



## المجلة الأردنية في القانون والعلوم السياسية

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## **The Implications of the Use of Social Media on Political Development: Philadelphia University Students' Perspective**

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### **Abstrac**

This study aimed at exploring the implications of the use of social media on political development from Philadelphia University students' perspective. The researcher adopted the qualitative research approach proposed by Strauss and Corbin on a sample of (200) students out of (12,000) as the total population in the academic year (2016-2017). This approach incorporated three basic elements: the theoretical sensitive coding; that is, creating theoretical solid ideas from the information to clarify the phenomenon discussed; theoretical sampling; that is, choosing whom to meet or what to see next as indicated by the condition of the state of theory generation, and that implies starting data analysis with the first interview, and writing down early hypotheses; and the need to contrast phenomena and contexts to make the theory valid. The researcher concluded that it was the phrase of "Political participation" as a probable key category that led to the validation of the perceived hypothesis.

**Keywords:** Social media, political development, political participation, qualitative research, university students, Jordan.

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حقوق النشر محفوظة لجامعة مؤتة، الكرك، الأردن.

الآثار المترتبة على استخدام وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي على التنمية السياسية:  
منظور طلاب جامعة فيلادلفيا

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ملخص

هدفت هذه الدراسة إلى استكشاف الآثار المترتبة على استخدام وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي على التنمية السياسية من منظور طلاب جامعة فيلادلفيا. اعتمدت الدراسة منهج البحث النوعي الذي اقترحه شتراوس وكوربين على عينة من (200) طالب من مختلف المستويات الجامعية والكليات والأكاديمية في الجامعة في العام الدراسي (2016-2017)؛ وقد تألف مجتمع الدراسة من طلاب الجامعة الذين بلغ عددهم (12000) طالبا. ويتضمن هذا النهج العناصر الثلاثة الأساسية؛ وهي: ترميز حساس نظري، أي توليد مفاهيم نظرية قوية من البيانات لشرح الظاهرة التي نوقشت؛ أخذ العينات، أي تحديد الجهة المقابلة أو ما يجب مراعاته وفقاً لحالة تشكيل النظرية، وهذا يتضمن إجراء تحليل للبيانات بدءاً من المقابلة الأولى، وتسجيل الملاحظات والفرضيات المبكرة؛ والحاجة إلى المقارنة بين الظواهر والسياقات لجعل النظرية صالحة. وخلصت الدراسة إلى أن عبارة "المشاركة السياسية" هي فئة أساسية محتملة أدت إلى التحقق من صحة الفرضية المتصورة.

**الكلمات الدالة:** وسائل التواصل الاجتماعية، التنمية السياسية، المشاركة السياسية، البحث النوعي، طلاب جامعة، الأردن.

## **1.1 Introduction:**

### **The Theoretical Framework and Previous Studies:**

Researchers have noticed the correlation and interdependence between social networks and freedom of speech.

It is clearly shown in nowadays information development that both social networks and freedom of speech are highly and positively related and interdependent.

#### **1.1.1 The following studies and theoretical data reflect that clearly:**

The rapid development of the media and communication has led to a real revolution and fundamental changes in all areas of life. The effects of these changes at the level of groups and individuals have begun not only at the local level but beyond that to the global level, leading to new phenomenon and direct effects on various social structures (Inglehart, 2015).

This has contributed to what has become known as the social media networks that have become the means of communication affecting daily events (Kietzmann, Hermkens, McCarthy & Silvestre, 2011), so that social networking has positively affected freedom of speech. On the other hand, providing the opportunity to all individuals, and researchers to convey their ideas and discuss their political and social issues, and what they wish to transfer, crossing this natural border into new and unregulated spaces. Even governments and NGOs are using these networks to deliver their ideas and achieve their different objectives (Mangold & Faulds, 2009).

Social networking is one aspect of interaction in the context of the whole new technology revolution of communication, the so-called "new world", in which users engage in all interactive and participatory activities freely. They are no longer simply just tools of communication, exchange of views and entertainment between individuals and communities through the thousands of applications, but exceeded that to form one of the most important tools in the interactive world, through which millions of people are sharing common interests (Vatikiotis, 2005).

Thus, it can be said that the social networks (such as Facebook, Twitter and YouTube) have caused a qualitative leap; not only in the field of communication between individuals and groups, but in the results and impacts of these communications, which have impressive results in the humanitarian, social, political and cultural systems locally and globally; as the traditional media is no longer able to make such changes (Bargh & McKenna, 2004).

Interactive media and social networking sites have become a powerful and important tool that has played real and active roles in political, social and cultural life. This has been demonstrated by the great role it played during the so-called "Arab Spring Revolutions" (Joseph, 2012).

Social media sites have interacted in the lives of individuals on the personal, social and political levels, and have come to constitute a virtual world that opens the way for individuals, groups and organizations of all kinds to express their opinions on issues and topics. These sites can provide citizens with new channels to participate in political activities, which makes politics a public affair practiced by most people without being restricted to other groups, because these sites encourage individuals who are not active or political actors to participate in political events, so that it can be said that it can be a political voice for the ordinary citizen (Bennett, 2008).

Political development is a modern concept and a fundamental dimension of comprehensive development. The researchers define it as "developing the ability of the masses to understand their problems clearly, and their ability to mobilize all the possibilities available to solve these problems in a practical and realistic manner, and the organization of the political life and the follow-up of the performance of political functions within the state, and the development of political systems and political practice to become more democratic and more embarrassing to human dignity and demands, in addition to representing the masses of the values of democracy and the achievement of Political equality among the members of the society" (Baghdadi, 1993, p. 286).

It is clear from the historical analysis of the developing societies that the role of the university is a place for study and practicing politics at the same time through forming the political formation, political recruitment and the preparation of political elite of its students (Pierson, 2011).

Politically, university students face opportunities provided by the social media to exercise their rights to free speech, to interact with their representatives, and make constructive contributions to the political process in ways that were unimaginable just a decade ago (Gitlin, 2003).

Another study shows that privacy and therefore freedom of speech are negatively affected by social media, as Gelman (2009) discussed in his article (Privacy, Free Speech, and Blurry-Edged Social Networks).

One can see clearly how these studies tackled different kinds of relations and interdependence, but none of them was concerned in cultural environment of Arab youth involvement in social networks and how that affected freedom of speech .

### **1.1.2 Scientific Importance of the study:**

The study is scientifically important, using a new technique and theory in practice to prove how social media and freedom of speech are positively interdependent.

### **1.1.3 Practical Importance of the study:**

The study is important in practice, as it is as well critical to judge an environment as politically free, and with freedom of speech expressed by all means. The practical importance is manifested in the idea of political participation of youth , and that is mainly needed in the Arab world.

## **1.2 Problem Statement**

Social networking websites on the Internet is the latest and most popular communication technology product, though these sites created primarily for social networking among individuals, their use was extended to include political activities. Social media sites today are important institutions that play an important role in providing correct habits and behaviors and an important tool of social, political and cultural awareness among university students to exercise their rights to free speech, to interact with their representatives, and make constructive contributions to the political process (Lovejoy & Saxton, 2012).

### **1.2.1 Determinants and Spatial study objectives:**

The objective of this research is to identify the implications of the use of social media on political development. Determinants are manifested in social media, freedom of speech, and political participation.

Therefore, the problem of this study stems out of its attempt to answer the following questions:

1. Do social networking websites (Social Media) respond to the fact that university students exercise their rights to free speech in Jordan?
2. Do social networking websites (Social Media) respond to the fact that university students interact with their political representatives in Jordan?
3. Does social networking websites (Social Media) respond to the fact that university students can make constructive contributions to the political process in Jordan?

### 1.3 Study Methodology

Whatever the focus is, the qualitative research approach should be concerned with interpretation of subjective meaning, and description of social context. And this clarifies how people in certain contexts come to appreciate, justify, carry out and administer their routine circumstances, and seek to deliver data within the society.

Qualitative content analysis can be referred to as “a research method for subjective interpretation of the content of text data through the systematic classification process of coding and identifying themes or patterns” (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005, p. 1278). It is “a method for systematically describing the meaning of qualitative material” (Schreier, 2012, p. 1).

Thus, the researcher, after examining three most prominent grounded theory methodologies by Glaser and Strauss (1967), Strauss and Corbin (1990, 1998), and Charmaz (2006), has decided that the one by Strauss and Corbin (1990, 1998) would be most suitable in this current study. This methodology is examined in the subsequent section.

Grounded theory is a methodology that seeks to construct theory about issues of importance in peoples' lives (Glaser, 1978; Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). It does this through a process of data collection that is often described as inductive in nature (Morse, 2001). According to its founders, grounded theory constitutes an innovative methodology, facilitating ‘the discovery of theory from data’ (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, p. 1). This implies that in grounded theory the researcher is not focused on testing hypotheses taken from existing theoretical frameworks, but rather develops a new theory or a working hypotheses grounded in empirical data collected in the field (Dunne, 2011).

In this study, the underlying principle of using qualitative research can be rationalized by Interview Questions' characteristics: For obtaining a deep insight into university students' experiences of the implications of the use of Social Media on the political development; the research questions are exploratory and open-ended, and these characteristics will contribute in the qualitative research approach (Soafer, 1999; Holliday, 2002).

Avis (2005) also stated that to reflect qualitative studies; questions have to present a comprehension of social manners; by investigating students' attitudes toward the implications of the use of Social Media on political development. Questions such as (How) or (What) and (Why) as investigated by Cook, Meade, and Perry (2001) and by Greenhalg & Taylor (2015) affirmed that qualitative research questions tend to focus on ‘what’, ‘how’, and ‘why’ of the

phenomenon being investigated and that complement the current research questions. And by existing Research Level: Qualitative research is predominantly practical to investigate a relatively new phenomenon as Kane & O'Reilly de Brún (2001) emphasized, also they highlighted; and in line with this study, university students' experiences of the implications of the use of Social Media on the political development have been given inadequate attention up until now, particularly in the Jordanian perspective. Thus, a qualitative approach is an appropriate choice for this study. Also the study raises questions to focus on research Aims: To acquire a profound comprehension of a particular phenomenon, to understand meanings, to develop justification, ideas, concepts and theories, which in this situation are the implications of the use of Social Media on the political development factors among Jordanian university students. Besides that a quantitative survey: for the validating of the study results will be conducted; as researchers believe that qualitative and quantitative research can be effectively combined in the same research project (Strauss and Corbin, 1990).

After studying the three schools of grounded theory, the researcher will be adopting Strauss version for this study. Allen (2010) comments on the way in which Strauss and Corbin invite the researcher to use their experience and literature to generate concepts, an area treated with considerable caution in the original method. Covan (2007) points out that Strauss, in discussion, really underlined the importance of history and personal biography, and the way in which meaning becomes negotiated within the social context.

#### **1.4 Spatial Study Population and Sample**

The study was conducted at Philadelphia University in the academic year (2016-2017); in which the study population consisted of all the students in the university reaching (12,000) students. The researcher chose (200) students with different gender, faculties and academic levels.

#### **1.5 Characteristics of the study sample**

The study sample is distributed by gender (males and females), faculty stream (scientific and humanitarian) and academic year level (first year, second year, third year and fourth year); and table (1) shows these distributions.



**Table (1) Distributions of the study sample**

<b>Variable</b>		<b>Frequency</b>
Gender	Male	112
	Female	88
Faculty	Scientific	91
	Humanitarian	109
Academic year level	First year	50
	Second year	48
	Third year	52
	Fourth year	50

### 1.6 Interview Questions

All interviews were based on both open-ended responses to the following questions:

- 1- How would you describe exercising your rights to free speech using social media websites?
- 2- How would you describe interacting with your political representatives using social media websites?
- 3- How would you describe your making constructive contributions to the political process using social media websites?
- 4- What are the positive sides of using social media websites in exercising rights to free speech?
- 5- What are the negative sides of using social media websites in exercising rights to free speech?

These questions are consistent to the major elements of the paradigm model described by Strauss and Corbin (1998).

And therefore, for this research, the approach proposed by Strauss and Corbin (1990; 1998) has been adopted. Three basic elements this approach should include; which are: theoretical sensitive coding, that is, creating theoretical solid ideas from the information to clarify the phenomenon discussed; theoretical sampling, that is, choosing whom to meet or what to see next as indicated by the condition of the state of theory generation, and that

implies starting data analysis with the first interview, and writing down memos and hypotheses early; and the need to compare between phenomena and contexts to make the theory valid. In addition, structured aspect encourages the researcher and provides clear boundaries of what to look for in specific situations, how, where, when, and why.

## **1.7 Data collection and analysis**

### **1.7.1 Units of Analysis**

A strategy for examining data is termed as coding (Charmaz, 2006). In open coding, it might comprise of a sentence, a line from a transcription, a physical activity or acquisition of past components (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). It is significant amid data analysis to separate between terms utilized by the respondents and the procedural terms that the researcher indicated; this will minimize the inclination that could be brought into the examination by the researcher's presuppositions. Therefore, the theory building is conceptualizing; and to begin with, demographical data are divided into actions, events, incidents and ideas by means of asking straightforward questions such as what, where, when and how much. Data are then given a representative name, and this procedure entails word-by-word, line-by-line and phrase-by-phrase analysis. Researcher utilizes codes to pull together and arrange series of generally discrete occasions, statements, and perceptions which they distinguish in the data. At first the data might seem, by all accounts, to be a mass of confusing, inconsequential, accounts yet by concentrating on and coding the researcher starts to make request.

### **1.7.2 Sampling Technique**

The researcher will be using a purposive sampling or what is also known as theoretical sampling strategy to identify informers to participate in the current research. It engaged selecting groups or individuals to be investigated based on their significance to research questions (Mason, 1996) and as the sampling process the researcher tried to find informants based on their capability to contribute to an emerging theory (Creswell, 1998). With qualitative research like grounded theory, a population might be cautiously selected, but the sample is intentionally non-random. This is because the researcher desires to examine through and isolate informants who best show evidence of the phenomena being explored. Creswell (2005) identifies nine different types of purposeful sampling: (1) maximal variation; (2) extreme case; (3) typical; (4) theory or concept; (5) homogeneous; (6) critical; (7) opportunistic; (8) snowball; and (9) confirming or disconfirming. For this particular research, the researcher will be using a combination of purposive sampling strategies.

### 1.7.3 The Coding Process

Data were collected using grounded theory procedures described in Creswell (1998), and Strauss and Corbin (1998). Creswell (1998) suggested that a standard grounded theory research comprises 20 to 30 interviews that collectively cover the categories that emerge during analysis. Data are accumulated in four phases that differ with regard to purpose and data collection strategies. Data analysis of the current study was completed by using NVivo 11 to face the terms of "trustworthiness", "rigorousness", or "quality" of the data, therefore it is important that this is carried out in a thorough and transparent manner. Therefore, using software in the data analysis process has been thought by some to add accuracy to qualitative research. The present study used a four-stage data collection strategy summarized in Table 2.

**Table (2) Four Phases in Data Collection**

Phase	Coding	Purpose	Informants
1	Open	Categorizing codes within categories for advance analysis	40 individuals And 25 in Focus groups
2	Axial	Specifying codes in details; relay codes to one another to generate themes	40 individuals And 25 in Focus groups
3	Selective	Creating paradigm model and investigate themes relative to the model; Establishing plot that integrates paradigm model	30 in Focus groups
4	Selective	Testing, certify and explain paradigm model until saturated; recognize surfacing principles constant with paradigm model; perform member checks	40 in Focus groups

Table (3) shows 20 preliminary codes obtained from the interview sessions with each code representing a significant topic of discussion related to the use of Social Media on the political development. The researcher thus concluded that the focus group and individual interviews saturated the codes that were necessary to understand the phenomenon of using of Social Media on the political development after similar codes emerged during the interviews.

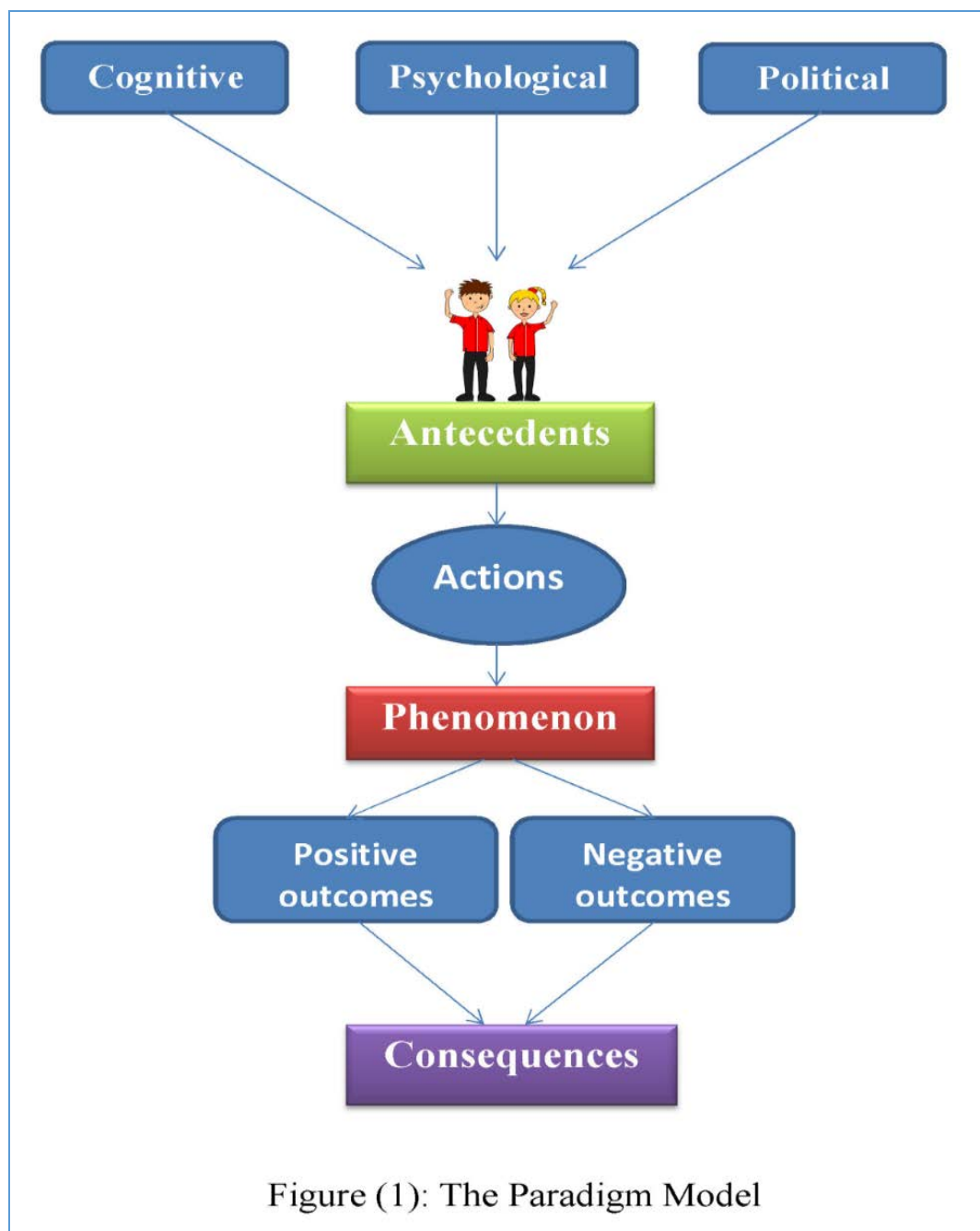
**Table (3) Initial Categories and Codes in Phase One**

<b>Category</b>	<b>Code</b>
Antecedents	1. Powerful feelings
	2. No political influence
	3. Self-Satisfaction
	4. Self - esteem
	5- Political participation
	6- Living illusionary political life
Phenomenon: Positive sides	7- Express opinions freely
	8- Make stress on politicians
	9- Interact with political representatives
	10- Constructive political contributions
	11- Fighting extremism
Phenomenon: Negative sides	12- Encourage extremism
	13- Feelings of doubt
	14- All are watched by the government
	15- Legal consequences
Consequences:	16- More Political participation
	17- Reflects on country development
	18- Legal consequences
	19- Encourage extremism
	20- More political power

## 1.8 Study Results and discussion

The researcher has placed indications to take the reader through a plan for this particular study. The first indication is the problem statement, and subsequently the research objectives, which establish the core for the study. Consequently, the researcher has posed research questions, which the interview questions will be based upon later. The analysis of interview for this study went through four main phases, according to the following study model.

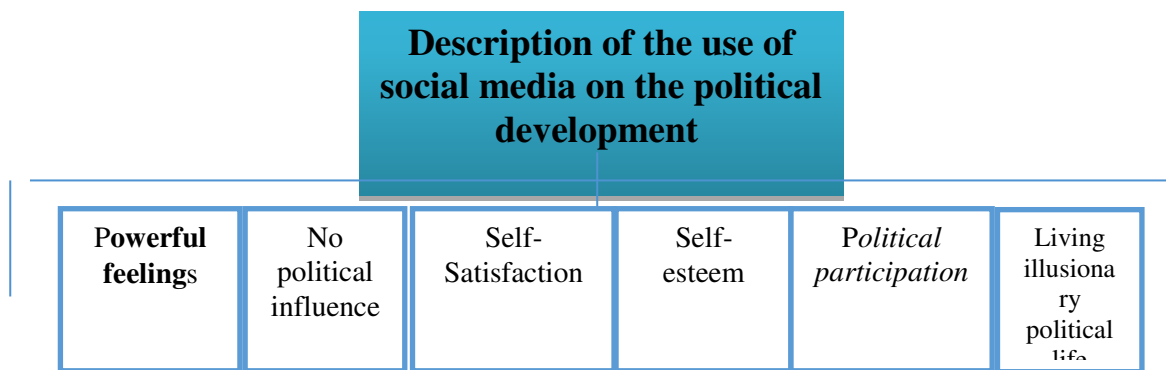
### 1.8.1 Study Paradigm Model



The model illustrated in Figure (1) is generated entirely by utilizing NVivo 11 as a result of nodes or themes established being linked together. These relationships of concepts are rigorously established based on validation process in phase four selective data analysis.

### 1.8.2 Antecedents

As shown in Figure (2) the main themes comprised the use of social media on the political development description according to student answers, which refers to (Powerful feelings, No political influence, Self-Satisfaction, Self-esteem, Political participation and Living illusionary political life).



**Figure (2): Main themes according to student answers on describing the use of social media on the political development**

And table (4) shows the themes for gender respondents.

**Table (4) Themes for gender respondents**

Themes	Male		Female		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Powerful feelings	19	17.00	14	15.90	33	16.5
No political influence	21	18.75	16	18.20	37	18.5
Self-Satisfaction	14	12.50	9	10.23	23	11.5
Self-esteem	13	11.60	7	07.95	20	10.0
Political participation	30	26.80	29	32.95	59	29.5
Living illusionary political life	15	13.35	13	14.77	28	14.0
Total	11	100.0	88	100.0	200	100.

Data in table (4) shows that the highest theme approval for gender respondents is the (Political participation) theme with the frequency of (59) and with the percentage of (29.50%). And table (5) illustrates the themes for faculty respondents.

**Table (5) Themes for faculty respondents**

Themes	Scientific		Humanit		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Powerful feelings	15	16.5	16	14.70	31	15.5
No political influence	17	18.7	20	18.30	37	18.5
Self-Satisfaction	12	13.1	14	12.80	26	13.0
Self-esteem	11	12.1	15	13.80	26	13.0
Political participation	27	26.7	31	28.40	58	29.0
Living illusionary political	9	12.9	13	12.00	22	11.0
Total	91	100.	109	100.0	200	100.

Data in table (5) shows that the highest theme approval for faculty respondents is the (Political participation) theme with the frequency of (58) and with the percentage of (29.00%). And table (6) illustrates the themes for academic year level respondents.

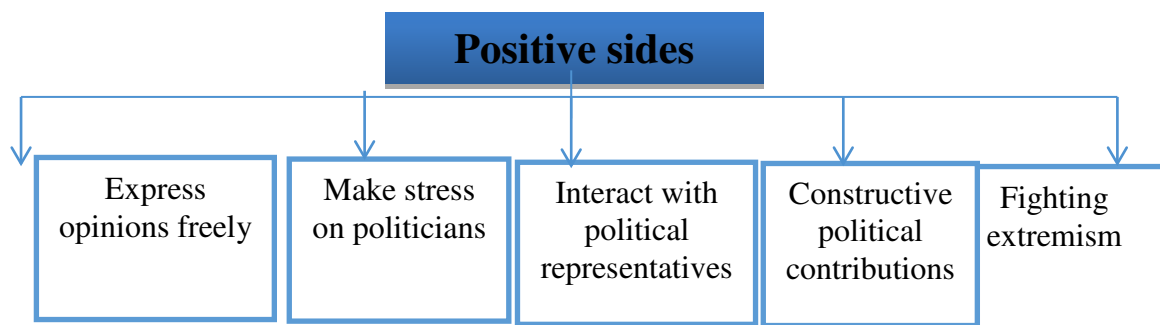
**Table (6) Themes for academic year level respondents**

Themes	1 <sup>st</sup> year	2 <sup>nd</sup> year	3 <sup>ed</sup> year	4 <sup>th</sup>	Total	
	N	N	N	N	N	%
Powerful feelings	5	4	6	9	24	12.00
No political	9	8	7	5	29	14.50
Self-Satisfaction	6	6	7	4	23	11.50
Self-esteem	4	5	6	6	21	10.50
Political	18	16	18	19	71	35.50
Living illusionary	8	9	8	7	32	16.00
Total	50	48	52	50	200	100.0

Data in table (6) shows that the highest theme approval for academic year level respondents is the (Political participation) theme with the frequency of (71) and with the percentage of (35.50%).

### 1.8.3 Positive sides

As it is mentioned in figure (3) the main themes comprised from positive sides of the use of social media on the political development according to student answers, which refers to (Express opinions freely, Make stress on politicians, Interact with political representatives, Constructive political contributions and Fighting extremism).



**Figure (3): Main themes of positives according to student answers**

And table (7) illustrates the themes for the positive sides of the use of social media on the political development according to student answers.

**Table (7) Themes for positive sides respondents**

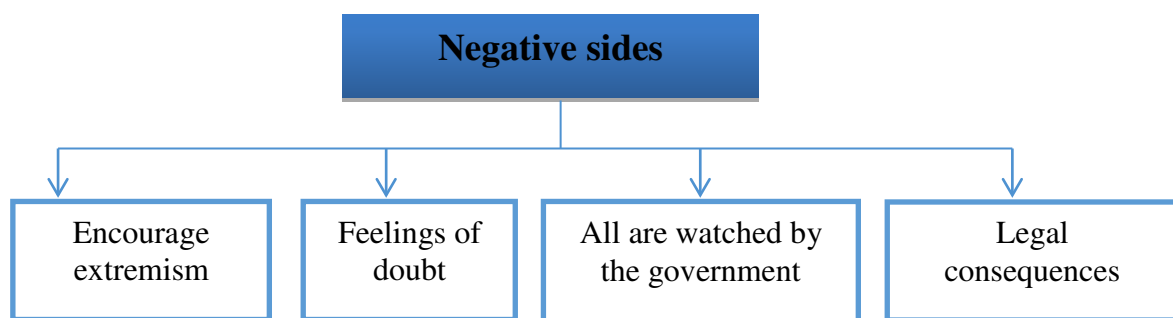
Themes	Total	
	N	%
Express opinions freely	33	16.50
Make stress on politicians	24	12.00
Interact with political representatives	69	34.50
Constructive political contributions	51	25.50
Fighting extremism	23	11.50
Total	200	100.0



Data in table (7) shows that the highest theme approval for the positive sides of the use of social media on the political development according to student answers is the (Interact with political representatives) theme with the frequency of (69) and with the percentage of (34.50%), and in the second level came the theme (Constructive political contributions) with the frequency of (51) and with the percentage of (25.50%). And these two themes go with the results of the description of the use of social media on the political development according to student answers which is (Political participation).

#### 1.8.4 Negative sides

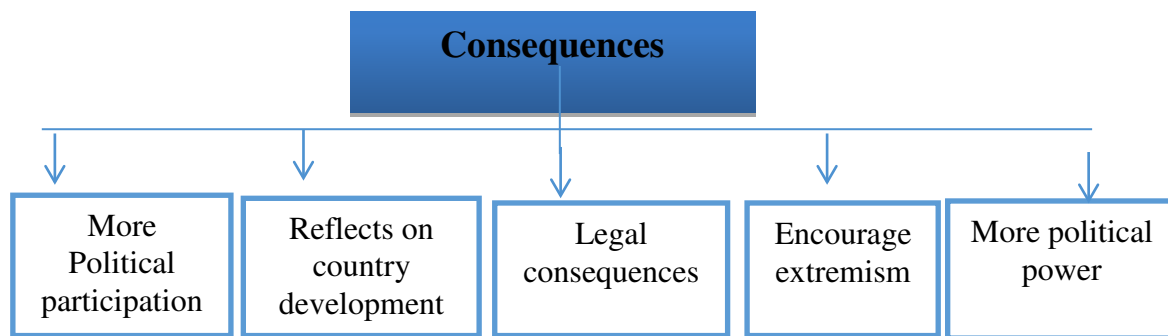
As it is mentioned in figure (4) the main themes comprised from negative sides of the use of social media on the political development according to student answers, which refers to (Encourage extremism, Feelings of doubt, All are watched by the government and Legal consequences).



**Figure (4) Main themes of negatives according to student answers**

#### 1.8.5 Consequences

As shown in Figure (5) the main themes of the consequences affecting the use of social media on the political development according to student answers, which refer to (More Political participation, Reflects on country development, Legal consequences, Encourage extremism, and more political power). After discussing the answers; the researcher has realized that the respondents focus on one theme, according to the students' answers which refer to (More Political participation).



**Figure (5) Main themes of consequences according to student answers**

## 1.9 Conclusion

For understanding the effects of the use of social media on the political development according to student answers in The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, the answered questions had covered Strauss and Corbin's five main aims in the use of social media on the political development. Indications of the problem statement, and subsequently the research aims, which establish the central direction for the study are provided research questions, which the interview questions are based on. The analysis of interview went through four main phases, in order to get the study model.

The model illustrated in Figure (1) is generated entirely by utilizing NVivo 11 as a result of nodes or themes established being linked together. These relationships of concepts are rigorously established based on validation process in phase four and selective data analysis. This model includes antecedents of the use of social media on the political development description, positive and negative sides and the consequences affecting the use of social media on the political development according to student answers.

Drawing attention to the effectiveness of grounded theory as a thorough qualitative research methodology, which constructs ideas grounded in investigational data, while looking for comprehension how these associate to existing theoretical concepts. Indicated in the research findings; students' personal expressions have been employed to authenticate the presentation of theoretical categories, and then investigating the research flexibility by promoting informants to put into words regarding their personal insights of the use of social media on the political development; which will form valuable and unique outcomes. Therefore, the researcher concluded that, it became a credible hypothesis to be validated noting that the grounded theory put forward the approach that did not commence with a hypothesis to be confirmed or refuted. However, it is an area to be extravagantly investigated by ongoing in-depth

interviews until assimilation of the issue had been completed, the procedure sustained. However, it was the phrase of “Political participation” as a probable key category that led to the validation of the perceived hypothesis.

Therefore, and in the emerging categories, the key category that surfaced was that informants engaged in the use of social media activities desired to get “Political participation” over their lives. Progressively, the informants accomplished their exploitation of online communication have established this concept of “Political participation”. This key category has thus generated behaviors that caused positive and negative impacts toward the students, which could be regarded as the phenomena in the current research.

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