

# The Impact of the Culture on the Ethical Standards of Using “Facebook” in Developing Country: Case Study - Yemen

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**Abstract:** *New social media has become increasingly popular components of our everyday lives in today's globalizing society. Facebook as a service where users create personal profiles, add other users as friends and exchange messages, including automatic notifications when they update their own profile. To balance the needs and interests of a global population, Facebook protects expression that meets the community standards outlined on its page. This research aims to investigate the Yemeni users' behaviors when using social networking such as Facebook according to the ethical standards. The results showed good behaviors in general, in the other hand there are some bad behaviors especially towards the professors/colleagues. From my point of view, Facebook gives users the chance to post their feelings, opinions freely and without care about the ethical standard which they follow in their real life. This might be indictor to lose the ethical standards by the time in our real life towards the others rights. This research recommends putting more rules and clear announcements and listing more laws to protect the communications and create clean environment.*

**Keywords:** Ethical standards, Yemeni society, Facebook

## 1. Introduction

New social media has become increasingly popular components of our everyday lives in today's globalizing society. They provide a context where people across the world can communicate, exchange messages, share knowledge, and interact with each other regardless of the distance that separates them [3]. Intercultural adaptation involves the process of promoting understanding through interaction to increase the level of fitness so that the demands of a new cultural environment can be met. Research shows that people tend to use new social media to become more integrated into the host culture during their adaptation and to maintain connections to their home countries [7]. Their mission according to their site “Our mission is to give people the power to share and make the world more open and connected”. Every day people come to Facebook to share their stories, see the world through the eyes of others and connect with friends and causes [3].

According to Chen *et. al.* [2] “The compression of time and space, due to the convergence of new media and globalization, has shrunk the world into a much smaller interactive field.” People across the globe can interact with each other within seconds of sending and receiving messages. New social media has brought people from different cultures together in the “global village.”

During intercultural adaptation, people use social media to learn about their host countries, establish and maintain relationships, and stay informed with events in their home countries. Communication and interaction are key factors that influence how social media impacts intercultural adaptation [2]. While cultures around the world value their individual traditions, beliefs, and norms that make them unique, social media links people around the world regardless of differences and geographical boundaries [7].

## 2. Research Theoretical

### Social Network

New social media is an important part of our lives because it promotes the interconnectedness and interdependence of our culturally diverse world. Media for social interaction allows for people to communicate and engage with information that is quickly accessible on the Internet [7]. Social media is the world phenomenon which is used by more than milliard people and serves as an interface for interactions with people, business and communication where people create, share, and exchange information and ideas [6].

Social network sites as web-based services that allow individuals to construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system, articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection, and view their list of connections and those made by others within the system [1]. Example of these sites is Facebook, it was created in 2004, and now, according to the most recent statistics listed on Facebook itself, there are more than 500 million active users, 50% of whom log in daily (Facebook statistics, 2010) [4].

Broughton *et. al.* [1] define Facebook as a service where users create personal profiles, add other users as friends and exchange messages, including automatic notifications when they update their own profile. Additionally, users may join common-interest user groups, organized by common characteristics. It gives people around the world the power to publish their own stories, see the world through the eyes of many other people, and connect and share wherever they go. The conversation that happens on Facebook – and the opinions expressed here – mirror the diversity of the people using Facebook [8]. To balance the needs and interests of a global population, Facebook

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protects expression that meets the community standards outlined on its page.

### Ethics Standards

Ethics standards and social responsibility are essential for the successful performance of new media [6]. Social media has implications for society, culture, politics that can influence the general opinion and people's behavior. Clearly, there is an immediate need for the application of those ethical guidelines present in the physical world to be imposed upon the realms of online social networking. Currently, there is very little recognition of the fact that use of the Internet for communication presents many of the same risks one might find if their actions were present outside of the virtual world. The current misuse of the Internet for photo and video postings of socially unacceptable behaviors, uncensored speech, and misleading self-representation exemplify the concern for a revision of behavior in regards to online social networking [10].

### 3. Literature Review

Jurisova [6] studied the impact of social networking on business and business ethics. He discussed various issues of social media and their impact on business and ethical behaviour.

He listed some guidelines for social media code of ethics, Jurisova suggested that there are some risks that must be considered when using and publishing on social media [6].

Jurisova found out that social networks are playing an important role in modern advertising and its influence on business is on the rise.

The comparison of consumer opinions and behaviour showed that they are willing to trust the information on social media but they still trust more official news or recommendations from friends and family than advertising from paid services [6].

Social media come up with many good features and challenges but they can also cause damage and distrust which can lead to the loss of credibility. Businesses can experience positive effects of the social networks interaction with their current or prospective customers. However, they have to pay attention to possible threats and use the social network services wisely and correctly [6].

Hartig [4] studied social networking websites and counselors-in-training of ethical and professional issues. The counselor training field is one which shares these concerns over professionalism and others which are even more problematic due to the nature of the counseling relationship, which is already fraught with boundary issues. The issue of privacy is one that has garnered much attention during the past few years. The issues of privacy therefore lie both with potential technological issues as well as with the ability of users to enact settings and manage their profile/information accordingly [4].

Hohmann *et al.* [6] set 10 best practices for social media for the journalist as following:

1. Traditional ethics rules still apply online.
2. Assume everything you write online will become public.
3. Use social media to engage with readers, but professionally.
4. Break news on your website, not on Twitter.
5. Beware of perceptions.
6. Independently authenticate anything found on a social networking site.
7. Always identify yourself as a journalist.
8. Social networks are tools not toys.
9. Be transparent and admit when you're wrong online.
10. Keep internal deliberations confidential.

And for social media Guidelines [5] as following:

1. Every social network has its own set of terms and conditions that govern the data that appears on the site. In many cases, social networks reserve the right to display portions of a user's personal information or updates without additional consent.
2. Some social networks offer privacy settings to help protect the spread of information outside of a user's friends and followers on a social network. These protections, while useful, are fallible. Assume anything posted on the Web is publicly available.
3. Deleting a post does not ensure its removal from the Web. Assume anything posted will be available in perpetuity.

According to Vallor [9] ethical topic areas centre around privacy questions, ethics of identity, the issue of "friendship" in social networking services, democracy in the public sphere and cybercrime [9]. Facebook, which started as a project for university community, connects the whole world now. There are continuous debates how to define privacy and what kind of information should be protected. Vallor summarizes some critical issues[9]:(1) the potential availability of users' data to third parties for commercial, surveillance or data mining purposes, (2) the capacity of facial-recognition software to automatically identify persons in uploaded photos, (3) the ability of third-party applications to collect and publish user data without their permission or awareness, (4) the frequent use by SNS(Social Networking Services) of automatic „opt-in“ privacy controls; the use of „cookies“ to track online user activities after they have left a SNS, (5) the potential use of location-based social networking for stalking or other illicit monitoring of users' physical movements; the sharing of user information or patterns of activity with government entities, (6). the potential of SNS to encourage users to adopt voluntary but imprudent, ill-informed or unethical information sharing practices, either with respect to sharing their own personal data or sharing data related to other persons and entities.“

### 4. Research Aims

The research aims to find out the impact of culture on using social media platforms such as Facebook by the

Yemeni Society. This research also aims to draw attention to situations where people start behaving negatively in this virtual environment.

## 5. Research Methodology

The research methodology is based on questionnaires. From the literature review and from the official Facebook website[8],[3] we can come up with the following factors to measure the ethical standards and issues relating to it when using Facebook;

1. Transparent
2. Honesty and integrity
3. Courtesy. We set number of statements (see appendix) under each factor to gather the required information (see section Results and Discussion). The questionnaires will be distributed among a random sample of Yemeni users via Facebook. The sample will contain users with different characteristic of age, gender and occupation. To achieve this sample we will distribute the questionnaire to friends of different Facebook users (school student, university student, employee, professor). The questionnaire has been designed using Google Form.

## 6. The Importance of the Research

From the researcher knowledge this research is the first one that is working on the ethical standards of Facebook in Yemen, and this contributes greatly to the knowledge in Yemen and adds new value. Traditional ethical rules should be applied in the virtual environment as well. Some of the misuses and negative behavior are done without the individual's knowledge of how it affects the ethical standards, so this research will draw attention to the ethical standards when using Facebook.

## 7. Results and Discussion

The survey results show the sample tested were 69% male and 31% female, most of them (44%) are between 21-29 years old and most of them are also students (48%), whereas employees were (44%). This can be considered as excellent sample because the participants have a variety of characteristics.

Most of the respondents have only one account (72%). One the other hand, 19% of the respondents indicated that they have created a fake account with a fake name. The most popular reason for having a fake account was the ability to post anything they pleased without anyone knowing their true identity.

For the statement "I have account/s impersonating known public figures" most of the respondents indicated that they do not have such accounts (93%). However, a small percentage of (7%) indicated that they have an account impersonating a known public figure. It was claimed that the reason behind creating such accounts was to be able to easily voice their opinions. Regarding the statement, "My personal information is incorrect and/or inaccurate", most

of respondents ensured that their personal information is correct and/or accurate (91%). Merely (9%) indicated that their personal information is incorrect due to some reservations they have regarding their personal information. Updating personal information did not seem to be of great importance to the majority of the respondents. As we can see from the responses of the statement "I do not update my personal information", the respondents do give much care about updating their personal information (49%).

To conclude on the **transparency factor**, it could be understood that most of the respondents commit to Facebook ethical principles. As most of them have only one account with their true names, the only one that can be improved upon, is the concept of the importance of keeping personal information accurate and up-to-date.

As can be seen in the results of the statement "I publish posts that belong to other users without giving them credit", most of the respondents claim they do not do that (62%). Whereas 31% admitted to sometimes publishing without giving credits to original authors. The other statement "I publish posts claiming achievements that are untrue" showed a high percentage of 93% of all respondents indicating that they never do that. Another high percentage of 96% of the respondents also indicated that they never publish posts from other users after distorting them, this is shown in the results of the statement, "I publish posts from other users after distorting it".

In the statement "I publish posts about the political party I belong to, stating achievements which I know are untrue" the majority of respondents said they never do that (94%).

Only 10% of all respondents admitted to publishing pictures after having distorted them. While 87% stated they do not, this is as shown in the results of the statement "I publish pictures after distorting them". For the statement "I share other users' posts without checking the accuracy of the information or its recourses", 52% of the respondents indicated that they never do that, however, 42% indicated that they do it sometimes.

The majority of the respondents (88%) do not share posts which have a negative effect on their country, but still a small percentage of 18% indicated that they do sometimes. Whereas sharing posts which have a negative effect on their school, university or company, a higher percentage of 43% stated they did, this is presented in the results of the statement "I share a post which has a negative effect on my school/university/company".

All in all, for the **Honesty and Integrity Factor** it can be determined that although the majority of the respondents valued honesty and integrity, some of them did engage in promoting negativity towards their school/university/company.

For the statement, "I publish my friends' pictures without their permission", 64% of the respondents indicated that they never do that. However, 30% said that they do

sometimes. On the other hand, 94% of the respondents indicated that they never publish posts about their friends' private information without their permission. Whereas when it came to posting a video of a friend, only 83% indicated that they never do that. This is shown under the statement, "I publish a video of my friends without their permission".

The statement regarding adding friends to new groups without their permission or tagging them in posts in which they have no interest in seems to show positive results, since 61% of the respondents indicated that they never add friends to new groups without permission and 77% of the respondents also indicated that they never tag their friends in posts which they have no interest in.

Most of respondents (71%) indicated that they never publish posts to criticize their colleagues and 76% of the respondents indicated that they never publish posts to criticize their boss or professor. Still, 26% of the respondents indicated that they publish posts to criticize their colleagues and 20% of the respondents indicated that they publish posts to criticize their boss or professor sometime.

Nearly 86% of the respondents indicated that they never manage pages that attack groups with different beliefs than theirs. Contrarily, 10% of the respondents indicated that they sometimes do, and 5% indicated they always do. Sending private messages to annoy or intrude on some of their friends is not acceptable by the respondents since 90% of them indicated that they never do that. For the statement, "I send private messages to threaten other people (not on my friends list)", 94% of the respondents indicated that they never do. Most of respondents do not comment on their friends' posts freely without paying attention to being polite or respectful (89%). For the statement, "If my friend request is rejected, I send a message to ask why?", 82% of the respondents indicated that they never do that. Whereas, 16% indicated they sometimes do.

All statements measuring the harm that could be done to others' accounts as well as the accounts of public figures gave positive results. For the statement, "I send viruses to others via Facebook messages inbox", 96% of the respondents ensured that they never do that. Also, for the statement, "I hack my friends' accounts", 93% of all respondents indicated that they never. For the statement, "I publish posts to attack some public figures", 60% of the respondents indicated that they do not. Whereas 33% indicated they do sometimes.

Finally, for the **Courtesy Factor**, the respondents displayed moral behavior, regardless of some of the small percentages of negative behaviors such as publishing pictures and videos of friends without their permission. The most negative results were the ones about criticizing colleagues, a boss or a professor.

## 8. Conclusion

As a result, it can be concluded that the Yemeni Society are committed to the ethical values when using Facebook. The majority of the respondents were not overstepping on the rights of others on Facebook. This is a positive result especially taking into consideration that the research sample included 44% of young people ages between (21-29) years old. We cannot, however, ignore that the results that showed some negative behavior toward respecting the rights of others.

## 9. Recommendation

Facebook is considered the most popular tool of communication; it is used by a huge number of people all around the world. The ethical standards associated with proper conduct should be well known by all Facebook users. This could be achieved by raising the awareness and warning about misuse.

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### Appendix

I tag my friends in posts which they have no interest in	1%	20%	77%
I publish posts to criticize my colleagues	1%	26%	71%
I publish posts to criticize my boss or professor	2%	20%	76%
I manage pages that attack some groups with different beliefs than mine	2%	10%	86%
I send private messages to annoy or intrude on some of my friends	0%	8%	90%
I send private messages to threaten other people (not on my friends list)	0%	4%	94%
I comment on my friends' posts freely without paying attention to being polite or respectful	1%	8%	89%
I send viruses to others via Facebook messages inbox	1%	1%	96%
I hack my friends' accounts	1%	4%	93%
I hack other users' accounts	0%	5%	93%
If my friend request is rejected, I send a message to ask why?	1%	16%	82%
I publish posts to attack some public figures	5%	33%	60%

**Table 1**

<i>Transparency</i>	<i>Yes</i>	<i>No</i>	
I have more than one account on Facebook	28%	72%	
I have an account with a fake name on Facebook	19%	81%	
I have account/s impersonating known public figures	7%	93%	
My personal information is incorrect and/or inaccurate	9%	91%	
I do not update my personal information	49%	51%	
<b>Honesty and Integrity</b>	<b>always</b>	<b>sometime</b>	<b>Never</b>
I publish posts that belong to other users without giving them credit	1%	4%	93%
I publish posts from other users after distorting it	0%	1%	96%
I publish posts about the political party I belong to, stating achievements which I know are not true	1%	3%	94%
I publish pictures after distorting them	1%	10%	87%
I share other users' posts without checking the accuracy of the information or its recourses	4%	42%	52%
I share posts which has a negative effect on my country	2%	8%	88%
I share posts which has a negative effect on my school/university/company	0%	19%	78%
<b>Courtesy</b>	<b>always</b>	<b>sometime</b>	<b>Never</b>
I publish my friends' pictures without their permission	4%	30%	64%
I publish posts about my friends' private information without their permission	2%	3%	94%
I publish a video of my friends without their permission	1%	14%	83%
I add my friends to new groups without their permission	5%	32%	61%