

The Use of Social Media Platforms and its Relationship to Ideological Polarisation in the Arab Region: A Meta-Analytical Reading of a Sample of Previous Studies

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This study delves into the research trends surrounding social media platforms and their relationship with political polarisation in the Arab region by reviewing research published on various Arabic online platforms between 2011 and 2022. A total of 62 scientific studies were selected using the intentional sampling method. These include recent scientific articles and research that are very similar to the subject of the study. In addition, the study includes a number of Arab countries, and covers the most important events the Arab region has seen in recent years as well as the period in which social media spread vastly in the region.

Moreover, the study is based on meta-analysis. Among its key findings is that the study sample focused on the topic of social media platforms and its relationship to the political awareness and political participation of university graduate youth. Findings also show that a great portion of the sample was descriptive survey studies, and relied on questionnaires as a tool for data collection. Hence, most of the research is primarily quantitative given the lack of qualitative research and reliance on theoretical approaches.

The study notes a gap between quantitative and qualitative analysis. Being satisfied with the former at the expense of the latter makes findings open to other questions that need clarification, analysis and interpretation. Furthermore, some data requires knowledge of theoretical backgrounds and the nature of relationships between variables, especially in an environment controlled by technology. This necessitates that researchers focus on communication and media approaches in their relationship to the new communication environment.

What is more is that findings indicate that discussion through the digital environment is considered an easy space for the spread of information and the extension of the power of social media platforms to the political domain and vice versa. As a result, the level of polarisation has increased through the digital space, which provides information about their users consistent with their desires; and it has provided users with the ability to become a centre of and actor in political polarisation as a recipient, participant, producer and sender.