Exploring the potential of social media platforms to foster cultural diversity and enhance intercultural comprehension among Efl university students

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Abstract - This research aimed to investigate how social media platforms promote cultural diversity and improve intercultural understanding among their users. To accomplish these goals, the research used qualitative methods for gathering data, particularly by conducting in-depth interviews with a group of 12 students who are currently enrolled in the English department at Halabja University. The study findings indicate that social media platforms are widely recognized as essential tools that enable users to access and acquire knowledge about various cultures, and these platforms provide a space for users to engage with individuals from different backgrounds and gain exposure to new perspectives. In conclusion, identifying obstacles that hinder the integration of cultural diversity and suggesting specific solutions to overcome these issues provides valuable knowledge on using social media platforms to enhance cross-cultural communication and understanding. Additionally, the study aimed to identify barriers that impede the integration of cultural diversity and suggest appropriate solutions.

Keywords: culture diversity; Halabja University; social media; linguistic impediments; RFL

1. Introduction

Social media, defined as "forms of electronic communication (such as websites for social networking and microblogging) through which users create online communities to share information, ideas, personal messages, and other content such as videos," has garnered significant research attention. According to Merriam-Webster (2023), 4.9 billion people will be using social media out of a total population of almost 8 billion. This amount is massive. According to these statistics, social media is used by one in three people worldwide and more than two-thirds of internet users (Ruby, 2023). One user can now contact hundreds of people

worldwide due to the spread of social media and the accessible Internet (Mangold & Faulds, 2009). Social media's growth in popularity over the past ten years has impacted how users create and share content, interact online, and publicly voice their opinions as consumers and citizens (Smith, 2009).

The significance of the study showed that People use social media for a variety of purposes, such as sharing opinions, fostering group communication, connecting with friends and acquaintances, staying up-to-date on news and information (through shared content), and simple recreation, thanks to the numerous applications provided by social media platforms (Pal, 2018). Social media has shaped our perceptions, understandings, meaning constructions, and general images of reality or the world to the point where it has become an essential part of our daily lives (Okocha & Aihunume, 2022). This research problem focuses on understanding the role of social media platforms in promoting cultural diversity and understanding among their users. Despite the widespread use of social media platforms, there has been limited research on their potential to foster cultural variety and understanding. Therefore, this research explores how social media platforms use their procedures and policies to foster cultural variety and understanding among their users. The research endeavours to provide answers to the following questions:

(1) How do social media platforms promote cultural diversity and understanding among users?

(2) What are the challenges and barriers to promoting cultural diversity through social media, and how can they be addressed?

The significance of social media in many industries is covered in the study. The worldwide phenomenon of social media has transformed how individuals interact and communicate. On the other hand, social media is not a novel idea; it has existed since the dawn of human civilization. Recently, social media has altered many aspects of human communication, which has impacted the growth of businesses. According to Edosomwan et al. (2011), social networking has become routine for some individuals. Moreover, for marketing academics and professionals, social media is a crucial field of interest. Spend more than $60 billion a year on social media ads (Whiting & Williams, 2013). Social media, however, is not a new concept; it has been developing ever since the beginning of human contact. Social media has recently changed many facets of human communication, which has affected business development. For some users, social networking has become a regular activity (Edosomwan et al., 2011).

Another reason to use social media Chemers et al. (2001) said using communication technology can help students transition to college and enhance their education. The significance of self-perceptions for students' adjustment to college is stressed in many studies (2001). Social media also pays attention to healthcare. Over the past few years, healthcare organisations, doctors, and the general public have all used social media more frequently. The realisation that healthcare organisations and clinicians need to be more engaged with their patients led to this growing tendency in the use of social media. Social media offers a virtual forum for discussions about various health-related issues, including patient education, health advocacy, community involvement, public relations, and crisis communication. Blogs, messaging (like Twitter), social networking (like Facebook), file and video sharing (like YouTube), e-games, and wikis are a few examples of social media platforms. (Courtney et al., 2013).

The subject of education has greatly benefited from technological advancements, particularly in the area of English as a foreign language instruction. Students' language proficiency may be enhanced via information and communication technologies in English language instruction. Utilisation has the potential to inspire and empower English language learners. To help students develop their critical thinking abilities, it exhorts instructors to change to a more dynamic, adaptable, successful, and student-centred style of instruction. In

addition, using information and communication technology may provide chances for engagement and cooperation while learning English. However, for students to use these opportunities, their learning must be scaffolded (Tuzel & Hobbs, 2017). This suggests that social media might be a helpful tool for language acquisition. Social networking is an excellent human tool that has helped us in many ways with challenging undertakings. These were a few advantages and findings of the social media study.

1.2 Research Objectives

(1) To investigate the role of social media platforms in promoting cultural diversity and understanding among users.

(2) To identify the mechanisms and strategies social media platforms employ to promote cultural diversity and understanding among users.

(3) To explore the impact of social media platforms on users' perceptions of cultural diversity and understanding.

(4) To examine the extent to which social media platforms can serve as a platform for cross-cultural communication and understanding.

Overall, these research objectives can help advance our understanding of social media's potential to promote cultural diversity and identify strategies for leveraging social media platforms to support diverse cultural expressions, cross-cultural collaboration, and social cohesion. The problem addressed by this study is the need to identify the challenges and barriers that impede the promotion of cultural diversity through social media and to explore potential solutions to address these issues. Although social media platforms have the potential to promote cultural diversity, several obstacles hinder their effectiveness. These challenges may include cultural insensitivity, language barriers, lack of representation, and algorithmic biases. Therefore, this study aims to identify the key challenges and barriers to promoting cultural diversity through social media and to explore practical solutions to address these issues.

The current study explores how social media platforms facilitate the promotion of cultural diversity and understanding among users, the challenges and barriers to promoting cultural diversity through social media, and how they can be addressed.

This study focused on reaching different cultures through social media. The problem addressed by this study is the need to identify the challenges and barriers that impede the promotion of cultural diversity through social media and to explore potential solutions to address these issues. Although social media platforms have the potential to promote cultural diversity, several obstacles hinder their effectiveness. The problems of the study are that social media platforms facilitate the promotion of cultural diversity and understanding among users, and challenges and barriers to promoting cultural diversity through social media can be addressed. This study takes an example from the 3rd stage of the English department because researchers did not have the opportunity to interview students who studied at foreign universities. Because of lack of time, researchers could not interview all the students; they just took some examples from them.

There are several published studies outlining the function of social media. Social media describes the online communities and networks that individuals use to produce, share, and exchange ideas and information with one another. Generally speaking, social media refers to material created using easily accessible publishing technologies intended for social engagement. Traditional and industrial media (such as newspapers and television) are not included in this. (2011) Welzer et al. The cumulative effect of social media on users' lives is increasing due to the widespread use of connected technologies like email, text messaging, social networking sites like Facebook, and microblogging platforms like Twitter. According to Vance (2012), Facebook has over 1 billion users worldwide, or 14.5% of the global population, with 70% of users in the US, 75% in Ireland, and 24% in South Korea using the platform.

In June 2012, the number of Twitter accounts exceeded 500 million; This includes 140 million in the US, 30 million in the UK, and 8 million in South Korea (Semiocast, 2012).

Additionally, these totals do not include social media platforms such as CY World in South Korea and LinkedIn in the US and Ireland. Both contribute to the ever-growing number of tweets and a surge of friend requests; there were approximately 2.5 billion in the United States. Addressed to Regina Connolly, Dublin City University, Dublin9, Irland (Reardon, 2009).

To date, several studies have investigated the uses of social media. Tuzel and Hobbs (2017) stated that social media and other digital platforms can develop an intellectual curiosity and a progressive civic voice in connection with learning about people and cultures worldwide. They also point out that teachers and students from various cultural backgrounds can now connect and collaborate more quickly because of the growth of social media. A project has been designed by Tuzel and Hobbs (2017) between middle-school teachers and students in the United States and Turkey by using a private online social network to let American and Turkish students (a) gain confidence in communicating with others on social media websites, (b) encourage intercultural competence and critical thought towards media and popular culture, and (c) increase mutual understanding of cultures between American and Turkish middle school students. Through this project, teachers and students were able to investigate the potential of an online social network for long-term cross-cultural communication. Another study indicates that several organizations use digital media to foster global dialogues among college students (Soliya, 2014).

Furthermore, Kuruca and Akyol (2014) claim that cinema and the film industry have also evolved into a medium that benefits from social media due to social media's entry into every aspect of our lives. Nevertheless, Helberger (2018) concludes that a growing amount of research has found proof of social media platforms' beneficial contributions to media diversity, specifically to the diversity of exposure. The Reuters Institute discovered in its 2017 News Report that social media users were noticeably more likely than non-users to find sources they would not ordinarily utilize. This result aligns with previous studies that show that using social media platforms can lead to exposure to more varied news (Bakshy et al., 2015). regions According to Cao et al. (2015), Online users from many nations are establishing more connections in social networks and online communities related to the Internet. Individuals from various social and cultural backgrounds participate in social networking platforms worldwide. Trier and Bobrik (2009) believe global participation in social media continues to proliferate and with complexity. This growth has created a virtual internet environment where users share and exchange knowledge and ideas.

Many studies have begun to examine social networks and culture in the workplace, where employees are exposed to a wider variety of people than in a physical setting in the virtual world, where work is usually mediated by media platforms (Olson & Olson, 2000; Yang et al., 2011). Similarly, when one study concentrated on members of 87 separate workgroups rather than the entire company, they discovered increased cultural diversity in online friendship bonds, demonstrating that the effect of cultural differences was essentially the opposite of what was observed in the firm as a whole (Dong et al., 2016).

Traditionally, research on the demands made by the different social media platforms and their impact has been done independently of one another. However, increasing attention is being given to the combined effects of the incessant onslaught of emails, texts, Facebook notifications, and tweets that many users encounter; this is occurring at the same time that the demands of keeping up with and replying to online friends and followers are growing (e.g., Richtel, 2010). Scholarly interest in the phenomenon has grown, particularly after Turkle (2011) published her book Alone Together, in which she discussed the conflicts the always connected face when they use devices that keep them apart from their real-life intimates and eventually lead them to prefer online communication over in-person contact.

Studies demonstrate that by enabling users to maintain their contact details, social networking sites may enhance already-existing social bonds. Boyd and Ellison

(2007) state that another distinctive feature of social networking sites is the ability to display their network of connections to other users. According to some scholars, social media's accessibility, affordability, and beneficial network effects make it a potentially helpful tool for teaching in higher education. In university courses, Facebook has improved teacher-student communication, while wikis and blogs have been employed for project collaboration and fast response times (Alexander & Levine, 2009). According to Johnson, Levine, Stone, and Smith (2009), specific classrooms have also used YouTube as a platform for students to create and share instructional videos. Hamid et al. (2011) found that displaying tweets on a large screen promoted cross-group participation and encouraged in-class conversations among students in various classrooms.

The primary motivation for using social networking sites is communication and maintaining relationships. Consequently, interaction between members of social network sites and the compounding effect of new connections leads to the evolution and proliferation of social networks. Participation in social networking sites is becoming increasingly global, with more and more users from different social and cultural backgrounds. User relationships built on social networks play an essential role in the users' activities on social networking sites. (Musembwa & paul,2012).

One further use of social media that Malik and Asnoor (2019) proposed is using social media as a tool to acquire new languages in higher education. The results of their research were presented in a paper titled "Using Social Media as a Medium of Foreign Language Learning in Higher Education."

The primary obstacles to cross-cultural communication include linguistic difficulties, divergent values and behavioural norms, limited exposure, absence of trust, inadequate comprehension of other cultures, and reliance on stereotypes (Lobintsev & Canavilhas, 2017). Researchers have used many proxy indicators to evaluate widespread prejudice, such as policy assessments (Kawachi & Berkman, 2003) and biased crime analysis (Sharkey, 2010). Nevertheless, rules often exhibit a significant level of geographical precision. It is important to note that not all instances of discrimination result in criminal behaviour. Moreover, when evaluating the effectiveness of policies, it is more pertinent to consider the unique factors, contexts, and motives that underlie criminal activity rather than focusing on generalities. It has the potential to be used for both research and mitigation purposes. Discrimination. Nation. The current surge in hate crimes in the United States (Fari-var, 2018) underscores the need for a more profound understanding of prejudice.

Researchers are aware that globalization significantly impacts identity transition, which makes information and knowledge accessible to people from various cultural backgrounds (Arnett, 2002). Arnett (2002) claims that there are several ways in which globalization may impact identity, mainly as a result of interactions between the individual and the social context to which they are exposed. Cultural variances in language and behaviour may likely be attributed to fundamental disparities in social media interactions vs offline ones. According to Velazquez (2017), a study on the consumption and use of different media among Spanish speakers revealed that social media consumption and usage varied in that the primary language used on social media platforms is far less common than on other communication channels. The research most likely linked it to self-preservation and group participation, particularly in online contexts where English is the primary language.

2. Method

The study's methodology, which involves interviews, allows for a more thorough understanding of its participants' viewpoints and experiences. Researchers from Halabja University interviewed 12 students, divided between males and females, to gather data. The data-gathering procedure used a variety of technologies to improve comprehension and strengthen the study's validity. For instance, the group collected the data, formatted it into a text, and then carefully examined it.

2.1 Research Design
This investigation employs qualitative research methods. Through qualitative analysis, the researchers

were able to acquire a more profound understanding of the participants' thoughts, experiences, conceptions, and views. The qualitative technique provided more in-depth information on the topic and allowed the participants to talk about their experiences and have a voice in the research.

2.2 Sample and Population

The study was conducted at the English department of the College of Basic Education at the University of Halabja. A total of 12 students from the third stage, between the ages of 20 and 24, participated; six were male and six were female. The participants were chosen based on their choice; random sampling was used to select the participants. Random sampling gives everyone in the population the same chance of being chosen for the study (Omona, 2013). Six participants from each class were chosen. The participants have more opportunities to interact with people from diverse cultures and the availability and ability to help in research. They also have a deeper comprehension of analysis to serve in research. Moreover, based on the field, there has been hardly any research on university students, not to mention that more qualitative research needs to be done at Halabja University.

2.3 Validity and Reliability

In this study, data were collected and tested for validity and reliability. The samples were from third-stage English department students at the University of Halabja. Then, the process was conducted in the form of interviews and face-to-face interviews at the university. The participants' voices were recorded with their consent. Some participants were interviewed in the dormitory due to lack of opportunity; students responded freely and without any restrictions.

2.4 Research Instrument

In this research, a face-to-face interview is used in qualitative research; it helps target opinions and attitudes. This face-to-face interview can be conducted in person or through mass media (telephone, video call, or webinar). If you do this type of interview, have an interview guide or questionnaire ready. It takes time. However, for face-to-face interviews and video calls, you can look for explanations of your answers. It also gives them the ability to interpret body language and facial expressions. This research used mobile phones to record the participants' voices.

2.5 Primary Data Collection

This study used interview methods to collect data and further explore whether the participants agree with the importance of social media platforms in increasing user awareness and cultural diversity. Numerous issues and conversations exist about how to promote cultural diversity in social media, what the challenges are, how to overcome them, and more.

We may delve into the nuances of the topic, obtain a thorough grasp of the different aspects that may affect our participants' thinking and behaviour, and receive the proper responses from the participants themselves by conducting one-on-one interviews.

2.6 Data Analysis

The study adopted a thematic analysis method to find themes or relevant or fascinating patterns in the data and then use these themes to address the research. The method did more than summarize the data; it analysed and made meaning of it (Maguire & Delahunt, 2017). It emphasized finding, recognizing, analysing, and understanding qualitative data patterns.

3. Results and Discussion

Eight broad themes emerged from the analysis. One is the closeness that social media gives to users of different cultures. In today's globalized way of life, social media have become increasingly important components of our daily lives. They provide a setting where people worldwide may connect, exchange messages, share knowledge, and interact regardless of the distance that separates them (Sawyer & Chen, 2012). Social media encourages our culturally diverse world's connection and reliance. It connects people across all time zones and locations, allowing them to find like-minded communities and participate in public life in previously impossible ways (Zaw, 2018). Twelve interviewees, ID6, ID8, ID10, and ID12, discussed how social media brought the world closer. As one interviewee (ID12) put it, "The technology and those platforms make the world so small and every culture so close to each other, so yeah, of course, they had many effects on people; it is so clear nowadays.". Several studies have shown that social media is essential in globalising the world. ID8 and ID12 even talked about how social media makes them closer to people they know. The results of this study show that social media platforms have made the world one big village where people can exchange cultures and interact with each other.

Our research found another theme: social media is a widespread way to learn a new language. Most participants (ID1, ID2, ID3, ID4, ID6, ID8, ID9, ID10, ID11, ID12) believed that using social media is a way to learn a new language that helps us understand different cultures more quickly and deeply. As an ID4 participant says, "Culture is a part of language, and language is a part of the culture,"

meaning that they complement and help each other. We need to learn the language to understand and adapt to a different culture.

Malik and Asnoor (2019) suggested using social media as a method for students to learn foreign languages. Learning a new language can help you better understand the culture and worldview of the people who speak that language. As you learn the language, you will become familiar with their customs, traditions, beliefs, and values, which can give you a broader perspective on the world. ID3 gave an example of a teacher who has an online course. His students learned English, and in a video, a participant said that he learned the language and became familiar with his culture only through the teacher's online course. In every culture, there is something to give to other cultures and people, but when I did not know the language, it was tough to get it.

ID10, ID11, ID12, ID1, ID6, ID7, ID8, and ID9 out of 12 participants believe that communication is a fast and powerful way to reach different cultures. Participants suggested several applications such as Facebook, Instagram, Spooky, Snapchat, helloTalk, Club House, and many others that help you communicate and are used by many people to exchange and share their information. As Musembwa and Paul (2012) confirm, the primary motivation for using social networking sites is to communicate and maintain relationships. Consequently, the interaction between members of social networking sites and the complex effect of new relationships lead to the evolution and spread of social networks. Participation in social media is becoming increasingly global, with More and more users from different social and cultural backgrounds. User communication created on social media sites is essential in introducing cultures. ID5 pointed out that he uses Instagram daily and has friends who share their culture and food style.

Facebook, which has many users worldwide, has many group chats and activities regardless of culture and religion; all gather and exchange ideas, which has provided many opportunities to get to know other cultures. (Vance, 2012) stated that social media like Facebook and microblogs like Twitter, the cumulative impact of these social media on users' lives continues to grow. Facebook has over 1 billion users worldwide, or about 14.5% of the world's population.

The most prominent finding from the analysis is that social media platforms allow users to access information about other cultures. ID1, ID2, ID3, ID4, ID6, ID8, ID9, ID11, and ID12 had a standard view about how social media helps in becoming familiar with different cultures, which helps in increasing cultural awareness. "It is essential to know about other cultures or diversities through social media. For example, in my account on Facebook, I have many pages that I like; they are all about different cultures, for example, British culture, American culture, and Russian culture, which helps to get the benefits and to be familiar with their culture." This is how ID11 answered when asked about the importance of social media in promoting cultural diversity and understanding; later on, the interviewee stated that he was not familiar with Russian culture before using social media platforms. In answering the question, "Do you think social media platforms have a responsibility to promote cultural diversity and understanding among their users? Why or why not?" ID3 said that "there are many videos, photos, or posts we have on social media that we read or listen to, and we understand other cultures through them." This means that social media not only makes us familiar but also promotes cultural understanding. Prior studies have noted the importance of social media in making diverse cultures know each other, which leads to cultural awareness among the users. Some interviewees even mentioned the applications that they used to learn about different cultures: Facebook, YouTube, TikTok, Instagram, Twitter, Snapchat, and Spooky.

There are various challenges and barriers to promoting cultural diversity. The study found that language can be a challenge in promoting cultural diversity through social media. ID2, ID3, ID4, ID5, ID6, and ID10 all agreed that language can be a challenge in promoting cultural diversity through social media due to the fact that not knowing the language causes the user to not understand other cultures. ID10 responded, "I am a fan of learning about other cultures, but most of the time, a very major condition that I faced was that I did not know the language of those people that speak it, and I wanted to learn about their culture because I am such a person that I accept all the ideologies and I accept all the cultures, and I believe that in every culture there is something to give other cultures and other people, but because I did not know the language, it was very challenging for me, and I did not like it" when asked about challenges or barriers they encountered to promoting cultural diversity through social media, and ID10's solution to the problem is a translation section in each platform. Different interviewees had different views on how this challenge could be addressed. Some suggested platforms should have a translation feature, while others suggested learning a shared language like English. ID9 even said that if social media platforms made automatic corrections to the language you use (the second language), then it would be very helpful. This finding is in line with the literature, which indicates that language is a worldwide obstacle to cross-cultural communication.

One of the challenges is a stereotype, which is a fixed image or idea of a particular type of person. ID1, ID10, and ID4 agree with this; ID4 talked about the stereotype of Iraq and said, "When we want to talk with other people, they think we are terrorists because Iraq famous terrorists they do not know about us." This theme is important because, according to Simply Psychology, we use stereotypes to simplify the social world and reduce the amount of processing (i.e., thinking) required when meeting new people by identifying people with similar attributes and characteristics or categorizing them by placing them under "preconceptions" with attitudes. we observe.

Additional studies explore stereotypes, such as investigating the generalization process using the viewpoint of the target, which primarily focuses on documenting the effects of stereotypes and prejudice on individuals belonging to marginalized groups. It is crucial to remember that in real-life social interactions, individuals play the dual roles of both perceiving others and being seen themselves. Both persons in a social encounter may be seen as observers who use stereotypes to evaluate each other, and both individuals can also be viewed as subjects of stigmas linked to their specific group identities. However, in the context of analyzing negative stereotypes, it is often observed that persons belonging to dominant or majority groups have fewer psychological and material consequences compared to members of lower status or minority groups. Furthermore, due to the dominant group's higher level of influence in society, they play a more significant role in shaping the prevailing "knowledge" about certain groups. It is often observed that individuals who are part of majority groups sometimes struggle more in generating stereotypes about their group compared to minority groups (Simon & Hamilton, 1994).

Another challenge is discrimination, which is treating some people differently from others. this theme is important because social media posts that contain discrimination, harassment, bullying, or racial slurs against individuals may violate the law. Discrimination occurs when one person is treated less favourably than another because of certain characteristics. Harassment and bullying can lead to discrimination.

Inappropriate posts, comments, or content shared on social media may constitute sexual harassment.

ID7, ID11, and ID12 agree with this; ID7 talks about the limitations of social media, then says, "Develop and enforce policies against hate speech, discrimination, and harassment: Social media platforms should have clear and enforceable policies that prohibit hate speech, discrimination, and harassment. Such policies can help create a safe and welcoming environment for users from diverse backgrounds.". ID11 advises users to be careful when using social media. Then ID12 says, "Everyone on social media, that's because social media should be censored."

another research talks about this discrimination, such as: It was discovered that exposure to ethnic prejudice on social media, whether it came via a friend's page or directly, had a negative impact on participants' mental health, according to Cano. "Unfortunately, it may have a severe influence on mental health when you witness someone publicly mention your social or ethnic group in a poor or degrading manner. A viral video or meme may not necessarily be intended at you." Recent national conversations and rallies against racial and ethnic inequality have brought attention to hate speech and ethnic discrimination on social media, which has prompted advertisers to boycott social media sites. According to a 2018 Pew Research Center poll, 73% of Hispanic respondents said they use Facebook, the social media platform with the most users in the country.

The literature section argues that social media refers to the means of interaction between people in which they create and share information and ideas in online groups and networks (Welzer et al., 2011, pp. 3-8). However, ID4 has a different opinion and believes there is no trust among social media users, saying that when you want to send a message or follow a European or American, they refuse because they do not trust you and says social media does not help communicate information and share diverse cultures. This is due to the lack of trust among social media users. Therefore, trust is another challenge or barrier to reaching diverse cultures through social media.

4. Conclusion

This research aimed to investigate the possible effectiveness of social media platforms in promoting cultural variety and improving intercultural comprehension among its users, while also recognizing and resolving the obstacles and challenges that arise during this process. The study's conclusions demonstrate that social media platforms have the innate ability to foster cross-cultural communication and knowledge acquisition because they allow users to meaningfully interact with people from different socio-cultural backgrounds, which opens up new perspectives. However, the investigation conducted for this research also identified the existence of strong obstacles that prevent cultural diversity from

being effectively promoted on social media platforms. These obstacles include language differences, stereotypes, prejudice, and a general lack of trust. In the end, this study's findings significantly add to the corpus of knowledge regarding the enablers and barriers related to promoting cultural diversity on social media platforms, providing priceless information for academics, decision-makers, and practitioners working in this field.

Recommendation

The research provides several suggestions for strategic activities that may be taken to overcome these challenges. These recommendations include purposeful promotion of multilingual material and intentionally encouraging relationships between users from various backgrounds.

Admittedly, accepting the limitations inherent in the study is of the utmost importance. These limitations mainly arise from the relatively small sample size, the limits of time and money, and the researchers' inexperience in the subject. The empirical results, on the other hand, highlight the crucial significance of promoting cultural variety via social media platforms. To set the way for future research, it is essential to conduct studies that include bigger sample sizes while also addressing the constraints present in this particular study in a severe manner.

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Appendix

The verbatim Interviews
Interviewer: How often do you use social media platforms?
ID 1: Yes, I use it a lot.
ID 2: I use it in my free time, especially Facebook and TikTok.
ID 3: I use it a lot every day.
ID 4: Yes, two or three hours a day. It includes Facebook, Twitter and other applications.
Help me become familiar with other cultures or languages.
Interviewer: How influential are social media platforms in promoting cultural diversity and understanding to you?
ID 1: It is essential because we see many videos and documentaries on social media, like YouTube, Facebook, and any application, so I think it is essential to know about the culture in social media.
ID 2: It is essential because by using social media, we know about other cultures; for example, when we see a documentary or tourist documentary, we know about the culture, and when we see a movie or series, we learn about their culture.

Interviewer: Do you think social media platforms are responsible for promoting cultural diversity and understanding among their users? Why or why not?
ID 2: Yes, I do; as users, we can be familiar with different cultures.
ID 3: Yes, because there are many videos, photos or posts we have on social media that we read or listen to and understand other cultures through.
ID 4: Yes, it helps, but sometimes not a lot because maybe there is some application that you can connect with foreign people, but there is not too much.

Interviewer: How do social media platforms help you connect with people from different cultures?
ID 1: It is an online platform, but it depends on your need; for example, I need English, so I connect with those who want to learn English. As native language. The English language is a concept that affects my ability to connect with different people and different cultures.
ID 3: Social media helps us a lot. For example, many applications like Spooky, Twitter, and TikTok exist. On Twitter, we learn about other people because most Americans use Twitter.
ID 4: Not too much, because it is sometimes hard to find someone because many Americans or British people do not connect with someone whom they do not know; if you or l send a message or add, maybe reject it because they do not have truth you, they do not know you.

Interviewer: Do you think that social media platforms have contributed positively to promoting cultural diversity and understanding?
ID 2: Yes, because social media consists of everything different from ourselves, and when you use them, we understand a lot of them.
ID 3: Yes, because it is beneficial things in social media that can help us or affect our understanding of the culture of social media. It affects our understanding to know about them and see the culture through social media.
ID 4: Yes, social platforms affect your mind to understand culture. It causes you to be compressive person.
Interviewer: What advice would you give to social media platforms to better facilitate the promotion of cultural diversity and understanding among their users?
ID 1: I advise them to have an application to have an excellent application to know more about culture and their lifestyle and so on.
ID 3: I have no advice because I think it is excellent.
Interviewer: Have you ever encountered challenges or barriers to promoting cultural diversity through social media? If so, can you describe them?
ID 1: Sure, there are many challenges when you use social media applications can you encounter.
ID 4: When we want to talk with other people, they think we are terrorists because Iraq is a famous terrorist. They do not know about us.

Interviewer: Do you think language barriers can challenge promoting cultural diversity

on social media? If so, how can this be addressed?
ID 2: Yes, because we cannot understand some text or the meaning of some videos well.
ID 3: Yes, because we can make it a way to learn the language we want, we can benefit from learning the language and their culture more.
ID 4: There is a saying that culture is part of language and language is part of culture. That is, they both complete each other. To better understand different cultures, we must also Learn languages.

Interviewer: Do you think that social media platforms should be more proactive in addressing issues related to cultural diversity and sensitivity? If so, what steps do you think they should take?
ID 1: Yes, many social media applications share harmful addresses about
different cultures. For example, l heard that Indian culture is terrible, but all of it in social media, but it was not true.
ID 2: I do not think so because it depends on people because it depends on us.
ID 4: Yes, learning about them affects our lives.
Interviewer: Have you ever seen successful examples of promoting cultural diversity through social media? If so, what were they?
ID 2: There are so many channels to learn about culture and cultural diversity.
ID 3: Yes, for example, Muhammad Mahdi, a famous English teacher. I did not participate in his courses, but I saw a video of a boy who works in a village. However, he knows English and speaks very well because of Muhammad's course. He has an online course through social media.
ID 4: Yes, I have a friend. When he was in the first stage, he did not speak English, but now he is better than all of us by using social media a lot. He speaks to people from different cultures.

Interviewer: In your opinion, what are some practical solutions that could be implemented to address what are the challenges and barriers to promoting cultural diversity through social media?
ID 1: communications with other people from different countries and different cultures.
ID 3: Watch videos about their culture and way of life.

Interviewer: How often do you use social media platforms?
ID5: Actually, I use it most of my free time. I mainly use Instagram and Facebook to look at people's posts.
Interviewer: How do social media platforms help you to connect with people from different cultures?

ID5: For example, through social media, specifically Instagram, I have got to know people from them. I got some information about their cultures by talking to them. They talk about their foods and clothes and describe them.
Interviewer: Do you think language barriers can challenge promoting cultural diversity on social media? If so, how can this be addressed?
ID5: Of course, since language barriers can cause misunderstanding and misinterpretations, and if you do not understand; you cannot get information from the people themselves are the best ones to get information from.
Interviewer: How often do you use social media platforms?
ID6: I use social media so many times in my daily life. I use it because I enjoy using it, and that's why I love using social media.
Interviewer: Do you think social media platforms are responsible for promoting cultural diversity and understanding among their users? Why or why not?
ID6: Yes, social media has a significant impact on our lives, especially culture, because you can communicate with the whole world through social media, and you may get new information because You can also share your own culture.
Interviewer: In your opinion, what are some practical solutions that could be implemented to address the challenges and barriers to promoting cultural diversity through social media.
ID6: One of the problems with sharing our culture is language. If we use English to share our posts and videos, we can share our culture better than other languages, for example.
Interviewer: What advice would you give to social media platforms to better facilitate the promotion of cultural diversity and understanding among their users?

ID7: Develop and enforce policies against hate speech, discrimination, and harassment: Social media platforms should have clear and enforceable policies that prohibit hate speech, discrimination, and harassment. Such policies can help create a safe and welcoming environment for users from diverse backgrounds.

Interviewer: Do you think language barriers can challenge promoting cultural diversity on social media? If so, how can this be addressed?

ID7: Translation tools: Social media platforms can provide automatic translation tools to translate posts and messages into different languages. This would enable people who do not speak the same language to communicate and share their ideas.

Interviewer: How do social media platforms help you connect with people from different cultures?

ID7: Language Translation: Many social media platforms offer built-in features allowing users to translate messages and posts into different languages. This makes it easier to communicate with people who speak different languages.

Interviewer: How often do you use social media platforms?

ID8: in this century, using social media become popular, and people are affected by it; I can say most of the activities to it, we can say life without it nowadays is difficult. Myself I use social media most of the time, especially in my free time, for example, Snapchat and Facebook; by using them, I can learn new information and new things, and I can connect with my friends and my family.

Interviewer: What advice would you give to social media platforms to better facilitate the promotion of cultural diversity and understanding among their users?

ID8: In order to use social media effectively, we have to be aware of time; how often do we use it? If we use it randomly, we may waste so much of our lives using it. So, we have to be careful about how often we use social media to benefit from it.

Interviewer: How do social media platforms help you connect with people from different cultures?

ID8: I think social media is the easiest way to make a connection with people from other cultures. For example, you can open Facebook, and you can make a friend relationship with people from the different culture, for example, my cousin is very good in the English language, and he knows about the different culture, it is just because he has friends from other countries so that we can say social media has many disadvantages, but it also has many advantages as well; one of them is making connecting with people from different cultures.

ID9

Interviewer: how often do you use social media?

ID9: I often use social media each day for a long time different social media like Facebook, Instagram and TikTok and so on.

Interviewer: how important is it to you that social media platforms promote cultural diversity and understanding?

ID9: yeah, I think it's so important because when maybe you will have interaction with someone in a different country, then you know how to interact with them if you have connections with any social media with him or them.

Interviewer: and do you think that social media platforms have contributed positively to promoting cultural diversity and understanding?

ID9: Yeah, I think especially for language, I have talked with someone in other countries and I get benefits and advantages from them, especially for language. I improved my language, my speaking language skills because of them.

Interviewer: You talk about you interact with people from different cultures. How was your experience?

ID9: I talked with someone in Algeria in America, and Iranian people. It was so interesting for me because he told me so much about his country, the history of his country, and his culture, especially for Algerian and Iranian people.

Interviewer: how do social media platforms help you connect with people from different cultures?

ID9: I think it helped you a lot, as I said before, for different reasons for cultural communication for language for other things; maybe you have a travel in later years for example, maybe you go to an American, then you will know how to contact them politely, respectfully and so on.

Interviewer: What advice would you give to social media platforms to better facilitate the promotion

of cultural diversity and understanding among their users?

ID9: Yeah, I think it's will be some changes to the social media platform it for example self, correction when you speak with someone in another language, of course, you will make some mistakes if the app the application corrects you by itself, it will be very good.

Interviewer: So you mean the language if the application corrected your language?

ID9: yes

Interviewer: can you talk about it a little more?

ID9: for example, I speak I will speak with someone with American people, I don't know how to say something for them, I will do some mistakes. For example, I say I ate yesterday, and there is some mistake in it instead of eat I should say ate so the application itself corrects we'll be so good.

Interviewer: OK, thank you very much.

ID10

Interviewer: Have you ever encountered any challenges or barriers to promoting cultural diversity through social media?

ID10: Of course, because I am a fan of learning about other cultures, but most of the time at very major condition that I faced was I did not know the language of the people that speak it. I wanted to learn about their culture because I am such a person that I accept all the ideologies and I accept all the cultures. I believe that in every culture there's something to give other cultures and other people, but I didn't know the language it was very challenging for me, and I did not like it.

Interviewer: in your opinion, how can this be addressed?

ID10: OK, I believe that the translation section in each platform is something very necessary and paramount because I can remember several years ago, I did not know the language for example, when saw a program in TV, but now, if I do not know the language sometimes, especially on YouTube, in Facebook and other platforms is something new, but YouTube it helps me a lot because for example I love the culture of Arabic. However, now I can get a translation of it into English because English is a shared language, and all the people around the world can speak it so it gives me a benefit to get an idea of how these people live.

Interviewer: Do you think that social media platforms should be more proactive in addressing issues related to cultural diversity and sensitivity?

ID10: of course, yes, because they are the fastest way to get all the people around the world because as we know, the people and the members of these platforms are a lot and nearly everyone in this the world uses at least one platform, so is the fastest way, and as we can say in the platforms they make big changes in the world through politics, culture, and other sections and sectors.

Interviewer: Can you talk about the steps that you think that should be taken?

ID10: Of course, online cooperation between different nations, and different people and these platforms because they use artificial intelligence so if I'm in Iraq, they can in the advertisement and other related cultural things they can show me things from different cultures, not just my culture and because I see something our advertisement, for example, I'm in the Middle East, all of this about Middle East I don't like this. I want to know more about the Western world because we grew up most of us thinking that those people in those countries are bad, but when I interacted with Jim and people, I knew that they are so kind and so amazing people and if we make more operations it would be so ok.

Interviewer: So, in your opinion, social media helped you positively to promote cultural diversity?

ID10: Of course, everything has two sides, but actually, I believe that the positive one is more because I benefit a lot from these platforms.

Interviewer: OK, have you ever seen any successful examples of promoting cultural diversity through social media?

ID10: Personality, not, but actually, generally and in public, I saw that there are many things that we can get, and yeah.

Interviewer: In your opinion, what are some practical solutions that could be implemented to address What are the challenges and barriers to promoting cultural diversity through social media?

ID10: The people who created these platforms should be more aware of cultural diversity and should learn about the different cultures and add more things that can show and make other people be familiar with these cultures, especially those who know they will die out if they don't arise

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and make it clear to the people around the world because as we say Arabic English and maybe the East of Asia, but what about other countries? What about Afghanistan? What about the culture of African Countries? There are many cultures beautiful things that they can share it, so I hope I will see more about this.

ID11

Interviewer: How often do you use social media platforms?
ID11: Absolutely among the days, or, let's say, daily, about four hours or five hours I spend my time on social media.
Interviewer: How important is it to you that social media platforms promote cultural diversity and understanding?
ID11: Of course, it is very important to know about other cultures or diversities through social media of course, for example in my account on Facebook, I have many many pages that I like it they are all about different cultures, for example, British culture, American culture, and Russian cultures that help to
get the benefits and be similar to their culture.
Interviewer: How do social media platforms help you connect with people from different cultures?
ID11: Yes, I have an example there's an application named Clubhouse through this I have talked with foreign people, especially British, and from British and America and they helped me a lot to get through this.
Interviewer: Do you think social media platforms have a responsibility to promote cultural diversity and understanding among their users?
ID11: yes, of course,
Interviewer: why?
ID11: because you know when you get to know about social media, and you have accounts for example Instagram, in Facebook or any other social media applications, you do not choose what you see there are many posts that you see for example different pages from football to movies from songs and many other things, so I think this helps us to achieve something new about the culture and
to be a little familiar with their culture.
Interviewer: so, it helped you become more familiar?
ID11: yes
Interviewer: can you give us an example of a culture you were not familiar with before social media?
ID11: I think in Russia, when you count in numbers, OK, you have to raise your fingers and point them like this one two three, not one to three. I do not know why it is so but I think if you do not point them your fingers, it would be like something rude in their culture or for example, in our funeral we are wearing black dresses but in theirs, it is different you are allowed to wear any colour of your dress.
Interviewer: What advice would you give to social media platforms to better facilitate the promotion of cultural diversity and understanding among their users?
ID11: OK, I think, in my opinion, it should be like how to say it; it is in our hands how to deal with it for example, if you like many pages that consistently or relate to something that helps you to get familiar with a culture so your social media will be beneficial so it is up to you what pages do you like what posts you like? Wherever you want, you can get this.
Interviewer: what is your advice to the social media platforms to the media platforms, not the people, to better facilitate, to better promote cultural diversity and understanding among their users? What is your
advice to the owners of social media?
ID11: OK, my advice is we have to sensor some videos or some posts because we know many children use mobile phones if they are allowed with their families or if they are not, they see posters, so the posts have to be like in limit if you understand me what I am saying, so that is my advice.
ID12
Interviewer: How often do you use social media platforms?
ID12: Like in the daily?
Interviewer: How much do you use it?

ID12: Yeah, like every day I use social media because it is like something we need
to communicate with our friends and sometimes our family, so every day 2 hours, maybe
about 2 hours every day. I use social media for at least 2 hours sometimes. Maybe it's more.
Interviewer: How do social media platforms help you connect with people from different cultures?

ID12: Actually, I have, I think, a big experience in that because, since I applied to this department, I come to this department; I tried to communicate with people all over the world through many applications like Hello Talk and other applications in order to improve my English, and I have tried I have spoken to many people. I have learned about other cultures like Indonesia, American even Malaysia and others, I have learned so much about it.
Interviewer: How was your experience? Was it positive or negative?
ID12: Yeah, of course, it was positive for my English and my experience alive.
Interviewer: Do social media platforms positively promote
cultural diversity and understanding?
ID12: Actually, it has a positive and negative effect, but I think the positive one is clearer; we can say, because without the Internet, we can not communicate with people from other cultures and other countries, so I think it was a positive one.
Interviewer: Do you think social media platforms have a responsibility to promote cultural diversity and understanding among their users?
ID12: Actually, I think it has responsibility, but actually, I think it does not have a reasonable effort in that
case because it makes people lazy; in our culture, it makes us know about other cultures, but it does not make us continue our culture like we neglected our culture we can say that because of the technology, I think. We know about others, but we somehow neglect our culture.
Interviewer: Do you think the social media owner and the social media itself have a responsibility to promote cultural diversity and understanding among their users?
ID12: Yeah, actually, you know, like, nowadays, the technology and those platforms make
the world so small and every culture so close to each other, so yeah, of course, they had many effects on people. It is so clear nowadays.
Interviewer: How important is it to you that social media platforms promote cultural diversity and understanding?
ID12: Of course, it is so important because everything nowadays is related to those platforms and inter-social media so they can work on it in the case of to prevent the spread of violence things and promote cultural diversity because social media is used by every single person, like the child and from all ages has the users. Hence, they have to work hard on that case, and they do not let it spread violence things or anything that does not suit all ages, hold on to it so it does not spread.