The Perceptions of Iraqi Internally Displaced Persons of Social Media Use during War and Conflict

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ABSTRACT

The expansion of social media platforms' uses through mobile devices to obtain news and information in wars and conflicts is pertinent among refugees and even internally displaced persons (IDPs). A few studies have examined how different social media platforms have enabled users to send and get their news and information about their situation. Explained by the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) and the Uses and Gratifications theory, this study examines the impressions of how and why Iraqi IDP respondents use social media platforms, their perceptions, and their adoption of social media platforms in the times of war and conflict especially during the ISIS operations, for communication, information seeking, social interaction and its perceived usefulness regarding continuous usage behavioral intention. A sample of 288 Iraqi IDPs in four large camps in Iraq participated in this research. The findings revealed that most IDP respondents use and adopt various media platforms (traditional and new) for news and information. They, not surprisingly, mostly used their mobile devices to send and get such news and information. Such devices and platforms were very important in enabling them to get in touch with their loved ones, friends and relatives and communicate and socialize with others. These devices, once connected to the Internet, were also important as a tool in seeking information e.g., knowing what assistance is being provided.

Keywords: *Social media sites, Refugee crisis, internally displaced persons, mobile devices, Iraq war and conflict.*

INTRODUCTION

The refugee crisis camps in Iraq in 2014 were one of the world's most severe humanitarian and displacement crises (Sabie et al., 2019). In June 2014, While the so-called Islamic State in Iraq and the Sham (ISIS) attempted to control the northern, central and western parts of Iraq, the Iraqi military started an operation to liberate these territories (Taha & Sijbrandij, 2021), with the help of the international community. As a result, The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) (2019), the UN refugee agency, estimated that the number of Iraqis affected by this conflict / operation exceeded 6.5 million. In most cases, hosting large numbers of refugees or IDPs often experience a high level of poverty (Fajth et al., 2019), mental health issues (Sundvall et al., 2021), vulnerability etc. In addition, those affected needed humanitarian assistance and protection due to the war and conflict, with more than three million being forced to flee their cities and towns, resulting in approximately 360,000 Iraqis being internally displaced in informal settlements. As of 2019, more than two million remained as IDPs, spread across different locations in the country (Taha & Sijbrandij,

2021), with estimated as high as 80% being very vulnerable (e.g., women, children, disabled persons, etc.).

Arguably, any wars and conflicts would impact the affected population e.g., separating families, feeling lost, confusion, fears, and lack of communication (Al-Shawi, 2018). Regarding the latter and as an alternative way, social media platforms become a vital platform for IDPs' information and news habits. For example, it allows them to be connected with others, generate content, share their news and pictures, and comment on others' content (Ray & Saeed, 2015; Tess, 2013). This is seen as one of the most critical aspects of social media even in conflict zones (Awan, 2017; Christensen & Khalil, 2021; Singer & Brooking, 2015). Furthermore, the importance of such platforms in such times allows even different traditional media news providers, those that are run through social media, especially the latter, have played a vital role as a medium between the IDPs and their families (Sundvall et al., 2021). The main reason for such adoption of social media in times of war and conflict is that it is easy to use and very useful, especially mobile devices that are commonly used to communicate with a wide range of online users. For both news providers and online users, social media platforms have allowed them to contribute and share content (receiver and producer / contributor). This is an important way of communication in war and conflict zones such as Iraq (Al-Majdhoub, 2016).

Several studies have highlighted the vital role of social media as a source of news and information in conflicts, including the refugee crises in Syria and Iraq (Al-Rawi & Fahmy, 2018; Al-Shawi, 2018; Alencar, 2020; Taha & Sijbrandij, 2021; Xu & Maitland, 2017), especially the increased use of smartphones for communication and for seeking information and updates (Xu & Maitland, 2016) during the crisis, including by IDPs (Sabie et al., 2019; Taha & Sijbrandij, 2021). Despite social media scholars have acknowledged and focused on addressing the importance of social media from migrants' and refugees' perceptive (Dekker et al., 2018; Diminescu, 2020), the literature lacks extensive survey-based research concerning the adoption of social media by Iraqi IDPs (Sundvall et al., 2021). The overall purpose of this study is twofold. First, it investigates this area of research in particular the context of internal refugee camps in Iraq. It also discusses social media use and adoption and the relevant research of refugees, and looks at its impact. In these times of socioeconomic hardship, security concerns and uncertainty about the future. Second, this study examines the impressions of Iraqi IDPs and their adoption of social media to obtain news. It looks at how such platforms contribute towards increasing the amount of news and information sought, as well as communication and social interaction regarding their situation in the camps.

LITERATURE REVIEW

a.   Theoretical Framework and Model Development

Theoretically, this study draws on perspectives on technology adoption during war and conflict, and applies the TAM model to social media platforms. It also uses an integral relationship among users (Davis, 1989). For example, new technology has enabled social interaction and communication processes through different social media platforms e.g., sharing news, photos, presentation etc. which became new research initiatives that examine both the internet-enabled media and online socialization processes (Rauniar et al., 2014). One widely accepted theory on the actual usage behavior of new technology has been the technology acceptance model proposed by Davis (1989).

Furthermore, the Uses and Gratification Theory (U&G) is also a fundamental framework used as an active user-centered theory to describe the determinants of why people (e.g., Iraqi IPDs) use a specific medium (social media platforms) (Rosengren, 1974; Rubin, 1983; Ruggiero, 2000). Our assumption is based on that online users depend on the media (social media) to meet particular needs and achieve specific goals. The theory also explains the motives associated with why users (Iraqi IDPs) use such a medium (social media) and the gratifications that they subsequently obtain (Kim et al., 2020).

Research has examined why users use and adopt social media in wars and conflicts (Christensen & Khalil, 2021; Melchior, 2014; Singer & Brooking, 2015). For example, people (e.g., IDPs) engage with others using social media because they want to be connected and share their news (Al-Rawi, 2018). Research has indicated three motives associated with sharing news and information on social media: social interaction, communication, and information seeking (see for e.g., Kümpel et al., 2015). For example, in our case, IDP users would use social media to socialize and interact with others, which is a very important element in times of conflict. Socializing would help and allow IDPs to come over their situation at least emotionally, as well as get updated about their situation. Communication has been a great part of most social media platforms that allow users to easily communicate inside the camps and with the world around them. Seeking and sharing information are seen as one of the widespread uses of social media sites. For example, IDPs would seek information and look for informative content on social media to view others affected by the conflict or have the same situation. They also would share information on social media to get others' (local, national, and international) attention (Al Dulaimi, 2021). However, other motivations can also emerge from the sharing and adopting of social media by Iraqi IDP users, such as self-efficacy, social engagement, empathy, and gain.
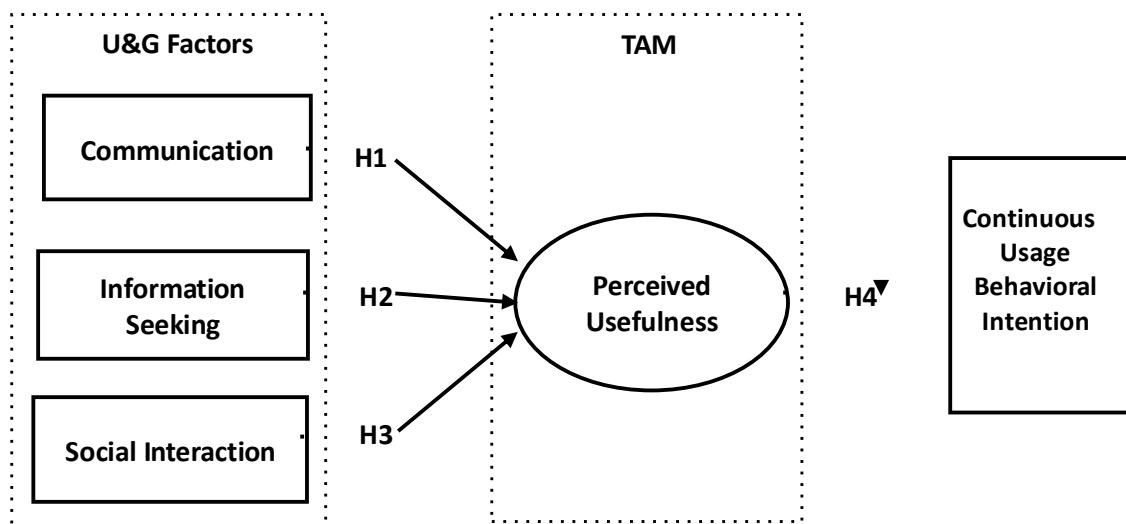

Figure 1: The proposed conceptual framework of U&G and TAM

The conceptual framework of the current research is also supported by the TAM model (Figure 1) as technology acceptance and adoption have been among the primary topics of attention during the past three decades (Budu et al., 2018; Davis, 1989). The increasing trends toward using social media at various times, such as during wars and conflicts, also highlight the influence of these platforms among different types of people such as IDP users.

For example, online users tend to learn and engage with news and information through social media platforms as such news usually comes from those they know or trust, while these platforms are also perceived as helpful in keeping people in touch with each other. Such an attitude supports the assumption that users would accept Internet technology because they understand its usefulness for dismissing news and information (Mansour, 2018; Ruangkanjanases et al., 2020).

Based on both theories, this research examines the impressions of how and why Iraqi IDP respondents use social media, their perceptions and their adoption during the 2014 conflict. There are three types of effect that potentially result from an IDP user's adoption of social media: cognitive, affective, and behavioral. Cognitive effects are those effects on a user's attitudes, beliefs, and values regarding how they perceive social media content. The affective effect implies fear and anxiety about living in certain conditions (conflict zones). The behavioral-intention effect implies the actions that an IDP user would take to continue using social media platforms (Lin, 2008).

b.   *Mobile Technology, Social Media, and IDPs*

Mobile technology (apps) has enabled users to easily find, receive, and share news and information (Al Dulaimi, 2021; Gunter & Elareshi, 2016), through smart devices on cellular networks (Sabie et al., 2019; Xu & Maitland, 2016, 2017). And they can go beyond just calling and texting (Madianou, 2014). For example, Xu and Maitland (2017) found that mobile phones were highly used by refugees in Syria and Jordan, suggesting that mobile phones becoming critical part for IDPs to share their news and information as well as their feelings and experiences, with others regardless of their geographical location (Dhaha & Igale, 2014). Although in terms of ICT presence, studies have found that refugees and IDPs show a heavy reliance on mobile technology such as smartphones and connect it to social media for communication, information and socialization (Alencar, 2020; Mancini et al., 2019), however, they might lack Internet access modes (Sabie et al., 2019). For example, mobile internet devices have become a vital platform for refugees and IDPs, especially in Syria and Iraq (Taha & Sijbrandij, 2021), as they can share their news, stories and pictures, distributing them widely through social media services (Alencar, 2020; Bulbul, Kaplan & Ismail, 2018).

Furthermore, Sabie at al. (2019) found that mobile phones were ultimately the most popular smart device in terms of use, with 70% and 69% of respondents having smartphones or SIM cards. They also found that other digital devices, such as tablets, laptops, and desktops, had limited use. Despite the limited access to Internet data and connectivity in some camps (e.g., in some cases, IDPs have to buy mobile data), this technology has been an essential factor in Iraqi IDPs staying updated about news from their home and the world (Mancini et al., 2019). In terms of Internet connection, Sabie at al. (2019) found that more IDPs connect to the Internet via their mobile phones, while access to WiFi services was very limited due to a lack of ICT infrastructure (also see e.g., Xu & Maitland, 2016, 2017). For such users, when devices connected to the Internet, social media platforms became the only accessible platforms for them to navigate their journeys (Alencar, 2020) and news with relatives and friends and share their life experiences in the camps, especially after losing their homes and livelihood.

In this sense, social platforms such as Facebook (88%), WhatsApp (77%), Instagram (25%), and Twitter (22%) are among the most popular platforms in Iraq (Salem, 2017). In general, they only require little knowledge to operate and use them and this makes them very useful and accessible to a vast majority of users, including refugees and IDPs in Iraq (Merisalo

& Jauhiainen, 2021). However, it is worth saying that these latter two groups face major problems in using modern technologies such as mobile devices, as they need to be able to charge their mobile phones or receive Internet data (Cotter, 2019).

c.   Why Iraqi IDPs?
The definition of an IDP is someone who is forced to flee their home but who remains within their country's borders. While refugees cross a border to find protection, IDPs stay within their own country and remain under their own state's sovereignty (Sabie et al., 2019). The 2014 events in Iraq, yielded a disastrous impact on affected Iraqis, as Taha and Sijbrandij (2021) state. In 2014, Iraq was described as the third-largest IDP population (3.6 million) of any country in the world after Syria (7.6 million) and Colombia (6 million), with more than three million IDPs (UNHCR, 2015, 2019).

Figure 2: Electricity supply in Kirkuk camp (source: www.reach-initiative.org)

The International Committee of the Red Cross defines IDPs as "[a person(s)] who have left their place for whatever reason" (Wilson, 2015). It is a very uncomfortable situation when that country is at war and has minimal resources to offer its citizens, especially displaced people (Sabie et al., 2019). For example, the IDPs are not lawfully protected under UN regulations and international laws, while refugees are internationally and lawfully protected. In 2014, when ISIS occupied many Iraqi governorates, such as Mosul, Al Anbar, and Ṣalāḥ ad-Dīn, as well as parts of Diyala, leaving thousands of Iraqi IDPs without shelter, healthcare and food (Al-Shawi, 2018), they became more vulnerable. It is worth saying that although some camps are equipped with limited electricity supply, it is seen as one of the main challenges in getting connected, meaning that charging smart devices might not always be possible (Dekker et al., 2018).

Based on the above discussion, this study examines the impressions of how and why Iraqi IDP respondents use social media, their perceptions and their adoption of it in times of conflict in four temporary refugee camps in Iraq, focusing on social media's perceived usefulness. This study is underpinned by one main research question and by four hypotheses as follows:

RQ1: How much local news and information do Iraqi IDPs usually consume?
H1: Communication (COM) has positively impact on perceived usefulness (PU).

H2: Information seeking (INS) has positively impact on perceived usefulness (PU).
H3: Social interaction (SOI) has positively impact perceived usefulness (PU).
H4: Perceived usefulness (PU) has positively impact on continuous usage behavioral intention (CUBI).

METHOD

a.   Sample and Procedure

The study was conducted through a self-reported questionnaire (face-to-face) between July and October 2017 with a random sample of 300 Iraqi IDPs from four main large camps in Mosul, Kirkuk, Ṣalāḥ ad-Dīn, and Al Anbar governorates in Iraq, after approval by the Research Committee Board of the Faculty of Media at the University of Baghdad. To capture a diverse sample of Iraqi IDP users of social media, respondents were recruited by asking some volunteers working in these camps to help us to get access to as many Iraqi IDPs as possible, aged 18 and above. Due to the sensitivity surrounding Iraqi IDPs' details, participants were asked to read and acknowledge the informed consent. In addition, they were asked not to provide personal information (thereby remaining anonymous) and assured that answers would be kept confidential. Those who participated in the survey were directly thanked for their time and effort.

Because of the difficulty in reaching all Iraqi IDPs in these camps, the sampling approach chosen was a snowball method whereby respondents could bring / recruit others via their network contacts (family members, friends, relatives etc.), especially after trust had been built up and they understood the study's purpose. Thus, the survey mainly targeted Iraqi IDPs in the above camps and their perceptions of social media use for gaining access to news and information about their families and their future situation. A total of 300 questionnaires were received. Out of these 300 responses, 12 forms were withdrawn because they were not completed.

b.   Questionnaire Survey and Measures

The questionnaire included different questions to measure the social media use by Iraqi IDPs. It was tested for its internal reliability and validity before distribution. The pre-structured questionnaire had 16 questions relating to Iraqi IDPs' use of new and social media platforms for communication, the time spent on these platforms, the respondents' social media preference, motivations, interactions, and perceptions.

The first set of questions concerning social media use and asking whether respondents (Q1) had social media accounts and, if not, (Q2) used their friends', family members' or relatives' devices to connect to social media ("yes" / "no"). They were then asked (Q3) how they got their news and information, (Q4) which (if any) apps were used on their mobile devices (e.g., Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp, Instagram etc.), (Q5) the duration of social media use ("< 1 year", "1-3 years", "3 years and over"), (Q6) amount of time spent on social media on a daily basis ("< 1 hour", "1-2 hours", "2-3 hours" "> 3 hours"), (Q7) time-of-use preference ("morning", "afternoon", "night"), and (Q8) to what extent social media were used to obtain news and information ("a lot", "often", "sometimes", "don't use").

The second set of questions concerning social media accessibility and (Q9) why IDP users utilized social media platforms in the camps, with nine motives. The communication motive (α =.79) was measured with three items ("Helping the security forces with information", "Knowing what happened to my family and friends", "I can express my thoughts about the situation of the camps"). The information-seeking motive (α =.83) was measured

with three items ("Getting information about the time when I can return home", "Knowing about the security situation in my city and in Iraq", "Getting acquainted with local news"). The social interaction motive (α =.87) was measured with three items ("Keeping my family and relatives away from danger", "Socializing with family and relatives", "Feeling solidarity with other online users"). Responses were measured on a 5-point Likert scale (5 = "strongly agree"; 1 = "strongly disagree"). They were then asked (Q10) how they interacted through social media during the military operations in the liberation and throughout the crisis, (Q11) the type of topics and information that they sought, and (Q12) the impact of social media on them ("a lot", "often", "sometimes", "don't use").

Finally, respondents were asked to evaluate their educational background and their period living in the camp and to give details about their (Q13) gender, (Q14) age, (Q15) education level and (Q16) marital status. Furthermore, the Pearson correlation analysis was performed to measure the association between perceived usefulness and continuous usage behavioral intention during war and conflict, and p-value < 0.05 was considered as a significant association. Regression analysis was also performed to determine the impact of perceived usefulness on the use of social media platforms and IDPs' continuous usage behavioral intention during war and conflict.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

a. Demographic Characteristics

The sociodemographic characteristics of the respondents were as follows: the majority of respondents (69.5%) of the final sample was male and 30.5% was female. No significant differences were reported between females and males regarding their sociodemographic domains: age, education level, status, and duration of stay in camps. The majority of respondents (80%) had a pre-university education level ("primary", "secondary" or "higher school"); 19% university level; and 1%, postgraduate level. Their ages ranged from less than 25 years old (41.8%) to those aged 26-35 (24.3%), those aged 46-55 (15.2%), those aged 36-45 (12.5%), and those aged 55 and over (6.2%). More than 70% of respondents were married, 25% were single, and 5% were classed as others. Regarding their stay in the refugee camps, the majority of respondents (50%) had lived there for more than three years, while 27% had lived in the camps for 2-3 years, and 23% had lived there for less than one year.

b. News Information and Media Technology

In this survey, when asked about which media platforms the Iraqi IDPs used most as sources of news and information while in the camp (Table 1). The majority of respondents indicated that they "always" used different social media platforms, such as Facebook, YouTube, and Twitter, followed by other sources, including online news sites, word of mouth, SMS, and lastly traditional media (e.g., TV, radio, newspapers). This does not mean that respondents do not use traditional media for different news and information. It seems that TV and radio are still popular platforms for news and information.

Table 1: Reported frequencies of claimed use of different news media platforms

Construct	Indicator	Frequency	%	Ranking
Traditional media	TV	68	23.50	5
	Radio	65	22.70	7
	Newspaper	51	17.60	9

Social media	Facebook	133	46.10	1
	YouTube	70	24.30	4
	Twitter	67	23.30	6
Others	Online news sites	88	30.50	2
	Word of mouth	79	27.50	3
	SMS	56	19.50	8

As shown in Table 1, the clear indication is that social media sites (e.g., Facebook) and other online news sites, along with word of mouth, were the most accessible and easiest ways for our IDP respondents to get news and information while in the camps. These findings confirmed the importance of social media as a news source provider for millions of people around the world (Hwang et al., 2021; Monti et al., 2019). This is, however, could be because respondents had no access to traditional media outlets, and social media become an alternative platform for news and information (Gangadharbatla et al., 2014; Yunus, 2013; Ziani et al., 2016). Indeed, social media emerged during crises and conflicts, as a vital platform for news sources (Christensen & Khalil, 2021; Lara & Bokoch, 2021).

In this regard, the results also emphasize the usefulness of mobile technology such as using social media in uncertain conditions in the camps. They adopted and used different social media to gather news and information that was more related to them. For example, in his study Mansour (2018) found that Syrian refugees in Egypt heavily relied on social media with top priorities were being aware of the situation in their home country, looking for services for their children.

c.   *Apps for News and Information*
In the context of refugee / IDPs used of mobile apps, mobiles can be used as an integrative part of face-to-face communication, especially when affordability and accessibility are considered (Alencar, 2020; Mansour, 2018). In our study, respondents indicated the types of apps they mostly used on their devices to gather news and information of interest to them.

Table 2: Reported frequencies of claimed use of different apps

Construct	Frequency	%
Facebook	89	31
FB Messenger	58	20.10
WhatsApp	50	17.40
Viber	46	15.80
Twitter	23	8.0
Instagram	17	6.0
Others	5	1.7

See Table 2, three-in-10 Iraqi IDPs claimed to use Facebook and Facebook Messenger apps for news and information. These findings were consistent with earlier research (Robehmed, 2019; Sabie et al., 2019; Xu & Maitland, 2017). In most countries, these apps are the most in-demand platforms for news and information (e.g., sharing photos and videos) relevant to IDPs during wartime and times of conflict (Alarid, 2016; Fahmy & Kim, 2008; Lynch, 2015). For example, Syrian refugees were found to make active use of social media apps such as Facebook, YouTube, WhatsApp, Google Maps, and Google Translate (AbuJarour et al., 2019). Such a result can also highlight the importance of social media in re-connecting refugees and to promote resilience and help with re-establishing a sense of identity and integration as Sundvall et al. (2021) indicated.

d.   Relationships between Communication, Information Seeking, Social Interaction, and Perceived Usefulness

Respondents who indicated that they used different social media platforms for news and information were further asked to state their motivations for adopting social media during their stay in the camps and indicate their gratifications. The results of Pearson correlation analysis between perceived usefulness (PU) and communication (COM), information seeking (INS), and social interaction (SOI) are shown in Figure 3. Based on the data analysis, the findings supported all the stated hypotheses by indicating a positive relationship between use of social media for (H1) communication ($r = 0.863$, $p = < 0.000$), (H2) information seeking ($r = 0.682$, $p = < 0.043$), (H3) social interaction ($r = 0.670$, $p = < 0.009$), and (H4) continuous usage behavioral intention ($r = 0.772$, $p = < 0.000$) and its perceived usefulness.

The above positive relationship between the use of social media and other important factors indicated that for the communication motive, our Iraqi IDP respondents used social media platforms for more likely to know what happened to their family and friends, to help the security forces with information, and to express their thoughts about the situation of the camps. There is also an indication that respondents used social media platforms to seek information that related to how to get information about the time when they can return home, to know about the security situation in their city and in Iraq, and to get acquainted with local news. Lastly, respondents expressed their views and motivations in social media that related to social interaction. For example, they used social media platforms to keep their family and relatives away from danger, to socialize with their family and relatives, to feel solidarity with other online users.
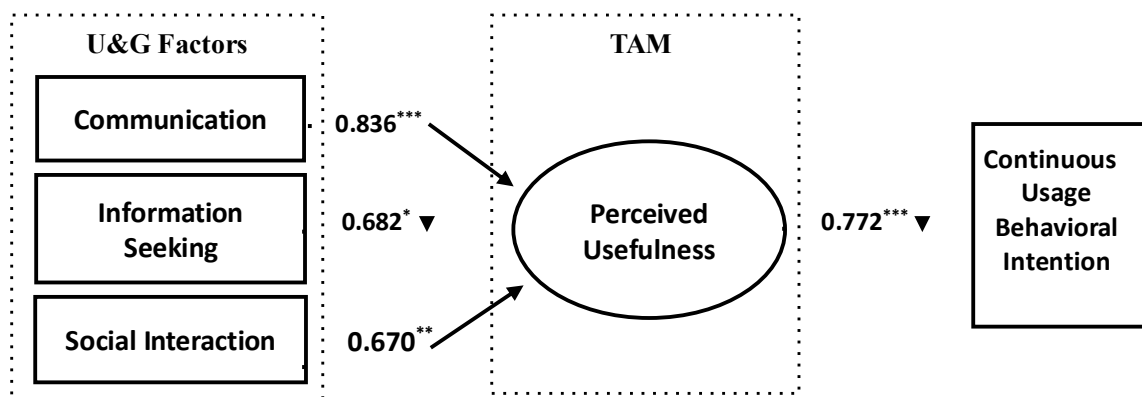

Figure 3: The Pearson correlation test results

Further analysis was performed using regression analysis to determine the impact of perceived usefulness on social media users' continuous usage behavioral intention during war and conflict (Table 3). The value of R square ($R^2 = 0.645$) and the path coefficients ($\beta = 0.800$) for perceived usefulness of social media demonstrated a significant impact of IPDs on continuous usage behavioral intention to use such platforms (*p-value* = 0.000).

Table 3: Path analysis of structural equation model

Variable	R^2	β	t-value	p-value
Constant (CUBI)[*]			9.584	0.000
PU	0.645	0.800	32.584	0.000

Note: [*]dependent variable, Model R^2 = 0.661; Adjusted R^2 = 0.654; F-value = 256.142; p-value = 0.000

The findings reported also supported the TAM model (Davis, 1989). This was achieved by identifying the relationship between the dependent variable (continuous usage behavioral intention) and the independent variable (perceived usefulness) and by confirming the impact of perceived usefulness (linked to communication, information seeking, and social interaction) of social media for the Iraqi IDPs represented in this research. As a result, the findings of this research supported the four hypotheses (Figure 3).

CONCLUSION

A self-completion questionnaire (face-to-face) survey was reported in this study, examining the impressions of how and why Iraqi IDP respondents use social media platforms, their perceptions and their adoption of it in times of war and conflict in four temporary refugee camps in Iraq using the TAM model and the uses and gratification theory. While the latter was used to examine how respondents' use and adopt social media for communication, information seeking, and social interaction, the former model was used to examine how Iraqi IPD respondents' perceived social media platforms as useful for communication and interaction with others and their continuous usage behavioral intention.

Evidence has emerged that Iraqi IDP users have used different social media platforms. The results indicate, not surprisingly, that for example, new technology through mobile and smart devices allow Iraqi IDPs to stay in touch and to get news and information, in particular news about their family and friends (Al Dulaimi, 2021; Alencar, 2020; Ziani et al., 2017), especially in Syria and Iraq (Al-Rawi, 2019). Research elsewhere has also confirmed the increased use of social media in everyday life such as in education (Lampe et al., 2011), health (Dutta-Bergman, 2004; Alencar, 2020), during resettlement (Alencar, 2020), in IDP camps (Taha & Sijbrandij, 2021), wars and conflicts (Aday et al., 2012; Lynch, 2015; Sundvall et al., 2021).

Among the main findings, this study highlighted the importance of social media and mobile devices during the 2014 Iraqi conflict. Perhaps, those Iraqi IDPs who were able to access mobile technologies were able to know what happened to their families and relatives (Diminescu, 2020; Cotter, 2019; Sabie et al., 2019; Xu & Maitland, 2017). IDP respondents have also been able to connect to some media environments and outlets to help them to find lost loved ones and relatives in the camps (Robehmed, 2019), and to use social media platforms as a news source, allowing refugees and IDPs to stay in contact with others, keep family and relatives away from danger (Diminescu, 2020; Shekaliu et al., 2018), to know about the Arab and international news (Bülbül & Ismail, 2018).

Our findings support the assumption that social media has perceived usefulness as a source of satisfaction for psychological needs and as a source of social interaction. The psychological aspect (e.g., feelings of depression and anxiety) is explained in the way in which IDPs use social media to relieve loneliness or to recognize the need to own their situation and to get engaged in and involved with their new community (the camps) (Jiang et al., 2020; Taha & Sijbrandij, 2021). It is also linked to IDPs' feelings about the conflict and about their situation, with such factors a possible cause for IDPs to depend on and adopt social media sites. Radcliffe and Lam (2018) have indicated that new media serve a variety of needs in the Arab world, such as communication, friendships, and relationships.

Regarding social interaction, social media platforms have allowed Iraqi IDP users to socially interact with others inside and outside the camp (e.g., families and friends). Thus, social media allowed refugees to present themselves among the local community and others (Mancini et al., 2019). The use of social media for building these kinds of interactions has

enabled Iraqi IDP users to be active online "often" or just to view news and information. This means that social media has enabled IDP users to feel safe and secure for some time in the camps (Al-Rawi & Fahmy, 2018; Madianou, 2014; Singer & Brooking, 2015).

The growth in mobile devices has made it possible for a range of social interactions to occur beyond the physical space (Gunter, 2010). For Iraqi IDP users, mobile devices have enlarged peripheral layers of social relationships, allowing communication, following of news and information, and knowing what assistance is being provided. For news and information, mobile devices are seen as a very important part of the mainstream media (especially during crises and conflicts), and they constitute the greatest challenge to old forms of interpersonal, public, and political communication, as Ibahrine (2008) states.

LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

This research has some limitations, beginning with the fact that the sample size and data collection method were drawn from a population of IDP respondents at four single large camps. Thus, the findings are limited to those who responded in this research and therefore may not be generalizable. The report generated from the data analysis is descriptive (due to data size) and cannot be inferred as well. The accuracy of the IDP respondents is questionable as their ability to report information accurately is unclear. This data was collected in camps (which are uncertain and unusual places for respondents) and this may have had an impact on the respondents' understanding of, and participation in, the research. Future research needs to explore further the specifics of IDPs' social media usage in other places with large populations and different demographics. The literature on the use of social media among IDPs is broad and can differ from one region to another. Therefore, surveys are always needed for such studies in order to understand participants' preferences and to get valid databases.

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BIODATA

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