

Negative Repercussions of Social Media in Light of Developments in Media and Communication

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ABSTRACT

Background: Advancements in media and communications have come with rapid social media growth that has introduced risks to economies, societies, and policies.

Aim: To assess the significance of social media's negative repercussions across the economy, society, and policy, and the most affected groups.

Methodology: The research adopted a quantitative design using an electronic questionnaire sampling experts in the social sciences, media and education across Saudi universities (n=276).

Results: Risk of social media on the three domains is deemed very high, with the risk on policy deemed as the greatest. Under the economic domain, the key risks related to unemployment and productivity losses, while cultural bias, rebellion, and rumors were the most prominent risks related to society. With regards to policy, the greatest risks are related to non-compliance with the law, incitement, and polarization. The poor, women, ideological groups, minorities, and youth, in that order, were the groups perceived as the most influenced.

KEYWORDS

Social Media, Economy, Society, Policy, Media Theories

1. Introduction

Developments in media and communication have resulted in the rapid expansion of social media use. Social media platforms are currently embedded in multiple facets of life, including economic activities, social interaction, and governance (Candrasari, 2020; Roengtam, 2020; Song et al., 2024). The platforms have also attained widespread global reach (Poushter et al., 2018). Increasing global penetration has also resulted in the platforms functioning as primary channels of information dissemination and interaction.

Literature has examined multiple facets of social media. Initial studies examined factors such as how much social media enhances connectivity, its benefits to information access, and its capacity to support civic participation, often focusing on the platforms' benefits and potential (Fish et al., 2019; Poushter et al., 2018; Yue et al., 2019). However, with time, research began focusing on the repercussions of social media and risks. Research directed focus towards matters such as the misinformation the platforms enable, their polarizing effects, and the threats that they pose to institutions (Arifah et al., 2025; Denniss & Lindberg, 2025; Hussain &

Soomro, 2023). Studies also started shedding more light on the mental health implications of these platforms, especially on the young populations (Masri-zada et al., 2025; Nagata et al., 2025). There was thus the emergence of a critical research paradigm that focused more on the negative externalities of social media.

In researching the negative repercussions of social media, studies have gone ahead to explore the ramifications that these platforms have had on the economy, society, and politics. However, the current research usually focuses on these three concepts as separate entities. This presents a limited view of the ramifications of social media platforms. It also necessitates empirical multi-domain synthesis of the risks that social media poses. The current study thus seeks to address this absence in the knowledge base on social media research. It leverages expert-based insights to provide interdisciplinary perspectives on the risks that social media poses to the economy, society, and politics. A clear understanding of how the risks from social media are perceived will benefit policymakers, organizations, and the society as a whole, more so within the Saudi context.

The Dangers of Social Media in Inciting Public Opinion

Social media presents significant risks related to the incitement of public opinion. One of these risks is the amplification of one-sided views by the underlying algorithms (Ahmmad et al., 2025). Social media algorithms promote ideological homogeneity resulting in users having limited exposure to diverse perspectives. Individuals develop a distorted outlook of situations, because of limited exposure to divergent views, which can open doors for the emergence of extreme perspectives. The platforms confine them to echo chambers (Ahmmad et al., 2025). Public opinions are fragmented and isolated within self-reinforcing groups. These spaces strengthen identity and their sense of belonging to make their beliefs more resistant to change.

Another danger related to social media with respect to inciting public opinion relates to the amplification and rapid spread of inciting content. Owing to the viral nature of some inciteful content, social media algorithms inadvertently push the content to broader audiences, enabling its spread even more (Munsoor, 2026). Given that these platforms are available globally, the inciteful content could also manage to garner appeal even beyond their location of origin. This wide reach increases the risk that the content could inspire real-world harm. Social media platforms are also often unable to differentiate between general speech and incitement (Munsoor, 2026; Sweeny, 2019). This makes it difficult to stop some forms of incitement as they are not clearly identified. Moreover, the context of social media posts, with regard to their tone, audience, reaction, and virality also makes the interpretation of whether content is mere speech or incitement complicated. Traditional legal frameworks are thus not fully capable of adapting to digital communication environments to curb inciteful content.

Social media also presents the danger of inciting public opinion through its support for anonymity. Anonymity often makes social media users less accountable as they are personally exposed to limited consequences (Munsoor, 2026; Sweeny, 2019). Exposure to limited consequences at the individual level in turn encourages more radical or

inflammatory expression on social media compared to how much one would be willing to put out such remarks in offline contexts. Anonymity also makes it complicated to enforce incitement laws.

The Dangers of Social Media to Society

Social media has come with great benefits to connectivity but at the same time, it poses some substantial dangers to society. A key danger with social media is the spread of misinformation across critical domains, including but not limited to disaster management, public health, and politics (Muhammed & Mathew, 2022; Scott, 2025). Such misinformation often leads to real world consequences from the public reactions to the misinformation. Another potent danger of social media to society comes through the erosion of democratic systems. Misinformation circulating on social media along with the polarizing effect of the platforms often undermines foundational principles of democracy such as the preservation of human rights and citizen participation (Hunter, 2023). Social media can also be manipulated to attack democratic institutions in order to threaten democracy (Escribà-Folch & Timoneda, 2026; Scott, 2025). Politicians have been indicated to test tactics undermining democratic institutions, leveraging the highlighted flaws of the platforms, to cause misinformation and polarization.

Social media also present societal risks through its promotion of outgroup intolerance. This cultivation of intolerance has been broadly detailed in studies with Ghafar et al. (2024) particularly highlighting the effect on the youth. These intolerant attitudes developed online and seep offline reinforce real world discrimination and social division (Burhanuddin et al., 2020; Ghafar et al., 2024). They create a real danger that, if unaddressed, fosters intense radicalization.

Another societal risk of social media comes are shown in the form of the health implications of these platforms. The design of social media aids problematic use, which is linked to higher rates of mental health issues and loneliness (Shannon et al., 2024). This use is also associated with poor sleep quality which comes with its own set of mental health concerns (Alonzo et al., 2021). Sustained use of social media platforms,

besides risking the wellbeing of individuals also exposes them to the threat of personal data exploitation by the social media companies (Ahmad, 2023; Scott, 2025). On multiple occasions, social media companies have been accused of data harvesting and unwarranted surveillance, hence threatening individual privacy and autonomy. Therefore, generally, social media poses a broad range of societal threats.

The Risks of Social Media to the Economy

Social media also presents notable risks to the economy. Most prominently, social media has been linked to the loss of labor productivity. Studies show that employees tend to spend a substantial amount of paid working hours on non-work-related social media activities (Yemoh & Amitai, 2022). Spending this time, in turn, is linked to reduced output, lower levels of efficiency and wasted labor hours. Empirical evidence indicates that there are often significant drops in productivity associated with time spent online (Wushe & Shenje, 2019). Closely associated with the loss of labor productivity as a result of social media is a decline in work quality and performance. Distractions from social media often result in reduced concentration levels and a diminished quality of the completed tasks. Employees often find themselves missing deadlines and failing to meet the performance expectations set by their organizations (Priyadarshini et al., 2020). The effect of this diminished work quality and employee performance is an overall decline in organizational efficacy. Workplaces experience inefficiencies in operations, which lead to the unnecessary rise in operational costs (Wushe & Shenje, 2019). Organizations incur indirect costs from the delayed task completions. Subsequently, they are forced to expand monitoring and management resources to maintain optimal productivity levels.

The employee health issues associated with the use of social media also incur economic costs. Overuse of social media is linked to issues such as sleep deprivation, eye strain, and back pain (Priyadarshini et al., 2020). Such issues, in turn, come with repercussions such as increased absenteeism.

Subsequently, they cause long term implications on workforce efficiency.

Besides the workplace-related repercussions of social media, the platforms also introduce risks to the economy through triggering market instability. Mignot et al. (2024) highlights how social media enables the emergence and spreading of fake news that distorts the perceptions of asset values to increase volatility and make markets riskier. Investors are forced to rely on speculative and more technical trading strategies since social media leads to fundamental analysis being undermined (Mignot et al., 2024). Such market conditions allow some actors to exploit the misinformation to extract fraudulent profits from the market.

The Risks of Social Media to National Policies

A significant risk of social media to national policies comes in the form of foreign interference in national elections. In recent times, social media has presented a highly viable tool for foreign actors to influence elections in nations, which subsequently affects policymaking at all levels of governance. Greene et al. (2026) presented insights that in 2024, dubbed as the “year of elections,” election interference was observed in approximately 30% of elections, which affected about 60% of the global voting population. Interference was predominantly carried out by manipulating news and information, aiming to undermine democratic procedures and systems (Chechelashvili et al., 2023). The scale and efficiency of election interference are likely to increase with increasing digitization of election systems and social media reach. This will give foreign entities greater influence on policymaking. Social media also poses a risk to national policies through distorting the policymaking process. The platforms, through facilitating disinformation, enable the spread of anti-fact and anti-expert narratives, which subsequently undermines the reliance on scientific and expert evidence in the policymaking process (Hartley, 2025). Essentially, the social media-enabled disinformation created epistemic destabilization, which is characterized by a lack of shared agreements on facts (Hartley, 2025). This destabilization makes it significantly difficult for

governments to design effective policies, or even justify the adoption of specific policies.

Another pertinent risk of social media to national policies comes in the form of encouraging noncompliance with government policies among the public. This was demonstrated during the COVID pandemic, when reliance on social media information reduced compliance with government measures (Dekker et al., 2025). Citizens exposed to conflicting or misleading information through social media were less likely to follow the COVID-19 measures implemented in policies (Dekker et al., 2025). The noncompliance effect was particularly stronger among individuals who already had a low level of trust in their government.

Lastly, social media also risks national policies through distorting public perceptions of the policies and government performance. Misinformation ends up shaping how citizens evaluate policies (Larreguy & Raffler, 2025). This leads to biased and inaccurate policy judgment. It also inadvertently influences electoral outcomes and candidate support.

Theories of Media Incitement

There are numerous theories of media incitement advanced by the available literature. Nonetheless, some of the key theories include the priming theory, the framing theory, and the agenda-setting theory. The priming theory is underscored by the core idea that media exposure activates existing thoughts or associations in the minds of individuals (Hoewe, 2020). It stipulates that the influence of media is passive, unintentional, and unconscious. Under this theory, recent media content consumed ends up shaping how individuals respond to, judge, or behave in later situations (Hoewe, 2020). Even if the original stimulus is forgotten, the priming media can still influence future actions through the carry-over effect.

Secondly, the framing theory is underscored by the idea of frames that shape meaning, through which the media also presents information. Frames as schemata of interpretation (Güran & Özarlan, 2022). Incitement occurs when the media selects and emphasizes certain aspects of reality while

omitting others. With regards to this theory, frames define what an issue is about while simultaneously guiding audiences on how to interpret events (Güran & Özarlan, 2022). Journalists emerge as the builders of a specific social reality. They use routine practices to package news into familiar narratives. They shape the interpretation of reality. In turn, the media is able to steer public perceptions and reactions to potentially incite specific responses and viewpoints.

Lastly, the agenda-setting theory posits that the media not only influence what people think, but also how they think about it. It describes incitement through the lens of the media assigning salience to specific issues, which subsequently directs public attention to a specific matter (Dereszewski, 2023). The media transfers emotional tone to an issue, which in turn shapes the public sentiment. Agenda-setting theory advances that the media determines the level of priority that specific issues are given in public discourse. It then elicits emotional reactions to the said issues, while also influencing how they are interpreted by the public (Dereszewski, 2023). Media can thus incite concern, a sense of urgency, or outrage towards a specific issue by elevating specific topics above others while also assigning to them some level of emotional significance.

Research Questions

The current study is largely concerned with social media and its repercussions on the economy, society, and policies. The primary overarching research question is thus: What are the negative repercussions resulting from social media? This primary research question is further broken down into four secondary research questions. These secondary research questions include;

1. How significant are the risks of social media to the economy?
2. How significant are the risks of social media to the general society?
3. How significant are the risks of social media to national policy?
4. Which groups tend to be most influenced by social media?

Study Aims

The developments in media and communication technologies have led to an increase in the usage of social media. Social media use, in turn, has come with significant risks. This study thus aims to explore how significant the risks of social media are to the economy, the general society, and national policy. It will also compare different groups to evaluate which group is viewed by the study respondents as the one that social media influences most.

Study Concepts

Social Media

Social media constitutes a broad set of ever-evolving communication technologies. These technologies constitute internet-based applications built on the foundations of Web 2.0, which allow user-generated content to be shared with many people, usually globally (Drude, 2021). Social media has both professional and personal use that comes with substantial implications, both positive and negative (Drude, 2021). On the positive side, social media platforms support the rapid exchange of information, learning, and communications, while also enabling product advertisement (Maciuk et al., 2025). Nonetheless, the use of social media is also associated with substantial negative implications (Gangadharan & Jena, 2025; Okari et al., 2025). Frequent use of social media platforms exposes users to cybersecurity threats, data breaches, and misinformation, while irresponsible use of the platforms yields repercussions related to the polarization of society, as individuals get confined in echo chambers, along with mental health concerns such as depression, anxiety, and addiction.

The Economy

The economy is a relatively broad term. The Bank of England (BoE) defines the economy as the system that organizes the distribution of scarce resources (BoE, 2025). Therefore, this refers to how people create, purchase, or sell commodities, as well as how money flows between entities such as individuals, firms, and the government. It also considers how the flow of money affects the value of the resources and

assets within a nation (BoE, 2025). Economies are structured as one of three models: market-based economies, command-based economies, or mixed economies (Kenton, 2026). Market-based economies are driven by the forces of supply and demand, planned economies tend to be state-directed, while mixed economies combine the stability of planned economies with the efficiency of supply and demand forces. Factors such as the gross domestic product (GDP), rate of inflation, unemployment, and inequality are used to determine the economic performance.

Society

The concept of society is one that has received some attention in scholarly literature, albeit not significantly. Moffett (2025) defines society as a bounded group of individuals that goes beyond the simple immediate family and has the capacity to endure over generations. The constituent individuals in a society also need to recognize each other as members of an ingroup and maintain control over a specific geographical space. The concept applies not just to nations, but also to diverse groups of hunter-gatherer and tribal associations dating back to as early as the era of humanity's common ancestor with the chimpanzee (Moffett, 2025). The conceptual shift to defining societies as a complex system of overlapping domains has been crucial as past models that relied on the nation-state increasingly become inadequate for analyzing cross-border associations (Walby, 2021). Past definitions were devoid of a congruence between institutional domains of society and regimes structuring inequality.

Government Policy

Government policy has multiple broad definitions. Nonetheless, it can largely be viewed as the declaration of goals and the attainment of negotiated outcomes that result from the policy execution process (Adeniran et al., 2023). A key distinguishing feature of government policy is its dynamic nature, as government policy is often relatively unstable and changeable. Government policy can also be viewed as the intended direction in which legislators often seek to guide the public, which also describes how a country plans to mobilize

and use the resources at its disposal (Adeniran et al., 2023). There are various variables at play that can influence government policies, and the policy formation process, including but not limited to the legislators and foundational national documents such as the constitution (Adeniran et al., 2023). By and large however, policy seeks to resolve issues within a nation that are known to the bureaucrats or politicians in charge.

2. Literature Review

Developments in media and communication technologies in recent years have culminated in the proliferation of social media platforms that have come with notable transformations in how individuals exchange and access information, or engage with economic, social, and political systems. Social media offers considerable benefits related to enhancing connectivity and expanding information access, but a growing body of literature has drawn attention to the substantial risks that these platforms also carry across multiple domains, personal, social, economic, and political (Baccarella et al., 2018; Sabatini, 2025). The current study is concerned with the risks of social media across three key thematic areas, the economy, society, and national policy, but also explores the groups that have been most influenced by these technologies. Literature does touch on these components that the current study focuses on.

The economic risks of social media, for instance, have attracted substantial scholarly attention. Research in this domain largely focuses on the risks to economic components such as productivity, market dynamics, and consumer behavior. Bhowmik (2025), for instance, looked into how information overload extracts valuable cognitive resources from knowledge workers to result in their inability to engage in meaningful activity in their organizational life. Conversely, Bruce et al. (2025) and Hansen et al. (2018) presented how social media endangers market dynamics in how the platforms negatively impacts the financial performance of firms as well as their reputation. Lastly, Jesse et al. (2025) and Moisescu et al. (2025) details how social media may negatively affect the level of trust customers have in brands, influencing their spending to impact the economy. These

studies suggest that social media come with broad economic consequences at either the individual, firm, or macroeconomic level.

At the society level, studies have reviewed the huge risks social media has on multiple dimensions including but not limited to social cohesion, the spread of information and political processes. About social cohesion, Kobellarz et al. (2024) and Kossowska et al. (2023) have explored the fragmentation effects of social media on the society that emerge from restricting persons in echo chambers. Qureshi and Bhatt (2024) strengthen this perspective further and introduce the risks of social media to the spread of information by touching on how the platforms enable the capacity to rapidly disseminate extreme and false views with limited correction measures for misinformation. The societal fragmentation and misinformation enabled by social media platforms, in turn, threaten the political component of the society, causing direct threats to democracy. Lastly, on the societal effects of social media, Castelló et al. (2025) demonstrate how the combination of social fragmentation and misinformation yield threats to democracy. Based on the literature, therefore, unchecked social media use poses substantial threats at the societal level that could destabilize social functioning.

On the facet of national policies, studies typically explore how social media risks the policy formation process. One key way through which social media influences policy formation, as espoused in studies, is through shaping public opinions on specific policies. Studies such as Zafar and Saleem (2025) and Gauthier et al. (2026) have highlighted how social media has substantial potential in influencing the thoughts and sentiments of populations through exposing the public to certain types of content and feeds. Exposure to different types of content may either encourage individuals to support specific policies, or to stand against them, which then affects whether these policies are implemented or complied with among the public. Closely related to the shaping of public opinions by social media is the facet of foreign interference through social media. Douek (2020) and Kazemi (2023) highlight how social media supports initiatives of foreign entities to influence elections through shaping the public

opinion of candidates. Influencing elections, in turn, strikes at the heart of policy making. Specifically, this is because it touches on the entities responsible for putting in place and amending policies.

Lastly, substantial literature has examined the susceptibility of different demographic groups to social media. The study by Corke et al. (2025) present how exposure to social media platforms risk the mental health and wellbeing of adolescent populations, while Hamilton et al. (2024) present youth with problematic social media usage as the most at-risk demographic from the ramifications of social media. Generally however, most research on the at-risk population appears to predominantly present the young populations as the most at risk, with slight variations in marginally differentiating characteristics within this population. Regardless, the findings outlined in studies offer a strong foundation for the current study to examine different and varying population groups.

Results of Previous Studies

With regards to the repercussions of social media on the economy, studies have presented results advancing that social media can contribute to a reduction in unemployment. Paulinus et al. (2024) advances that social media can diminish unemployment by presenting a platform to start online businesses, or by presenting opportunities for paid content creation. Tonny et al. (2023) adds that social media can mitigate joblessness by acting as a job search tool. With regard to social media introducing the risk of property loss, research do not entirely present social media as a direct contributor to property losses, but Amin et al. (2024) do point out how the platforms may provide avenues for financial losses from exposure to fraud. While evidence for social media's effects on property losses is not robust, there is strong evidence presented by Finkelsztein (2025) and Momoh et al. (2025) that social media reduces economic productivity. Studies, nonetheless, do not present any clear results linking social media to delays in development projects or high prices. These areas present gaps that future studies could explore in detail.

With regard to social media's repercussions on society, research supports multiple ways in which social media platforms can present risks. Mark and Ahmed (2023) detail that social media can reinforce stereotypes through misinformation and polarization, when individuals are confined to echo chambers. Olaniran and Williams (2020) present findings that social media can contribute to social rebellions through enabling the organization of protest, with Khatoon (2024) specifically presenting the example of the Arab Spring rebellions in North Africa and the Middle East as an example of social media contributing to social rebellion. On the other hand, Rahman and Jahan (2020) detail that social media can enable the spread of rumors, as Huang (2024) explains that this comes about as a result of individual differences in the perception of the freedom of speech. Findings by Smith et al. (2021) outline that social media can heighten loneliness even while the platforms expand connectivity. Azzaakiyyah (2023) also outlines that the societal ramifications of social media may include the division of society.

Kavitha and Sudarmathy (2026), examining the repercussions of social media on policy, highlighted that social media may cause disrespect for laws through enabling misinformation that misleads individuals into law-breaking. Hakim (2020) and Wang (2024) also noted that social media platforms increase the risk of incitement, which can inspire hostilities. According to Chakma (2024), social media can also promote the rise of social movements by supporting mobilization, undermining policies. Lastly, Forrester et al. (2019) detail that social media can be a viable tool for advancing foreign propaganda to undermine national policies.

With regards to the group that could be most influenced by social media, current research does not rank any specific group as being more heavily influenced by social media platforms than another. Nonetheless, studies by Agyapong-Opoku et al. (2025), He et al. (2024), Hui (2025), and Zhu (2024) highlight that the poor, women, minorities, and youth and adolescents are heavily influenced by social media.

3. Methodology

Research Design

The current study collected data on the negative social repercussions that have come with developments in media and communications, more so social media. It utilized an electronic questionnaire to gather these insights. The electronic questionnaire was designed to collect quantitative data on the social repercussions of social media in light of the developments in media and communication. The researcher settled on a quantitative approach to facilitate more straightforward processing and analysis of data. Insights were gathered from a random sample of experts in the fields of social science, media communications, and education spread across multiple universities in Saudi Arabia. Email was used to distribute the electronic questionnaire, with the researcher sending a link to the electronic questionnaire to the study sample. The use of emails supported the capacity of the study to reach a much wider study sample of the experts from multiple universities spread across the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

Target Population

This study targeted a sample of experts in multiple fields, including social science, media communications, and education in multiple Saudi Arabian universities. It aimed at establishing the negative implications of social media in light of the developments that have occurred in media and communications, and the target population was well-suited to gather data from, owing to their direct professional engagement with social media across academic and social contexts. Therefore, the sampling of the population was based on the nature of the questions posed in the study. The sampling was done through convenience sampling, yielding a total of 184 study respondents.

Data Collection

The primary data collection tool was an electronic questionnaire designed to align with the objectives of the study. This questionnaire was validated using insights from the professors in the researcher's university, with whom the

researcher reviewed the opinions of experts with knowledge on the subject. To assess the internal consistency and reliability of the data collection tool, the study calculated Cronbach's alpha, yielding a value of 0.91, which indicated an acceptable level of reliability. Some improvements were then made to the tool to enhance the language, style, content, and format of the questionnaire, after which it was administered to the 276 study participants who constituted the main sample for the study. Participants were asked to rate their level of agreement with corresponding questionnaire items which used a five-point Likert scale.

Data Analysis

The study used the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software to undertake an analysis of the quantitative data collected through the electronic questionnaires. The analysis included a basic demographic analysis and the computation of means and response values for items. The response values were provided by participants based on a five-point Likert scale: strongly disagree, disagree, neutral, agree, and strongly agree. For each survey item, the proportion of respondents who selected each response option was also calculated and presented as a percentage, allowing for a detailed understanding of the attitudes of participants across the sampled group of experts.

Piloting of Questionnaire

For piloting, the questionnaire was administered to a random sample of 17 participants. Nonetheless, the pilot study adopted a slightly different procedure compared to the main study, relying on in-person paper-based questionnaires rather than online questionnaires. The researcher collaborated with a team of research assistants to explain the nature of the questionnaire to the pilot study participants in a two-hour session. Along with the assistants, the researcher then distributed the questionnaires to the pilot study participants, supervised their filling, and collected the questionnaires. Based on the responses of the pilot study participants, the number of questions posed, their framing, and procedures followed were modified to improve the data collection process.

4. Results

The Negative Repercussions of Social Media on the Economy

Items	Strongly disagree n-p	Disagree n-p	Neutral n-p	Agreed n-p	Strongly agree n-p	Mean	SD	The level	Rank
Increased unemployment rates	(0.3) 1	(1.8) 5	(6.7) 19	(35.2) 97	(56) 154	4.45	0.723	Very high	1
High prices	(0.4) 1	(3.8) 10	(10.1) 28	(39.8) 110	(45.9) 127	4.27	0.820	Very high	4
Property losses	(0.5) 1	(4.4) 12	(8.4) 23	(33.3) 92	(53.4) 148	4.35	0.846	Very high	2
Decreased productivity	(5.7) 15	(7.2) 20	(14.1) 39	(31.4) 87	(41.6) 115	3.96	1.165	Very high	5
Delayed development projects	(0.7) 2	(2.1) 6	(7.9) 21	(44.1) 122	(45.2) 125	4.31	0.764	Very high	3
The overall average regarding the negative repercussions on the economy.						4.27	0.621	Very high	

Table 1: Results on the negative repercussions of social media on the economy.

Overall, the majority of the respondents in the current study either agreed or strongly agreed that social media had negative repercussions on the economy ($M=4.27$; $SD=0.621$). The perception that social media negatively impacted the economy among the respondents was very high, suggesting significant repercussions of social media on this specific facet.

Majority of the respondents either strongly agreed (56%; $n=154$) or agreed (35.2%; $n=97$) that social media did increase the unemployment rates. This questionnaire item was the highest rated of all five items under the category related to the repercussions of social media on the economy ($M=4.45$; $SD=0.723$), implying that respondents felt that the impact of social media on unemployment was very high. The second highest rated item ($M=4.35$; $SD=0.846$) was on the effect of social media on property losses. With regards to this item, a majority of respondents also agreed (33%; $n=92$) or strongly agreed (53.4%; $n=148$) that social media contributed to property losses.

The lowest ranking three items with regard to social media's repercussions on the economy related to the effects on development projects ($M=4.31$; $SD=0.764$), prices ($M=4.27$; $SD=0.820$), and productivity ($M=3.96$; $SD=1.165$), respectively. A majority of the study respondents agreed (44.1%; $n=122$) or strongly agreed (45.2%; $n=125$) that social media delayed development projects. The majority of the respondents also agreed (39.8%; $n=110$) or strongly agreed

(45.9%; $n=127$) that social media resulted in high prices. Similarly, the greater proportion of the study participants agreed (31.4%; $n=87$) or strongly agreed (41.6%; $n=115$) that social media decreased productivity. The effect of social media on productivity was, nonetheless, deemed the lowest by the participants in the study. Regardless, all items considered generally ranked "very high" with regards to how much participants deemed them to be affected by social media in light of the developments that have come about in media and communication.

The Repercussions of Social Media on Society

Items	Strongly disagree n-p	Disagree n-p	Neutral n-p	Agreed n-p	Strongly agree n-p	Mean	SD	The level
Social rebellion	(0.5) 2	(2) 6	(12.4) 34	(40.7) 112	(44.4) 122	4.26	0.792	Very high
Social isolation	(0.5) 2	(4) 11	(12.2) 33	(43.2) 119	(40) 111	4.18	0.836	High
Cultural biases	(2.2) 6	(0.8) 3	(5.2) 14	(37.7) 104	(54.2) 149	4.41	0.809	Very high
The spread of rumors	(1) 2	(3.1) 9	(11) 30	(42.8) 118	(42.1) 117	4.22	0.834	Very high
Lack of social cooperation	(1.1) 3	(5.4) 15	(10.4) 29	(41.3) 114	(41.8) 115	4.17	0.899	High
The overall average regarding the negative repercussions on society.						4.25	0.586	Very high

Table 2: Results on the negative repercussions of social media on society.

The majority of the respondents in the current study either agreed or strongly agreed that social media had negative repercussions on society ($M=4.25$; $SD=0.586$). The perception that social media negatively impacted society was "very high." Majority of the respondents either strongly agreed (54.2%; $n=149$) or agreed (37.7%; $n=104$) that social media led to cultural biases. This questionnaire item was the highest rated of all five items considered under the effects of social media on society ($M=4.41$; $SD=0.809$). The rating implied that respondents felt that the impact of social media on inducing biases was very high. The second highest rated item was on the effect of social media on social rebellion ($M=4.26$; $SD=0.792$). A majority of respondents agreed (40.7%; $n=112$) or strongly agreed (44.4%; $n=122$) that social media notably contributed to social rebellion. The final item that saw a "very high" rating under this category was on the effect of social media on the spread of rumors ($M=4.22$; $SD=0.834$). The majority of the study respondents agreed (42.8%; $n=118$) or

strongly agreed (42.1%; n=117) that social media enabled the spread of rumors. Social media’s most prominent effects on society, as per the respondents, thus largely revolved around inducing cultural biases, social rebellion, and spreading rumors.

The lowest ranking two items with regards to social media’s repercussions on society, which only ranked as “high,” related to the effects of social media on social isolation (M=4.18; SD=0.836) and reducing social cooperation (M=4.17; SD=0.899), respectively. The majority of the respondents agreed (43.2%; n=119) or strongly agreed (40%; n=111) that social media contributed to social isolation. Similarly, the greater proportion of the study participants agreed (41.3%; n=114) or strongly agreed (41.8%; n=115) that social media led to a lack of social cooperation. The effect of social media on reducing social cooperation was deemed the lowest by the study participants.

The Repercussions of Social Media on Policy

Items	Strongly disagree n-p	Disagree n-p	Neutral n-p	Agreed n-p	Strongly agree n-p	Mean	SD	The level
Disrespect for regulations and laws	(0.8) 2	(2.4) 6	(3.6) 10	(29.9) 83	(63.3) 175	4.53	0.749	Very high
Inciting public opinion	(2.3) 6	(0.9) 3	(4.7) 13	(26.9) 75	(65.2) 179	4.52	0.819	Very high
Rise of intellectual movements	(1.1) 3	(5.5) 15	(12.8) 35	(36.5) 101	(44.1) 122	4.17	0.927	Very high
Social division	(0.5) 1	(1.7) 5	(7.6) 21	(44.4) 123	(45.8) 126	4.33	0.730	Very high
Foreign interventions	(1.3) 3	(5.8) 16	(17.7) 49	(39.6) 109	(35.7) 99	4.03	0.938	High
The overall average regarding the negative repercussions on policy.						4.32	0.603	Very high

Table 3: Results on the negative repercussions of social media on policy.

To a large extent, respondents in the current study agreed or strongly agreed that social media had negative repercussions on policy (M=4.32; SD=0.603). The overall perception that social media negatively impacted policy was “very high.” Additionally, compared to the effects of social media on the economy and society, the policy effects had the highest mean score.

The majority of the respondents either strongly agreed (63.3%; n=175) or agreed (29.9%; n=83) that social media led to disrespect for regulations and laws. This questionnaire item was the highest rated of all five items considered under the effects of social media on society (M=4.53; SD=0.749).

The rating implied that respondents felt that the impact of social media on inducing disrespect for policies was very high. The second highest rated item was on the effect of social media on inciting public opinion (M=4.52; SD=0.819). A majority of respondents agreed (26.9%; n=75) or strongly agreed (65.2%; n=179) that social media notably incited the opinions of the public. The item ranked third under this category was on the effect of social media on social division (M=4.33; SD=0.730). The majority of the study respondents agreed (44.4%; n=123) or strongly agreed (45.8%; n=126) that social media contributed to social divisions. The effects of social media on the fourth-ranked item under this category, the rise of intellectual movements was also deemed “very high” (M=4.17; SD=0.927), with a majority of respondents either plain agreeing (36.5%; n=101) or strongly agreeing (44.1%; n=122) that social media had links to the rise of these movements.

The lowest ranking item with regards to social media’s repercussions on society, which only ranked as “high,” related to the effects of social media on foreign interventions (M=4.03; SD=0.938). Still, the majority of the respondents agreed (39.6%; n=109) or strongly agreed (35.7%; n=99) that social media contributed to foreign interventions.

Those Most Influenced by Social Media

Items	Strongly disagree n-p	Disagree n-p	Neutral n-p	Agreed n-p	Strongly agree n-p	Mean	SD	The level
Youth and adolescents	(2.2) 6	(2.1) 5	(7.2) 20	(39.3) 109	(49.3) 136	4.31	0.863	Very high
The poor	(0.5) 2	(1.3) 4	(5.5) 15	(37.2) 103	(55.4) 152	4.46	0.707	Very high
Ideological currents	(0.4) 1	(2.5) 7	(9.5) 26	(38.9) 108	(48.6) 134	4.33	0.779	Very high
Women	(0.9) 2	(2.7) 8	(7.4) 21	(35.9) 99	(53.1) 146	4.38	0.809	Very high
Population minorities	(2.5) 7	(2.3) 6	(6.8) 19	(37.9) 104	(50.5) 140	4.32	0.891	Very high
The overall average regarding those most influenced by social media.						4.36	0.627	Very high

Table 4: Results on the groups most influenced by social media.

The current study considered five groups: youth and adolescents, the poor, ideological currents, women, and minorities, when inquiring from participants about the entities that are most influenced by social media. Participants indicated that the influence of social media on these groups, as a whole, was “very high” (M=4.36; SD=0.627).

Considering specific groups, the participants in the study rated the poor to be the group most influenced by social media ($M=4.46$; $SD=0.707$). Most of the respondents either agreed (37.2%; $n=103$) or strongly agreed (55.4%; $n=152$) that this group was most influenced. Women ranked second as the group most influenced by social media ($M=4.38$; $SD=0.809$). Respondents also overwhelmingly agreed (35.9%; $n=99$) or strongly agreed (53.1%; $n=146$) that this group was heavily influenced by social media. On the other hand, ideological currents ranked third among the five groups considered in this study as being the most influenced by social media ($M=4.33$; $SD=0.779$). Study respondents largely agreed (38.9%; $n=108$) and strongly agreed (48.6%; $n=134$) that ideological currents were influenced significantly by social media.

Minorities ($M=4.32$; $SD=0.891$) along with youth and adolescents ($M=4.31$; $SD=0.863$) were the two groups ranking lowest as those most influenced by social media according to the respondents. Nevertheless, the majority of the respondents still held the perspective that minorities were heavily influenced by social media, with many agreeing (37.9%; $n=104$) and even more strongly agreeing (50.5%; $n=140$). Similarly, many of the respondents agreed (39.3%; $n=109$) that youth and adolescents were substantially influenced by social media, with an even greater proportion of the respondents strongly agreeing (49.3%; $n=136$) with the sentiment. Nevertheless, while these two groups ranked the lowest, the individual means for all groups considered indicated that the influence of social media was “very high.” This aligned with the overarching sentiment that social media’s influence on the groups was “very high” altogether.

5. Discussion

The respondents in the current study perceived social media as having negative repercussions on the economy. They held the perception that social media increased unemployment rates, but these sentiments contradicted those presented in available research. Studies highlight that social media usage is linked to a reduction in unemployment. Specifically, social media can contribute to unemployment by availing a platform to establish businesses online or undertake content creation

(Paulinus et al., 2024). Social media platforms can also act as job-seeking tools by allowing individuals to seek and gain employment (Tonny et al., 2023). With regards to property losses, respondents saw social media as a potential contributor. These sentiments were partially reported by literature, with Amin et al. (2024) highlighting how platforms introduce risk of property scams from fake listings. Property scams, while not directly leading to property losses, did lead to financial losses, an aspect that can indirectly be considered the loss of property, albeit financial. The sentiments that social media delayed development projects or caused high prices were, nonetheless, neither supported nor disputed by research. These gaps present an opportunity for future studies. Lastly, on economic implications of social media, the respondents claimed to perceive social media as having negative implications on productivity. These sentiments were supported in the available literature (Finkelsztein, 2025; Momoh et al., 2025). Research presented the inappropriate use of social media, more so in the workplace, as a contributor to GDP losses.

Respondents in the study also perceived social media as having multiple repercussions on society, all which were supported by the available literature. The study participants viewed social media as an entity that promoted cultural biases, sentiments that were shared by current literature. Studies presented that the platforms can shape and reinforce stereotypes through misinformation and the isolation of opinions in echo chambers (Mark & Ahmed, 2023). Participants in the current study also deemed social media as having the potential to contribute to social rebellions. Research backed these perspectives. Olaniran and Williams (2020) highlighted how the platforms can support the organization of protests and amplify disruptive rhetoric, while also facilitating rapid sharing of information. A notable example of social rebellion inspired by social media was the Arab Spring rebellions that affected much of North Africa and some parts of the Middle East (Khatoun, 2024). Available studies also backed the effects of social media on the spread of rumors (Rahman & Jahan, 2020). Huang (2024) highlighted how social media enables the sharing of thoughts and opinions, but the different perceptions of the freedom of

speech among individuals often result in individual differences that contribute to rumors. On social isolation, study respondents viewed social media as a contributor to social isolation, and research backed the conceptualization that social media led to isolation (Smith et al., 2021). Nevertheless, studies distinguished between individuals who used social media with the motive of maintaining relationships and those who spent the same time on social media engaging in other reasons, stipulating how the former were more affected by social-media related loneliness (Bonsaksen et al., 2023). Lastly, respondents deemed social media as having negative repercussions on reducing social isolation. Azzaakiyyah (2023) supported these sentiments, albeit highlighting that social media could act as both a catalyst for community building and a driver of social fragmentation to minimize corruption.

Like the ramifications of social media on society, the perceived implications of social media on policy were also all supported by research. The overwhelming sentiment among respondents was that social media led to the disrespect of regulations and laws. Kavitha and Sudarmathy (2026) backed these sentiments by presenting that social media leads to the disrespect of laws by spreading misinformation and introducing the risks of privacy. The study respondents also held the perspective that social media contributed to the incitement of public opinions. Hakim (2020) and Wang (2024) presented findings supporting these perspectives by highlighting how social media increases the risks and intensity of public incitement by promoting discrimination and violence, which cultivate grounds for hate. With regards to how social media contributed to social divisions, as outlined by the study respondents, research was in support of the view, with Cao (2022) explaining that social media could fuel divisions by fostering polarization and echo chambers. Studies were also in support of the perspective that social media had the potential to cause the rise of social movements. Chakma (2024) and Obaid (2020) advanced that social media presented a powerful tool for mobilizing, organizing, and amplifying causes in a way that enables activists bypass traditional media filters, which resultantly contributed to the technologies advancing social movements. Lastly, research

also supported that social media contributed to foreign interventions. To this effect, studies such as Forrester et al. (2019) presented social media as a tool for spreading propaganda and disinformation. They highlighted that such propaganda and disinformation were often pushed by foreign entities and directed towards increasing divisions in democratic populations.

Respondents in the current study also shared their perspectives on the groups they perceived to be most influenced by social media. The participants highlighted that they felt the groups most influenced by social media, in order, were the poor, women, ideologists, minorities, and the youth and adolescent groups. Other than for ideologists, however, the influence of social media on all the groups considered in the current study was supported by research (Agyapong-Opoku et al., 2025; He et al., 2024; Hui, 2025; Zhu, 2024). Nevertheless, studies did not provide inter-group comparisons, thus presenting a potential inquiry area. Nonetheless, the study respondents did acknowledge that the influence of social media on all these populations was significant. These sentiments were supported by all the studies, which showed that social media often came with notable social and psychological implications on the different groups (Agyapong-Opoku et al., 2025; He et al., 2024; Hui, 2025; Zhu, 2024). Studies could nonetheless seek to establish how significant the influence of social media is on ideological currents, which were barely focused on by the existing studies. It is possible that social media substantially intensifies individual ideologies held.

Measures to Protect Society from the Dangers of Social Media

Various measures could be taken to protect society from the dangers of social media. One of them would be the provision of comprehensive digital literacy programs that equip individuals with the capacity to critically evaluate social media content (Prakash, 2025). The digital literacy programs could be implemented from early life, such as during school-going years. School-based media literacy interventions have been shown by studies to improve safety online through enhancing aspects such as misinformation detection (Rodríguez et al., 2026). Another potential measure to protect

society from the dangers of social media would be to enhance parental involvement and guidance in the use of these platforms. With parents equipped with digital literacy, they could be involved in the active monitoring and discussion of their children's online behavior to reduce exposure to harmful content (Prakash, 2025). The involvement of parents would support safer use of social media without fully restricting access to these platforms for children. Open access that is monitored would instead support greater digital inclusion, along with the building of peer support networks. Implementing widespread fact-checking and content verification systems could also benefit the protection of society from the dangers of social media. Slaughter et al. (2015) advances how features such as fact checking relying on a platform's community have shown promise in curbing misinformation. They limit how viral the harmful or misleading content gets, with empirical evidence pointing to a notable decrease in engagement and diffusion of information that has been fact-checked by online communities. A final possible avenue to implement societal protections from social media's dangers would be the adoption of robust policies and dynamic regulations that continuously seek to mitigate the broader impacts of social media on mental health, behavior, and education (Stevens et al., 2026). Continuous review of policies would enable the refinement of strategies to keep up with ever-changing technological developments in social media use. Policymaking should also adopt a multi-stakeholder collaborative approach that engages with policymakers, educators, parents, and platform providers (Prakash, 2025). Engaging multiple stakeholders would ensure a balance that preserves the benefits of social media use while also minimizing risks.

6. Conclusion

The current study establishes that social media is widely perceived to have significant negative repercussions across the domains of economy, society, and policy, with all domains ranked "very high" in how much they are influenced by social media. There was a strong consensus among the study

respondents that social media had notable negative implications. Among the three domains considered, however, the repercussions on policy were deemed as the most pronounced. Under the economic repercussions, respondents strongly perceived social media as a factor that increased employment, risked property-related losses, and reduced productivity. Nonetheless, these risks, while being significant, were unevenly supported by empirical evidence. On the other hand, under societal risks, there was a strong convergence between the perceptions of the respondents and existing literature, with social media deemed to intensify social divisions. The perceptions under the policy domain were similarly supported. Respondents and the existing knowledge base point to social media presenting systemic challenges to governance, affecting compliance and democratic processes. With respect to the groups most influenced by social media, the study points to social media having a broad and pervasive influence. Nonetheless, the intensity of this influence, as perceived by respondents, remains insufficiently supported or differentiated in research.

Study Contributions

The current study contributes to the existing knowledge base on the risks posed by social media. It does so through its examination of the repercussions of social media on different domains, the economy, society, and policy. The multifaceted approach goes beyond the existing approach adopted by a majority of studies that largely examine these components individually. The study also contributes to the knowledge base by presenting some contradictions that expert perspectives have, which clash with the existing body of knowledge. These gaps were specifically identified in the effects of social media on unemployment and property losses. The contribution enables a better understanding of how expert opinions may diverge from empirical findings, introducing a further need to study why this may be the case. It also allows for a better understanding of potential gaps in the evidence that should be addressed to offer a more comprehensive view of social media's effects.

Recommendations

With regards to the economy, respondents in the study held the perspective that social media strongly decreased productivity, findings that were also backed by research. Therefore, it would be integral to develop and enforce workplace social media policies that offer clear guidelines on acceptable social media use during work hours. Additionally, with respect to the societal ramifications of social media, respondents perceived these platforms as having the potential to contribute to social rebellion, insights that were also backed by research. Therefore, governments in particular should consistently monitor social media discourse to identify early signs of unrest while still maintaining civil liberties. On policy, respondents viewed social media as an enabler of foreign interference, sentiments that existing literature also supports. Therefore, it would be important for the Saudi government to adopt more technically sound cybersecurity and digital governance strategies to strengthen the detection and prevention of disinformation campaigns by foreign entities.

Study Limitations

A key limitation of the current study is the reliance on expert opinions rather than objective measures of the effects of social media. Reliance on expert opinions reflects the perceptions of impact rather than the actual causal effects of social media on the economy, society, or policies, which could also be an underlying factor behind the observed gaps in the views of the respondents and existing empirical findings. Another limitation relates to the use of convenience sampling to obtain study respondents. The application of convenience sampling limits the generalizability of the results of the study, as the sample may not fully represent the views of all experts in the fields of social science, media communications, and education. Lastly, the study was conducted among experts in Saudi Arabia only. This geographical limitation further limits the generalizability of the findings, as the cultural, political, and economic context of the region may influence perceptions.

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