THE DILEMMA OF INFORMATION MANAGEMENT AND DECISION SCIENCE IN THE VIRTUAL WORLD: A STUDY OF THE DISCLOSURE OF THE SOCIAL NETWORKING SITES PSYCHOLOGICAL & MANIPULATIVE TECHNIQUES & AND THE INTELLECTUAL SECURITY OF ARAB MIND

Sayed M. Ismail, Prince Sattam Bin Abdulaziz University

ABSTRACT

Intellectual security has become a permanent source of headache for the Arab countries because it has recently become vulnerable to many external influences resulting from the incessant effect of the social networking sites and their potential threats on the minds of the young Arab. The present study aims to delineate the threats posed by the social networking sites on the intellectual security of Arab young people. To achieve this end, the study applies the qualitative methodology through which it can analyze critically the potential threats posed by the social networking sites on the intellectual of security. The study has found that the social networking sites employ logical fallacies for brainwashing the minds of Muslims young people and changing their ideas and manipulating their thoughts and isolating them from their cultural and religious values. Young Arab students should have learnt from their tender ways of critical and creative thinking.

Keywords: Critical Thinking Intellectual Security, Logical Fallacies, Social Networking Sites

INTRODUCTION

The issue of the impact of the social networking sites on people's lives is highly debatable as studies are divided between whether the social networking sites have affected peoples' lives negatively or positively (Hampton et al., 2011). The use of social networking sites introduces an important background for the social, emotional, and cognitive development of youth, accounting for a large portion of their time (Roberts, 2005). Youth spent nearly 6.5 hours per day with media (Roberts et al., 2005). In Saudi Arabia context, the studies addressing the social networking sites focused mainly on the aspects of Facebook usage by Saudi university students, their impact on Saudi university students' contact with the members of their families, the use of Saudi female, the impact of Facebook on EFL learners, the role of Facebook in E-learning, and so on (see for example, Aljasir et al., 2013; Aljasir, 2015; Alsanie, 2015; Al-Saggaf, 2011). However, there is a clear gap in the studies done in Saudi Arabia dealing with how social networking sites could manipulate and affect the intellectual security of Muslims' mind. Even the studies investigating the relationship between intellectual security and the social networking sites are meant to measure the perceptions and perspectives of the students across the Arab world, which are known for the lack of deep analysis to the case under examination and in most cases, the results are adjusted to be congruent with the expectations of the researchers.

The networking sites are based on the concept of making online or virtual friendships that transcend geographical, cultural, language, racial, religious, and social boundaries. Each member has the freedom to post his ideas, thoughts, ideologies and beliefs without any internal or external censorship. These posts are often visible to public or to all members of the same group, making all posts go viral within few seconds. Therefore, social networking sites are considered to be a double edged weapon in the sense that people who are intellectually insecure

can be an easy prey to religious fundamentalism, atheism and many harmful ideas that shake the stability and the security of societies. The vulnerable young people can also be a target to excessive waves of deviating thoughts that may undermine their ethical, cultural and religious values and strip them off identity, and faith and alienate them, all of which are regarded to be salient and serious threats to their value system, psychological balance.

The Problem of the Study

The intellectual security of the young people has become a necessity for maintaining the political, social, cultural stabilities of societies. The rapid and strong intervention of the social networking sites into Saudi Arabia has been aimed at undermining and shaking Saudi youths' trust and faith into their religion, Sunnah, the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), religious scholars (u'lmah). In addition, these social networking sites spread doubts and rumors about revelation and the Holy Qur'an. They also aim to marginalize traditional and cultural values of the youth and distort their concept of identity. The posts and information being shared on the social networking sites call for ideas like hybridity, humanism, unity of religions and so on are paradoxical. At the superficial level, these values seem to be idealistic that foster reconciliation and harmony among people belonging to different cultures. At the deeper level, they propagate Western supremacy and lure youth to adopt the Western values indirectly via convincing them to set their religious, cultural and social beliefs aside and instead adopt a model of universal culture. However, this model of universal culture bears the Western values within its confines. And the role of the social networking sites is to introduce these values to youth in wolf in sheep's clothing through different techniques, the most important of which is normalization. The major role of the Social networking sites is to familiarize young people with irregular, strange and incongruent values with their own common value system.

Therefore, the current study aims to address a highly problematic issue, which is represented in the following issues: how can the Saudi young people secure themselves, religion, beliefs and even psychological safety from the threats posed by the social networking sites without self-centrism? How can they develop self-defence mechanism against all harmful ideas and thoughts? How can they distinguish logical ideas from fallacious ones? And finally how can they protect themselves from all dangerous values?

The Questions of the Study

1. To what extent do social networking sites affect the intellectual security of the young people?
2. What are the elements of intellectual security for Saudi university students?

The Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the study are represented in the following items:

1. Identifying the effects of the social networking sites on intellectual security of Saudi young people.
2. Identifying the elements posing potential threats to the intellectual security of the Saudi university students.

The Significance of the Study

Young people all over the world have become largely influenced by the social networking sites and they spent many hours in the virtual world which has exceeded the number of hours they spent in the real-life. Indeed, taking into account the statistics of Saudis' users of Internet, the number of holders of accounts in Facebook, Twitter and YouTube, one can realize the great impact of the social networking sites on Saudis. According to BBC report, Saudi Arabia has the largest social media market in the Middle East. In Saudi Arabia, statistics have shown that the number of social media users has recently reached 27.millon out of 35.08 populations in January

2021, which is equivalent to 79.3% of the total population in January 2021. Saudis spend an average of 2 hours and 50 minutes on social media daily. The country ranks 7th globally in terms of individual accounts on social (The Global Statistics Report, 2021; CITC, 2021; The Social Clinic, 2021). Social networking sites are designed to be interactive where people belonging to different cultures and places sharing posts, personal photos, views, ideas, and so on which appear to their friends (Jain et al., 2012, 37). In the Arab world, the social networking sites have largely contributed to the outbreak of the Arab Spring Revolution in a number of Arab countries, resulting in a large state of chaos and destruction in region, the evacuation of some countries from its people, the economic regression and social instability of other countries. The radical movements and terrorist group also made use of these social networking sites for spreading its harsh religious discourse and engineering the minds of the young people to accept such a kind of discourse, taking the advantage of young peoples' religious enthusiasm to recruit them in these radical groups like ISIS and so on. In addition, the social networking sites are used as a platform for circulating atheism, agnosticism, material culture affecting the young people the intellectual security of which is vulnerable. Therefore, the studies addressing the issue of intellectual security in Saudi Arabia is so significant since it raise the awareness of the young people of the dangers, ills, the manipulative techniques used by the social networking sites.

The Limitations of the Study

The study is limited to address the intellectual and cognitive techniques employed by the social networking sites in threatening the social security of the University students.

Intellectual Security

Intellectual security is a highly controversial concept which has been recently introduced to social sciences. "Intellectual security is the contradictory to the intellectual deviation and started when Satan deviated and rejected obeying Allah" (Al-Dajah, 2019). Intellectual security is composed of two Arabic words, intellectual and security. Security is an equivalent of safety, tranquillity, peace of mind and it also refers to the security of the lives and the properties of people. Intellectual is derived from intellect. Intellect refers to the process of reasoning and thinking in order to understand what is obscure or unknown to us (Faris, 2012). Therefore, intellectual security is defined as "all concepts and values that maintain the validity of thought and protect it from deviations which turn it away from the true path and drive it away from its real function as a means of enriching life with a good code of conduct and useful effects and preserving necessities to be a source of destruction and spoiling threatening all the necessities of society and its interests (Al-qararaha, 2005). Al-otaibi defined it as the sound reasoning which is void of error and logical fallacies that driving man away from moderation in perceiving and thinking of both religious and worldly affairs. Intellectual security is also perceived of the security of the creed because it protects society and creeds from any aggression or harm. Therefore, the intellectual security is defined as the protection of the cultural and intellectual values of members of society from any deviating, external, imported thought incongruent with the fundamentals and principles of the society (Abu-khatwah & Al-baz, 2014). I argue that the intellectual security is best defined as moderation and one's own ability to control thoughts and ideas and external influences intervening into one's own mind. The intellectual security is a metaphor to the battlefield of mind in which negative, harsh, and damaging ideas and thoughts are in a state of permanent conflict with the positive, moderate and constructive thoughts.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The studies addressing the impact of social networking sites on the Arab mind are scarce and they do not address the manipulative techniques and the methods through which the social networking sites manipulate and brainstorm the minds of the young people in the Arab world in

order to undermine their intellectual security. Al-Khataibeh (2019) argued for the role of social media in threatening the intellectual security from the perception of Jordanian university undergraduates. The study has concluded that the social media platforms play a major in spreading extremist discourse and ideas. Religious, social and political extremism discourses are among the major causes that threaten the intellectual security. This study is such a qualitative which is mainly concerned with measuring the perception of the samples of Jordanian students about the role of social media in threatening the intellectual security. However, the study was in short of delineating the methods and techniques employed by the users of social media platforms for convincing the Jordanian youth to adopt the extremist discourse and accordingly threaten their intellectual security.

Conversely, Al-Zboun, et al., (2021) addressed the role of social networking sites in enhancing the intellectual security among university students in Jordan. The study also measures the perception of the University student toward the role of social networking sites in raising the awareness of the intellectual security. What is strikingly noticed in such types of studies measuring the perception is that they are subjective because questions written in questionnaires are designed to elicit specific answers from the respondents which may correspond to the expectations of the researchers. In the same vein, Ismail, et al., (2020) examined the effect of informal education, which includes social networking sites, on the cultural security of the Saudi university students as the study measured the perception of a selected sample of Saudi students about how informal education channels like Facebook, Twitter, and so on shape the students' mind-sets of their cultural, religious and traditional values. The study also fall in the category of qualitative studies measuring the perceptions whose results may be subjective due to addressing the students' specific questions in order to make them give answers follows the expectations of the researchers.

Al-Khaza'leh (2019) stated that the social media can reinforce the intellectual security if students are fully informed of the methods of meaningful dialogue through the use of social media. This study has started from a utopian hypothesis entailing that the intellectual security can be scaffold through a meaningful dialogue. The study does not identify what are the characteristics of this dialogue?   With whom the students should have such a kind of dialogue? What is the basis for such a dialogue? Is it based on stressing differences or highlighting what is in common? How can prepare students to start such dialog objectively? Gad & Ahmad (2019) examined the relationship between the use of social networking sites and the intellectual security among students of social work in Egypt through assessing the perception of the students in order to identify the factors supporting online intellectual security. The study focused on the intellectual extremism as opposite to the intellectual security. Zein El-Abdein & Mohammed (2019) assessed the impact of the social networking sites upon the intellectual security from the perspective of the Saudi Students in Umm Al Qura University. Al-Smadi (2016) examined the mutual relationship between social networking sits and intellectual deviation and this study was applied to the students from Qassim University in Saudi Arabia. This study has limited the negative impact of the social networking sites to the extremist ideas resulting from the intellectual deviation.

METHODOLOGY

To achieve the objectives of the study, the study used a descriptive methodology that interprets and analyzes data objectively by collecting the details and information relating to the problem of the study. The study has studied the psychological and cognitive techniques employed by some users of social networking sites in order to shake and destabilize the intellectual security of the young people in Saudi Arabia.

DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS

To perceive how the social networking sites affect the students, we have to learn about

the salient features of these social networking sites, the real objectives and intentions of these virtual channels which provides users membership for free and how these sites managed to undermine the intellectual security of the young people across several Arab countries the results of which have been clearly seen in the Arab spring. The study presupposes that the intellectual security of the young people can be easily threatened by logical fallacies, which are concealed in the great deal of information being post and gone viral across the social networking sites. Logical fallacy is defined as an erroneous thinking. They are a set of "devices that camouflage and subvert reason" (Gula, 2002). Gula (2002) writes: "The first device is known as emotional language, which is consisted of several items. For example, Appeal to pity: Instead of giving carefully documented reasons, evidence, and facts, a person appeals to our sense of pity, compassion, brotherly love" (26). For example, terrorist groups post pictures of burring people, destroyed cities or destroyed mosques and reframing it with caption stating these people were burnt alive just because they are Muslims. Definitely speaking, these reframed pictures will inevitably move the hearts of young people who are untrained or lack experience to discover that these pictures are not true and they were taken for the destructions resulting from natural disasters like earthquakes, floods and so on and they were manipulated and reframed to play the emotions of the young people and subsequently, they can be easily recruited in these terrorist groups.

The second device used is the appeal to fear as manipulator tries to frighten us into a specific action or into accepting a specific belief. "If you do not does X, then Y will happen?" Of course, y is something dreadful. "If you don't get the enemy first, he'll get you." The Western media tries to make its people abhor and scared of Islam; so for example, they introduce Islam as ISIS or Taliban movement or providing them pictures of veiled woman. They also represent Muslim as a primitive and back warded people who are still leading their lives in the desert. At the same time, they also represent the Western as the torch of civilizations with its well-planned cities, well-dressed ladies and prosperous life. In paralleling the two pictures, one will automatically choose the second alternative because of his fear of the first picture. This strategy has manipulated the minds of the receptors and limited their choices to only two choices and forces them to choose rather than to think and to compare.

The third device is known as Appeal to the bandwagon. It appeals to our need to belong. That is to say, young people have the desire to discover the different and new world and sometimes, they appeal to belong to this world. Therefore, the manipulators exploit the desires of young people of belonging, asking them to be members of certain groups in order to disseminate their values and ideologies easily and brainwashing them. The manipulators also the appeal to love and the appeal to trust through which they make youth adopt values like humanism, hybridity, and universalism and so on. Though these values seem to be Universalist, they are completely westernized. In this way, students are indirectly adopted Western values and start getting rid of their values, tradition and religion gradually.

The fourth device is known as the appeal to crowd and this device is addressed to the mob and is often based on generalities, clichés, slogans, platitudes, sanctimonious claptrap, and Glorification of the masses abound. Let me quote here Harold Ickes, secretary of the interior, in 1941:

"What constitutes an American? Not color nor race nor religion. Not the pedigree of his family nor the place of his birth. Not the coincidence of his citizenship. Neither his social status nor his bank account. Neither his trade nor his profession, An American is one who loves justice and believes in the dignity of man. An American is one who fights for his freedom and that of his neighbor. An American is one who will sacrifice prosperity, ease and security in order that he and his children may retain the rights of free men."

This speech is utterly rhetorical that makes use of people emotions in order to persuade them of specific idea or value. Generalization is a remarkable feature of the speech where the speaker addresses the entire American nation using singular pronoun. He also used bombastic, idealistic, flattering, and emotional language that make audience accept the message and act accordingly without thinking critically of its soundness and validity, and without trying to

compare between the message of the speaker and the real-life situations. The attempts of Westernization or radicalization are using such a generalized discourse covered by layers of rhetorical and emotional terms and expressions, the function of which is to make the audience accept the content without thinking of its soundness and applicability to the ground of reality. For example, when American forces wanted to occupy Iraq and Afghanistan after September 11 Attacks

In the Middle East, it uses such emotional discourse as President WW Bush by claims that it is in a civilizing mission and it came to spread democracy and freedom and topple the tyrannical regimes. Let us quote Bush's speech at length:

"Therefore, the United States has adopted a new policy, a forward strategy of freedom in the Middle East. This strategy requires the same persistence and energy and idealism we have shown before. And it will yield the same results. As in Europe, as in Asia, as in every region of the world, the advance of freedom leads to peace (Applause). The advance of freedom is the calling of our time; it is the calling of our country. From the Fourteen Points to the Four Freedoms, to the Speech at Westminster, America has put our power at the service of principle. We believe that liberty is the design of nature; we believe that liberty is the direction of history. We believe that human fulfillment and excellence come in the responsible exercise of liberty. And we believe that freedom -- the freedom we prize -- is not for us alone, it is the right and the capacity of all mankind (Applause)."

WW Bush's speech is a highly propagandistic and it almost follows the norms and discursive style of the predecessors' American presidents' speech which is based on generalization and emotional language and employs the singular form to address the plural form. This discourse is highly rhetorical which is charged with ultraistic values and humanistic principles as it calls for universal values like freedom. It regards America as the savior who is entitled to save the whole world from tyranny, oppression and corruption. What is circulated in the media across the world is that the American war in Iraq aimed to free Iraqi people from tyranny, oppression, poverty and degradation. However, what happened following the American invasion of Iraq is the destruction of Iraq, the division of its lands, the plundering of its resources including its heritage, the emergence of terrorist groups like ISIS. When it comes to reality, there is neither freedom nor democracy but there is a colonization that aims to capture the natural resources and historical tradition of these nations. It is a kind of propaganda.

Propaganda is another logical fallacy used by the manipulators for manipulating and deceiving people. "In its broadest sense propaganda is merely a form of persuasion, a form that appeals to our emotions rather than reason. It relies upon suggestibility" (Gula, 2012). Propaganda tries to make us think and act in a certain way. It strives hard to control our attitude and change our beliefs to be consistent with it. The propagandist does show his real intentions to his victim's works from behind the scene. He manipulates his victims through an appeal to emotions by telling people what they want to hear in order to gain confidence and then starts influencing their attitude. He does not give reason for what he is calling for as his reasons are often selective and one sided and they are oversimplified and naïve. An example is how the propaganda on social networking sites and news TV channels manipulates and distorts the image of Islam by misrepresenting it as the religion of terrorism, and this message is addressed to both non-Muslims and Muslims on an equal footing. This propaganda just makes use of individual terrorist attacks that infrequently occur at long intervals to persuade people that Islam, whose adherents are more than one billion people, is the religion of terrorism and subsequently all Muslims are terrorist. Unfortunately, young people can be easy prey to such a misleading propaganda.

The propagandist uses the logical fallacy of bandwagon—"that everyone is doing it." That is to say, if one Muslim commits a terrorist attack, all Muslims are to be classified as terrorists. In order to circulate his ideas among a large section of people and ensure that people are convinced by it, the propagandist uses the technique of repetition. To illustrate, on Facebook, one can find that a terrorist attack went viral. The same terrorist attack is also repeated in Twitter, in YouTube and in news TV channels simply because the repetition of a piece of news turns it into a fact. In addition, repetition is coupled with a tone of confidence that gives impression that what is circulated is true and based on empirical evidence. However, this

confidence is not supported by any evidence. It is supported by oversimplification, which is rested upon focusing only on one side of a situation, as if it were the only side of the story. Oversimplification is meant to take "a complex issue and reduces it to extremes, often presenting that issue as an either…. Or" (Gula, 2012).

To illustrate, the manipulator assigns abusive epithets or uses names that have strong pejorative emotional associations to people, ideas, or ideologies he wants to deconstruct, distort or debunk. The propagandist uses the acronym داعش when referring to the الدولة تنظيم الاسلامية because Daish in Arabic implies a sharp negative prosodic pejorative and its sound system is often linked with words of a degratory meaning. Indeed, ISIS as a movement is the invention of the West, the ideology of which has nothing to do with the teachings of moderate Islam, as it derives its teaching from harsh and misleading interpretations of the religious text. However, when it is attributed to Islam by Western media with its negative associations, the audience will receive Islam as an equivalent to Daish. What is striking is that such a misrepresentative and degratory message is not intended to address Western audience because of his lack of the conceptual prosodic degratory meaning of the word, Daish in Arabic. Rather, this degratory message is mainly addressed to the Arab and Muslim audience in order to misrepresent the image of Islam in their minds where Islam is to be perceived as of the religion of terror.

Indeed, the propagandist resorts to oversimplifying the case and reduce its representation to his own worldview, focusing on the technique of repetition where news on Daish are always went viral online and frequently aired by TV news channels, giving an impression to the audience that Islam is Daish and Daish is Islam, bearing within its confines a sweeping generalization. Such a kind of false prejudiced propaganda is mainly addressed to people who are easily blinded by their emotions and do not apply critical thinking to complicated issues they encounter in their lives.

Stereotyping is also used extensively in social networking sites for shaking the intellectual security of young Muslims. "The propagandist takes one characteristic of a person, exaggerates it, and then regards it as the only characteristic" (Gula, 2012). This technique is frequently used by Hollywood against Muslim character which is always represented as primitive character growing thick bread, wearing medieval dress, acting like a blood thirty creature and a blood sucker who always uses gun for killing people, which is a reductive that reduces the heterogonous Muslim identity into a fixed and static traditional model of a terrorist. The mass media and social networking sites are used to circulate the image of the terrorist and vulgar Muslim at a large scale in order to cultivate into the minds of younger generations, Muslims and non-Muslims, this vulgar image of Muslims and Islam. The language used in the social networking sites addressing Islamic issue is based on glittering generality, employing broad, sweeping statements, usually ones with complex and far-reaching ramifications, but he ignores the complexities and the ramifications. For example, the propagandist can speak up general statements like "Islam is the religion of terror," Muslims are inherently terrorists or blood suckers" and so on.

CONCLUSION

Muslim young people should be trained on the skills of critical thinking and creative thinking and should be given courses in logical fallacies, argumentation, thinking styles and creative thinking which enables them to think objectively of information, news, data, news articles, TV news which they always encounter in their daily-life situations and in the virtual world. Religious teaching, praying the five times in the Mosques, reciting Qur'an, having good Muslim companions, maintaining the families ties and family connections, learning Islam with moderation are all means for protecting the intellectual security. Young Muslims should be informed of how to recognize on the logical fallacies techniques used in the social networking sites and how to avoid falling into their trap.

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