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STUDY ON SOCIAL NETWORK USAGE FROM ISLAMIC PERSPECTIVE AMONG UTM MUSLIM STUDENTS

GEHAD MOHAMMED SHARAF MOHAMMED

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the award of the degree of Master of Science (Information Technology - Management)

Faculty of Computer Science and Information Systems
Universiti Teknologi Malaysia

JUNE /2012
I declare that this dissertation entitled “Study On Social Network Usage From Islamic Perspective Among Utm Muslim Students” is the result of my own research except as cited in the references. The dissertation has not been accepted for any degree and is not concurrently submitted in candidature of any other degree.

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This dissertation is dedicated to my family for their unconditional support.
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“ALHAMDULLILAH”
ABSTRACT

Muslim users of the social networks are vulnerable to enormous temptations through those sites because many things inside them are against of Islamic rules. Muslims have been affected by other cultures and they use those social networks as same as those who are not Muslims. This study is about exploring the students’ perception of using social networking sites from Islamic perspective. Study was conducted through three phases. Phases included declaring the objectives and collecting the secondary and primary data by conducting interviews with the Islamic Scholars at Islamic civilization faculty to get the allowed and not allowed actions list of using social networking sites. Based on this list, questionnaires were distributed to know the students’ perception. Comparison between the scholars’ perception and the students’ perception, shows that the majority of the respondents are aware of most of the allowed and not allowed actions, however they were not aware of forbidden conversation such as gossip and make fun of others. Finally, recommendations were provided to the Muslim users, FSKSM’s SNSs designers and UTM Islamic center to guide those Muslim users to follow the Islamic rules.
ABSTRAK

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CHAPTER 1

PROJECT PREVIEW

1.1 Introduction

As stated by Snyder Jonny et al (2006), the Internet is the world’s largest social network. Within this framework lie many sub-networks that cater to individual interests or online desires. Each of these sub-networks has “rules of engagement” usually formalized in documents such as user agreements, terms of use or privacy statements. These rules define who can use the site, how the site is to be used and consequences for abuses to the rules.

The development of social networking websites is a recent phenomenon. From the time that they were created, social networking websites have attracted millions of users from teenagers, to college students and professionals. These social networking websites may be centered on shared interests, political views, religion, nationality and culture just to name a few (Ashitari, et al (2009).

1.2 Problem Background

The Internet provides a space and medium within which Muslims can shape the relationship between their religious identity and their social and political affiliations. In this new space and medium, the question of imagining a global
Muslim identity demonstrates the interaction involved in the formation of religious and media subjectivity. Developing a critical understanding of multimodal representation and communication is an essential factor in studying Muslim engagement with the internet.

Social networks contain a wealth of personal information. People share their date of birth, email address, home address, family ties, and pictures. For Muslim users, especially female Muslims uploaded their photos and their family photos that make other users can see their personal photos without wearing hijab, which is forbidden in Islam. **Allah SWT said in Quran:**

“O prophet! tell thy wives and daughters and the believing women that they should cast their outer garments over their persons (when abroad): that is most convenient that they should be known (as such) and not molested: and Allah is Oft-Forgiving Most Merciful” (Surat al Alhzab: verse 59).

Social networks have global users which they have different affiliations and religions, thus we cannot control the content that non-Muslims post in those social networks which Muslims are part of it. As a result, Muslims are vulnerable to the fitnah (Temptation).

1.2.1 The Current Facebook Site’s Problems from an Islamic Perspective

Facebook is distinct from others in many ways, including the following:

1. Availability of users’ detailed personal information, which, as a result, has already ended up in negative results like:

   (a) It leads to make old relations between lovers vivid lead to a resuming those ‘illicit’ relationships to end up in divorce. and betrayal.
In Egypt, a study on Facebook was prepared by a team from the National Centre for Social and Criminal Research and that study lasted for many weeks, which noted serious results of using this site. It noted, besides other things, “many visitors to the website succeeded in finding their first love and former relationships, and rebuilt destructive relationships outside the family, which is threatening marriages and Muslim family life.”

(b) Some services by foreign spy are meant to recruit some members of Facebook that look at their economic situation, details, and standard of living, in order to use them for spying purposes.

As it is discovered by a foreign newspaper, a Jewish spy network is recruiting Muslim and Arab youth for spying purposes.

On the Muheet website – dated 25 (Jumaada al-Oola 1431 AH) – as quoted from a French newspaper the Jewish exploitation story of Facebook about agents to be recruited:

A professor, Gerald Nero) in the psychology college of the French University of Provence and the Dangers of the Internet author, says: “This network was discovered in May 2001 CE; it was a group of networks run by Israeli specialists in psychology who were recruited to work on youth in the Third World, especially those living in Arab states that are hostile towards Israel, as well as South America.”

(c) To hack into bank accounts and to steal the Facebook member identity through viewing his personal information.

2. This website spread was known globally as a chat site that helps to bring people from all parts of the world together; by giving a program to the users of their site that makes it easy for these conversations to happen without entering the site, they made matters worse, such as that which was produced by Messenger and Hotmail. Chatting leads to unpleasant results that everybody experienced of that on the Internet knows, since the program takes it possible to allow people to view and
write to each other. Besides chatting and sinful relationships negative results are as the following:

(a) to wasting valuable time in nonsense talk and to get to be known to people. It should be realized by a wise Muslim and know that his lifespan on earth is limited and will not live forever; and there will be a meeting with his Lord, (may He be exalted), and will be asked about the way he spent his youth, and what he did in his life. Therefore, the wise one is allowed to think about time and their lifespan and look at the early generations of scholars of this ummah.

Ibn ‘Aqeel al-Hanbali (may Allah have mercy on him) said of himself: I’m not permitted to waste an hour of my life. After I finish the discussion of some knowledge issues and debate them with others and after doing a book reading, during relaxing and resting and before getting up, I begin thinking and pondering, I form an idea that I must write down and I have a keen desire to build up and enrich my knowledge, now I am in my eighties and more keen compared to my twenties. Quoted from him by Ibn al-Jawzi in al-Muntazam, 9/214

Ibn al-Qayyim (may Allah have mercy on him) said: in fact, the time of a man is his life and his eternal life, whether it is eternal suffering or bliss, depends on the way how he spends it. Time passes very quickly; the time spent for Allah sake and by Allah help, this is the true life; other time is not considered part of his life, even if it is spent to do like animals. Therefore, if this time spent in idleness and heedlessness, false wishes and idle entertainment, and the time passes through idleness and sleeping, then being death is better than being alive. Al-Jawaab al-Kaafi, p. 109

(c) to establish sinful relations between men and women, which might lead to the destroy of a stable family.

A study conducted by the National Center says: One in every five divorce cases take place when one part knew that the other formed a relationship via the Internet and via Facebook.
1.3  Problem statement

Due to the problems, those social networking sites make for Muslims. This research conducted to answer the following questions:

• What are the actions that Muslims should or should not do in Social Networking Sites from Islamic perspective?
• What is the student’s perception of using Social networking sites from the Islamic perspective?
• How can Muslims utilize the Social Networking Sites in Islamic way and promote Islam?

1.4  Research Objectives

This study is conducted to achieve the following objectives:

• To identify the allowed and not allowed usage of facebook from Islamic perspective.
• To identify Muslim student’s perception of using facebook from Islamic perspective.
• To make recommendations for the beneficiaries of this study who are stated in the section (1.7); according to the Islamic regulations.

1.5  Scope of the Research

For achieving the research objectives, which have been stated in the previous section, it is important to determine the study area and boundaries, which are stated in the following points:
To determine the Islamic perspective of the allowed and not allowed usage of the facebook, Faculty of Islamic Civilization’s scholars are the ones who will provide the Islamic perspective.

Study will conducted among UTM Muslim students.

Because 73.16 of total internet users in Malaysia are using facebook, so it considered as the most popular site in Malaysia in particular and in the worldwide in general, thus it will be the case study of the social networking sites.

1.6 Significance of study

This study designed to explore the perception of the Muslim users about using social networking sites from Islamic perspective. As An-Nu'man ibn Bashir reported that the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, said, "The metaphor of the believers in their mutual love, mercy and affection is that of the body. When one limb of it complains, the rest of the body collapses with sleeplessness and fever." [Agreed upon]. Thus, as we are bothers in Islam and it is our obligatory to guide our brothers and advice them to the right way in every aspect of this life. This research has been conducted in the sake of promoting Islamic values while using technology, which Allah (SWA) has subjected for us to serve his religion and our brothers.

One more is to provide SNSs designer with Islamic outlines to help them building an Islamic SNSs. Moreover is to give the Islamic scholars recommendations to extensive their efforts by making more awareness campaigns for Muslim users.
1.7 Beneficiaries of the Study

There are many beneficiaries can get beneficial of the study such as following:

- Institutions of Islamic Affairs, which is UTM Islamic Center for our case study UTM.
- SNSs developers and designers, which is FSKSM’s SNSs designers in our case study, because, it is the one who is in charge for the sites developing and designing in the UTM.
- SNSs Muslim users. Muslim students in the UTM

1.8 Chapter Summary

This chapter outline an introduction to investigate the perception of Muslim students in using social networking sites from Islamic perspective. This chapter consist of the background of the study, problem statement, objectives, research questions, scope and significance of the research that can be achieved.