

**Social Work Students Onboard Social Media: Academic vs. Nonacademic Usage: Implications for the Academic Libraries in Kuwait**

**طلاب العمل الاجتماعي ووسائل التواصل الاجتماعي: الاستخدام الأكاديمي مقابل الاستخدام غير الأكاديمي الآثار المترتبة على المكتبات الأكاديمية  
بدولة الكويت**

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**ABSTRACT**

Investigating people's interactions with social media tools remains a major area of study. Various fields, such as sociology and information studies, will continue to focus on how diverse groups of people incorporate social media into their daily lives. This research focused on how social work students use social media tools and applications and how that use impacts the academic library services in Kuwait. Most previous research in this area has focused on either academic or nonacademic usage; this study investigated both aspects. To meet the purpose of this descriptive exploratory study, the researchers used a cross-sectional method and an online questionnaire as a study tool for the sample which consisted of 311 undergraduate social work students at Kuwait University. The results showed that social work students mostly used social networking applications (e.g., WhatsApp) for both nonacademic and academic purposes. The results indicated that six of eight motivations had prominent levels of approval. "Self-improve knowledge in my subject of study" was the most motivating item for using social media for academic purposes, while the least motivating item was "Build social media groups with mutual academic interests". Factors related to gender and academic year level proved significant when examining how students used social media. Results of this study will have implications for the academic library to make the best use of

social media in both improving its services and in reaching out for students.

### Keywords:

social work students, social media academic and nonacademic usage, undergraduate students, academic libraries

### مستخلص:

تعد دراسة تفاعل الأفراد مع وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي مجالاً رئيسياً وحيوياً للدراسة حيث تستمر مجالات مختلفة، مثل علم الاجتماع ودراسات المعلومات، في التركيز على كيفية اندماج مجموعات متنوعة من الأفراد مع وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي في حياتهم اليومية. ومن هنا ركز هذا البحث على كيفية استخدام طلاب العمل الاجتماعي لأدوات وتطبيقات الوسائط الاجتماعية وكيف يؤثر ذلك على خدمات المكتبة الأكاديمية في دولة الكويت. وبينما تناولت معظم الأبحاث السابقة في هذا المجال الاستخدام الأكاديمي أو غير الأكاديمي؛ إلا أن هذه الدراسة قد بحثت كلا الجانبين. ولتحقيق غرض هذه الدراسة الوصفية الاستكشافية، استخدم الباحثون المنهج المقطعي والاستبيان الإلكتروني كأداة دراسة للعينة المكونة من ٣١١ طالباً جامعياً في العمل الاجتماعي بجامعة الكويت. وقد أظهرت النتائج أن طلاب العمل الاجتماعي يستخدمون في الغالب تطبيقات الشبكات الاجتماعية مثل WhatsApp للأغراض غير الأكاديمية والأكاديمية. كما أشارت النتائج إلى أن ستة من أصل ثمانية دوافع حظيت بمستويات موافقة مرتفعة من أفراد عينة الدراسة. كان "تطوير المعرفة الذاتية في موضوع دراستي" هو البند الأكثر تحفيزاً لاستخدام وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي للأغراض الأكاديمية، بينما كان البند الأقل تحفيزاً هو "بناء مجموعات وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي ذات الاهتمامات الأكاديمية المشتركة". كما أثبتت العوامل المتعلقة بالجنس ومستوى العام الدراسي أهميتها عند فحص كيفية استخدام الطلاب لوسائل التواصل الاجتماعي. وتساهم هذه الدراسة في تحقيق الاستخدام الأمثل لوسائل التواصل الاجتماعي بالمكتبة الأكاديمية بجامعة الكويت وتحسين خدماتها المقدمة للطلبة.

### الكلمات الدالة:

طلاب العمل الاجتماعي، الاستخدام الأكاديمي وغير الأكاديمي لوسائل التواصل الاجتماعي، طلاب المرحلة الجامعية الأولى، المكتبة الأكاديمية.

## 1. INTRODUCTION AND RELATED RESEARCH:

Social media tools have changed human life in general. Due to the ever-growing use of these tools, researchers find it necessary to continue studying and monitoring how social media affect various categories of

people. The purpose of this survey-based study is to describe how social work students interact with social media technology for academic and nonacademic purposes. Digital media, particularly during pandemics, have become an integral part of students' academic and nonacademic lives. Understanding how students interact with these media tools has become essential, as technology has proven to be an essential part of students' daily interactions. As shown in many countries, the COVID-19 pandemic has accelerated people's dependency on technology for education despite its negative effects.

Social work is one of the major academic disciplines in the College of Social Sciences at Kuwait University. Academics and administrators need to know how to best integrate the e-learning dimension of social media to effectively prepare social work students for their social work practice. Social work is a practice-based profession, and social work graduates are expected to be fully prepared to understand the behaviors of various types of people. Social work students prepare to have a positive impact on society and technology, especially social media platforms, tools, and sites, which provide great opportunities to help students who are more capable of understanding how to deal with others. The goal of social work is to promote the well-being of individuals, families, groups, and communities. Moreover, social workers help individuals deal with social and mental health problems. Additionally, it supports positive development, cohesion, and empowerment for individuals and communities. It is therefore necessary for social workers to keep updated on the latest theories and research in the social science field so they can help their patrons and do their jobs effectively. As a result of the total curfew in Kuwait due to COVID-19, social Work students depended heavily on social media and digital libraries for information to provide services to their clients. Therefore, social workers can receive the latest research and articles through digital libraries and social media. Based on the authors' knowledge, this study is the first study to investigate this topic among a sample of students of social work in

Kuwait.

The purpose of this section is to review existing work on the topic of social media usage by social science (SS) undergraduate students. Due to the changing nature of social media platforms, this review covers the last decade (2012-2022). A systematic literature review reveals some prominent issues in the use of social media by undergraduate students in general and social work majors in particular. These issues include the use of social media by undergraduate students either for academic purposes or for everyday-related matters. Table 1 illustrates the key issues discussed in the literature over the last decade.

**Table 1. Illustration of the related literature**

Author/s & year	Research aim/scope	Methodology	Main findings
Kim et al. (2015)	To identify the personal and environmental antecedents to information sharing on SNSs and to examine the interaction effects between the two factors	An online survey of college students	Personal factors such as information self-efficacy, positive social outcome expectations, and sharing enjoyment feelings were found to be significant predictors of sharing activities
Karpman and Drisko (2016)	Reviewed current social media policies and conceptualized their key elements	A review of current social media policies was reported, pointing to the need for further policy development	Six domains of a social media policy are identified: understanding social media, ethical and legal obligations, implications of one's personal and professional online presence, institutional obligations to the program and agency, productivity implications, and possible consequences for policy violations
Weller (2016)	Examined different approaches to uses of social media platforms for studying, from user statistics to the motivations for using specific features within a platform	A literature review	Social media research has neglected to question the use of more recent features of social media platforms, such as Twitter favorites or Facebook hashtags, as well as the more "destructive" activities in social networking such as unfollowing
Teixeira and Hash (2017)	To discuss use of Twitter in a bachelor's-level macro course on "Human Behavior in the Social Environment"	A survey of 45 students to assess their perceptions of Twitter	Students appreciated using social media in the course and reported that Twitter was a valuable professional social work tool
Baker and Hitchcock	Described the development, implementation and	21 undergraduate students	Undergraduate students are familiar with social media for

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(2017)	assessment of a social media assignment using Pinterest as a tool for student engagement and professional development in 2 undergraduate social work courses	completed the assignment and pilot study	personal use but need guidance when applying social media to professional contexts
Lubua et al. (2017)	Determined the relationship between the ease of use and the usefulness of social media for their adoption; showed whether the perceived security of social media relates to their adoption in the learning environment of university students	Survey research design; data were collected through the use of a closed-end questionnaire and were tested using descriptive statistics and one-way ANOVA	Social media offer a good platform for the learning process. Moreover, necessary efforts are required to enhance the perception of users on the usefulness of social media, and improve their awareness of security issues because they relate with the adoption of social media. Additionally, the complexity of social media relates with to adoption. An ease of use platform enhances adoption
Asiedu and Badu (2018)	To know why young people are so interested in social media sites	A survey administered to 204 students majoring in sociology	WhatsApp was found to be the most widely used social media tool; chatting and keeping in touch with loved ones and maintaining distant relationships are the major factors that motivate students to use social media sites; students are highly influenced by social media sites
Mushtaq and Benraghda (2018)	To determine the positive and negative effects of social media on the academic performances of students	371 survey questionnaires	Most of the students were interested in using social media in a positive manner for their educations; among the undergraduates, the positive impacts of social media appeared to be higher than the negative impacts
Pinto et al. (2018)	To analyze the informational behavior of a group of future professionals in the SS field in terms of their competence in the communication–dissemination of information	The IL–HUMASS, EVALCI/KN and EVALCI/SK tests regarding the affective (attitudes, motivations) and cognitive (knowledge, skills) dimensions were distributed to a stratified sample from five universities and eight-degree courses in Spain	Significant differences regarding the informational behavior of future SS professionals were discovered. The synthetic indicator allowed academic degrees to be ranked to identify those in need of initiatives aimed at improving communication–dissemination competence
Howard et al. (2018)	To investigate the social media behaviors of Purdue University students as they relate to the library and to develop evidence-based practices for managing the library’s social media	A survey using the web based Qualtrics survey software	Students currently use Facebook, YouTube, and Snapchat more than other social media types; however, students responded that they would like to see the library on Facebook, Instagram, and

Author/s & year	Research aim/scope	Methodology	Main findings
	accounts		Twitter; students wanted nearly all types of content from the library on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram, but they did not want to receive business news or content related to library resources on Snapchat; YouTube was seen as a resource for library service information
Obadara and Olaopa (2018)	Examined the correlation between social media utilization, study habits and undergraduate students' academic performance	The study developed and used a questionnaire named "Social Media Utilization and Study Habit Questionnaire" (SMUSHQ)	Undergraduate students displayed an important level of utilization of social media, and there was a relatively low study habit pattern among undergraduate students
Wickramanayake and Muhammad Jika (2018)	To investigate education students' perceptions, intentions, experiences, attitudes, opinions, and barriers concerning social media use and the impact of social media on their learning process	A questionnaire survey method was used to collect data	Students widely used mobile phones to access social media, and social media were extremely popular for education, entertainment, and communication among them; effective social media usage among students enhanced different types of skills, including learning
Mooketsi and Mutshewa (2019)	To investigate undergraduate students' use of SNSs	Semi structured interviews with undergraduate students at the University of Botswana	Undergraduate students depend on SNSs to meet several individual and social needs; Students' culture placed a constraint on how they used social media
Lee et al. (2019)	Explored how a technology-enhanced active learning classroom influenced social work students' engagement and overall learning experiences	An online survey of 125 social work students in micro and macro courses	Students in micro social work courses more positively reported active participation, effective teaching, and technical skills as benefits of the classroom; the dynamic learning environment and instructors' effective learning significantly affected students' positive learning experience
Reamer (2019)	Provided an overview of new standards, especially those related to the diverse ways in which technology is being used in social work education, instructor competence, academic standards, and field education		The new standards have broad implications for contemporary social work education in the digital age.
Blakemore and Agllias (2020)	Examined social work students' reflections on social media platforms	Qualitative analysis of students' responses to a reflective learning prompt	Students reported an ease of use and confidence in the use of social media and demonstrated awareness of the risks associated with these tools

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Gazit et al. (2020)	To explore how demographic variables, social networking site (SNS) importance, social and informational usage, and personality traits affect the use of SNSs	Questionnaires administered to 244 students	WhatsApp, the most frequently used platform, is used more by women and by people with an internal locus of control; Facebook is more frequently used by open people, and Instagram is more frequently used by women, younger adults and neurotic people; Twitter is more frequently used by men
Gilster et al. (2020)	To ensure that students develop a skilled and ethical use of social media	Creating an assignment for a group project requiring the use of a professional social media profile; a pretest–posttest evaluation was conducted	A statistically significant increase in competency and the knowledge of the written and unwritten rules of each platform was found
Gómez-García et al. (2020)	To understand the use patterns and attitudes of young people in university on social networks	Utilized a panel of 20 judges who were social media experts and a sample of 640 university students	
Papouli et al. (2020)	To explore Greek social work students' views on the use of digital technology during their stay at home due to the coronavirus lockdown	An online questionnaire was completed voluntarily by 550 students from different university departments of social work across the country	Digital technology plays a critical role in numerous aspects of the daily lives of students, helping them to discover new ways to navigate the unprecedented new reality formed by the COVID-19 pandemic.
Ahmad (2020)	Studied the relationship between the use of social media and social problems among university youth from a social service perspective	Studied the relationship between the use of social media problems among university youth, used a survey to 311 students from faculty of Arts in Qatar University	Found that the most important social media sites used are snapchat, WhatsApp and Instagram
Bitherman and Frempong-Kore (2021)	To identify the impact of social media usage on the academic performance of undergraduate students	800 students were selected as sample for the study	Most of the students were interested in using social media in a positive manner for their academic purposes
Khatri (2021)	To investigate the reading preferences of undergraduate students about various categories of information sources and the use of social media sources for academic and nonacademic activities	An exhaustive literature review	Wikipedia, YouTube, and blogs were the social media information sources most frequently used by students for academic activities, while Facebook and Twitter were prominently used for social interaction
Adjin-Tettey et al. (2022)	Examined the general motivations for social media usage; how social media are used to meet academic needs; the perceived academic benefits; and how social media usage disrupts studies	24 undergraduate students were engaged in rigorous focus group discussions	Social media have been adapted to suit the academic needs of users through the process of appropriation; although social media could be a viable platform for interuniversity collaborative learning, respondents hardly engaged in it

<b>Author/s &amp; year</b>	<b>Research aim/scope</b>	<b>Methodology</b>	<b>Main findings</b>
Yousef (2022)	Examined the relationship between the use of social media and social values among university students	Random sample of 209 students from Social Work, Arts, Humanities, Pharmacy, and nursing	No significant differences between users and non-users of social media and social values between medical and humanities, there is no significant gender differences
AlQaryo (2022)	Investigated the effect of social media tools on the academic achievement of university students	A questionnaire to a sample of 50 male and female students from Social Work department	Found that social networking sites have medium positive effect on the academic achievement of students and a significant negative impact on academic achievement
Ahmad (2023)	Studied the risk of social media on youth and suggested mechanisms to reduce it from the perspective of social work	Questionnaire to non-random sample of 214 youth	Revealed dangers of social media: spread of cyber-bullying, spreading rumors and false news, increase of cyber-extortion crimes

A thematic analysis of the systematic review shows that studies on social media use by Social Science students in general can be classified into the following major areas: the use of social media platforms (Adjin-Tetty et al.2022; Asiedu and Badu 2018; Blakemore & Agllias 2020; Gazit et al.2020; Gilster at al.2020; Gomez-Garcia et al.2020). These studies have examined the general use of social media by college students including areas tackling motivations for using social media platforms, reflections, attitudes, and the skills that students have or need to make the best out of these tools in their lives. Other studies have focused on the use of social media tools for academic purposes (e.g. Bitherman & Frempong-Kore 2021; Khatri 2021; Baker & Hitchcock 2017; Mushtaq & benraghda 2018; Obadara & Olaopa 2018). These studies, adopting pilot studies and literature reviews and surveys, have focused on social media use by students for academic purposes. The results of the mentioned studies revealed prominent level of interest from students toward using social media platforms for academic purposes even though they still need guidance when it comes to making the best use of social media in the professional academic context. It is evident from the systematic review that few studies have focused on social work students, for examples (Lee at al.2019; Papouli et al.2020; Reamer 2019), those studies have provided an overview of how social media tools or platforms were being used by social work students and



the implications of the digital age in shaping the lives of social work students. A thorough analysis of the studies in Table 1 shows that there is a lack of studies that brings together the three aspects of: investigating the use of social media; by social work students, for both academic and nonacademic purposes.

It is also clear from the systematic review table that few studies have focused on social work students in the region (Ahmad 2020; Yousef 2022; AlQaryo 2022; Ahmad 2023). In addition, no study in the literature that focuses on social work students' interaction with social media in Kuwait was found. This study is appropriate to fill this gap.

### **2. RESEARCH QUESTIONS:**

This research aims to answer the following questions:

- To what extent do undergraduate social work students at Kuwait University use social media for academic and nonacademic purposes?
- For undergraduate social work students at Kuwait University, what factors are important when using social media for academic purposes?
- For undergraduate social work students at Kuwait University, what motivation items are important when using social media for academic purposes?
- Are there statistically significant differences between the social media platforms used by undergraduate social work students at Kuwait University for academic and nonacademic purposes or based on variables such as gender and the academic year level?
- How the usage patterns of social media by social work students can help in fostering the services of academic libraries?

### **3. METHODOLOGY:**

To meet the purpose of this descriptive exploratory study, the researchers used a cross-sectional method. They used an online questionnaire as a study tool for the sample, which consisted of undergraduate social work students at Kuwait University. The sample was collected during the COVID-19 pandemic in Kuwait in the academic year

2020/2021; therefore, the online questionnaire was the most appropriate tool to use. The online questionnaire link was sent to the study population, which consisted of 417 social work students at Kuwait University, via the Teams application.

### **Instrumentation:**

As mentioned, the researchers used an online questionnaire as the instrument for this study. It included demographic questions to address the respondents' gender, age, nationality, academic year level, and information technology (IT) literacy level. In addition, the online questionnaire included usage pattern items, "factors for academic use," and the "motivation for use" list developed by Al-Aufi et al. (2017). The usage patterns included items for nonacademic purposes (8 items) and for academic purposes (8 items). The "motivation for use" list consisted of 8 items, and the "factors for academic use" items consisted of 7 items. Responses were made on a 5-point Likert scale, where 1 = Never and 5 = Always. The Cronbach's  $\alpha$  calculated for the "motivation for use" and "factors for academic use" constructs was 0.777 and 0.865, respectively.

### **4. ETHICAL STATEMENT:**

All procedures followed were in accordance with the ethical standards of Kuwait University's rules and regulations on human experimentation and with the Helsinki Declaration of 1975, as revised in 2000. In addition, the researchers has obtained a written consent from all participants included in the study.

### **5. DATA ANALYSIS/RESULTS:**

#### **5/1 Data Analysis:**

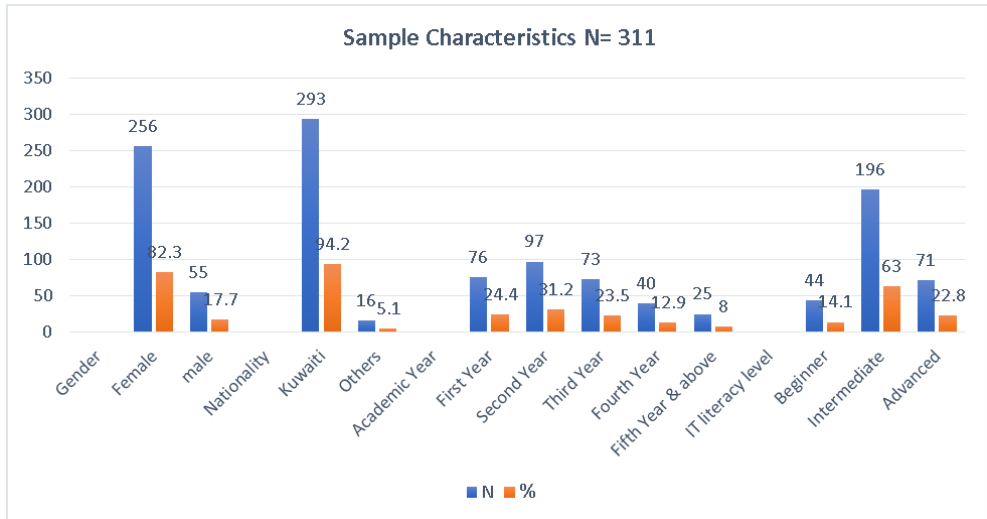
Descriptive statistical analysis, including means, percentages, and standard deviations, and inferential analysis, including the chi-square, were used to answer the research questions. Statistical significance was set at  $p \leq 0.05$ . The measurements applied to demonstrate the level of the means in the descriptive statistical analysis, adopted from Al-Aufi et al. (2017), were as follows: low = 0.10-2.32, medium = 2.33-3.65, and high = 3.66-5.00. SPSS

(version 26; IBM Corp) was used to analyze the data.

**Participant Demographics**

From a total of 417 undergraduate social work students at Kuwait University who participate in this study, only 311 completed the online questionnaire, with a response rate of 74.5%. The majority of the sample participants were female (82.3%) because the majority of the Kuwaiti university student population was female (70%). The respondents’ ages ranged from 19 to 53 years (mean = 25.35 years old, SD = 7.76); the largest group (31.2%) was in its second academic year, followed by the first (24.4%), third (23.5%), fourth (12.9%), and fifth (8%) academic years. The nationality of the participants was Kuwaiti (94.2%), followed by non-Kuwaiti (5.1%). The percentage of participants who reported that they had an intermediate IT literacy level was (63%), however, 22.8% reported an advanced level, and 14.1% reported a beginner level. See Table 2 and Figure 1.

**Table 2. Sample Characteristics (N = 311)**



**Figure 1. Sample Characteristics**

Variables	<i>N</i>	%
Gender		
Female	256	82.3
Male	55	17.7
Nationality		
Kuwaiti	293	94.2
Others	16	5.1
Academic Year		
First Year	76	24.4
Second Year	97	31.2
Third Year	73	23.5
Fourth Year	40	12.9
Fifth Year & above	25	8
IT literacy level		
Beginner	44	14.1
Intermediate	196	63
Advanced	71	22.8

## 5/2 Results :

### Gender

The chi-square test identified significant differences between genders and eight different platforms that were used by social work students for nonacademic and academic purposes. The results showed that there were significant differences between genders in the use of *Wikipedia* ( $\chi^2 = 10.37$ ,  $p = 0.035$ ), video sharing (e.g., YouTube) ( $\chi^2 = 23.13$ ,  $p = 0.000$ ), Facebook ( $\chi^2 = 43.39$ ,  $p = 0.000$ ), and nonacademic internet forums ( $\chi^2 = 22.97$ ,  $p = 0.000$ ) for nonacademic purposes. *The results indicated that female social work students were more likely than male social work students to use Wikipedia and video sharing (e.g., YouTube) for nonacademic purposes. In contrast, female social work students used Facebook and nonacademic internet forums less than male social work students for nonacademic purposes. No significant (at  $p \leq 0.05$ ) differences between genders in the use*

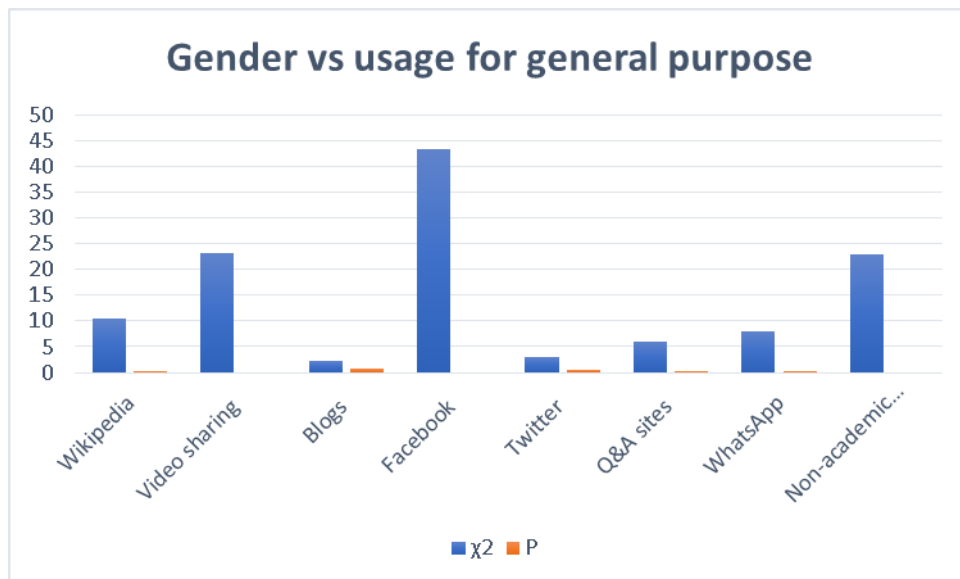
of *blogs*, *Twitter*, search sites (e.g., Yahoo, Google), and social networking applications (e.g., WhatsApp) for nonacademic purposes were found by the authors.

Additionally, there were significant differences between genders in the use of *blogs* ( $\chi^2 = 14.67, p = 0.005$ ), Facebook ( $\chi^2 = 56.35, p = 0.000$ ), and nonacademic internet forums ( $\chi^2 = 11.79, p = 0.019$ ) for academic purposes. Moreover, female social work students used *blogs*, Facebook, and nonacademic internet forums less than male social work students for academic purposes. However, no significant (at  $p \leq 0.05$ ) differences between genders in the use of *Wikipedia*, *Twitter*, video sharing (e.g., YouTube), search sites (e.g., Yahoo, Google), and social networking applications (e.g., WhatsApp) for academic purposes among social work students were found by the authors. See Tables 3 & 4, Figures 2 & 3.

**Table 3. Gender vs uses for general purposes.**

To what extent are these platforms used for general purposes?	Male Students					Female Students					$\chi^2$	P
	Always	Often	Sometime	Rarely	Never	Always	Often	Sometime	Rarely	Never		
Wikipedia % (N)	1.6% (5)	7.1% (22)	2.9% (9)	3.5% (11)	2.6% (8)	24.4% (76)	23.8% (74)	12.5% (39)	12.2% (38)	9.3% (29)	10.37	0.035
Video sharing, e.g. YouTube % (N)	0.6% (2)	0.6% (2)	5.1% (16)	3.2% (10)	8.0% (25)	2.6% (8)	1.3% (4)	6.4% (20)	28.6% (89)	43.4% (135)	23.13	0.000
Blogs %(N)	5.1% (16)	4.8% (15)	3.2% (10)	3.5% (11)	1.0% (3)	24.4% (76)	16.1% (50)	14.8% (46)	22.2% (69)	4.8% (15)	2.16	0.705
Facebook %(N)	7.4% (23)	4.8% (15)	2.3% (7)	1.9% (6)	1.3% (4)	65.9% (205)	11.6% (36)	1.3% (4)	2.6% (8)	1.0% (3)	43.39	0.000
Twitter %(N)	0.3% (1)	0.6% (2)	2.6% (8)	5.2% (16)	9.1% (28)	3.9% (12)	5.8% (18)	8.7% (27)	19.4% (60)	44.3% (137)	2.97	0.561
Q&A sites (e.g., Yahoo, Google) %(N)	1.3% (4)	1.3% (4)	2.9% (9)	2.3% (7)	10.0% (31)	7.7% (24)	3.5% (11)	9.6% (30)	21.9% (68)	39.5% (123)	6.05	0.195
WhatsApp %(N)	1.0% (3)	0% (0)	1.0% (3)	1.6% (5)	14.2%(44)	1.0% (3)	1.0% (3)	3.9% (12)	3.2% (10)	73.2% (227)	7.89	0.095
Non-academic internet forums %(N)	4.8% (15)	2.3% (7)	2.9% (9)	4.2% (13)	3.5% (11)	37.0% (115)	17% (54)	12.2% (38)	12.2% (38)	3.5% (11)	22.97	0.000

Figure 2 illustrates findings related to gender and use of social media for general purposes.



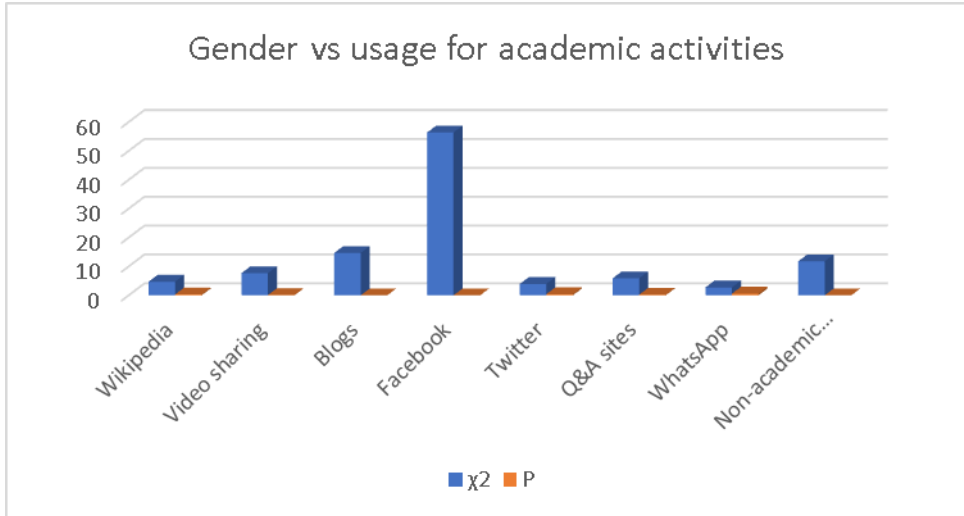
**Figure 2. Gender vs usage for general purpose**

**Table 4. Gender vs usage for academic activities**

To what extent are these platforms used for general purposes?	Male Students					Female Students					$\chi^2$	P
	Always	Often	Sometime	Rarely	Never	Always	Often	Sometime	Rarely	Never		
Wikipedia % (N)	1.6% (5)	7.1% (22)	2.9% (9)	3.5% (11)	2.6% (8)	24.4% (76)	23.8% (74)	12.5% (39)	12.2% (38)	9.3% (29)	10.37	0.035
Video sharing, e.g. YouTube % (N)	0.6% (2)	0.6% (2)	5.1% (16)	3.2% (10)	8.0% (25)	2.6% (8)	1.3% (4)	6.4% (20)	28.6% (89)	43.4% (135)	23.13	0.000
Blogs %(N)	5.1% (16)	4.8% (15)	3.2% (10)	3.5% (11)	1.0% (3)	24.4% (76)	16.1% (50)	14.8% (46)	22.2% (69)	4.8% (15)	2.16	0.705
Facebook %(N)	7.4% (23)	4.8% (15)	2.3% (7)	1.9% (6)	1.3% (4)	65.9% (205)	11.6% (36)	1.3% (4)	2.6% (8)	1.0% (3)	43.39	0.000
Twitter %(N)	0.3% (1)	0.6% (2)	2.6% (8)	5.2% (16)	9.1% (28)	3.9% (12)	5.8% (18)	8.7% (27)	19.4% (60)	44.3% (137)	2.97	0.561
Q&A sites (e.g., Yahoo, Google) %(N)	1.3% (4)	1.3% (4)	2.9% (9)	2.3% (7)	10.0% (31)	7.7% (24)	3.5% (11)	9.6% (30)	21.9% (68)	39.5% (123)	6.05	0.195
WhatsApp %(N)	1.0% (3)	0% (0)	1.0% (3)	1.6% (5)	14.2% (44)	1.0% (3)	1.0% (3)	3.9% (12)	3.2% (10)	73.2% (227)	7.89	0.095
Non-academic internet forums %(N)	4.8% (15)	2.3% (7)	2.9% (9)	4.2% (13)	3.5% (11)	37.0% (115)	17% (54)	12.2% (38)	12.2% (38)	3.5% (11)	22.97	0.000



Figure 3 illustrates findings related to gender and the use of social media tools for academic activities.

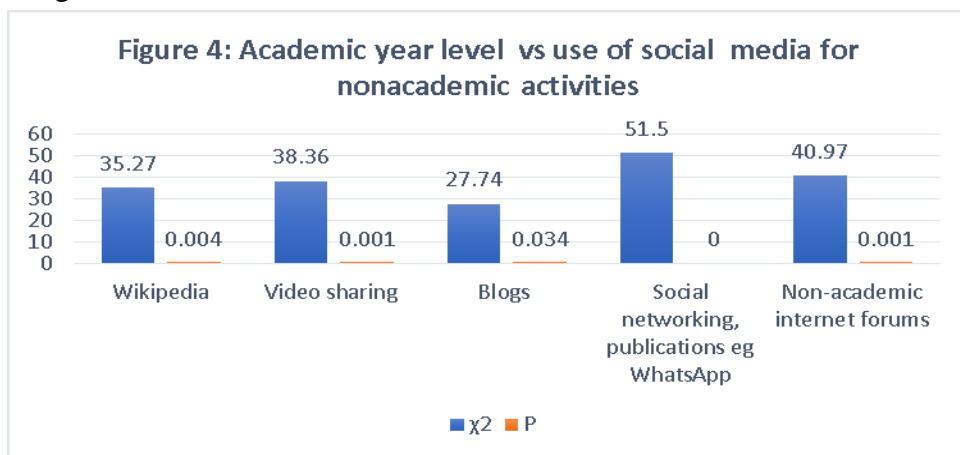


**Figure 3. Gender vs usage for academic activities**

The above quantitative analysis revealed that gender has an influence on some patterns of social media use by social work students. The results showed that female students heavily rely on and use YouTube and Wikis more than males for general purposes, not necessarily for academic reasons. The results also revealed that female students rely less than male counterparts on blogs and Facebook when it comes to academic or professional purposes. These results have implications for academic libraries to learn more about the usage patterns and the preferences of students when it comes to using social media for all types of purposes ranging from watching videos to doing research or keeping in touch with colleagues and classmates, family and friends. Results showing gender differences are interesting and valuable as they provide academic community (faculty members and librarians) with in-depth information on the factors shaping the use of social media tools by female and male students.

*Academic Year Level*

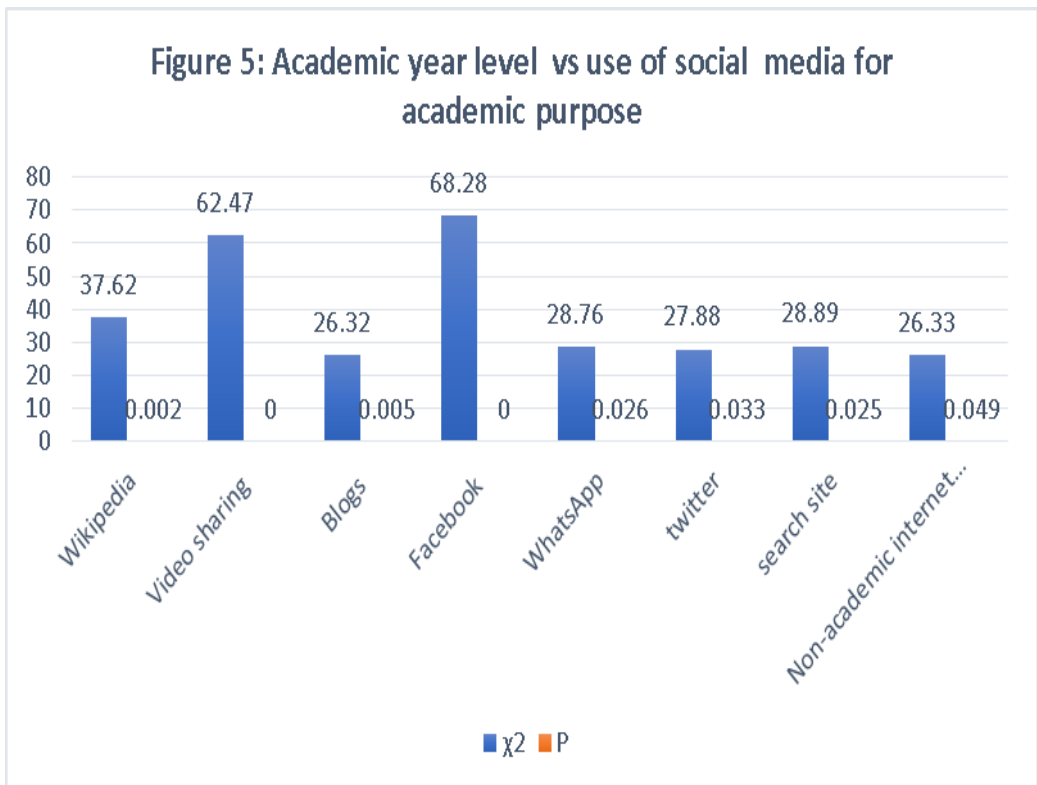
The chi-square was used to assess significant differences between academic year levels in the use of eight different platforms by social work students for nonacademic and academic purposes. The academic year level variable had five values: first year, second year, third year, fourth year, and fifth year and above. These year levels were based on social work students' enrollment at Kuwait University. Furthermore, significant differences between academic year levels in the use of *Wikipedia* ( $\chi^2 = 35.27, p = 0.004$ ), video sharing (e.g., YouTube) ( $\chi^2 = 38.36, p \leq 0.001$ ), blogs ( $\chi^2 = 27.74, p = 0.034$ ), Facebook ( $\chi^2 = 54.46, p = 0.000$ ), social networking applications (e.g., WhatsApp) ( $\chi^2 = 51.50, p = 0.000$ ), and nonacademic internet forums ( $\chi^2 = 40.97, p = 0.001$ ) for nonacademic purposes were found. *Second-year social work students were more likely to use Wikipedia, social networking applications (e.g., WhatsApp), and video sharing (e.g., YouTube) for nonacademic purposes than social work students at different year levels. However, they used blogs, nonacademic internet forums, and Facebook the least for nonacademic purposes. In addition, no significant (at  $p \leq 0.05$ ) differences between academic year levels in the use of Twitter and search sites (e.g., Yahoo, Google) for nonacademic purposes were found. See Figures 4.*



**Figure 4. Academic year level vs use of social media for nonacademic purposes**

## Social Work Students Onboard Social Media: Academic vs. Nonacademic Usage

The results showed that there were significant differences between academic year levels in the use of *Wikipedia* ( $\chi^2 = 37.62, p = 0.002$ ), video sharing (e.g., YouTube) ( $\chi^2 = 62.47, p = 0.000$ ), blogs ( $\chi^2 = 26.32, p = 0.05$ ), Facebook ( $\chi^2 = 68.28, p = 0.000$ ), social networking applications (e.g., WhatsApp) ( $\chi^2 = 28.76, p = 0.026$ ), *Twitter* ( $\chi^2 = 27.88, p = 0.033$ ), search sites (e.g., Yahoo, Google) ( $\chi^2 = 28.89, p = 0.025$ ), and nonacademic internet forums ( $\chi^2 = 26.33, p = 0.049$ ) for academic purposes. *Second-year social work students were more likely to use Wikipedia, social networking applications (e.g., WhatsApp), Twitter, search sites (e.g., Yahoo, Google), and video sharing (e.g., YouTube) for academic purposes than social work students at different year levels. However, they used blogs, nonacademic internet forums, and Facebook the least for academic purposes.* See Figure 5



**Figure 5. Academic year level vs use of social media for academic purposes**

The authors found that the above results indicate that the academic stage, year in which students are in present a significant factor influencing some patterns of how social work students use social media tools. This has implications for academic libraries as they will benefit from knowing how students in each academic stage use social media for various purposes. The library will know more about first-year students, second, third and graduate students and this will help the librarians know how to reach students and market their services through YouTube, Instagram, Facebook, Twitter and other tools. Knowing more facts about students' usage patterns and preferences for social media platforms will help academic libraries build more effective social media strategy that will reach students in all their academic levels.

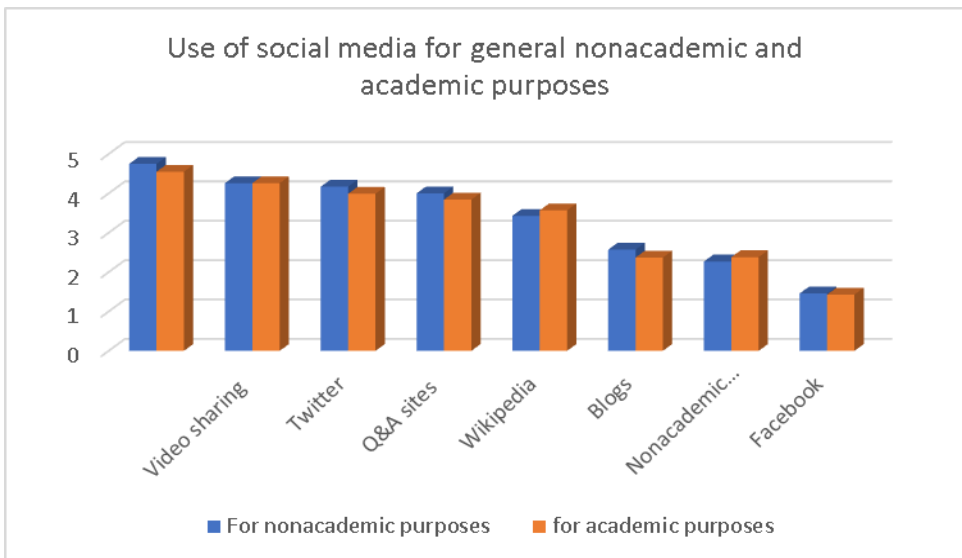
#### Use of social media for Nonacademic and Academic Purposes

Eight social media platforms were presented to the participants of the study, and they were asked to report their academic and nonacademic use of these platforms. The results showed that the study participants mostly used social networking applications such as WhatsApp for both nonacademic and academic purposes (mean = 4.75 and 4.55, SD = 0.76 and 0.98, respectively), followed by video-sharing applications such as YouTube (mean = 4.26, SD = 0.96 and 0.97). On the other hand, the study participants' least used social media application for nonacademic and academic purposes was Facebook (mean = 1.46, SD = 0.92 and 0.96). As indicated by the results above, social work students at Kuwait University used the same platforms for academic and nonacademic purposes. See Table 5 and Figure 6

## Social Work Students Onboard Social Media: Academic vs. Nonacademic Usage

**Table 5.** Use of social media for general nonacademic and academic purposes

Social media	Use of social media for general nonacademic purposes			Use of social media for academic purposes		
	Mean	SD	Usage level	Mean	SD	Usage level
Social networking applications (e.g., WhatsApp)	4.75	0.76	High	4.55	0.98	High
Video sharing (e.g., YouTube)	4.26	0.96	High	4.26	0.97	High
Twitter	4.17	1.12	High	3.99	1.28	High
Q&A sites (e.g., Yahoo, Google)	4.00	1.27	High	3.84	1.43	High
Wikipedia	3.43	1.34	Medium	3.57	1.42	Medium
Blogs	2.57	1.30	Medium	2.37	1.31	Medium
Nonacademic internet forums	2.27	1.33	Low	2.38	1.38	Medium
Facebook	1.46	0.92	Low	1.43	0.96	Low



**Figure 6.** Use of social media for general non-academic and academic purposes

*Factors that Are Considered Important When Using social media for*

*Academic Purposes*

The researchers asked the participants of the study to answer the following question: To what extent are the seven factors important to you when you use social media for academic purposes? The results indicated that the most principal factor for social work students was information accuracy (mean = 4.32, SD = 1.01), followed by information credibility (mean = 4.25, SD = 1.06). However, they cared less about “knowing the author who wrote the information” (mean = 3.24, SD = 1.34). See Table 6 and Figure 7.

**Table 6. Factors that are important when using social media for academic purposes**

Factors	Use for academic purposes		
	Mean	SD	Usage level
Information credibility	4.25	1.06	High
Information accuracy	4.32	1.01	High
Up-to-date information	3.75	1.24	High
Confidence in the transmitter of information	3.99	1.16	High
Knowing the original source of the information, such as a book, a scientific article, or a website	3.93	1.20	High
The information used contains sufficient data for the source of the information	3.99	1.14	High
Knowing the author who wrote the information	3.24	1.34	Medium

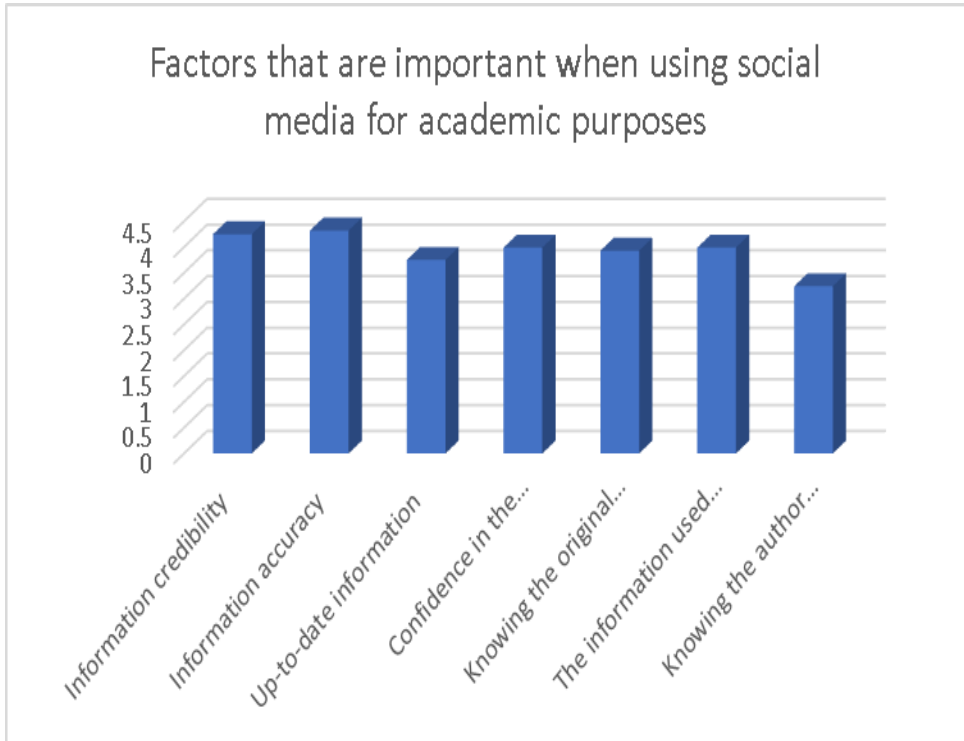


Figure 7. Principal factors when using social media for academic purposes.

### *Motivations for Use*

The authors gave the participants a list of motivations. The results indicated that six out of eight motivations had elevated levels of approval. “Self-improve knowledge in my subject of study” was the most motivating item for using social media for academic purposes (mean = 4.32, SD = 0.97), followed by “Obtain information to complete course assignments” (mean = 4.26, SD = 0.84) and “Obtain preliminary information to define a term or a concept” (mean = 4.21, SD = 0.97). However, the least motivating item was “Build social media groups with mutual academic interests” (mean = 3.28, SD = 1.33). See Table 7 and Figure 8.

**Table 7. Motivations for use**

Motivation	Use for academic purposes		
	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>	Usage level
Obtain information to complete course assignments	4.26	0.84	High
Self-improve knowledge in my subject of study.	4.32	0.97	High
Obtain preliminary information to define a term or a concept	4.21	0.97	High
Share information obtained from social media in classroom activities	3.89	1.09	High
Seek a peer's opinion on a particular topic related to an academic activity	3.87	1.15	High
Share information obtained from social media in the course management system (Moodle)	3.69	1.22	High
Share information with my classmates on SNSs	3.49	1.32	Medium
Build social media groups with mutual academic interests	3.28	1.33	Low



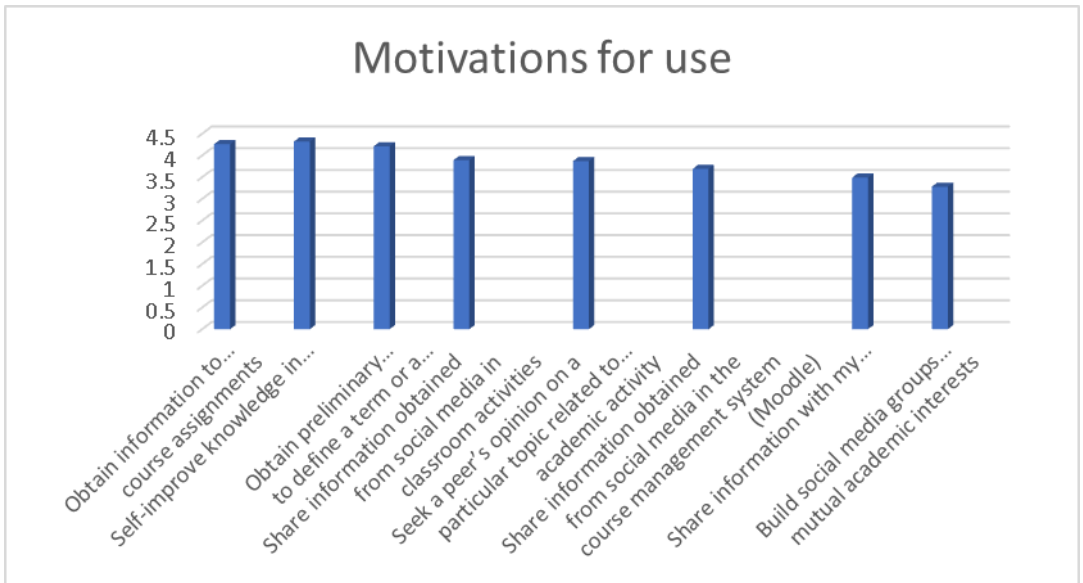


Figure 8. Motivations for use

## 6. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS:

The data analysis results clearly showed that social work students, including males and females representing various academic year levels, used social media platforms for both academic and nonacademic purposes. However, the use of social media platforms varied, and students preferred some platforms over others. The authors found a significant differences in terms of gender; females were more likely to use Wikipedia and video sharing platforms such as YouTube for nonacademic purposes, while they used Facebook less for nonacademic purposes. In addition, female social work students used blogs, Facebook, and nonacademic internet forums less than male students for academic purposes. As found in the review of the literature from the last decade, studies that examining gender differences in the use of social media by undergraduates are scarce. As shown in Table 1, Gazit et al. (2020) explored demographic variables and found that WhatsApp and Instagram were more frequently used by women and that Twitter was more frequently used by men. Those findings by Gazit and others are different from the results of the current study, which found no

significant differences in gender for the use of blogs, Twitter, and WhatsApp for nonacademic purposes and no significant differences in gender in the use of Wikipedia, Twitter, YouTube, search sites and WhatsApp for academic purposes. These results are interesting because they show that both female and male students are not fully aware of the specific functions of each social media platform and the benefits, they might obtain from using such tools.

Moreover, the results indicated that the academic year level was a significant factor shaping the use of social media platforms for both academic and nonacademic purposes. Students enrolled in their second year were more likely to use Wikipedia, social networking applications (e.g., WhatsApp), and video sharing (YouTube) for nonacademic purposes than students enrolled in other academic years. Second-year students were also more likely to use Wikipedia, social networking applications (e.g., WhatsApp), Twitter, search sites (e.g., Google) and video sharing (e.g., YouTube) for academic purposes than students at other year levels. Having such significant findings related to second-year enrollment is interesting and raises some questions: Why are second-year students found to significantly deal with social media sites? Is it because of their age and the skills they have in using these tools? What is the situation among first-year students and students in their final years? It is worth conducting more research to compare first-year students and graduating students and to see whether there are significant differences in how they deal with social media. These results have implications for the library to consider implementing information literacy programs tailored to the needs and skills of each academic stage.

Interestingly, the results showed that students mostly used social networking applications such as WhatsApp for both nonacademic and academic purposes, while the least used application for nonacademic and academic purposes was Facebook. These results clearly indicated that social work students did not have a clear-cut differentiating usage preference regarding academic vs. nonacademic purposes. This result indicates that

social work students do not have clear ideas about the differences between the diverse types of social media, nor do they know that each platform has its specific usage. Knowing which social media platform to use, when to use it and for which purposes enhances students' information literacy levels and makes them better consumers of the benefits offered by social media. This again holds promises and have implications for the academic library to implement more in-depth training sessions focusing on how to best use various social media platforms for academic and professional purposes. Students from all academic backgrounds should have more insight into the usefulness of the various tools available through social media and not only focus on using them for connecting with their friends and classmates.

The results also revealed that students considered information accuracy to be the most important factor regarding using social media for academic purposes, while the least important factor they cared about was knowing the author. These results are interesting because they indicate some contradiction in students' reactions to their perceptions; they care about how accurate the information is, but they care less about the author, which is problematic. The accuracy of information is very much related to who wrote it, especially when the purpose is academic.

Regarding the motivations for use, the results showed that the most motivating factor for using social media for academic purposes was self-improving knowledge in the subject area, while the least motivating factor was building social media groups with mutual academic interests. Again, these findings indicate that social work students are not fully aware of the benefits of social media platforms in terms of academic use. Improving one's knowledge in the subject area can be accomplished through other means, and social media are meant to help users gain knowledge through mutual interactions. However, this aspect was the least important item in the social work students' list. Figure 9 illustrates the significant findings.

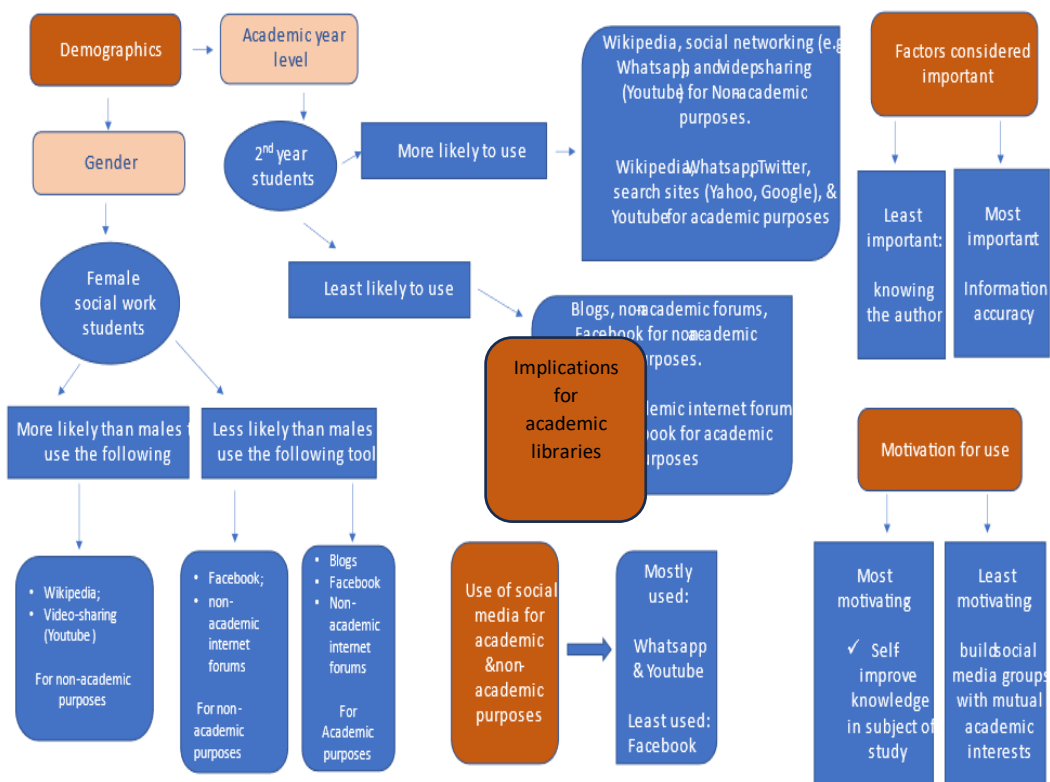


Figure 9. Illustration of the significant findings

## 7. Implications, Limitations and Future Studies:

This study focused only on social work students, and the results cannot be generalized to students from other departments and disciplines in the College of Social Sciences or other colleges. Additionally, the authors didn't include all social media platforms in this study. Future research needs to further examine undergraduate students from other disciplines, and it also needs to include more social media platforms. In addition, this study considered both academic and nonacademic purposes, and another follow-up study can focus on only one aspect, either nonacademic or academic, thus providing more space for including specialized social media platforms, especially academic-oriented platforms (e.g., LinkedIn, Google Docs, Mendeley, Moodle, Prezi, ResearchGate).

Investigating the extent to which students are knowledgeable about the

use of social media platforms continues to be a significant research area due to the richness, variety, and ever-changing nature of such sites. Moreover, students from various disciplines and at all year levels need to keep themselves up to date on the advantages of using these tools in their academic lives.

The result of this study will have an impact on the services of the academic library community. The university library can make use of the results of the study by facilitating more usage of its social media accounts through which students, from all other disciplines, can make use of. The library homepage can be enhanced with more features and applications useful for all students of the university. The library can also develop web-based tools through which it provides educational and social service resources for the community. It is worth concluding this paper by noting that social media world is in instant change, thus it is necessary and valuable to understand the information seeking and interaction behavior of various groups of the community by conducting studies on yearly basis.

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