Palestinian University Students' Exposure to Islamic Websites - An-Najah and Birzeit Universities as Examples

تعرض طلبة الجامعات الفلسطينية للمواقع الإسلامية على الإنترنيت: طلبة جامعتي النجاح وبيرزيت نموذجا

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Abstract

The rise of "Islamism" in the Arab world in the last few decades has drawn researchers' attention to this significant phenomenon. In addition, the advent of internet, it is believed, formed a vital tool for this rise, given it opened a wide door to Muslim groups to communicate with audiences. Simultaneously, it is noticed that Palestinian people, in particular, were influenced by political Muslim groups which influence peoples' various aspects of life. This study focuses on the exposure of Palestinian students at two major universities to the Islamic websites, and sheds light on the extent to which those students are influenced by them. The study, based on the Use and Gratifications Theory, depended on the descriptive approach, and used the quantitative analyses, examined a sample of An-Najah and Birzeit universities in the Palestinian West Bank, and found that more than half of students are exposed to Islamic websites, and regard them as a reliable source of information. At the same time, the study shows that students, in general, are open to "non-Islamic" websites, and obtain news and political analyses from them. Students, in addition, show reservations on Islamic websites which

represent Islamic parties, and believe that those sites do not offer enough room for interaction.

Keywords: Islamic websites, university students, exposure to internet, religious websites

ملخص

مثل صعود "التوجهات الإسلامية" في العالم العربي اهتماما متزايدا من قبل الباحثين لهذه الظاهرة المهمة. وبالإضافة إلى ذلك، يُعتقد أن اختراع الانترنيت وانتشاره، مثل أيضا أداة مهمة لهذا الصعود، لأن الإنترنيت فتح الباب واسعا أمام الجماعات الإسلامية للاتصال بالجمهور بشكل غير مسبوق. وبالتزامن مع ذلك، يلاحظ بأن الشعب الفلسطيني، على وجه الخصوص، تأثر بالتيارات السياسية الإسلامية التي أثرت على مختلف أوجه الحياة في فلسطين. تركز هذه الدراسة على تعرض الطلبة الفلسطينيين في جامعتين كبيرتين للمواقع الإسلامية على الإنترنيت، وتلقي الضوء على مدى تأثر هؤلاء الطلبة بهذه المواقع. استندت هذه الدراسة إلى نظرية الاستخدامات والإشباعات التي تعالج دوافع اختيار المحتوى والإشباعات المتحققة من الإعلام بناء على الظروف والاحتياجات الاجتماعية للأفراد. وكذلك استندت إلى نظرية الانتقائية التي تشير إلى أن الفرد يتعرض، ويتذكر، ويفسر الرسائل وفقا لقناعاته المسبقة. واعتمدت على المنهج الوصفي، باستخدام منهج تحليل المضمون الكمي، حيث تم تحليل استبانة وزعت على عينة من الطلبة من كلتا الجامعتين في الضفة الغربية. وقد وجدت الدراسة أن أكثر من نصف عدد الطلبة المبحوثين تعرضوا للمواقع الإسلامية على الإنترنيت، بل إنهم اعتمدوا على تلك المواقع في الحصول على المعلومات. وفي ذات الوقت أظهرت الدراسة أن الطلبة المبحوثين، منفتحون على المواقع الأخرى (التي لا تعرف نفسها بأنها مواقع إسلامية)، وأنهم يحصلون على الأخبار والتحليلات السياسية من تلك المواقع. كما أبدى الطلبة المبحوثون تحفظا على المواقع الإسلامية المحسوبة على أحزاب سياسية، معتقدين أن تلك المواقع لا توفر المساحة الكافية لجمهورها للتفاعل مع موضوعاتها.

Operational Definitions

Islamic websites: This term refers to websites that adopt Islam as a reference and way of thinking, and include variety of topics, such as political, social, artistic, religious, and so forth.

Islamic religious websites: These sites are Islamic, but provide merely religious matters, such as reciting Quran, presenting Hadith, providing interpretation of Quran and Hadith, as well as jurisprudence.

Other websites: Websites which do not adopt Islam as their reference, and could be described as liberal and secular. They are referred to in some places as "non-Islamic websites."

Statistics show that the use of the internet in the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPTs) has increased dramatically in the past decade. It has also affected, in both positive and negative ways, other means of communication, such as television, radio and newspapers, especially as valuable sources for news and other forms of information, as well as means of entertainment. In addition, the use of the internet, including the amount of time spent on the websites, and the quality of information and news the person is exposed to, has become a concern of media researches (Reddick, 2009, p.22). This includes interaction with website contents, such as commenting and/or engaging in discussions in various forums and social media sites.

As is commonly understood, the interests of the public selection of sites vary according to their perceptions and personal preferences. In addition, internet sites vary in the information they provide pertaining to the topic of interest. This leaves the door wide open for the public to choose from various websites. These various sources represent a form of "media democracy[1]" which provides the public with the opportunity to choose from various websites and allows them to participate in the discussion and comment on various topics. It also means expressing their

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[1] In the context of his writing on the "democratic-participant media theory," McQuail calls for "alternative, grass-roots media, expressing the needs of citizens" supporting the "right to use the new means of communication for interaction" (McQuail, 1994, p.131).

opinions freely without pressure or censorship, with the exception of that which is imposed on some practices by government officials[1].

The purpose of exposure to these websites may take various aspects. It aims at getting access to information, entertainment, increasing the awareness of people at certain issues. It is important to emphasize that there are cultural and social frameworks of exposure to internet websites. The person reserves the right to be exposed to certain websites that are compatible with his/her desires, ideas, and values, and those which allow him/her to be part of the community sharing its cultural and social values (CommGap, http://siteresources.worldbank.org/EXTGOVACC/Resources/MediaEffectsweb.pdf, p2).

The purpose of this study is to examine the exposure of an important segment of Palestinian society, university students, to Islamic websites. This group of young people has been chosen because, out of all groups in Palestinian society, they interact most frequently and intensively with the internet[2]. Young people, including university students, spend a longer period of time daily using this modern medium (as most studies

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(1) Nasr mentioned different methods used by governments to impose surveillance, or even to control the internet. He also maintains that governments continue to face challenges controlling the internet and thus there that even though governments realize that they face difficulties in controlling it, which clearly makes the internet enjoy the widest space of freedom (Nasr, 2003, p.247).
Hofheinz also mentioned that "even in countries that do not block access to sites deemed morally or politically unacceptable, however, internet traffic is monitored by police and security organs." He added that "Nevertheless, while censorship remains an issue of great concern, governments have not been able to silence the expression of dissent on the net and to prevent the increasing use of technology to strengthen communication and coordination among opposition and civil society activists" (Hofheinz, 2005, pp.79-80).

(2) According to the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics survey, (81.4%) of people aged (15-19) year old use internet. This is followed by people aged (20-29) year old with (75.4%). Younger and older ages used internet even less than that. (PCBS, 2011, p41) Moreover, Abu Wardeh found in his study that (98.8%) of An-Najah University students use the internet, and (43.9%) of them use it (1-2) hours every day (Abu Wardeh, 2011, pp.174-175).

indicate)[1]. The choice of Islamic websites stems from the fact that Arab societies are Muslim, and, as is commonly understood, Muslim communities are tied to Islamic culture and values. In addition, there is a wave of "Muslims abiding to religion," i.e. "Islamization" (Ta'aslom or Aslamah) sweeping the Arab and Islamic societies[2]. Islamic movements have found an unprecedented opportunity on the internet to communicate with the public, following decades of media monopoly by Arab governments which worked vigorously to deprive the opposition forces led by Islamists from taking part in the media[3].

Accordingly, this study assumes that there is a high proportion of young people visiting Islamic websites[4]. The researcher argues that young audiences are attracted to these websites and consider them an essential factor in promoting Islamic values. The researcher also suggests

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(1) There are a number of studies which indicated that youth, particularly students, are the most social groups that use the Internet (see, for example, Abdul-Hamid, http://socio.montadarabi.com/t1215-topic and Nasr 2003, p.43).

(2) All of which are contextually understood, but will not be discussed in this research because they are not related to the subject of this research and it can be proposed for a future research.

(3) Hofheinz mentions that in the earliest days of the web, in 1993, "Muslim student associations in America and Europe were quick to embrace the new medium to promote a global Islamic consciousness" (p.85). This emphasizes the assumption that Muslim groups were deprived from accessing using media to address Muslim and non-Muslim people, and thus, found their chance in the internet. He also indicated that there is an apparent trend for Arab web users to follow events relates to Muslim struggle (In Bosnia, Chechnya, Palestine, Kashmir, and other places) (p.88). This trend encouraged many Muslims to establish their own websites, aiming to attract audiences to them.

(4) This assumption is based on studies which reveal that there has been clear religious tendencies among Palestinian people, among whom are university students. Dalal Bajes noted that Islamic Blocs, the student arm of the Islamic movement, Hamas, dominated the student unions in most and biggest universities in Palestine, among which are An-Najah and Birzeit from 1996 until 2007, when Hamas took over Gaza and Fateh (the biggest secular movement, took over the West Bank (Bajes, 2012, pp.42, 193). In addition, Zeevi attributed the overwhelming victory of Hamas in the parliamentary elections in 2006, to "the rise of nationalist-religious tendencies" in Palestine (Zeevi, 2006, p.2).

that the audiences, who are educated young people, believe that Islamic websites are not the only source of information, and thus they are open to using other websites for relevant information. Young people, the researcher maintains, are not browsing these websites for religious purposes only, but also to follow other various topics (i.e. political, economic, social, etc.). Most importantly, Islamic *political* websites receive more attention by the respondents for various important reasons. Among these reasons is the politicization of Palestinian citizens due to the political situation in the Occupied Territories (the occupation, the ongoing confrontations with Israel, and the political instability in the region).

Moreover, the study argues that females are exposed more than males to Islamic websites, and that they are more influenced by these sites (since the religious polarization and Islamization trend among females is stronger than the males as studies have indicated)[1]. Moreover, students in scientific faculties are more interested in Islamic websites than those in the arts and humanities, since religion in Palestinian universities is more prevalent among college students in the scientific faculties (Barghouthi, 2012). Additionally, the population of the villages and refugee camps tend to gravitate toward these websites due to the conservative social environment present in those areas. In terms of the university students who are the central focus of this research, those at An-Najah University in Nablus, in the north of the OPTs, are more exposed to Islamic websites than students of Birzeit University due to the conservative environment in the City of Nablus compared to the southern City of Ramallah, which is more open and an international hub, where Birzeit University is located.

In reference to those who are not exposed to Islamic websites, the study assumes that it is due to the following reasons: First, they do not

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(1) Iyad Barghouthi, who is a professor in the field of political sociology, and has several studies in political Islam in Palestine, mentioned that he noticed that female students at the Palestinian universities tend to vote for Islamic groups more than the males. He added that, in addition, female members of Islamic groups at the universities are more than males (Barghouthi, interview, 2012).

agree with the arguments posted on those sites. Second, they object to these websites on the ground that the websites are affiliated with organizations the respondents disagree with. Finally, the study assumes that the respondents are attracted to moderate Islamic websites more than the extremist ones.

The first objective of this study, therefore, is to identify the extent that university students access Islamic websites, and the time and attention given to these sites by this important sector in Palestinian society compared to their exposure to other websites. Namely, among other objectives, the study is seeking to explore the degree of attention given by university students to Islamic websites for the purpose of developing them and to respond to their needs. Furthermore, one of the major objectives of this paper is to identify the extent of openness of the students to sites exposing other ideas and ideologies and political trends, reflecting the predisposition of those students in dealing with the principles of democracy, pluralism and diversity.

The study used descriptive analytical approach which draws on quantitative methods. For this purpose, a questionnaire was designed and distributed to a sample of students from An-Najah and Birzeit universities. Feedback on the questionnaire was solicited from a number of specialists in the field of media and humanities to ensure its validity. It was also tested by distributing it to a sample of students in a pilot phase of the research, and was revised accordingly. It was prepared as a final form for data gathering by the research community. [1]

The research is based on the Uses and Gratifications Theory which deals with "the motives for content choice and the satisfactions looked

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for and derived from media in terms of everyday social circumstances and needs" (McQuail, 1994, p.318). The theory, according to MacQuail, is "concerned with the choice, reception and manner of response of the media audience…. The audience members make a conscious and motivated choice among channels and content on offer" (McQuail, 1994, p.318).

The study has also drawn upon the Theory of Selectivity which states that the individual is exposed, remembers or interprets messages according to his / her behavior and prior convictions (Baran, 1999, p.322). These two theories are believed to be appropriate to the nature of this research where the audience is exposed to information from a large number of websites. Additionally, the audience choice of Islamic websites is in line with the concept of selectivity which corresponds to the audiences' personal references.

It should be noted that there are no previous studies regarding the exposure of Palestinian students to Islamic websites. However, relevant studies concerning the effects of internet sites on students have been drawn upon for this research.

In a study by Abu Warda (2011) entitled: "The impact of the Palestinian news websites on the orientation and political affiliation - Najah National University Students model - (2000-2007)" the researcher discussed the uses of Palestinian news websites by students, and the extent to which various student movements benefit from these sites in presenting their political ideas and aspirations. The study also dealt with the impact of those websites on students during the years of Al-Aqsa Intifada. Additionally, those websites play a role in increasing the gap between the rival Palestinian factions, due to the language and terminology used by them. The researcher indicated that Palestinian websites had a significant impact in perpetuating the political polarization among students. However, among the findings of the research was the high level of confidence in the Palestinian Islamic websites (especially websites affiliated with Hamas) by students. However, Abu Warda did not address the issue of exposure to Islamic websites except in the context of political polarization, and also by

comparing the exposed students to websites affiliated with both political parties (Hamas and Fatah).

In his study, "The Internet in the Arab World: Playground for Political Liberalization," Hofheinz (2005) dealt with the emergence and development of Arab websites; the trends of the Arab audience in their selection of sites. The main outcome of the research was that Islamic issues represented the most important issues to the audience. On the other hand, Hofheinz found that Islamic groups and organizations tended to establish their own websites, especially as "the Internet has proved an ideal medium for breaking the limitations traditionally imposed on whom is allowed to speak in public, and what it is proper to say or even think regarding the social, moral, and political orders" (Hofheinz, 2005, p.92).

In a study by Ceyhan (2011) which focused on Anadul University students' internet use, the author found particular forms of internet consumption amongst students who "use the Internet for entertainment purposes," and of those who "use the Internet to establish social relationships with unfamiliar people" were significantly higher than those who "use the Internet to obtain information." This result indicates that the use of the internet for entertainment and social interactions constitute an important risk vis-à-vis using it for obtaining information.

Two studies dealt with the Islamic websites, but from different angles. The first one, a study by Chawki (2010) entitled: "Islam in the Digital Age: Counseling and Fatwas[1] at the Click of a Mouse" dealt with Islamic sites, especially those related to religious fatwas, and their impact on the public in light of the September 11 attack. However, the study did not address the public's exposure to these websites or the way they used them. The second study is a research by Sokol and Sisler (2010) entitled: "Socializing on the Internet: Case Study of Internet Use among University Students in the United Arab Emirates," addressed the internet uses by UAE university students, especially in the field of social

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(1) Fatwas are formal legal opinions issued by a recognized religious legal authority. Fatwas are most frequently issued in response to social issues and concerns in accordance with religious law.

networking and interaction. The research did not address what kind of websites the students were exposed to.

Most of the studies examined above have focused on the websites in terms of their orientations, policies, and objectives, but have not addressed the degree of the audience's exposure and the way they value these websites, i.e. their uses and gratifications with these sites. For example, Sati's (2009) examination of "internet Islam" which examined US-based Islamic websites after September 11 concluded that people's use of such websites is turning the internet into a mass communication apparatus. He argued that religious material is now posted online and is accessible to anyone with an internet ready computer and where Muslim scholars are no longer only found in mosques, but are accessible through various media forums including online ones. Moreover, according to Sati, the internet is also enhancing the learning culture of Islam by making it easier to research and locate information. This has led to the emergence of a new Islamic movement in the United States – a movement that utilizes emerging communication technologies and allows its followers to practice Islam in a liberating environment, free from strict or controlling religious authorities.

Turning to research examining gender differences in internet use, Abdel-Hamid (2002) found in his study of students from the United Arab Emirates University that there was a slightly positive stance in both sexes in regards to the use of the internet. He suggests that there is no statistically significant difference between male and female students in the direction and rate of use. Additionally, positive uses are rising by regular internet users compared to those who are non-regular users. He also found that the internet use is higher among males than females. While the latter tend to use the internet for academic learning and obtaining general knowledge, the former often use it more for entertainment purposes. Therefore, the preferential utilization rate of the internet by females was in accordance to their academic achievements, while there is a negative correlation between the internet and academic achievement amongst the males.

Methodology

As indicated earlier, in the present study, the descriptive approach is adopted for analyzing the researched students' uses of Islamic websites. A questionnaire was adopted as a tool to collect the required data. The questionnaire was distributed to a sample of students at An-Najah and Birzeit universities in December 2010. The selection of those two universities was based on the grounds that they are the largest and oldest universities in the West Bank. Being that they are considered the most influential universities. Besides, An-Najah tends to be regarded as a more politically and socially conservative university, while Birzeit is regarded as more politically and socially liberal.

The sample of this research is as follows: Students of An-Najah University represented (62%) of the sample, while the students of Birzeit University represented (38%), given that the number of An-Najah University students is roughly (22,000) and that of Birzeit University is about (7,000).

The study chooses simple random sampling. The respondent students are between (19) and (21) years of age. The study includes both males and females, and the proportion of males to females is slightly higher ((51.9%) to (48.1%), respectively). Single non-married student respondents represent the majority of the sample (95.1%). The sample includes all the colleges but the humanity college sectors are slightly higher than the number of those at the scientific colleges ((51.7%) to (48.3%), respectively). The sample also includes students from different towns and villages. The results show that the highest proportion of students live in villages (57.7%). The following proportion of students living in cities is (37.8%) compared to those living in refugee camps (4.5%).

Table (1): Respondent Students (Sample Size).

Univ.	Frequency	Percentage
An-Najah	303	62
Birzeit	186	38
Total	**489**	**100**

The description of the sample is as follows:

Table (2): Demographic Descriptive of the Sample.

Variables		Frequency	Percentage
Age	18	18	3.7
	19	94	19.2
	20	138	28.2
	21	111	22.7
	22	68	13.9
	23	35	7.2
	More than 23	25	5.1
	Total	489	100
Gender	Male	254	51.9
	Female	235	48.1
	Total	489	100
Marital status	Single	465	95.1
	Married	21	4.3
	Divorced	3	0.6
	Total	489	100
Faculty	Scientific faculties	253	51.7
	Humanities faculties	236	48.3
	Total	489	100
Places of residence	City	185	37.8
	Village	282	57.7
	Camp	22	4.5
	Total	489	100

Students' uses of Islamic websites

The research predicted that there would be a high percentage of students seeking out Islamic website in Palestine for many reasons, including the prevalent spread of Islamic websites there, in addition to

the fact that the Palestinian society is generally conservative, and it is geared towards religion. However, the results indicate that the proportion of students' exposed to Islamic websites is not very high, for it does not exceed half of the students. Notwithstanding the percentage of the respondent students from An-Najah University surpassing the percentage of those respondents of Birzeit University ((57.8%) and (42.2%), respectively) as illustrated in Table (3).

Table (3): Respondents' Exposure to Islamic Websites.

	An-Najah	**Birzeit**	**Total**
Yes	157 57.8%	70 37.6%	245 50.1%
No	128 42.2%	116 62.4%	244 49.1%

The table displays the exposed proportion of students from both An-Najah and Birzeit universities to Islamic websites. The table illustrates that although slightly more than half of the total students at both universities are exposed to those sites (50.1%), the majority of Birzeit students are not exposed to them (62.4%), while a tangible majority of An-Najah students are exposed to them (57.8%).

Table (4): Respondents' Exposure to Islamic Websites According to Gender.

	An-Najah			Birzeit			Total (within two universities)		
	Exposed	Not exposed	Total	Exposed	Not exposed	Total	Exposed	Not exposed	Total
Male	98 59%	68 41%	166 100%	33 37.5%	55 62.5%	88 100%	131 51.6%	123 48.4%	254 100%
Female	77 56.2%	60 43.8%	137 100%	37 37.8%	61 62.2%	98 100%	114 48.5%	121 51.5%	235 100%

Table (4) shows the percentage of female students at An-Najah University who are exposed to Islamic websites being (56.2%) slightly lower than male exposure to such websites (59%). In Birzeit University the proportion of females and males is relatively close [(37.8%) to (37.5%)]. This indicates that both sexes are exposed to Islamic websites, but the proportion of males who are exposed to Islamic websites is slightly higher than that of females ((51.6%) to (48.5%)).

Table (5): Respondents' Exposure to the Islamic Websites According to Faculty.

	An-Najah			Birzeit			Total (within two universities)		
	Exposed	Not exposed	Total	Exposed	Not exposed	Total	Exposed	Not exposed	Total
Humanities faculties	90 56.3%	70 43.7%	160 100%	36 38.7%	57 61.3%	93 100%	126 49.8%	127 50.2%	253 100%
Scientific faculties	85 59.4%	58 40.6%	143 100%	34 36.6%	59 63.4%	93 100%	119 44.1%	151 55.9%	236 100%

Table (5) illustrates the percentage of students who are exposed to Islamic websites in the scientific faculties at An-Najah University being slightly higher than those from the humanities ((59.4%) to (56.3%)). At Birzeit University, the percentage of students exposed to those sites is slightly higher in the humanities than it is at the scientific faculties ((38.7%) to (36.6%)). The percentage of the total students who are exposed to Islamic websites at both universities is higher in the faculties of humanities than the percentage of those of the scientific faculties ((49.8%) to (44.1%)).

Table (6): Respondents' Exposure to Islamic Websites According to Places of Residence.

	An-Najah			Birzeit			Total (within two universities)		
	Exposed	Not exposed	Total	Exposed	Not exposed	Total	Exposed	Not exposed	Total
City	58 50.9%	56 49.1%	114 100%	25 35.2%	46 64.8%	71 100%	83 44.9%	102 55.1%	185 100%
Village	110 62.1%	67 37.9%	177 100%	41 39%	64 61%	105 100%	151 53.5%	131 46.5%	282 100%
Refugee camp	7 58.3%	5 41.7%	12 100%	4 40%	6 60%	10 100%	11 50%	11 50%	22 100%

Table (6) indicates that the proportion of exposed students to Islamic websites from An-Najah National University from rural areas is the highest, followed by students from refugee camps, followed by students living in urban areas ((62.1%) to (58.3%) to (50.9%)). As for Birzeit University most of the students living in refugee camp are exposed to those websites, followed by students from rural areas, and then students from urban areas ((40%) to (39%) to (35.2%)). The table shows that the proportion of the total number of students from both universities who are exposed to Islamic websites is higher among those living in rural areas, followed by those living in refugee camps, and then those living in urban areas ((53.5%) to (50%) to (44.9%)).The result clearly indicates that students living in rural areas and refugee camps from both universities are mainly exposed to Islamic websites, while those living in urban areas are less exposed to these sites.

Reasons mentioned by those who are not exposed to Islamic websites

Prior to analyzing results in regards to the reasons of exposure to Islamic websites by the respondent students, it is appropriate to examine the reasons behind the lack of exposure by those who said they were not exposed to those websites. In fact, the results are clearly striking, as seen in Table (7).

Table (7): Respondents' Reasons of Non- Exposure to Islamic Websites.

	Statement	Agree			Disagree			No opinion		
		An-Najah	Birzeit	Total	An-Najah	Birzeit	Total	An-Najah	Birzeit	Total
1	Content not interesting	51 39.8%	45 38.5%	96 39.2%	42 32.8%	49 41.9%	91 37.1%	35 27.3%	23 19.7%	58 23.7%
2	I disagree with their argument	29 22.7%	33 28.2%	62 25.3%	59 46.1%	68 58.1%	127 51.8%	40 31.1%	16 13.7%	56 22.9%
3	They belong to political parties I disagree with	63 49.2%	59 50.4%	122 49.8%	36 28.1%	36 30.8%	72 29.4%	29 22.7%	22 18.8%	51 20.8%
4	I think they are dishonest, and are using religion as a cover-up	44 34.4%	48 41.0%	92 37.6%	52 40.6%	50 42.7%	102 41.6%	32 25.0%	19 16.2%	51 20.8%

…continue table (7)

	Statement	Agree			Disagree			No opinion		
		An-Najah	Birzeit	Total	An-Najah	Birzeit	Total	An-Najah	Birzeit	Total
5	They do not keep pace with life's development	39 30.5%	27 23.1%	66 26.9%	73 57.0%	67 57.3%	140 57.1%	16 12.5%	23 19.7%	39 15.9%
6	They are not open to all people's thoughts	49 38.3%	40 34.2%	89 36.3%	54 42.2%	57 48.7%	111 45.3%	25 19.5%	20 17.1%	45 18.4%
7	They are unacceptable because they represent different Islamic sects	33 25.8%	30 25.6%	63 25.7%	66 51.6%	62 53.0%	128 52.2%	29 22.6%	25 21.4%	54 22.0%
8	They are distancing themselves from the correct understanding of religion	47 36.7%	42 35.9%	89 36.3%	45 35.2%	52 44.4%	97 39.6%	36 28.1%	23 19.7%	59 24.1%

	Statement	Agree			Disagree			No opinion		
		An-Najah	Birzeit	Total	An-Najah	Birzeit	Total	An-Najah	Birzeit	Total
9	Their designs are not attractive	49 38.3%	37 31.6%	86 35.1%	46 35.9%	46 39.3%	92 37.6%	33 25.8%	34 29.1%	67 27.3%
10	They do not allow the browser to express his / her opinion	50 39.1%	34 29.1%	84 34.3%	38 29.7%	43 36.8%	81 33.1%	40 31.3%	40 34.2%	80 32.7%

Table (7) indicates a number of striking points; the first is that the respondents attributed their refrainment from exposure to Islamic websites not to have a substantial disagreement with the ideas of Islamic websites. They, however, mentioned other marginal reasons. For example, the results indicate that (39.2%) of the respondents found the contents of those sites uninteresting compared to (37.1%) who disagreed with this statement. What is striking here is that the largest proportion of students from Birzeit University disagree with the statement that Islamic websites are not interesting (41.9%) compared to the proportion of students from An-Najah University (32.8%).The results indicate that (51.8%) disagreed with the statement "do not agree with the arguments of those sites" compared to (25.3%) who agreed with the statement. The proportion of those who disagreed with this statement is higher among Birzeit University students in comparison with An-Najah University students ((58.1%) to (46.1%) respectively).The majority of students (49.8%) agreed that they were not exposed to these websites due to their affiliation with certain political parties not endorsed by them. This is

compared to (29.4%) who disagreed. The percentages of students who agreed and who disagreed to these statements from both universities are relatively close.

As for those who are not exposed to those websites because "they are not honest and believe they are using religion as a cover-up," the table indicates that the majority of respondents disagree with this statement (41.6%) compared to (37.6%) who agree, noting that the percentage of students at Birzeit University who agree with this statement is higher than that of An-Najah University ((41%) to (34%) respectively).

In relation to the statement "those websites do not keep pace with life's development," the results indicate that the majority of students disagree (57.1%), compared to (26.9%) who agree with this statement. The table shows that the percentage of students at An-Najah University who agree with this statement was higher than that of Birzeit University students ((30.5%) to (23.1%), respectively). In addition, the table shows that most respondents disagree with the statement that these websites are "not open to people's opinions" (45.3%) compared to (36.3%) who agree with it. The percentage of students from Birzeit University who disagree with this statement is higher than those of An-Najah University students ((48.7%) to (42.2%)).

Concerning non-exposure to those websites because "they are unacceptable because they represent different Islamic sects," since the results indicate that most respondents disagree with the statement (52.2%) compared to (25.7%) who agree with it. There is a similarity between the proportion of those who agree and those who disagree to this statement among students at both universities.

As for the statement "those websites distance themselves from the correct understanding of religion," the results indicate that most students (39.6%) disagree with that, compared to (36.3%) who agree with it. The results also show that the proportion of students within An-Najah University who disagree with this statement is similar to that proportion of those who agree ((35.2%) to (36.7%)).

In regard to non-exposure as a result of "the non-attractive design," the results indicate that the majority of students disagree (37.6%) compared to (35.1%) who agree. The results also indicate that the students of An-Najah University who disagree with this statement being less than those who agree from within the university ((35.9%) to (38.3%)).

The table also indicates that the proportion of those who agree and that of those who disagree with the statement "Islamic websites do not allow others to express their opinion" is relatively close ((34.3%) to (33.1%)). This reveals that respondents are generally more interested in interacting with those sites. It is striking that the percentage of Birzeit University students who disagree with this statement is higher than that of those who agree with it ((36.8%) to (29.1%)). But the results indicate the opposite result among An-Najah University students, who disagree with this statement in relations to those who agree with it ((29.7%) to (39.1%)).

This indicates that the lack of exposure is not due to rejection of those sites in principle, but perhaps due to the nature of those sites, and those funding them, especially if they are geared towards a particular Islamic party. Moreover, the reason could be attributed to these sites not allowing others to express their opinions.

It should be noted that a high percentage of students from both universities selected the "no opinion" statement. This could be attributed to many reasons, among of which could be that students are not exposed to Islamic websites because they are not aware of their existence. Therefore, they are unable to form an opinion or make an accurate assessment of the websites. The other argument could be that they do not oppose neither do they support these Islamic websites. More importantly their selection of "no opinion" could be a result of hesitance in approaching Islamic topics which are deemed sensitive in nature and which are causing anxiety among citizens.

Uses of Islamic websites seekers

The reasons behind the non-exposure to Islamic websites are indeed important, but more important are the effects of exposure to these websites on the social and political interactions of society. This portion of the study is divided into five sections: the first focuses on the students' exposure to Islamic websites; the second examines the nature of those websites; the third tackles the importance of these sites and their roles, like defying authoritarian regimes, being an outlet for Islamic websites to reach out to the masses, and opening the door for the development of Islamic media, just to name a few, the fourth looks at the content of these websites attracting student respondents, and the fifth considers the possible effects of these websites on the student respondents and their interactions.

1. Reasons given by those who are exposed to Islamic websites

A number of statements related to formal aspects in addition to the content of Islamic websites were presented to the student respondents in order to identify the reasons behind their attraction to these sites. The results were as follows:

Table (8): Respondents' Reasons of Exposure to Islamic Websites.

		Agree			Disagree			No opinion		
	Statement	**An-Najah**	**Birzeit**	**Total**	**An-Najah**	**Birzeit**	**Total**	**An-Najah**	**Birzeit**	**Total**
11	I am exposed to Islamic websites more than to other websites	98 56.0%	29 42.0%	127 52.0%	62 35.4%	38 55.1%	100 41.0%	15 8.6%	2 2.9%	17 7.0%

…continue table (8)

	Statement	Agree			Disagree			No opinion		
		An-Najah	Birzeit	Total	An-Najah	Birzeit	Total	An-Najah	Birzeit	Total
12	I find them interesting	144 82.3%	52 75.4%	196 80.3%	17 9.7%	11 15.9%	28 11.5%	14 8.0%	6 8.7%	20 8.2%
13	They complement my thoughts and objectives	119 68.0%	47 68.1%	166 68.0%	31 17.7%	15 21.7%	46 18.9%	25 14.3%	7 10.1%	32 13.1%
14	I am curious about them	142 81.1%	56 81.2%	198 81.1%	22 12.6%	8 11.6%	30 12.3%	11 6.3%	5 7.2%	16 6.6%
15	Their designs attract me	81 46.3%	34 49.3%	115 47.1%	52 29.7%	22 31.9%	74 30.3%	42 24.0%	13 18.8%	55 22.5%
16	I am encouraged by friends and relatives to browse them	91 52.0%	32 46.4%	123 50.4%	52 29.7%	26 37.7%	78 32.0%	32 18.3%	11 15.9%	43 17.6%
17	I find them truthful	125 71.4%	37 53.6%	162 66.4%	21 12.0%	16 23.2%	37 15.2%	29 16.6%	16 23.2%	45 18.4%

...continue table (8)

	Statement	Agree			Disagree			No opinion		
		An-Najah	Birzeit	Total	An-Najah	Birzeit	Total	An-Najah	Birzeit	Total
18	I find their argument logical	115 65.7%	41 59.4%	156 63.9%	26 14.9%	10 14.5%	36 14.8%	34 19.4%	18 26.1%	52 21.3%
19	I find that they keep pace with life's development	132 75.4%	50 72.5%	182 74.6%	24 13.7%	11 15.9%	35 14.3%	19 10.9%	8 11.6%	27 11.1%
20	They complement my desires	114 65.1%	41 59.4%	155 63.5%	35 20.0%	15 21.7%	50 20.5%	26 14.9%	13 18.8%	39 16.0%
21	They help me develop my knowledge	147 84.0%	59 85.5%	206 84.4%	14 8.0%	7 10.1%	21 8.6%	14 8.0%	3 4.3%	17 7.0%

Table (8) shows that a slight majority of student respondents agree to the statement that they are exposed to Islamic websites more than any other sites (52%), compared to (41%) who disagree with this statement. This proportion is high and reflects the preference of these students to Islamic websites over the other sites. It is important to note that although the majority of students exposed to those sites are high it does not confirm that they are not exposed to others. The percentage of students from An-Najah University which prefers Islamic websites was slightly higher in comparison to that of students from Birzeit University ((56%) to (42%)). This figure confirms the hypothesis that students of An-Najah

University are more exposed to these sites than Birzeit University students, and that they favor those sites above others.

The results indicate that the overwhelming majority of respondents who are exposed to Islamic websites (80.3%) believe that these sites are interesting, revealing that they appeal to many people and that their content satisfies a wide range of browsers. In addition, the results indicate the students of An-Najah University support the statement that these sites are interesting compared with those of Birzeit University ((82.3%) to (75.4%)). This suggests that these sites do not lack (from the viewpoint of the respondents) the element of attraction.

The table also illustrates that more than two-thirds (68%) of the student respondents who are exposed to Islamic websites have their own thoughts and beliefs reflected on those websites. This is especially significant because it reveals that the majority of these students visit such sites not for the purpose of obtaining knowledge, but due to their convictions which complements the contents of these sites. The table illustrates that there is a little difference between the percentage of An-Najah University students and those of Birzeit University, who feel that these sites are consistent with their beliefs. The table also indicates that a large majority of students from both universities display a curiosity towards these websites (81.1%).

The table shows that almost half of those students (47.1%) are attracted by the design of the Islamic websites (the Birzeit students slightly excelled those of An-Najah in this opinion ((49.3%) compared to (46.3%)). But this percentage is lower compared with those who are attracted to the contents, as noted above. This indicates that websites not viewed as Islamic have better artistic designs.

The percentage of students who are encouraged by their friends and family to browse these sites is (50.4%) compared to (32%) who are not. This refers to the degree of acceptance enjoyed by these sites by members of society (with a higher proportion of students at the An-Najah University than those at Birzeit University ((52%) to (46.4%)). This further emphasizes the idea that the environment in An-Najah University

is geared towards Islamic trends at a higher level than in Birzeit University.

The table also indicates that about two-thirds of students who are exposed to these sites (66.4%) believe their arguments to be sincere compared with (18.4%) who oppose this statement. The case is similar for whether Islamic websites pose logical arguments; (63.9%) agree with this and (14.8%) disagree. This suggests a high proportion of student browsers believe that the contents of these websites are credible. (An-Najah students believe more so than Birzeit students).

The table also indicates that about three-quarters of student respondents who are exposed to these sites (74.6%) believe the sites kept pace with societal development. This is significant because it reflects that the respondents approve and believe these sites keep up-to-date with the surrounding environment. They are not enclosed or isolated from social life and social development (students of An-Najah University slightly outperform students of Birzeit University in this regard). The majority of these students, with a percentage of (63.5%), agree with this statement that the content of those sites are consistent with their views (with the proportion of An-Najah University students surpassing that of Birzeit University students). The results are similar to what was mentioned above with regard to the content of these sites being consistent with browsers' thoughts and beliefs.

The results also confirm the high approval (84.4%) of browsers who believe that Islamic websites help them develop their knowledge (the percentage of An-Najah students' converge with that of Birzeit students).

2. The nature of the Islamic websites as seen by respondents

A number of statements presented in the questionnaire with regard to the nature of Islamic websites shed light on the degree of importance of these websites.

Table (9): The Natures and Orientations of Islamic Websites as the Respondents View Them.

	Statement	Agree			Disagree			No opinion		
		An-Najah	Birzeit	Total	An-Najah	Birzeit	Total	An-Najah	Birzeit	Total
22	I follow websites of Islamic parties	63 36.0%	23 33.3%	26 35.2%	90 51.4%	41 59.4%	131 53.7%	22 12.6%	5 7.2%	27 11.1%
23	I follow various Islamic websites	147 84.0%	56 81.2%	203 83.2%	20 11.4%	8 11.6%	28 11.5%	8 4.6%	5 7.2%	13 5.3%
24	I follow Islamic websites representing only religious contents	134 76.6%	58 84.1%	192 78.7%	27 15.4%	9 13.0%	36 14.8%	13 7.4%	2 2.9%	15 6.1%
25	Various Islamic websites contain useful and interesting information	143 81.7%	58 84.1%	201 82.4%	16 9.1%	2 2.9%	18 7.4%	16 9.1%	9 13.0%	25 10.2%

…continue table (9)

	Statement	Agree			Disagree			No opinion		
		An-Najah	Birzeit	Total	An-Najah	Birzeit	Total	An-Najah	Birzeit	Total
26	Various Islamic websites deal with matters in an eloquent manner	130 74.3%	48 69.6%	178 73.0%	24 13.7%	10 14.5%	34 13.9%	21 12.0%	11 15.9%	32 13.1%
27	Various Islamic websites preserve people's morals and culture	158 90.3%	62 89.9%	220 90.2%	9 5.1%	2 2.9%	11 4.5%	8 4.8%	5 7.2%	13 5.3%

Positive response by students exposed to Islamic websites changes when these websites are associated with Islamic political parties. It is found in Table (9) that the majority of those students (53.7%) are not exposed to Islamic *party* websites, compared to almost one-third of students (35.2%) who are exposed to them. It is noted that the proportion of Birzeit students who are not exposed to Islamic party websites is higher than that of An-Najah students ((59.4%) to (51.4%)). According to the results, the majority of student respondents who are exposed to Islamic websites (83.2%) are exposed to non-political Islamic websites (or that their Islamic political party is undeclared). These websites may include cultural, scientific, religious, political and social contents, and are not focused merely on religious matters. The table illustrates that (78.7%) the majority of respondents are exposed to religious sites. Students of Birzeit University are more openly exposed to religious sites compared to students of An-Najah University ((84.1%) to (76.6%)). They are

generally more open to religious sites not affiliated to any Islamic parties to a higher degree than the An-Najah students.

The table also indicates that the overwhelming majority of student respondents agree to the statement that "various Islamic websites provide useful and interesting information" (82.4%). (The ratio is similar between students of Birzeit and An-Najah University). The table also reveals that most (about three-quarters) of the students believe that the various Islamic websites address issues in an eloquent manner (73%). (The proportion is higher among An-Najah students in support of this statement than among the students of Birzeit ((74.3%) to (69.6%))).

The table also indicates that there is a high percentage of student respondents who believe that various Islamic websites attempt to preserve people's morals and culture (90.2%) (With a substantial convergence between the percentage of Birzeit students and that of An-Najah who support this statement). Generally speaking, these results could explain the fundamental reasons why student respondents are exposed to Islamic websites.

3. The importance of Islamic websites and their roles

The following section focuses on the freedom of space accorded to student respondents on Islamic websites.

Table (10): The Importance of Islamic Websites to Respondents, and their Roles.

	Statement	Agree			Disagree			No opinion		
		An-Najah	Birzeit	Total	An-Najah	Birzeit	Total	An-Najah	Birzeit	Total
28	Islamic websites defy authoritarian governments	72 41.1%	26 37.7%	98 40.2%	55 31.4%	30 43.5%	85 34.8%	47 26.9%	13 18.8%	60 24.6%
29	Internet is an excellent outlet for Islamic websites to reach out to the masses	145 82.9%	58 84.1%	203 83.2%	15 8.6%	7 10.1%	22 9.0%	15 8.6%	4 5.8%	19 7.8%
30	The Internet opened the door for the development of Islamic media	15 85.7%	57 82.6%	207 84.8%	9 5.1%	6 8.7%	15 6.1%	16 9.1%	6 8.7%	22 9.0%
31	Not all Islamic websites are reliable	102 58.3%	43 62.3%	145 59.4%	54 30.9%	19 27.6%	73 29.9%	19 10.9%	7 10.1%	26 10.7%

	Statement	Agree			Disagree			No opinion		
		An-Najah	Birzeit	Total	An-Najah	Birzeit	Total	An-Najah	Birzeit	Total
32	Islamic websites have reached non-Muslims	139 79.4%	35 79.7%	194 79.5%	22 12.6%	6 8.7%	28 11.5%	14 8.0%	8 11.6%	22 9.0%
33	Islamic websites enjoy a parallel success with other non-Islamic websites	93 53.1%	44 63.8%	137 56.1%	45 25.7%	14 20.3%	59 24.2%	37 21.1%	11 15.9%	48 19.7%
34	Religious websites are generally better than Islamic sites	59 33.7%	21 30.4%	80 32.8%	72 41.1%	26 37.7%	98 40.2%	44 25.1%	22 31.9%	66 27.0%
35	Islamic websites are not all good	104 59.4%	46 66.7%	150 61.5%	45 25.7%	13 18.8%	58 23.8%	26 14.9%	9 13.0%	35 14.3%

Table (10) indicates that (40.2%) of student respondents in both universities believe the Islamic websites pose a challenge to the government. The table shows a clear contrast between An-Najah and Birzeit students in this regard. Students at An-Najah (41.1%), agree with

this statement, while (31.4%) disagree with it. On the other hand (37.7%) of Birzeit students supported the statement compared to (43.5%) who opposed it.

The table indicates also that a high percentage of An-Najah students did not give an opinion in this matter (26.9%) and fewer students of Birzeit University (18.8%) did the same. This may reflect students' avoidance in visiting sites affiliated with political ideologies, especially when they pose an opposition to the government.

With regard to the statement that Islamic websites are an outlet for the masses (without reference to the political dimension), (83.2%) student respondents supported this (the ratio is similar between An-Najah and Birzeit students).

This was also the case with regard to the statement that the internet opened a wide door for the development of Islamic media (which have suffered for long from restrictions in many countries). The table illustrates that the vast majority, (84.8%), supported this statement (The ratio is similar between An-Najah and Birzeit students).

The table also shows there is a clear majority of student respondents who believe that there are a limited number of Islamic websites that can be relied upon (59.4%) (with a similar ratio among students of both universities).

The table additionally shows that the majority of student respondents, (79.5%), believe that Islamic websites manage to address non-Muslims (The ratio is similar between An-Najah and Birzeit students). In the same manner, the statement that "Islamic websites managed to make a parallel success to that of other sites" was supported by the majority of students (56.1%). Birzeit students were more in support of this statement than An-Najah students ((63.8%) to (53.1%)). This represents students' critical assessment of Islamic websites and their performance level compared to other sites. Less than two-thirds of Birzeit students supported this and slightly more than half of the students of An-Najah, clearly indicating students acceptance to these websites.

The table also reveals that a relatively high number of respondents, (40.2%), disagree with the statement that religious websites are better than Islamic sites which represent arts and politics compared to (32.8%) who agree with it. The proportion of those who chose "no opinion" on this statement is relatively high (27%). The proportion of An-Najah students slightly exceeded that of Birzeit students in terms of disagreement with this statement (41.1%) compared to (37.7%), respectively. This indicates that there is a positive trend towards religious websites, but Islamic websites are still considered more favorable. The results also show that about a quarter of the respondents chose no opinion for this statement, which indicates that they have no preference for religious sites or various Islamic ones.

The table also shows the majority of students supported the statement that not all Islamic sites are good (61.5%). Birzeit students exceeded An-Najah students (66.7%) to (59.4%)). It can be argued that students from both universities have enough awareness to distinguish between different Islamic sites and have a preference and offer a critical perspective on sites deemed good or bad.

4.   Contents of sites that attracted student respondents

The following topics and sections focus on various Islamic websites. This section also displays the contents student respondents are exposed to and their preference.

Table (11): The Content of Websites Respondents Exposed to.

	Statement	Agree			Disagree			No opinion		
		An-Najah	Birzeit	Total	An-Najah	Birzeit	Total	An-Najah	Birzeit	Total
36	I listen to Quran on Islamic websites	125 71.4%	45 65.2%	170 69.7%	38 21.7%	17 24.6%	55 22.5%	12 6.9%	7 10.1%	19 7.8%

...continue table (11)

	Statement	Agree			Disagree			No opinion		
		An-Najah	Birzeit	Total	An-Najah	Birzeit	Total	An-Najah	Birzeit	Total
37	I follow the Hadith on Islamic websites	107 61.1%	33 47.8%	140 57.4%	50 28.6%	26 37.7%	76 31.1%	18 10.3%	10 14.5%	28 11.5%
38	I follow Quran and Sunna interpretation on Islamic websites	106 60.6%	44 63.8%	150 61.5%	48 27.4%	17 24.6%	65 26.6%	21 12.0%	8 11.6%	29 11.9%
39	I follow Islamic jurisprudence on Islamic websites	122 69.7%	45 65.2%	167 68.4%	36 20.6%	16 23.2%	52 21.3%	17 9.7%	8 11.6%	25 10.2%
40	Islamic websites provide me with political news	79 45.1%	27 39.1%	106 43.4%	60 34.3%	31 44.9%	91 37.3%	36 20.6%	11 15.9%	47 19.3%
41	I follow social and cultural issues on Islamic websites	130 74.3%	52 75.4%	182 74.6%	30 17.1%	13 18.8%	43 17.6%	15 8.6%	4 5.8%	19 7.8%

…continue table (11)

	Statement	Agree			Disagree			No opinion		
		An-Najah	Birzeit	Total	An-Najah	Birzeit	Total	An-Najah	Birzeit	Total
42	I follow scientific issues on Islamic websites	134 76.6%	53 76.8%	187 76.6%	27 15.4%	11 15.9%	38 15.6%	14 8.0%	5 7.2%	19 7.8%
43	I participate in chats on Islamic websites	61 34.9%	20 29.0%	81 33.2%	92 52.6%	43 62.3%	135 55.3%	22 12.6%	6 8.7%	28 11.5%
44	I follow political analyses on Islamic websites	73 41.7%	26 37.7%	99 40.6%	75 42.9%	38 55.1%	113 46.3%	27 15.4%	5 7.2%	32 13.1%
45	I am more interested in Palestinian Islamic websites	84 48.0%	30 43.5%	114 46.7%	69 39.4%	27 37.1%	96 39.3%	22 12.6%	12 17.4%	34 13.9%

Table (11) illustrates that the majority of respondents visit religious parts from Islamic websites. They are interested in religious topics, regardless of whether the website is a religious one or a general Islamic website. The results indicate that (69.7%) of the student respondents say they listen to the Holy Quran on Islamic sites. It is apparent that the number of students from An-Najah University who listen to the Holy Quran from those sites is higher than their counterparts from Birzeit University ((71.4%) to (65.2%)).

The same applies to student respondents following Hadith[1] in those websites. According to the results, the majority of students following the Hadith are (57.4%). The table illustrates that the students of An-Najah exceeded those of Birzeit in respect to following the Hadith ((61.1%) to (47.8%)).

The results are also similar with respect to students following-up interpretation of the Quran and the Sunnah (61.5%). The results are similar for both universities ((60.6%) to (63.8%).

A similar result is found with regard to keeping up-to-date with Islamic jurisprudence on Islamic websites. The majority of the respondents follow these issues (68.4%). (The proportion is similar in both universities).

The results reflect a clear difference in terms of political issues. There is a decline in the proportion of those who are exposed to these sites for political purposes. Although the majority of respondents say that Islamic websites provide them with political news (43.4%), there is still a relatively high percentage of students who disagree with the statement by up to (37.3%). In addition, the results reveal that a majority of An-Najah students believe that Islamic websites provide them with political news (45.1%), whereas the majority of respondents of Birzeit disagree (44.9%).

The decline in visiting Islamic websites for the purpose of obtaining political news is due to the prevalent number of political websites which are not necessarily affiliated with any religious institutions, and are considered reliable sources. Moreover, the results indicate that (46.3%) of student respondents do not visit Islamic websites for the purpose of obtaining political analysis. (42.9%) of An-Najah students are not exposed to Islamic websites for the purpose of obtaining political analysis compared to (55.1%) of Birzeit students.

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(1) Hadith is "a collection of traditions containing sayings of the prophet Muhammad which, with accounts of his daily practice (the Sunna), constitute the major source of guidance for Muslims apart from the Koran" (http://oxforddictionaries.com/definition/Hadith?q=Hadith).

With regard to keeping-up with social, cultural, and scientific issues on Islamic websites, the researcher finds that there is a high percentage of students who follow these topics; roughly three-quarters of the respondents (74.6%) follow social and cultural topics and (76.6%) follow scientific issues. (The ratio is similar between An-Najah and Birzeit students).

The results indicate that the respondents interacting with Islamic websites by engaging in chats do not constitute a majority. The majority of respondents, (55.3%), disagree with this statement. The proportion of Birzeit students disagreeing with this statement is significantly higher than that of An-Najah, ((62.3%) to (52.6%)). The proportion of An-Najah students who engage in chat rooms from those websites is relatively higher than that of Birzeit, ((34.9%) to (29%)), but this proportion does not constitute the majority in both universities.

According to the results, the majority of respondents, (46.7%), rely on *Palestinian* Islamic websites. This is understandable taking into consideration that the respondents are Palestinians.

5. The degree to which respondents are affected by those sites and their interaction with them

This section focuses on the student's critical perspective of the Islamic websites, and the degree to which they are affected by them, as well as their interactions with these websites.

Table (12): The Impact Level on Respondents, and their Interaction with Islamic Websites.

	Statement	Agree			Disagree			No opinion		
		An-Najah	Birzeit	Total	An-Najah	Birzeit	Total	An-Najah	Birzeit	Total
46	I participate in Islamic websites through correspondence, chatting, and comments	54 30.9%	11 15.9%	65 26.6%	96 54.9%	46 66.7%	142 58.2%	25 14.3%	12 17.4%	37 15.2%
47	I encourage my friends to browse Islamic websites	107 61.1%	38 55.1%	145 59.4%	38 21.7%	20 29.0%	58 23.8%	30 17.1%	11 15.9%	41 16.8%
48	Islamic websites have a positive impact on my personality	126 72.0%	46 66.7%	172 70.5%	17 9.7%	11 15.9%	28 11.5%	32 18.3%	12 17.4%	44 18.0%

	Statement	Agree			Disagree			No opinion		
		An-Najah	Birzeit	Total	An-Najah	Birzeit	Total	An-Najah	Birzeit	Total
49	I am satisfied and I limit myself to the information provided by Islamic websites	21 12.0%	10 14.5%	31 12.7%	131 74.9%	52 75.4%	183 75.0%	23 13.1%	7 10.1%	30 12.3%
50	Political news on Islamic websites are more objective than on other websites	59 33.7%	20 29.0%	79 32.4%	64 36.6%	28 40.6%	92 37.7%	52 29.7%	21 30.4%	73 29.9%

Table (12) illustrates that the majority of respondents do not interact with Islamic websites via discussions or comments (58.2%). The results also illustrate that the percentage of students from An-Najah University who participate in these sites is almost double the percentage of students of Birzeit University ((30.9%) to (15.9%)). The results further emphasize the conclusion, illustrated in Table (11), with regard to the students' participation in Islamic websites.

Remarkably, the results also reveal that (59.4%) of students encourage their friends to browse Islamic websites. An-Najah students do more so than Birzeit students ((61.1%) to (55.1%)).

This reinforces the result derived from Table (8) where (50.4%) of students find encouragement from friends and relatives to browse the sites. This reflects a general interaction between the student and the social environment with respect to the exposure of those sites. It also indicates an emotional link to these websites and the belief that these websites are consistent with the principles of the community.

With regard to the influence of Islamic websites, an overwhelming majority of student respondents (70.5%) indicate that their personalities were affected by those sites; An-Najah students are affected more so than Birzeit students ((70%) to (66.7%)). This result is consistent with what was reported in Table (9), (90.2%) of the student respondents supported the statement that Islamic websites helped preserve people's culture and moral values.

As regards the statement whether the students are satisfied and limit themselves with the information provided by Islamic sites, the results indicate that a high percentage, (75%), disagrees with this statement. Additionally, (40.6%) of students also indicate that they disagree with the idea that Islamic sites are more objective than other websites. This could reflect a degree of interest in other various websites not associated with Islam. A high percentage of student respondents, (29.9%), did not show either support or opposition to this statement.

The Results of the study

The results of this study can be summarized as follows:

1. There is a clear acceptance by slightly more than a half of the students from both Birzeit and An-Najah universities to Islamic websites. About half the student respondents are exposed to such websites.

2. An-Najah University students are more exposed to Islamic websites compared with Birzeit University students.

3. This study shows that students' in exposure to Islamic websites is due to the following reasons: they are not interesting; belong to

Islamic parties; do not allow others an avenue to express their opinions.

4. Students who were not exposed to Islamic websites did not automatically reject these websites. They, however, have reservations about certain aspects in those websites, particularly when it comes to the statement: "they belong to political parties I disagree with."

5. The proportion of male and female exposure to Islamic websites is relatively close, and there is no significant difference between them.

6. The data proportion of students from the humanities and scientific colleges reflect a general similarity.

7. The students from the urban population exposed to Islamic websites formed the least proportion. Students from the villages formed the largest proportion, followed by students from the refugee camps (noting that in Birzeit University, the percentages of the students in the refugee camps and villages were relatively close to a large extent).

8. There is a clear majority of students browsing Islamic websites and approving the contents, design, and information presented on those websites.

9. A high proportion of students exposed to those websites indicates that they benefit from them, and they believe that they contribute to the preservation of their culture and morals.

10. There is a reservation by students, when it comes to visiting Islamic websites, associated with Islamic parties.

11. The majority of students believe that Islamic websites constitute an important outlet for opposing the government, and an avenue to express their views to the public. They also convey the message of Islam to non-Muslim societies.

12. Students are willing to visit religious websites, but prefer Islamic websites offering a variety of various subjects.

13. The majority of students believe that the Islamic websites represent a significant development in the Islamic media, and have achieved success which parallels the success of other websites. The majority of students also believe that Islamic websites are not all good, a clear indication that they are able to distinguish between good and not good Islamic websites.

14. The majority of students oppose the idea that Islamic websites provide them with news and political analysis, reflecting openness to other non-Islamic websites.

15. The majority of students tend to browse Palestinian Islamic websites.

16. Most students do not interact with Islamic websites via discussions and/or chats.

17. Many students are encouraged by friends and family to browse Islamic websites. Most students also confirm that they encourage their friends to browse these websites.

18. The majority of students indicate that they visit other websites that are not Islamic in nature to obtain other relevant information. They also do not believe political news stories from Islamic websites are more objective than in other sites.

The above results could be outlined as follows:

1. Islamic websites represent an important area for linking students with the contents represented on those websites. The results represent a general trend among young people, especially university students, towards Islamic media. Although the proportion of exposure to those websites is approximately (50%), those who are not exposed to these sites do not, in principle, oppose those sites. It is mainly because these sites may belong to a specific political party or that they do not offer an avenue to express different opinions.

2. The study shows that most students are consciously exposed to Islamic websites, as evidenced through statements such as the Islamic websites reserve people's culture and morals; they provide

them with political, scientific, and social information, and so forth. However, the majority of students did not agree that the information provided is sufficient, and they did not believe that the political information provided by those sites to be more objective. This is an indication that students depend on other websites for other relevant information.

3. The study reveals that most students who are exposed to Islamic websites tend to believe that they represent an important development in the Islamic media. Students noted that these websites represent an important outlet to oppose the government, and to convey the message of Islam to non-Muslim societies.

Recommendations

Based on the results of this study, recommendations can be made to take advantage of these results, and to use them for further research. The main recommendations are:

1. There is a need for further research on Palestinian universities students' exposure to Islamic websites especially in the light of the Arab spring. The rise of Islamism in the elections in a number of Arab countries may also impact the attitudes of students and the way they approach Islamic websites, not ruling out the role of the social media in the Arab spring.

2. The proportion of students exposed to Islamic websites is around (50%). Many of those not exposed do not oppose these websites. As a result, there is a need for a positive approach when dealing with these websites and with the audience. It is important to begin addressing the Islamic phenomenon and its multiple representations on the internet through these websites. A constructive dialogue must take place avoiding any confrontational techniques with those sites by other political and ideological streams.

3. It is important to conduct studies on the implications of Islamic websites; to analyze them, and manipulate them in a scientific and objective manner, for the purpose of strengthening the positions of

the websites deemed "moderate," and also those which encourage the development and coexistence among people from the same society. Further studies will aim to correct the approach of websites that are considered "extremist," and websites seeking to incite or cause discord among the intellectuals, political groups, and the community. Moreover, such studies would enhance the awareness among the public and improve the way they interact with those websites.

4. Islamic websites should adapt to their audiences and exert more effort in maintaining objectivity to their desires and needs, if they wish to widen their audiences' spectrum. In addition, they should be more interactive with their audiences so that they can have a say. Additionally, future research should compare the use of Islamic websites by young people in Palestine in comparison with their counterparts in the Arab world.

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Appendix

Questionnaire

عزيزي الطالبة / عزيزتي الطالبة

تتزايد المواقع الإسلامية على الإنترنيت بشكل واضح وملموس، الأمر الذي يفرض على الباحثين دراسة هذه الظاهرة ومدى تعرض متصفحي الإنترنيت لهذه المواقع وتفاعلهم معها.

الاستبانة المرفقة تضم أسئلة مهمة حول هذا الموضوع المهم، وسوف تستخدم المعلومات التي نجمعها لهدف واحد، هو البحث العلمي. ولذا، نرجو منكم تعبئة هذه الاستبانة بدقة وأمانة وشمولية، ومساعدة الباحث في الوصول إلى نتائج حقيقية، من خلال الإجابة على جميع الأسئلة.

شاكرين لكم حسن التعاون

الباحث

القسم الأول: ضع إشارة (X) في المربع المناسب:

1. السن:

أكثر من 23 سنة	23 سنة	22 سنة	21 سنة	20 سنة	19 سنة	18 سنة

2. النوع الاجتماعي:

أنثى	ذكر

3. الحالة الاجتماعية

مطلق	متزوج	أعزب

4. الكلية:

زراعة	اقتصاد	قانون	رياضة	فنون	شريعة	آداب	تربية
طب بيطري	طب	تمريض	طب صيدلة	صيدلة	بصريات	IT	علوم
هندسة							

5. مكان الإقامة الدائمة:

مدينة	قرية	مخيم

القسم الثاني: ضع إشارة (X) في المربع المناسب:

- أتعرض للمواقع الإسلامية على الإنترنيت

1- نعم (انتقل إلى السؤال رقم 11).

2- لا (أجب عن الأسئلة من 1-10).

إذا كنت لا تتعرض للمواقع الإسلامية على الإنترنيت، فالسبب هو (أجب فقط عن الأسئلة من 1-10)

لا رأي	غير موافق	موافق	السؤال	الرقم
			إذا كنت لا تتعرض للمواقع الإسلامية، فالسبب هو	
			مضمونها ليس شيقا	1
			لا أتفق معها فيما تطرحه	2
			محسوبة على أحزاب لا أتفق معها في الرأي	3
			أعتقد أنها ليست صادقة، وتتستر بالدين	4
			لا تواكب تطور الحياة	5
			المواقع الإسلامية غير منفتحة على الناس	6
			المواقع الإسلامية سيئة لأنها تمثل تيارات دينية مختلفة	7
			المواقع الإسلامية تبتعد عن الفهم الصحيح للدين	8
			تصميمها غير جذاب	9
			لا تتيح المجال للمتصفح أن يعبر عن رأيه	10
			إذا كنت تتعرض للمواقع الإسلامية، فالسبب هو (أجب عن الأسئلة من 11-50)	
			أتصفح المواقع الإسلامية أكثر من غيرها	11
			أجد المواقع الإسلامية شيقة	12
			تتفق مع اتجاهاتي وميولي	13
			لدي الفضول وحب الاستطلاع لمتابعتها	14
			يجذبني تصميمها الفني	15
			أجد تشجيعا من الأهل والأصدقاء لتصفح المواقع الإسلامية	16
			أجد المواقع الإسلامية صادقة	17
			أجد المواقع الإسلامية منطقية في الطرح	18
			أجد المواقع الإسلامية مواكبة لتطورات الحياة	19
			أجد مضمون المواقع الإسلامية منسجما مع رغباتي	20
			المواقع الإسلامية تساعدني على تطوير معلوماتي	21

لا رأي	غير موافق	موافق	السؤال	الرقم
			أتابع المواقع الإسلامية الحزبية	22
			أتابع المواقع الإسلامية المتنوعة	23
			أتابع المواقع الإسلامية الدينية	24
			المواقع الإسلامية المتنوعة تضم معلومات مفيدة وشيقة	25
			المواقع الإسلامية المتنوعة تعالج الأمور بأسلوب راق	26
			المواقع الإسلامية المتنوعة تحفظ للإنسان ثقافته وأخلاقه	27
			المواقع الإسلامية تمثل تحد للحكومات المتسلطة	28
			الإنترنيت يشكل منفذا ممتازا للمواقع الإسلامية للوصول إلى الجماهير	29
			الإنترنيت فتح بابا واسعا أمام تطور الإعلام الإسلامي	30
			هناك عدد محدد من المواقع الإسلامية التي يجب أن يعتمد عليها الفرد	31
			المواقع الإسلامية استطاعت مخاطبة غير المسلمين	32
			المواقع الإسلامية حققت نجاحا يوازي نجاح المواقع الأخرى	33
			المواقع الدينية أفضل من المواقع الإسلامية التي تقدم الفن والسياسة	34
			المواقع الإسلامية ليست كلها جيدة	35
			أستمع إلى القرآن في المواقع الإسلامية	36
			أتابع قضايا الحديث النبوي الشريف في المواقع الإسلامية	37
			أتابع التفسير للقرآن والسنة في المواقع الإسلامية	38
			أتابع قضايا الأحكام الفقهية في المواقع الإسلامية	39
			تزودني المواقع الإسلامية بالأخبار السياسية	40
			أتابع القضايا الاجتماعية والثقافية في المواقع الإسلامية	41
			أتابع القضايا العلمية في المواقع الإسلامية	42
			أتابع الحوارات وبرامج الدردشة على المواقع الإسلامية	43
			أتابع التحليلات السياسية في المواقع الإسلامية	44
			أهتم أكثر بالمواقع الإسلامية الفلسطينية	45
			أشارك في المواقع الإسلامية من خلال المراسلة والنقاش والتعليق	46
			أشجع زملائي على تصفح المواقع الإسلامية	47
			المواقع الإسلامية أثرت على شخصيتي إيجابيا	48
			أكتفي بالمعلومات التي توفرها المواقع الإسلامية	49
			الأخبار السياسية في المواقع الإسلامية أكثر موضوعية من غيرها من المواقع	50