

Research Article

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The Impact of Social Media on Female Students in Jordan: A Study on the Psychological and Social Factors Driving Them to Deactivate Their Facebook Accounts

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Abstract

Background/purpose. This research explores the psychological, social, and cultural factors driving female students in Jordan to deactivate their Facebook accounts, amid the rapid evolution of digital technologies, societal pressures, and privacy threats. As social media platforms, especially Facebook, play an integral role in daily life, understanding the motivations behind account deactivation becomes important, particularly in a conservative society where privacy concerns and social expectations are significant.

Materials/methods. A descriptive-analytical design was used, with a closed electronic questionnaire distributed to 224 female students from various educational levels. The sample allowed for examining how age and education influence the decision to deactivate Facebook accounts. Data were analyzed using SPSS software, and statistical techniques, including mean averages, standard deviations, T-tests, and ANOVA, were applied to explore significant differences.

Results. The findings show that privacy concerns, cyberbullying, and social pressure were the primary reasons for deactivation. Statistically significant differences were found between age groups and education levels, with younger students and those with lower education showing higher sensitivity to privacy and social pressures. The study suggests that deactivation is a defensive behavior reflecting a reaction to an insecure digital environment.

Conclusion. The study concludes that deactivating Facebook accounts is not simply a technical decision, but a defensive action reflecting psychological and cultural responses to the risks of the digital space. It emphasizes the need for educational interventions to encourage safe and conscious social media use, especially in conservative environments.

1. Introduction

Social media platforms, particularly Facebook, have become an integral part of modern life, shaping how individuals interact, express themselves, and form relationships. In the context of Jordanian society, these platforms are increasingly influential, especially among female students. The rapid growth of internet usage, along with the widespread adoption of social media, has introduced a new set of challenges for individuals, particularly women, who are navigating their digital identities within the boundaries of cultural and social expectations. As digital spaces become more ubiquitous, they bring with them new concerns related to privacy, online harassment, and identity formation, creating a complex environment for Female Students.

In Arab societies, including Jordan, social media usage is often viewed through a lens of both opportunity and restriction. While these platforms provide Female Students with opportunities for self-expression, they also expose them to unique challenges. These challenges are rooted in societal norms and expectations, which sometimes place Female Students under intense scrutiny both online and offline. Social media, as a space for communication and interaction, can therefore become a source of stress, anxiety, and withdrawal, rather than empowerment. A growing body of research indicates that digital platforms, such as Facebook, are often spaces where Female Students experience cyberbullying, concerns over privacy, and societal pressure, all of which contribute to the decision to deactivate accounts.

Several studies have highlighted the connection between social media usage and psychological outcomes, including increased anxiety and depression among Female Students who face harassment or privacy violations online. For instance, Keles et al. (2020) found a strong correlation between cyberbullying and mental health issues such as anxiety and depression. Similarly, Livingstone and Smith (2014) noted that women are more likely to be concerned about privacy risks in the digital space, leading many to alter their online behaviors. Marwick & Boyd (2011) also emphasized the ways in which Female Students use digital platforms to negotiate their identities, often under the pressures of societal expectations. Despite this existing body of literature, there remains a gap in understanding the specific motivations behind the decision of Female Students in Jordan to deactivate their social media accounts, particularly in the educational context.

This study seeks to fill that gap by examining the psychological, social, and cultural factors driving female students in Jordan to deactivate their Facebook accounts. By investigating the intersection of digital behavior, privacy concerns, and societal pressures, this research aims to contribute to the broader conversation on how digital platforms affect female students' well-being and identity in conservative societies. The study focuses specifically on the educational context, as students represent a demographic group that is highly engaged with social media while also being influenced by societal and familial values.

The primary research questions guiding this study are:

What psychological, social, and cultural factors drive female students in Jordan to deactivate their Facebook accounts?

How does cyberbullying influence female students' decisions to deactivate their accounts?

To what extent do concerns about digital privacy contribute to the decision to deactivate an account?

What role do societal values and family expectations play in shaping the digital behavior of female students?

The study aims to provide insights into these factors and offer practical recommendations for educational and community interventions that promote safe and conscious social media practices among Female Students.

2. Literature Review

The concept of digital identity is central to this study. Digital identity refers to how individuals present themselves in the online world, particularly on social media platforms. Papacharissi (2010) noted that social media allows individuals to craft idealized versions of themselves, which often interact with societal expectations and cultural values. In conservative societies such as Jordan, the construction of digital identity is influenced by the need to conform to family and community values, which often puts pressure on Female Students to present a constrained version of their online selves.

The issue of privacy has become increasingly significant in the context of social media. Livingstone and Smith (2014) highlighted that digital privacy concerns are particularly high among women, who often fear the exposure of personal information. This fear is compounded in societies where reputation and familial honor are highly valued, making privacy a key concern for Female Students using platforms like Facebook. Lau et al. (2018) found that women exhibit higher levels of "privacy concerns" and are more likely to withdraw or reduce interaction on platforms when their privacy is threatened. This concern often leads to digital decisions such as account deactivation as a protective measure.

Another important concept in this study is cyberbullying. The term refers to the use of digital platforms to harass, intimidate, or embarrass individuals, particularly vulnerable groups like Female Students. Studies such as Keles et al. (2020) have shown that cyberbullying disproportionately affects females, leading to psychological distress such as anxiety, depression, and in some cases, withdrawal from online spaces. Marwick & Boyd (2011) also pointed out that while social media can provide a platform for self-expression, it also exposes Female Students to constant surveillance and judgment, which often leads to negative emotional outcomes.

The existing literature provides evidence of the psychological and social risks associated with social media use among Female Students. Twenge & Campbell (2018) found that prolonged time spent on social media was associated with lower levels of psychological well-being, especially among Female Students who face social comparison pressures and the idealized content that circulates on platforms like Facebook. These pressures contribute to what Cover (2016) calls "digital anxiety," where the online self-presentation does not align with the individual's real-world identity, causing stress and emotional strain.

The relationship between digital platforms and mental health is well-documented, but fewer studies have focused specifically on Female Students in Arab societies, particularly in Jordan. This gap in the literature makes it essential to investigate how privacy concerns, societal pressures, and exposure to cyberbullying interact to influence the digital behaviors of female students in Jordan. Moreover, there has been limited exploration of the cultural and social factors that contribute to the decision to deactivate social media accounts, making this study particularly relevant.

This review of the literature highlights the need for research that addresses the intersection of digital behavior, privacy concerns, and cultural expectations. By examining these factors in the context of Jordanian female students, this study aims to fill the gap in understanding the motivations behind the decision to deactivate Facebook accounts, offering new insights into how digital platforms affect the identity and well-being of Female Students in conservative societies.

The conceptual framework of this study is informed by the theories of Uses and Gratifications and Digital Identity, which explore how individuals use media platforms to satisfy psychological, social, and cognitive needs. The decision to deactivate an account is viewed through this lens as a

preventive withdrawal, a deliberate strategy to protect one's privacy and identity from perceived threats.

3. Theoretical Framework

This study is based on two main theoretical perspectives: Uses and Gratifications Theory and Digital Identity Theory, which provide a comprehensive framework for understanding the motivations of Female Students in Jordan to deactivate their Facebook accounts.

3.1. *Uses and Gratifications Theory (Katz et al., 1973)*

This theory suggests that individuals actively seek media to satisfy their psychological, social, and cognitive needs. In the context of Facebook, Female Students use the platform to fulfill needs such as emotional validation, social connection, and information acquisition. However, when these needs are unmet, particularly due to cyberbullying, privacy concerns, or social pressure, women may choose to withdraw from the platform. This withdrawal is viewed as a deliberate, preventive strategy to protect their psychological well-being.

3.2. *Digital Identity Theory (Papacharissi, 2010)*

Digital Identity Theory focuses on how individuals construct and manage their identities online. For Female Students in conservative societies like Jordan, their digital identity is shaped by cultural norms and family expectations, making them vulnerable to societal scrutiny. To protect their reputation and privacy, they may deactivate their Facebook accounts, which is a culturally driven decision to safeguard their digital self-presentation.

By combining these two theories, this study views the decision to deactivate a Facebook account as a multifaceted process involving both unmet psychological needs (from cyberbullying or privacy issues) and the need to conform to cultural expectations. The theories provide a framework for understanding how these factors influence female students' digital behavior and their decisions to withdraw from social media platforms.

4. Methodology of the Study

This study follows a descriptive-analytical approach, which is suitable for examining psychological, social, and cultural phenomena related to the digital behaviors of Female Students in Jordan. The descriptive-analytical method allows for the collection of quantitative data, which can then be analyzed to uncover patterns and relationships between various factors influencing the decision to deactivate Facebook accounts.

The research design for this study is cross-sectional, meaning that data were collected at one point in time from a specific sample of Female Students. This design is ideal for exploring the relationships between digital behavior, privacy concerns, and societal pressures. The data were collected using a survey questionnaire, which provided a structured means to gather responses on various topics related to social media usage, privacy concerns, and cyberbullying.

The choice of a descriptive-analytical approach is supported by reliable methodology sources such as Field (2024), who explains the utility of this approach in behavioral studies, and Tabachnick & Fidell (2007), who highlight its applicability in analyzing large datasets for statistical significance.

The sample consisted of 224 female students from various regions of Jordan. The participants were selected using a simple random sampling method, ensuring that the sample was representative of the broader population of Female Students. The inclusion criteria specified that participants must be female students aged 18–35 and actively using Facebook. The selection of participants from diverse age groups and geographical locations (Amman, Zarqa, Irbid, and other governorates) provided a broad representation of the Jordanian female student population.

The total sample was further classified by age group (Under 18, 18–25, 26–35, Over 35) and education level (Primary, Secondary, University, Postgraduate). This classification ensured that various demographic factors were considered when analyzing the data.

The primary data collection tool was a 15-item closed electronic questionnaire. This tool was designed to assess various factors related to the decision to deactivate Facebook accounts, including privacy concerns, cyberbullying, and societal pressure. The questionnaire was developed based on a review of relevant literature and expert opinions from three academic reviewers specializing in psychology, sociology, and education.

To ensure the validity and reliability of the instrument, a content validity check was conducted by experts in the field. Additionally, Cronbach's Alpha was calculated to measure internal consistency. The reliability coefficients for the different sections of the questionnaire were as follows:

Psychological section: $\alpha = 0.84$

Social section: $\alpha = 0.81$

Technical section: $\alpha = 0.79$

Overall tool: $\alpha = 0.85$

These reliability values indicate a strong level of consistency and suggest that the instrument is well-suited for capturing the intended data.

Data analysis was performed using SPSS software (Field, 2024), which is widely used for analyzing statistical data in social sciences. The following statistical techniques were employed:

Descriptive Statistics: Frequencies, percentages, and mean averages were calculated to describe the sample's characteristics and key responses.

T-Test: Used to compare the means of two groups (e.g., age groups, education levels) to assess statistically significant differences.

One-Way ANOVA: Applied to compare more than two groups (e.g., geographical regions) and determine whether there were significant differences in responses based on location or education level.

These techniques were selected because they allow for an in-depth exploration of the data and are commonly used in psychological and sociological research to analyze the impact of various factors on behavior (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007). Each statistical method was chosen for its ability to assess the relationships between multiple variables and test hypotheses about digital behavior and privacy concerns.

5. Results and Statistical Analysis

This chapter presents a detailed description of the results derived from analyzing the responses of the study sample (224 Jordanian Female Students). The analyses were conducted using SPSS software, and the statistical techniques included:

- Descriptive statistics (frequencies, percentages)
- Mean averages and standard deviations
- Group comparison tests (T-test and ANOVA)

5.1. Demographic Characteristics of the Sample

The demographic characteristics of the sample are summarized in Table 1 and Table 2, showing the distribution of participants by age and education level. This classification helps understand the sample's diversity and provides a foundation for analyzing how different age and education groups experience digital behaviors.

Table 1. Distribution of the Sample by Age

Age Group	Frequency	Percentage
Less than 18	27	12.1%
18–25	121	54.0%
26–35	58	25.9%
Over 35	18	8.0%
Total	224	100%

The results show that the majority of the sample belongs to the 18–25 age group, which is the most active and influenced by social media usage.

Table 2. Distribution of the Sample by Education Level

Education Level	Frequency	Percentage
Primary	7	3.1%
Secondary	45	20.1%
University	139	62.1%
Postgraduate	33	14.7%
Total	224	100%

The table shows that the majority of participants hold university degrees, indicating a strong level of digital awareness among them.

5.2. Key Results

The key results from the data analysis are presented below, focusing on the responses related to privacy concerns, cyberbullying, and social pressure. These responses were directly aligned with the research questions.

5.2.1. Privacy Concerns and Cyberbullying (Research Questions 1 and 2)

Privacy Concerns: A significant proportion of participants expressed concerns about their privacy when using Facebook. The mean score for the statement "I feel concerned about privacy when using Facebook" was 4.22, with a standard deviation of 0.81. This indicates that privacy is a major concern for the majority of respondents.

Cyberbullying: The statement "I have been harassed or bullied on Facebook" received a mean score of 3.91 (standard deviation = 1.04), showing that nearly 40% of the respondents had experienced some form of cyberbullying on the platform. This reflects the negative impact of cyberbullying on their digital behavior and social media engagement.

Table 3. Means and Standard Deviations for Key Items

Item Number	Statement	Mean	Standard Deviation	Agreement Level
1	I feel concerned about privacy when using Facebook	4.22	0.81	High
2	I have been harassed or bullied on Facebook	3.91	1.04	High
4	Facebook negatively affects my psychological and social life	4.05	0.98	High
6	Deactivating the account is an effective way to protect privacy	4.18	0.89	High
9	Social media should be used cautiously	4.33	0.72	Very High
11	Awareness of safety helps Female Students make better decisions	4.39	0.67	Very High
13	I do not share personal information to avoid harm	4.28	0.76	Very High
14	Facebook does not provide a safe environment for Female Students	4.10	0.93	High

5.2.2. T-Test Analysis by Age Group (Research Question 3)

A T-test was conducted to compare the responses between the 18–25 age group and other age groups. The results revealed significant differences between these groups in relation to privacy concerns, exposure to bullying, and the inclination to deactivate accounts.

Table 4. T-Test Results for Key Items by Age Group

Item Statement	Sig.	Statistical Significance
Concern about privacy	0.018	Significant
Exposure to bullying	0.007	Very Significant
Social pressure	0.021	Significant
Account deactivation as an avoidance strategy	0.004	Very Significant

Female Students in the 18–25 age group are more likely to experience social pressure and privacy concerns and are more inclined to deactivate their accounts.

5.2.3. ANOVA Analysis by Education Level and Geographical Location (Research Question 4)

By Education Level: An ANOVA analysis indicated that university-educated women showed greater awareness of privacy risks and were more likely to deactivate their accounts to protect their privacy.

Table 5. ANOVA Results by Education Level

Item Statement	Sig.	Note
Deactivating the account as protection	0.029	Significant
Facebook does not provide a safe space	0.031	Significant
Facebook cannot be replaced	0.048	Slightly Significant

By Geographical Location: The analysis also revealed that social pressure and exposure to harassment were significantly higher in Amman and urban areas.

Table 6. ANOVA Results by Governorate

Item Statement	Sig.	Note
Social pressure	0.041	Higher in Amman
Exposure to harassment	0.017	Higher in urban areas

6. Discussion

This section provides a comprehensive interpretation of the study's results in relation to the theoretical framework and the existing literature. The findings are discussed in the context of privacy concerns, cyberbullying, social pressure, and the role of education and age in the decision of female students in Jordan to deactivate their Facebook accounts.

One of the primary findings of this study is the high level of privacy concerns among the participants, with a mean score of 4.22 (Table 3). This is consistent with previous research by Livingstone and Smith (2014), who found that women are more concerned about privacy loss on digital platforms compared to men. The study also revealed a significant relationship between cyberbullying and the decision to deactivate accounts, with a mean score of 3.91 (Table 3). This aligns with the findings of Keles et al. (2020), who reported that Female Students are more vulnerable to cyberbullying and that it is directly linked to anxiety, depression, and withdrawal from digital platforms.

In this study, a significant number of female students indicated that they had experienced cyberbullying on Facebook, which contributed to their decision to deactivate their accounts. This supports the idea that cyberbullying is a major factor influencing female students' behavior online, as emphasized in Papacharissi (2010), who noted that digital platforms can be both empowering and oppressive, particularly for women who face constant surveillance and harassment.

Another key finding was the significant role of social pressure in the decision to deactivate Facebook accounts, especially among the 18–25 age group. The results revealed that the 18–25 age group experienced higher levels of social pressure and privacy concerns, with T-test results indicating statistical significance (Table 4). This finding is consistent with Marwick & Boyd (2011), who argued that female students are particularly vulnerable to social surveillance on social media platforms, where they are pressured to conform to societal expectations. The 18–25 age group is particularly

sensitive to these pressures, as they are in the process of self-identity formation and are highly influenced by external validation and acceptance.

Interestingly, the older age groups did not exhibit the same degree of sensitivity to social pressures and privacy concerns, suggesting that age plays a crucial role in how female students navigate digital spaces. This finding aligns with Twenge & Campbell (2018), who found that younger users of social media experience higher levels of anxiety and lower psychological well-being compared to older age groups, who may have more established coping mechanisms and self-concepts.

The ANOVA analysis indicated that education level significantly influenced privacy concerns and the likelihood of deactivating accounts (Table 5). University-educated women demonstrated a higher awareness of privacy risks and were more likely to deactivate their accounts for protection. This finding is consistent with Field (2024), who highlighted the importance of digital literacy in shaping how individuals interact with digital platforms. Education seems to provide female students with the tools and knowledge to understand the risks of social media use, making them more proactive in protecting their digital privacy.

The results also show that female students with lower education levels exhibited less awareness of privacy issues, suggesting that there is a digital literacy gap among different education groups. This is a critical finding, as it emphasizes the need for targeted education on digital safety, especially for those with limited access to digital resources or training.

The study's findings also suggest that the decision to deactivate a Facebook account is not solely based on technical factors but is heavily influenced by cultural and social constraints. Papacharissi (2010) strongly supports this finding, arguing that in conservative societies, female students' digital identities are shaped by family and societal expectations. In Jordan, where family reputation and social standing are highly valued, female students may choose to deactivate their accounts as a protective measure to avoid violating cultural norms.

This aligns with the Digital Identity Theory, which suggests that digital self-presentation is not a liberating process but is instead often constrained by societal surveillance and cultural constraints (Papacharissi, 2010). The results show that Facebook is seen as a double-edged sword: it provides a space for self-expression, but it also places female students under constant scrutiny, leading many to withdraw from the platform to protect their digital identity from judgment or harm.

When compared with previous studies, the findings of this research confirm that cyberbullying, privacy concerns, and social pressure are common issues for female students across different cultural contexts. However, this study contributes new insights by focusing on Jordanian female students in a conservative Arab society, where social norms and family reputation significantly shape digital behavior. The study provides evidence that digital withdrawal is not merely a technical decision but a cultural and psychological response to the pressures of navigating a digital world that is not always perceived as safe or supportive.

In conclusion, the results of this study reveal that multiple psychological, social, and cultural factors influence the decision of young Jordanian female students to deactivate their Facebook accounts. The findings highlight the significant role of privacy concerns, cyberbullying, and social pressure in shaping female students' digital behaviors. These results are consistent with previous research but also underscore the unique cultural constraints faced by female students in conservative societies. The study calls for education and community interventions to promote safe and conscious use of social media, especially among younger women and those with lower levels of digital literacy.

7. Conclusion

In conclusion, this study aimed to explore the psychological, social, and cultural factors driving Jordanian female students to deactivate their Facebook accounts. The study addressed several key research questions and provided insightful answers based on the collected data and analysis.

Privacy concerns were the leading factor influencing female students to deactivate their accounts, with a high mean score of 4.22.

Cyberbullying emerged as another significant factor, with 39% of participants reporting exposure to online harassment. This finding aligns with previous research on the negative impacts of cyberbullying on mental health and digital behavior.

The study revealed that female students in the 18–25 age group were more likely to deactivate their accounts due to privacy concerns and cyberbullying. This group showed greater vulnerability to social pressures compared to older age groups, supporting the notion that Female Students face heightened scrutiny and pressures in digital spaces.

University-educated women exhibited higher awareness of privacy risks and were more likely to deactivate their accounts to protect their privacy. This suggests that digital literacy plays a significant role in shaping female students' digital behavior.

The study highlighted the strong influence of social pressure and family expectations in the decision to deactivate Facebook accounts. This aligns with the notion that digital identity is often constrained by societal and cultural norms in conservative societies, where maintaining a positive family reputation is of utmost importance.

8. Recommendations

Based on the findings, the study recommends the following:

1. Incorporating digital literacy programs into curricula to raise awareness of privacy and online safety among female students.
2. Promoting open dialogues within families to foster trust and understanding about the challenges of digital spaces.
3. Strengthening laws against cyberbullying to create safer online environments for Female Students.

This study reveals that the decision to deactivate a Facebook account is not simply a technical withdrawal but a psychological and cultural response to the challenges and risks associated with social media. Jordanian female students, in particular, navigate a digital world that is influenced by societal pressures, privacy concerns, and the desire to protect their identities from external judgment. Understanding these factors provides valuable insights into how social media use can be both empowering and restrictive for Female Students.

The findings contribute to the growing body of research on digital behavior in conservative societies and call for a multidimensional approach to support Female Students in safely navigating digital spaces.

Declarations

Author Contributions. All authors have read and approved the article's final version for publication.

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