social representations of history and their role in identity politics," *British Journal of Social Psychology*, vol. 44, no. 4, pp. 537-556, 2005. https://doi.org/10.1348/014466605X27162