

## Using Social Media in the Bahraini 2014 Elections “A Study on a Sample of Young People”

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### Abstract

Social media is considered one of the important instruments professionally employed in the elections in various countries around the world; as social media represents an important space for social communication, cultural exchange, and political debate among young people. The young believe that this default space provides a great deal of information, and perhaps this is the most important reason which leads them to love it. This use of space developed from being a mere tool for entertainment and building friendships to rather include various walks of life. The political issue, however, was not the exception on which the young depended on social media as an important source for their information. The fourth social media report issued by the Government Administration College in Dubai in 2014 indicated that the percentage of users of the most important social media networks in Bahrain reached as high as (410. 000 ) users of Twitter and (360. 000 )users of Facebook in a small country of not more than one million people. This study attempts to shed light on some facts associated with the Bahraini youth use of social media in the parliamentary and municipal elections which were held on November 25, 2014 in Bahrain. This study also aimed to identify the degree of young people reliance on social media as a source of information about the candidates and their election programs.

**Keywords:** Bahraini youth, Social media, Diffusion of Innovations theory, Elections, public sphere theory.

### Introduction:

Social Media plays a major and active role in shaping the democratization and political reform in various communities, as this media reflect the nature of the new relationship between the state and society and between the elite and the masses. The contribution of social media in political and democratic reform depends on the function of these networks in the community, the size of freedoms, and the plurality of opinions and trends prevailing, in addition to the nature of cultural, social and political factors inherent in the society. The nature and the role of means of communication in consolidating democracy, and promoting political participation values and political decision-making is linked with the philosophy of the political regime under which the media operate, and the degree of freedom enjoyed within the social structure, ( **Gilbert, W. Steven. 1995**).

Means of communication plays three essential roles in promoting democratic rule, as it is a public sphere which represents a voice for different sectors of society, and allows discussion of all points of view, and it is a mobilizing factor which facilitates civic participation among all sectors of society. The democratic rule also enhances the channels of public participation and works as a watchdog which curbs the excesses of authority, and increases government transparency and holds public officials accountable for their actions before the court of public opinion.

In this context, both (**Gage& Lokman**) determine three basic functions for using means and communications in election campaigns, which are illustrated by "**Mohammed Zinedine**" as that an election campaign has political rules and norms which necessitate the political activists to abide by. The commitment of the administration to enforce the law and treat all candidates equally, the candidates should have realistic and specific programs, and the candidates as well as the voters should respect the rules of the electoral code as they are all key factors for the success of fair and transparent election campaigns ( **Zinedine 2006, p. 90**). These functions are:

1. Social media is used as a helping tool: Here, we use means of communication as a helping and independent tool from the main subject in areas, such as communication , the public , its trends , preparing research and studies and data collection and analysis, in addition to making use of the sphere of cost and duty accomplishment methodology.
2. Social Media is used as a medium for the transfer of information: This means hiring social media as a means of connecting ideas, as is the case in education through practical training and educational networks.
3. Social Media is used as a goal: This means to acquire and learn how to use social media through organized study courses. Education is here meant to train students how to use these social networks in their various fields, as well as to prepare them for future career and social life.

The introduction of social media in the electoral process has a major impact on bringing about a quantum leap and a radical transformation in the nature of tasks and duties performed by the candidates for elections. The candidate role is no longer confined to merely "providing knowledge or information about his program" to the voters, but it becomes necessary to learn other new skills so as to direct thought and coordinate

electoral activities, to facilitate the electoral process, and to be a specialist guide, and a collaborator with his fellow candidates, and a specialist in measuring and evaluating the electoral prediction process, trends, and other responsibilities that contribute to the success of the electoral process, (Alley, 2007, p. 58 ).The active applications of social media in the electoral process necessitate that members of the electoral campaigns need to acquire certain skills and expertise to deal positively with those networks, through joining continuous programs and training courses to ensure follow-up of rapid developments in the field. This will undoubtedly help them to achieve a constructive employment of these networks in the electoral process.

### 1: Review of Related Literature:

Following is a number of relevant studies, such as:

(S. Arulchelvan, Anna, (2014) conducted a study entitled “New Media Communication Strategies for Election Campaigns: Experiences of Indian Political Parties,

Politics and Mass Communication have been an unbreakable duo for many centuries. Public meetings, Newspapers, Magazines, Radio, Television are the major communication tools. With the advent of new media technologies, the political campaign has gained a new dimension. During the last elections Indian political parties used Websites, E-mails, IVRS, SMSs, Internet-Banners, Online Advertising, Blogs, Mobile Phones, etc. This study has aimed to assess the effectiveness of new media political campaigns during the elections. Content analysis, Survey and In-depth Interview methods were used in the study. The study has revealed surprising facts. Every large political party has tried to use all the available new media tools. Television, Mobile phone and Internet have played a great role. The utilization of new media communication tools and strategies gave a new facet that was highly beneficial to the Indian politics. The political parties have reached a large number of voters through the new media. It made their election campaign easy, fast and successful.

- **Kaczmarek, L.,and other, (2014)** did a research entitled “Social Media Monitoring of the Campaigns for the 2013 German Bundestag Elections on Facebook and Twitter,

As more and more people use social media to communicate their view and perception of elections, researchers have increasingly been collecting and analyzing data from social media platforms.

Our research focuses on social media communication related to the 2013 election of the German parliament [translation: Bundestagswahl 2013. We constructed several social media datasets using data from Facebook and Twitter. First, we identified the most relevant candidates (n=2,346) and checked whether they maintained social media accounts. The Facebook data was collected in November 2013 for the period of January 2009 to October 2013. On Facebook we identified 1,408 Facebook walls containing approximately 469,000 posts. Twitter data was collected between June and December 2013 finishing with the constitution of the government. On Twitter we identified 1,009 candidates and 76 other agents, for example, journalists. We estimated the number of relevant tweets to exceed eight million for the period from July 27 to September 27 alone

**Stephen Mills, (2014).** conducted a study entitled “Use of Social Media in Politics by Young People in Australasia,

The use of social media in politics by young people in Australasia is not as exciting as anywhere else in the world.

There was no Australasian spring. Social media is not a heavily used tool in youth-based protests. The Occupy movement barely flickered into life in Australia and New Zealand. Social media is far from being the “worst menace to society” as it was described by Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan during protests in Turkey in early June.

It is still almost certain that social media will play an even larger role in Australasian political communications and equally almost certain is the assumption that social media will be more heavily used by younger than older voters when it comes to politics. Australasian political parties appear to be mostly using social media to target party supporters rather than younger voters per se although younger voters are certainly expected to be heavier users of social media than older voters.

**Khurshid (2011),** conducted a study entitled "The Role of Media in the Revitalization of the Arab Political Movement –Social Media as a Model" .This study aimed at recognizing how the Arab political movement could employ the potential of social media sites in fueling the Arab revolutions and in sustaining their momentum and mobilizing the youth. The study concluded that these sites have become mobilizing stations for participation in the political movement, and they broke the barrier of fear and turned the secret political action into public activity .These sites played the role of ideological mobilization for revolutions, and have made their presence in disseminating revolution ideas and promoting the rebels demands. The study also showed that these sites played a significant role in the coordination between the rebels, and they were employed in achieving solidarity among political groups and organizing sit-in activities. These sites also contributed in changing the stereotype image of the Arab youth, as they changed them from the young who were described as superficial, to active young people who yearn for freedom, dignity and change.

- **Abdel Kawi (2009)** conducted a study entitled "The Role of Social Media in the Activation of Political

Participation among Young People." This study aimed to identify the youth motives of using of virtual social networks, and the role of these networks in developing political awareness among young people; and in the formation of their attitudes towards political participation. A survey and comparison methodology was used on a sample of (380) young people, in addition to the site of the Face book. The study showed that the percentage of those who use Facebook for political purposes was (7.50%); and there were no significant statistical differences between males and females. The study also showed that views pluralism and discussion of political issues was of a great degree of freedom on the Facebook; and that providing an opportunity to comment and express opinion on the issues raised helped to attract young people's attention towards political implications raised on (Facebook) without discrimination between males and females.

- **Al - Alawneh (2012)** did a research on "The Role of Social Media in Stimulating the Jordanian citizens to participate in the Mass Movement ". This study aimed to identify the role of social network sites in stimulating Jordanian citizens to participate in the activities of mass movement by using both the descriptive and analytical approach. The sample consisted of (296) trade unionists in the city of Irbid. The main findings of the study were: (74.7%) of the trade unionists use social network sites, and (24.3%) of them use Facebook site as it gives users the opportunity to express their views freely. (50.6%) of the trade unionists use Facebook, whereas (27.1%) use Twitter. Their motives for using these sites are that they allow users to communicate with friends by (28.5%), and offer the opportunity to express their views freely by (21.8%).

### 1.1. Commentary on the related studies:

The most important aspects of previous studies can be identified as follows:

- Making use of field studies methodology adopted by most studies, and benefiting from methods and instruments used to measure the variables, in addition to the optimal use of statistical methods to get results, which enriched this study and deepened its implications in the context of the various relationships between the study variables.
- Those studies also benefited in the development of the questionnaire and in comparing the results of the study with that of other studies.

### 2. Problem of the Study:

Using social media in political participation in general, and participation in the electoral process is considered one of the most recent trends in election campaigns. In the light of opinion measuring and world centers tendency towards believing in the idea of virtual world uses (**Uperaft, Terenzinik, 2002**). At the same time, the virtual world becomes one of the issues that haunt decision-makers in those academic institutions, as they are drawing policies related to these social networks, providing financial support to develop, and creating the appropriate infrastructure, building strategies compatible with the specialists capabilities and providing continuous training and technical support. Although there is a great interest in using these social networks in the electoral campaigns by many in these centers, we find that studying the actual use of these social networks "has not received the same degree of attention. (**Kagima Hausafus.. 2000, p 233**), and it remains one of the most important challenges facing these institutions (**Green, 1999**). This is true in the Arab case, as studies on the use of the voters in the Arab world of social media in the electoral process is limited and even negligible; there are only few studies that accompany the electoral campaigns; this raises the question on how to take advantage of these networks as a major source of electoral information . This study main question is limited to: ***How did the (young) Bahraini voters participating in the parliamentary and municipal elections use social media as their source of information about candidates and their electoral programs?***

### 3. Objectives of the study:

The present study aims to identify the "young" Bahraini voter use of social media in the electoral process through the following:

1. Identifying the degree of Bahraini voter use of social media in the electoral process.
2. Identifying the most important social networks upon which the Bahraini voter accesses information related to election candidates and their programs.
3. Identifying the reasons that prompted the Bahraini voters to use social media as a source of information about the candidates and their election programs.
4. Recognizing the difficulties that hinder the Bahraini voter when using social media in the electoral process.

**4. Questions Hypotheses of the study:** This study intends to answer the following questions:

**RQ1:** To what degree does the Bahraini voter use social media in the electoral process?

**RQ2:** What are the media sites most used by the Bahraini youth in parliamentary and municipal elections?

**RQ3:** What are the reasons that prevent young Bahrainis from using social media in the parliamentary and municipal elections?

**RQ4:** What are the difficulties that face young Bahrainis when using social media in the parliamentary and municipal elections?

**RQ5:** What are the reasons that made the Bahraini youth use social media as a source of information in the parliamentary and municipal elections?

This study started from a set of hypotheses:

1. There are significant statistical differences between the use of social media and the variable of gender
2. There are significant statistical differences between the use of social media and the variable of age.

**5.The study theory:** This study is based on two theories:

**5.1. Public Sphere Theory:** the German philosopher (Jürgen Habermas) phrased the public sphere theory in (1962); it explains and describes the formation of public opinion. The public sphere occupies, in fact a place between public authority and government and the private sector which may focus on the family and the individuals private affairs. In the public sphere- which grew up in the European bourgeois societies - discussions about government policies were conducted freely and public opinion trends developed (Zekariah,2009, p. 943). "Habermas" defined the public sphere as a virtual or imaginary community not necessarily limited to a known location or (any space). It is made up of a group of individuals, who have common features combined with each other as audience, and they develop and identify the needs of society with the state. This virtual society highlights the views and trends through behaviors and dialogue, which seek to emphasize the general affairs of the State. In fact it is a perfect shape, (Calhoun.1992. p.21).

The great communication revolution and the new technology of electronic media, especially internet contributed in the emergence of a new social space which is subject to the idealism of "Habermas". In this social space public opinion is free regarding information movement, and exchange of ideas between citizens. The Internet offers new possibilities compared to traditional media. It also makes it easy to disseminate information widely among individuals. The public sphere theory confirms that electronic media creates a state of controversy among the public and has impact on public issues and on the ruling authority. The public sphere can be seen as an area in our social life, through which public opinion can be shaped. "Habermas," believes that there is a possibility of creating a dialogue outside the government's control and the economy through his theory, in addition to the political influence of the Internet among individuals. The internet plays a role in achieving democracy; as it is perceived in the public sphere as a political surrounding, (Abdel Kawi, 2009, p. 158).

Following are the most important features of the public sphere as identified by Habermas, (Azzi 2009, p. 8)

1. The public sphere is part of our social life through which it is possible to form what is approximately public opinion.
2. A Public sphere originates from special people; they gather together to ask for the community needs from the state.
3. The public sphere is a group of people benefiting from their wisdom and thinking to discuss general issues.

Public sphere - in general - is those areas where members discuss their preferences, and reach a decision on "how to live and work together in the future", There are three aspects which characterize the public sphere: first, participation in it is open; secondly parties involved in it are equal regardless of their social and economic background; and third any issue in it is debatable, (Habermas 1989.p18.)

The current study benefits from the public sphere theory in identifying the role of communication and information as the main source of information for voters, and it helps in giving people the opportunity to know candidates and their electoral programs, in addition to exchanging information and ideas. It is possible to take advantage of this theory in the interpretation of results, in view of the role of means of communication in creating a public sphere among people, which enables them to form a public opinion about the candidates and their electoral programs.

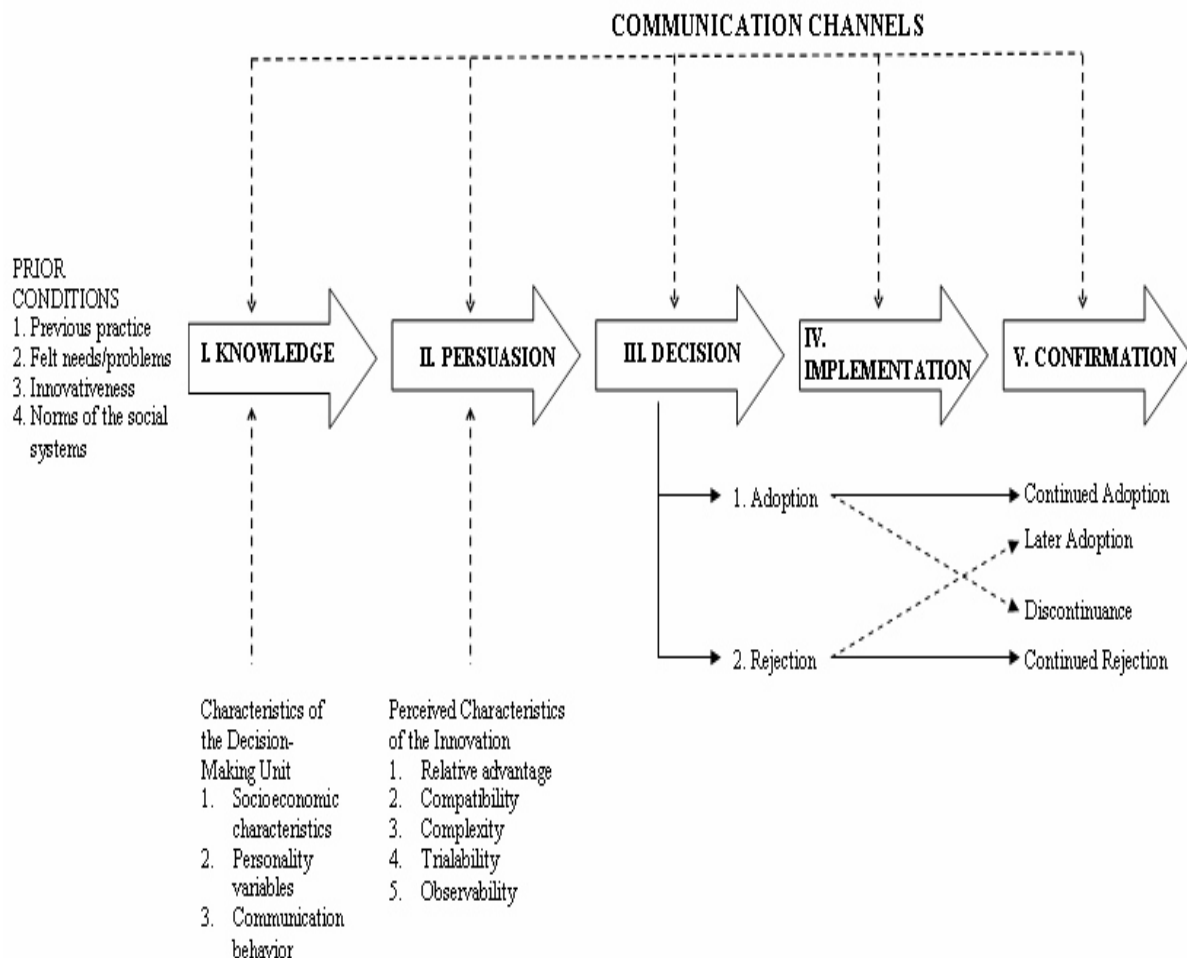
**5.2. Diffusion of Innovations theory:** Everett Rogers, who was a specialist in the field of rural and social work put this theory. Interest at that time focused on modernizing the American rural society and making it in line with economic and social changes that have made the United States a superpower after World War II. He focused on how to make the public adopt the new innovations, whether in production or consumption. Rogers carefully reviewed more than 5,000 related empirical studies related to the spread of all new innovations in the field of Rural Sociology and Anthropology. The aim of which was to identify the public mechanisms in adopting innovations. (Rogers 1962, p.150)

**First: Phases of adopting innovations and novel methods:** Adoption is defined as a mental process through which the individual passes from the time of hearing or knowing about innovation until the final adoption phase. Rogers noticed through his review of the many studies that there are five basic phases of adopting the innovations process:

**Awareness phase of the idea:** The individual hears or knows, for the first time, about the new innovation:

- I. Either spontaneously, or he reads by chance about the subject.
- II. Or intentionally that is, he heard that a special television program will be broadcast on the new subject about something. (Rogers, 2003, p. 12).

1. **Interest phase:** a desire for further knowledge and information about the topic, the behavior becomes purposeful. (Rogers, 2003, p. 21)
2. **Evaluation phase:** The individual evaluates available data and decides if there is value in putting the issue under practical experimentation.
3. **Experimentation phase:** The individual experiments the innovation in a short or specified period.
4. **Adoption phase:** If the experimentation phase is not convincing, the individual will ignore the issue, but if he is satisfied, he will adopt and apply it on a large scale. (Makkawi 2003, p. 90)



**Figure 1: Model of Five Phases in the Innovation-Decision**

**Second: The position of different public categories regarding innovations and stages of information transition.**

Not all members of the public react the same way towards innovations .Rogers however discovered different categories.

- **The early adopters:** it is a category of those who are crazy about having anything new on the market ,or know about it through the media, either through advertising or promotional campaigns, in order to brag or to translate their love of all that is new so as to feel unique and different from others.
- **Opinion leaders convinced:** opinion leaders recognize the innovation and experiment it. If they were convinced by its benefits, they will influence their social surroundings and followers, such as friends, relatives, co-workers and neighbors through face contact.

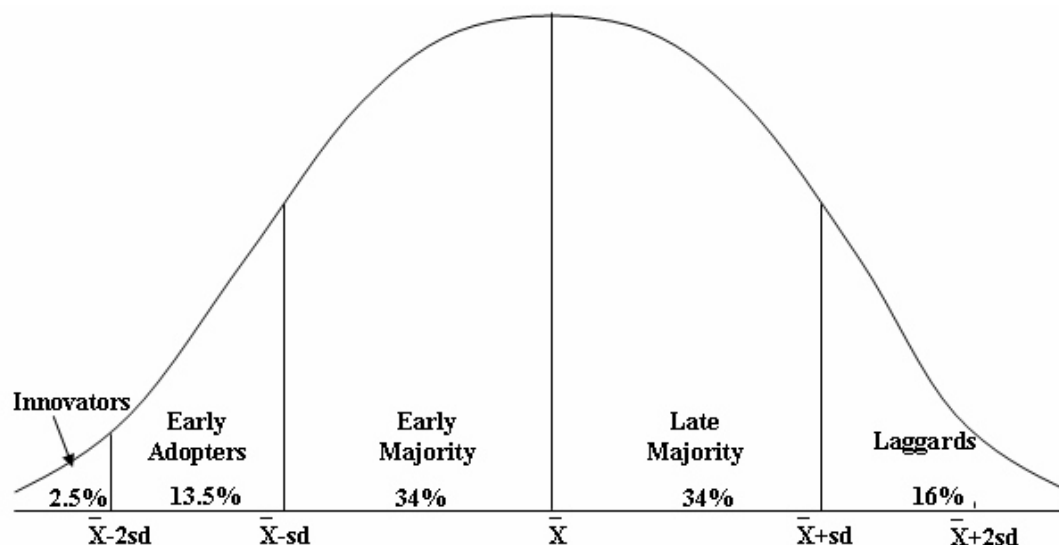


Figure 2: Adopter Categorization on the Basis of Innovativeness

### Third: The spread of innovations and social media

Social media which is one of the most striking innovations of today has extremely fast and efficient diffusion power with its various platforms and millions of users all around the world. According to diffusion of innovation approach, the factors as compatibility complexity, durability, observability and relative advantage have impacts on the decision and as a result the diffusion process of the innovation. In this sense, it is obvious that social media facilitates this diffusion with its dynamic, interactive, user-centered, user-friendly nature and with its opportunities that provides individuals more control over the contents and enables users to become producers as well.

Social media -perhaps for the first time in media history- gave users a chance to choose their relation type with the media. In other words, in today's media, users can just be the audiences of contents if they want, or they can be the participants too, or even they can be the content creators personally. It is clear that social media empowered the user and the user found a chance to have different roles in his/her relation with the media, even he/she can play all these roles at the same time. In this respect, this important emphasis on the individual can be considered as another crucial side for this rapid diffusion. Social media provides important opportunities to people by offering a chance to express themselves in a democratic and free environment. Being also a publisher of their own contents, every user of social media become an actor and has their own followers. Quick access to information and the social interaction chance offered by social media can be seen as other key elements for its successful diffusion.

On the other hand, Rogers (1995, p.252) stated that, in a social system, it is not possible for everyone to adopt an innovation at the same time. He mentioned that it is possible to categorize people according to their acceptance rank as from the ones who implement the innovation first and to the ones who accept the innovation over the time. According to Rogers, at this point, the thing that gains importance is the innovativeness and the individual's adaptation degree to the new ideas when comparing to the other members of a system. New applications or technologies provide the leadership position to the individuals who firstly adopt and implement the innovations while the others follow the leader and try to develop their technological and organizational superiorities. In this manner, in adaptation and diffusion process of an innovation, the characteristics of adopters or rejecters are also important as well as the characteristics of the innovation itself. (Folorunso , 2009, p.232)

### 6.Methodology of the Study

This study is a descriptive one. It is based on accurate observation and follow-up of a phenomenon or an event quantitatively or qualitatively in a period of time (Ulayan and Ghoneim, 2000, p. 43). It is also based on studying the recipients, classifying motives and needs; besides studying behavioral patterns, and levels of interest and preference (Abdul Hamid,( 2004, p. 59), and then analyzing and interpreting results to access accurate facts. The study also belongs to the survey genre, which is one of the most important approaches to study the public media in a descriptive and analytical context, through information and data collection and interpretation to indicate what actually happens, in order to reach conclusions and generalizations. (Al Mughrabi, 2007, p. 97).

### 6.1 Analysis Instruments and Data Collecting Method :

The questionnaire is the instrument of data collecting in this study; it is used to collect a variety of data from the selected sample of the study population by asking a series of questions in order to identify specific facts or the respondents' views, attitudes and motives towards a particular topic (Bonneville, 2007, p.123).

### 6.2 :Instrument Validity and Reliability:

To ensure the instrument validity, the researcher submitted it to a number of media and sociology professors,( Dr. Mohamed quad Kuwait University, Dr. Mohamed faide ahiya University, Dr. jamal zarouk University Ajman , who expressed a number of views and observations, which the researcher took before applying the instrument on the sample. The researcher used the Test- Retest method on a random sample of 10% of the total original sample. , The value of reliability coefficient has reached 83.9%, which is acceptable for such studies. The researcher also relied on the internal consistency between the elements and the items of the adopted questionnaire which ranged between (0.85-0.86). Table No. (1): Shows the internal consistency coefficient according to Cronbach Alpha equation and the reliability of fields and the instrument as a whole. These values were considered appropriate for the purpose of this study.

**Table (1) shows Cronbach alpha internal consistency, reliability of domains and the total score**

|              | Domain  | Reliability | Internal Consistency |
|--------------|---|-------------|----------------------|
| 1            | Reasons for using social media                    | 0.76        | 0.77                 |
| 2            | Dependence of youth on social media               | 0.71        | 0.78                 |
| 3            | Participation in elections driven by social media | 0.74        | 0.75                 |
| <b>Score</b> |   | 0.85        | 0.86                 |

**6.3: Population and sample:** The study population consisted of the young Bahrainis who voted at the polling center at the University of Bahrain. This social category is very important in the society as it shows considerable interest in political affairs, and interacts with national issues because its members are of a high level of education and cultural awareness and good users of social media. As for the sample of the study, the researcher used the simple random sampling method to select the respondent community; it is one of the main types of statistical probability samples as it gives every member of the community the opportunity to be one of the selected samples. (Abdel Hamid 2004, P. 59). The following procedure was adopted when dragging the study sample modules. All young people who cast their ballots in the electoral center have been targeted (University of Bahrain - the Electoral Center). Members of the study sample were 600 young people voters. They were given the questionnaire which included (11) questions; 8 respondents have been excluded for non-suitability for analysis; the sample then remained (592).

### 7.The Study Results:

**7.1** Table No. 1 data indicates that 54.3% of respondents are males and 54.6% are females; and those who are between 20-22 years constitute 26%, while those who are between 23-25 form 41.2%, whereas 32.7% were between 25 – years and above.

- In the domain of specialization, the results showed that the proportion of the Faculty of Law was 12.1% ,Faculty of Arts 14.5%, , Bahrain Teachers College 10.5%, , college of business administration 9.4%, , Faculty of Applied Sciences 11.8%, , Faculty of natural physical education and physical therapy 10. 3%; Faculty of Engineering 8.8% ; Health Sciences College 11.8%, Faculty of information technologies 10.8% . It should be noticed that the Colleges of Humanities and Social Sciences got 47.2%, and colleges of Applied Science got 52.8%. This finding shows that participation in the elections was not limited to students of the faculty of humanities only, but it was close in the elections regardless of the scientific specialization and scientific reference of young Bahrainis. This result also shows a high degree of political awareness of the importance political participation.

**Table No. 1: shows description of the study population**

| <b>Alternatives and Frequencies Variables</b> | <b>Alternatives</b>                             | <b>Respondents</b> | <b>%</b>   |
|---|---|--------------------|------------|
| <b>Gender</b>                                 | Male  | 322                | 54.3       |
|   | Female  | 270                | 45.6       |
|   | <b>Total</b>                                    | <b>592</b>         | <b>100</b> |
| <b>Age</b>                                    | 20 -22years                                     | 154                | 26         |
|   | years 23 25-                                    | 244                | 41.2       |
|   | or more -25                                     | 194                | 32.7       |
|   | <b>Total</b>                                    | <b>592</b>         | <b>100</b> |
| <b>Specialization</b>                         | Faculty of Law                                  | 72                 | 12.1       |
|   | Faculty of Arts                                 | 86                 | 14.5       |
|   | Bahrain Teachers' College                       | 62                 | 10.5       |
|   | Business Administration College                 | 56                 | 9.4        |
|   | Faculty of science                              | 70                 | 11.8       |
|   | Physical Education and Physical Therapy College | 60                 | 10.3       |
|   | Faculty of Engineering                          | 52                 | 8.8        |
|   | Health Sciences College                         | 70                 | 11.8       |
|   | Faculty of Information Technology               | 64                 | 10.8       |
|   | <b>Total</b>                                    | <b>592</b>         | <b>100</b> |

**7.2. The Bahraini youth use of social media as a source of information on elections.**

The results of the study showed that (91.5%) of young Bahrainis are using social media as a source of information about the elections, while the percentage of those who do not use it amounted to (8.5%), which means that this category of young people realizes the importance of network and its role on the personal, social and political levels. The youth resort to use networks to obtain necessary information; as they are the most learned category in the society, they are keen to keep up with technological developments in the field of communication. This finding coincides with the study of Mills which showed that 83% of young people use social media in the Australian election (Mills, 2014), as well as with Kaczmirek study which showed that 76.9% of German young people use social media in the elections as an important source of information about the candidates (Kaczmirek 0.2014). This study also agrees with Anna's which showed that 52.9% of Indian young people depend on social media in local elections (Anna, 2014)

**7.3. Reasons for not using social media as a source of information in elections**

Results of the study indicate that the Bahraini youth who do not use social media to get information about the candidates were (29) or (9.7%) of the sample size. The reason for this finding is due to the lack of confidence in these networks to transmit information accurately and objectively by (41.3%), followed by the belief that social media is a fertile ground to spread and promote malicious rumors which discredit candidates by (31%); while (27.5%) of the sample prefer a direct contact with the candidate in open meetings away from unjustified publicity to win votes.

**7.4. The relationship between demographic features of the youth and their use of social media as a source of information in the elections.**

Table (2) shows the relationship between demographic features and the use of social media in the Bahraini elections.

| <b>Use Demographic Characteristics</b> |                     | <b>Use</b>         |             | <b>Don't Use</b>   |            | $\chi^2$ | <b>Degree of Freedom</b> | <b>Statistical Significance</b> |
|--|---------------------|--------------------|-------------|--------------------|------------|----------|--------------------------|---------------------------------|
|  |                     | <b>Respondents</b> | <b>%</b>    | <b>Respondents</b> | <b>%</b>   |          |                          |                                 |
| <b>Gender</b>                          | <b>Male</b>         | 309                | 52.1        | 13                 | 2.1        | 0,579    | 3                        | 0,901                           |
|  | <b>Female</b>       | 254                | 43.1        | 16                 | 2.7        |          |                          |                                 |
|  | <b>Total</b>        | <b>563</b>         | <b>95.2</b> | <b>29</b>          | <b>4.8</b> |          |                          |                                 |
| <b>Age</b>                             | <b>20-22 years</b>  | 145                | 24,4        | 9                  | 1.5        | 8,010    | 1                        | 0,005                           |
|  | <b>23-25 years</b>  | 233                | 39.3        | 11                 | 1.8        |          |                          |                                 |
|  | <b>25 – or more</b> | 185                | 31.3        | 9                  | 1.5        |          |                          |                                 |
|  | <b>Total</b>        | 563                | 95.2        | 29                 | 4.8        |          |                          |                                 |



Regarding the relationship between demographic features of the Bahraini youth, and their use of social media as a source of information in the elections, the results indicate that there are no statistical correlation between age and relying on networks as the qui square ( $\chi^2$ ) value reached (0579); and the  $\chi^2$  value between sex and using social media was (8.010). This value is not statistically significant at ( $\alpha = 0, 05$ ).

### 7.5. Social media type used by Young Bahrainis as a source of information on elections

Table No. (3) Shows the type of social media used as a source of information on the elections.

| No | Social Media | Very High | High | Medium | Low  | Very Low |
|----|--------------|-----------|------|--------|------|----------|
| 1  | Instagram    | 18.2      | 22.7 | 22.9   | 12.4 | 23.8     |
| 2  | Twitter      | 34.7      | 17   | 21     | 9.1  | 18.2     |
| 3  | Snapchat     | -         | -    | -      | -    | -        |
| 4  | Facebook     | 25        | 17.6 | 23.8   | 10.3 | 23.3     |
| 5  | YouTube      | 12.5      | 21   | 13.1   | 18.1 | 35.3     |
| 6  | Google Plus  | 11,9      | 19.5 | 31.8   | 10.9 | 25.9     |
| 7  | What's up    | 12.5      | 25   | 26,1   | 22.1 | 14.3     |
| 8  | My Space     | -         | -    | 2,1    | 9,5  | 97,8     |
| 9  | LinkedIn     | 1,7       | 2,4  | 1,9    | 44,6 | 49,4     |

The objective of the study is to identify the use of young Bahrainis of social media in the parliamentary and municipal elections. Each individual respondent was asked to assess the degree of use of each of the networks contained in a list of a number of social networks that are usually used in the electoral process. Rogers model in the classification of innovation spread was adopted when he put the evaluation scale, which consisted of five degrees: 1 = very high, 2 = high, 3 = medium, 4 = low, 5 = very low.

The analysis of results of the Bahraini youth degree of using of social media in the elections shows that among more networks commonly used in the elections are Twitter, this is due the number of young Bahraini users which is (410 000) out of the total population of one million and a half, according to the fourth social media report issued in Dubai in 2014. It is used at a very high degree by 34.7% of the total number of young people in the study, and at a high degree by 17% and at a medium degree by 21%, followed by Instagram which is used at very high degree by 18.2%, and at a high degree by 22.7%, and at a medium degree by 22.9%, while young Bahrainis draw their information from Facebook at a very high degree of approximately 25%. Those who use Facebook at a high degree were 17.6%, this finding is in line with the results of the fourth Social media report issued by Government Administration College of Dubai in 2014, which shows that users of Facebook in Bahrain are (360 000) or 64% of the young people. This result is consistent with the results reached in a study on the use of the Bahraini university students for Facebook which amounted to 62.8%, (Zayani.2015). The result of Alawneh study, on the other hand, was identical with these results as the users of Twitter were 27.3%. (Alawneh, 2012). The percentage of Bahraini youth using YouTube at a very high level formed was 12.5%, and at a high degree formed 25%, but at the medium level was 26.1%. The percentage of those who use *what's up* at a very high degree was 12.5%, and at a high degree was 21%, and at a low degree was 13.1%. The percentage of the Bahraini youth using Google Plus at a high degree was 11.9% and at a medium degree formed 19.5% and a low degree 31.8 %. On the other hand, the results indicated that the Bahraini youth who participated in the study, still fall under one the five varieties of the creativity adopter categories identified by (Rogers) in his model: creative, early adopters, early majority, late majority, the later, with a disparity in the percentage of all of them, but it is noticeable that there is a difference between them in the proportion of such use among first adopters and what followed of adopters types who represent, as was confirmed by the results of this study, the most part of these varieties. This is what should be taken into account and given a priority when planning to use social media in the elections.

The least frequently used or non-existent virtual networks used by the Bahraini youth are *Myspace*, *snap chat* and *LinkedIn*. It can be noticed from these results that the Bahraini youth, in terms of their use of social media in the elections, have not yet arrived to what (Rogers) called the "critical mass" which can exist when a large number of individuals adopt a certain innovation. As these results suggest, (91.5%) of young Bahrainis using social media as a source of information about the elections is a high percentage; this indicates the continuity of Twitter and Facebook sovereignty and they facilitated their use process for everyone.

### 7.6. Youth motives for participation in the parliamentary elections due to social media.

The study results indicate that the motive of "social media provide information on the electoral candidate and his program, not provided by the media," was ranked first among the motives of young Bahrainis' dependence on the social media for participation in the elections at about 30.5%. The motive of "the Bahraini young people's

access to information and opinions about the candidate, through social media was easier than the media,” ranked in the second place, representing about 20.1%, while the motive of “the ability to communicate through social media with different sources on the elections” occupied third place by 14.4%.

The results also showed that young Bahrainis depend on social media as they display several different views about the candidates, their programs and election alliances came in the fourth place by 14.3%. The motive of “communication networks achieved a head start on the traditional media in the presentation of news and information about candidates” ranked fifth by 10.5%, while the motive of “social media achieves interaction with the candidate electoral program” ranked sixth by 10.2%. This is in line with the findings of the study on the young Bahrainis use of Facebook, where the motives of expression of political views, discussions and exchange of information represented 38.9% of the total utilitarian motives, (Zayani 2015); in addition, the results of Alawneh study showed that 24 0.3% of Jordanian youth use social media because they offer them the opportunity to express their views freely and get information which help in the political participation. (Alawneh, 2012). The study of Mills shows that 54.9% of Australian young people are using social media driven by recognition of the electoral programs and electoral campaigns of the candidates, (Mills, 2014), while the percentage of the German youth gets less to become 16.8% of them believe that social media is enough alone to learn about the electoral programs and candidates,(Kaczmirek, 2014); while Abdulkawi study results showed the percentage of those who use Facebook for political purposes was (50. 7%), and showed that the plurality of views and discussion of political issues was done at a large degree of freedom on the Facebook; However, providing opportunity to comment and express an opinion on the issues raised helped in attracting young people attention about the political implications raised on the (Facebook). (Abdul kawi, 2009).

These results clearly state that young Bahrainis motives of dependence on social media are close because these young people are almost similar in their methods of dealing with the social media, on the one hand, and in education and awareness of the importance of political participation levels, on the other hand. It is clear that young people are interested in obtaining information about the candidates and their election programs more easily and in an interactive way with what is published on these networks through comments available. This advantage is largely available more on the social media networks than other media, so these advantages provided by social media stimulate youth to participate in the Parliamentary and municipal elections.

#### **7.7. The availability of information about the candidates and their election programs on social media.**

Results indicate that 49.5% of young Bahrainis believe that the information is available continuously for electoral candidates and their programs, while 32% believe that such information is sometimes available, but those who believe that information is not available formed 18.4%. Statistical analysis also shows that the majority of young people participated in the elections believe that information is available constantly; this positively refers to the candidates’ interest in providing the recipient with information through multiple social media. The study of Anna, however, showed that 26.8 of the Indian young people believe significantly in the availability of information on the electoral programs, (Anna, 2014). A study by Mills showed that 31.8% of the Australian youth believe that social media provides good information on the electoral programs and campaigns of the candidates (Mills, 2014). This percentage rises to 33.1% when it comes to the German youth who believe that social media provide significant information on the electoral programs and candidates. (Kaczmirek, 2014).

#### **7.8 Difficulties that hinder young Bahrainis from using social media as a source of information in the elections.**

The results of the study indicate that the majority of young people had agreed that the most important difficulties they encountered in using social media is the uncertainty about the information published about the candidates in the first place by 19.2%, followed by lack of time to get to know these networks by 18.5%. In contrast, the researcher finds that the majority of respondents surveyed do not agree that fear of using social media prevents them from using it in the electoral process by 21.8%. The percentage of those who do not consider difficulty in dealing with social networks as an obstacle to use these networks in the electoral process was 21.5%. While the percentage of those who do not believe that social media was not within their interests in the field of elections was very low, of about 3.4% of the total study sample.

Results of statistical analysis showed that there are a number of difficulties that young Bahrainis agreed upon with varying degrees which hinder them from achieving benefit from the use of social media as a reliable source of information in the elections, in addition to a number of constraints specific for the nature of the Bahraini society environment. In the study of Mills, results showed that 9.8% of the Australian Youth acknowledges the obstacles on the reliance on social media as a source of information about the candidates; Mills attributed this to the belief in the credibility of candidates pages and the sincerity of their information ,(Mills, 2014).The study of Kaczmirek also shows that 3.8% of the German young people confirms the existence of difficulties in the use of social media as a source of information in the candidates’ election campaigns . This is due to the confidence in what is published in the official pages of the candidates and their

good knowledge in using these networks. (Kaczmarek, 2014).

### 7.9 . Bahraini youth's reliance on social media as a source of information to form opinions about election candidates.

Results of the study indicate that "social media allows the public to mobilize behind a specific candidate," ranked first with a mean of 2.58. In the second place came "Social media is able to provide the public with multiple views about the candidate which contribute to form a position of him "with a mean of 2.51. Social Media Networks form a consensus on a candidate through forming consistent groups that support his/her electoral program came third with a mean of 2.30; followed by the "Social media is unique in its ability to form public opinion about the candidate occupies the fourth place with a mean of 2.26. In the fifth position came, " Social media is not trusted in the elections as a source of news and information" with a mean of 2.10; and finally came in the sixth place "Social media cannot be relied upon in politics and it is reliable only in personal matters" with a mean of 2.09.

These results also show that social media can be considered as an important source that can be relied on to form opinions about some of candidates and their election programs, more than other means of communication. This conclusion comes in favor of the results of some previous studies that showed the growing role of social media during transitions and political movement witnessed by the Arab world.

**Table No. (4) Shows reliance on social media in forming opinions about candidates**

| Reliance of Youth on Social Media   | Mean | Standard Deviation |
|---|------|--------------------|
| Social media is unique in its ability to form a public opinion about the candidate  | 2.26 | 0.753              |
| Social media is able to provide the public with multiple views about the candidate which contribute to form a position of him | 2.51 | 0.617              |
| Social media cannot be relied upon in politics and it is reliable only in personal matters                                    | 2.09 | 0.809              |
| Social media networks allow the public to mobilize behind a specific candidate  | 2.58 | 0.571              |
| Social Media Networks form a consensus on a candidate through forming consistent groups that support his electoral program    | 2.30 | 0.696              |
| Social media is not trusted in the elections as a source of news and information  | 2.10 | 0.791              |

### 8. General Results of the Study:

This study attempted to identify the degree of Bahraini youth's use of social media as a source of information in the parliamentary and municipal elections in Bahrain. The researcher concluded the following:

1. There is a clear variation in the use of networks, and it is on the whole relatively high.
2. The study confirmed that Twitter ,Facebook and Instagram are the most popular social media networks among the young people as a source of information about election candidates and their programs.
3. The majority of the sample members involved in the study agrees on the existence of difficulties that hinder the use of social media in the electoral process, particularly with regard to confidence in the information published about the candidates on the network.
4. The results of the study confirmed that the Bahraini youth believe that social media can be relied on to form opinions about a candidate for the fact it offers, as well as it allows to mobilize the public behind a particular candidate.
5. The study showed that Bahraini youth rely heavily on social media in taking their decision to participate in elections.
6. The results of the study showed that there was no significant statistical relationship between demographic features of young people (age, gender), and the use of social media as a source of information in the election campaigns.

### 9. Recommendations:

The researcher recommended that:

1. Training courses and workshops should be held for the purpose of making use of social media in politics, especially in election campaigns.
2. Mechanisms of dealing with social media should be developed and clarified by election candidates to take advantage of social media in political marketing.
3. The way should be paved for young people to learn how to take advantage of social media to understand important issues which help in society development
4. Social partnership between government institutions, youth and social institutions interested in social media in Bahrain should be created to achieve political, social and economic development.

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