

**UTILIZATION OF SOCIAL MEDIA AMONG DENTAL PRACTITIONERS AT AL-KHARJ SAUDI ARABIA**

**Running title:** *Utilization of social media among Dental practitioners*

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**Abstract**

**Background:** Recent trend has suggested a great increase in social media by every profession including dentistry. Social media use could be beneficial as well as harmful if moral and ethical principles are violated. This cross sectional study was conducted to evaluate the use of social media by private Saudi dental practitioners at alkharij Saudi Arabia. **Methodology:** Data was collected from 200 practicing dentists from alkharij region Saudi Arabia. Only private dental practitioners were included in the study. A closed ended questionnaire consisting of demographic details, questions related to social media usage and attitude towards social media were asked. Data was collected through personal interview. **Results:** 68% of dental practitioners were using social media for clinical practice. 63% of dental practitioners broadcast treatment outcome in the social media more than 80% of dental practitioners were having positive opinion about social media. **Conclusion:** The use of social media could help in improving dental practice as experienced by the private practitioners at alkharij .however ethical and moral principles should be kept in mind

while broadcasting information related to patients also the use of social media should be within the purview of the law of particular country.

**Key words:** Social media, dental practice, dental practitioner, healthcare provider

## Introduction

Social media is a form of electronic communication platform through which contents, ideas, and interests can be dispersed through network.<sup>1</sup> In recent trend social Medias such as face book, twitter, instagram, linkedin, YouTube etc have gained tremendous popularity and have become platforms for marketing.<sup>2</sup> This increase in popularity of social media has not spared healthcare industry also, including dental practice also the use of social media is observed among all age groups and professions throughout the world.<sup>3,4</sup>

In dentistry social media can be used to train professionals, educate and communicate with patients & professional, to develop professional competence all which will help in improving quality of dental care.<sup>5</sup>

The social media provides audiovisual interactions, blogs which also provide the opportunity to publish large amounts of information in a variety of media (text, video, and audio) in an open forum.<sup>6</sup> in a survey conducted an physicians it was observed that more than 90% of physicians use some form of social media for personal activities, whereas only 65% use these sites for professional reasons.<sup>7</sup>

The reason for dental practitioners to use social media is to create platform for education and training, for marketing purpose, advertising strategy to reach patients, for uploading photos of clinically treated cases to show the practitioners skill and capabilities.<sup>8</sup>

Social media can be a useful tool for professional purpose, bringing advantages such as engaging with your patients and boosting service offered. Inappropriate use of social media can cause ethical issues regarding patient confidentiality and data protection that may lead to negative perceptions of dental professionalism.<sup>5</sup> in addition the misinformation can be quickly spread by the social media which is also a concern of utilizing social media by the dental professionals which can lead to breach in patient and health care provider.<sup>7</sup>

Hence some mixed opinions are noted on the use of social media by healthcare providers concerning legal and security issues.<sup>9,10</sup>

There are no related data of how dental practitioners utilize social media at alkharij Saudi Arabia hence the present study was aimed to assess the dentist's professional use of social media in their daily clinical practices at alkharij Saudi Arabia.

## Objectives

To assess social media use by the dental practitioners at alkharij social media.

To compare social media usage according to demographic factors

## Methodology

200 dental practitioners were included in this cross sectional study. All dental practitioners were residents of Saudi Arabia and practicing in alkharij region of Saudi Arabia. Direct interview method was used to collect information from the practicing dentists. Explanation was given about the study and consent was obtained for participation and any practitioner denying providing consent was excluded. The study was approved by the Institutional Review Board of Prince Sattam Bin Abdul-Aziz University, Al-Kharj. A thorough review of the literature was conducted and a structured questionnaire was framed with the assistance and guidance of a panel of academic experts. The questionnaire was initially prepared in Arabic, which is translated into English. The questionnaire was structured and had a total of 10 questions emphasizing the perception and attitude about social media among dental practitioners.. Each dentist was personally consulted and explained about the study. After obtaining the consent, the questionnaire was provided and sufficient time was given to fill out the questionnaire and it was collected back on the same day. The consent form was included in the questionnaire.

## Statistical analysis

Statistical analysis SPSS version 23 was used for statistical analysis. Chi-square test was used for compare perception of social media and attitude toward social media according to gender and year of practice. Results are expressed as numbers and percentages.

## Results

**Table 1: Demographic characteristics of study population**

| Demographic characteristics |           | Frequency | Percentage |
|-----------------------------|-----------|-----------|------------|
| Gender                      | Male      | 160       | 80.0%      |
|                             | Female    | 40        | 20.0%      |
| Specialization              | Yes       | 46        | 23.0%      |
|                             | no        | 154       | 77.0%      |
| Year of Practice            | < 5 years | 80        | 40.0%      |
|                             | > 5 years | 120       | 60.0%      |

Table 1 shows demographic characteristics of study population. There were total of 200 dental practitioners in the present study out of which 160 were males and 40 females. 23.0% were having specialization and 60% of the subjects were having more than 5 years of practice.

Table 2: Response of study subjects to various questions related to social media utilization in dental practice.

| Questions  | Response   | Frequency | Percentage |
|--|------------|-----------|------------|
| Are you using social media in your daily life                                | Yes        | 192       | 96.0%      |
|  | No         | 08        | 4.0%       |
| Are you use social media within the practice of dentistry                    | Yes        | 114       | 68.0%      |
|  | No         | 86        | 32.0%      |
| Which is the frequently used social media                                    | Facebook   | 62        | 31.0%      |
|  | WhatsApp   | 68        | 5.0%       |
|  | You tube   | 25        | 12.5%      |
|  | Instagram  | 28        | 14.0%      |
|  | Twitter    | 10        | 34.0%      |
|  | Linkedin   | 3         | 1.5%       |
|  | Snapchat   | 2         | 1.0%       |
| Do you Broadcast treatment outcome in the social media to attract patients   | Yes        | 126       | 63.0%      |
|  | No         | 74        | 37.0%      |
| Do you provide online consultation to patients                               | Yes        | 50        | 25.0%      |
|  | No         | 150       | 75.0%      |
| Number of hours spent on social media for professional purposes              | < 2 hours  | 80        | 40.0%      |
|  | 2– 4 hours | 92        | 46.0%      |
|  | > 4 hours  | 28        | 14.0%      |
| Do you Recommend social media usage to other dentists                        | Yes        | 175       | 87.5%      |
|  | No         | 25        | 12.5%      |
| Do you think Use of social media improves dental practice                    | Yes        | 146       | 73.0%      |
|  | No         | 54        | 27.0%      |
| Do you think Social media became an indicator for successful dental practice | Yes        | 26        | 13.0%      |
|  | No         | 174       | 87.0%      |
|  | Yes        | 160       | 80.0%      |

|  |    |    |       |
|--|----|----|-------|
| Do you think knowledge and communication skill is improved by using social media | No | 40 | 20.0% |
|--|----|----|-------|

Table 2 shows response of study participants about social media utilization. 95.0% of the participants told they use social media in the practice of dentistry. 34.0% of subjects were using WhatsApp as frequently used social media followed by 31.0% face book. 63.0% of subjects told that they broadcast their treatment outcome in the social media. 25.0% of subjects told they provide online consultation. 46.0% of subjects spend 2-4 hours in the social media. 87.5% of subjects told they recommend social media use to others. 73.0% of subjects think use of social media improves practice. 13.0% of subjects told Social media is an indicator for successful dental practice where 87.0% think it is not an indicator. 80.0%of the practitioners think knowledge and communication skill is improved by using social media.

### Discussion:

In this cross sectional study the utilization social media among dental practitioners in their clinical practice was evaluated. Recently a study by [Abed A-H Hamasha et al](#)<sup>11</sup> conducted similar study of social media utilization among dental practitioners in Riyadh and concluded that non-Saudis, general practitioners and dentists practicing in private clinics are significantly using more social media during their practice however in the present study we have not segregating practitioners on the basis of nationality.

In this study, the dentists who were using social media within their dental practice were 68%. This finding is higher in percentage compared to findings from USA dentists<sup>12</sup> where social media usage was 51% which can be within their practices this difference may be because the other study was conducted in 2012.

In our study Twitter (34.0%) was the most commonly used social media followed by Facebook (31.0%) which is similar to the study by [Abed A-H Hamasha et al](#).<sup>11</sup> which is also in support of Saudi Communication and Information Technology Commission. In this study, we found that most of the dentists do use social media 2 – 4 hours for practice purpose that could be the maximum time which can be considered with in practice schedule. Similar to study of Henry RK et al<sup>12</sup> general practitioners were using social media more than specialists.

More than 80% of the practicing dentists in the present study were having positive attitude towards social media and they think social media could play an important role for the betterment of the dental practice which is similar to reports of [Abed A-H Hamasha et al](#).<sup>11</sup> al<sup>13</sup> where 83.5% of subjects predicted that social media marketing would increase in the future and help in clinical practice and reports of Rajeh MT et al.<sup>13</sup> who conducted study on social media in dental education in Saudi Arabia.

In the present study no differences were found in the demographic factors and social media usage among dental practitioners at alkharij ( $p>0.05$ ) which can be traced to improved access and knowledge of social media gained through professional course among study participants.

## Conclusion

In recent years especially after COVID 19 the use of social media through online platforms was increased drastically. Dental practitioners at alkharij are having a positive attitude towards social media and think social media could help in increasing knowledge and improvement of quality of dental services rendered also Social media has become a tool for the dentists for growth of their clinical practice. However, certain legal issues and privacy of patient's information should be important to keep in mind. Dental practitioners should utilize social media without violating moral and ethical issues.

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