STUDENTS' PORTAL USAGE MODEL BASED ON SOCIAL COGNITIVE THEORY IN SAUDI ARABIA UNIVERSITIES

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DEDICATION

Special thanks:

To my beloved family My Father, Mother, Brothers, and Sisters.

To my supervisor Thank you very much for everything

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In the Name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful

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ABSTRACT

Student portal plays a vital role in the advancement of education system. In particular, student portal has been utilised to complement the formal education system by making knowledge and services available to all users. Hence, student portal is considered as a gateway that integrates information from different sources accessible to all the students based on their needs. Although most Saudi Arabia universities are currently equipped with good ICT infrastructure, the usage of student portal remains low. Therefore, there is a need to improve students' portal based on specific requirements deemed appropriate. This research aims to formulate a model for student portals usage that incorporates factors that affect students' engagement with the portal. This research employed Social Cognitive Theory (SCT) theory to build the model based on students' expectations and perceptions. Feedback gathered from survey involving 399 students from four Saudi Arabia universities were analysed using Smart-Pls quantitative analysis tools. The findings from this research revealed that eight out of ten factors were found to be significant and positively affect the students' portal usage. These factors include user satisfaction, design, availability of content, user intention, efficiency, portal user support, portal service quality and interaction. The enhancement of students' portal usage based on the above significant factors will assist universities in increasing their portal usage as well as the corresponding services provided.

ABSTRAK

Portal pelajar memainkan peranan penting dalam kemajuan sistem pendidikan. Secara khususnya, portal pelajar telah digunakan untuk melengkapkan sistem pendidikan formal dengan menyediakan pengetahuan dan perkhidmatan untuk semua pengguna. Oleh itu, portal pelajar dianggap sebagai gerbang yang menyatukan maklumat dari pelbagai sumber yang dapat diakses oleh semua pelajar berdasarkan keperluan mereka. Walaupun kebanyakan universiti Arab Saudi pada masa ini dilengkapi dengan infrastruktur ICT yang baik, penggunaan portal pelajar masih rendah. Oleh itu, terdapat keperluan untuk meningkatkan portal pelajar berdasarkan khusus yang difikirkan sesuai. Penyelidikan ini bertujuan untuk keperluan merumuskan model penggunaan portal pelajar yang merangkumi faktor-faktor yang penglibatan pelajar dengan portal tersebut. Penyelidikan ini mempengaruhi menggunakan Teori Kognitif Social (SCT) untuk membina model berdasarkan harapan dan persepsi pelajar. Data yang dikumpulkan daripada maklum balas soalselidik yang melibatkan 399 pelajar daripada empat universiti di Arab Saudi dianalisis menggunakan alatan analisis kuantitatif Smart-Pls. Hasil kajian ini menunjukkan bahawa terdapat lapan daripada sepuluh faktor didapati mempengaruhi penggunaan portal pelajar secara signifikan dan positif. Faktor-faktor ini merangkumi kepuasan pengguna, reka bentuk, ketersediaan kandungan, niat pengguna, kecekapan, sokongan pengguna portal, kualiti dan interaksi perkhidmatan portal. Peningkatan penggunaan portal pelajar berdasarkan faktor penting di atas akan membantu universiti dalam meningkatkan penggunaan portal mereka serta perkhidmatan yang sesuai.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

TITLE

	DECLARATION			iii	
	DEDICATION ACKNOWLEDGEMENT ABSTRACT ABSTRAK TABLE OF CONTENTS LIST OF TABLES				
	LIST	OF FIG	JURES	XV	
CHAPTER	.1	INTRO	DUCTION	1	
	1.1	Introdu	iction	1	
	1.2	Problem	m Background	2	
	1.3	Problem	m Statement	6	
	1.4	Resear	ch Questions	6	
	1.5	Resear	ch Objectives	7	
	1.6	Resear	ch Scope	7	
	1.7	Signifi	cance of The Research	8	
	1.8	Thesis	Structure	9	
CHAPTER 2		LITER	ATURE REVIEW	11	
	2.1	Introdu	iction	11	
	2.2	Higher	Education in Saudi Arabia	12	
		2.2.1	Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030 Themes	13	
		2.2.2	Saudi Arabia Universities	15	
		2.2.3	Under-developed Universities in Saudi Arabia	17	
	2.3	Web P	ortal Overview	18	
	2.4	Curren	t State of Students' Portal Usage	20	
		2.4.1	Portal Usage in Saudi Arabia Universities	24	

2.5	User Behavior					
2.6	Factors Affecting Students to Use Student Portal	30				
2.7	2.7 Theories Used in University Web Portal					
	2.7.1 Technology Acceptance Models (TAMs)	38				
	2.7.2 Delone and Mclean's Information System Success Model	39				
	2.7.3 Social Cognitive Theory (SCT)	39				
2.8	Use of Social Cognitive Theory in Web Portals	40				
2.9	Chapter Summary	42				
CHAPTER 3	RESEARCH METHODOLOGY	43				
3.1	Introduction	43				
3.2	Research Paradigm	43				
3.3	Research Approach	44				
3.4	Research Design					
	3.4.1 Phase 1: Problem Definition	49				
	3.4.2 Phase 2: Model Development	50				
	3.4.3 Phase 3: Instrument Development and Validation	53				
	3.4.3.1 Step 1: Define the Constructs and Content Domain	53				
	3.4.3.2 Step 2: Generate and Assess Measurement Items	54				
	3.4.3.3 Step 3: Develop and Define the Scale	61				
	3.4.4 Phase 4: Data Collection and Analysis	67				
	3.4.5 Phase 5: Results and Discussion	68				
3.5	Chapter Summary	68				
CHAPTER 4	DEVELOPMENT OF STUDENT PORTAL MODEL					
4.1	Introduction					
4.2	Theoretical Background					
	4.2.1 Behavioral	70				
	4.2.2 Personal					
	4.2.3 Environmental	70				

4.3	Deper	Dependent Variable; Student Portal Usage		
4.4	Indepe	endent Va	73	
	4.4.3	75		
4.5	Hypot	84		
	4.5.1	Environmental Factors Category		84
		4.5.1.1	4.5.1.1User Satisfaction4.5.1.2Information Quality	
		4.5.1.2		
		4.5.1.3	Interaction	85
		4.5.1.4	Availability of Content	86
		4.5.1.5	Portal Service Quality	86
		4.5.1.6	Design	87
		4.5.1.7	Navigation	87
		4.5.1.8	User Support	88
	4.5.2	Personal Factors Category		88
	4.5.3	Behavior	89	
16	Chapt	er Summa	90	
4.0	onupt	er stannia	r y	20
CHAPTER 5	DATA	COLLEC	TY CTION AND ANALYSIS	91
4.0 CHAPTER 5 5.1	DATA Introd	COLLEC	TION AND ANALYSIS	91 91
CHAPTER 5 5.1 5.2	DATA Introd Pilot S	COLLEC uction Study	TION AND ANALYSIS	91 91 91
CHAPTER 5 5.1 5.2	DATA Introd Pilot S 5.2.1	COLLEC uction Study Items Re	CTION AND ANALYSIS liability	91 91 91 93
CHAPTER 5 5.1 5.2	DATA Introd Pilot S 5.2.1 5.2.2	COLLEC uction Study Items Re Construc	CTION AND ANALYSIS liability t Reliability and Validity	91 91 93 93 94
4.0 CHAPTER 5 5.1 5.2	DATA Introd Pilot S 5.2.1 5.2.2 5.2.3	COLLEC uction Study Items Re Construc Discrimi	CTION AND ANALYSIS liability at Reliability and Validity nant Validity	91 91 93 94 95
CHAPTER 5 5.1 5.2 5.3	DATA Introd Pilot S 5.2.1 5.2.2 5.2.3 Main	COLLEC uction Study Items Re Construc Discrimi Survey Da	TION AND ANALYSIS liability t Reliability and Validity nant Validity ta Screening	91 91 93 94 95 99
5.3 5.4	DATA Introd Pilot S 5.2.1 5.2.2 5.2.3 Main Demo	COLLEC uction Study Items Re Construc Discrimi Survey Da graphics c	TION AND ANALYSIS liability t Reliability and Validity nant Validity ta Screening of Participants for Main Survey	91 91 93 94 95 99 99
5.3 5.5 5.1 5.2	DATA Introd Pilot S 5.2.1 5.2.2 5.2.3 Main Demo Data A	COLLEC uction Study Items Re Construc Discrimi Survey Da graphics o Analysis	TION AND ANALYSIS liability t Reliability and Validity nant Validity ata Screening of Participants for Main Survey	91 91 93 94 95 99 99 101
5.3 5.5 5.5	DATA Introd Pilot S 5.2.1 5.2.2 5.2.3 Main Demo Data A 5.5.1	COLLEC uction Study Items Re Construc Discrimi Survey Da graphics o Analysis Measure	TION AND ANALYSIS liability t Reliability and Validity nant Validity ta Screening of Participants for Main Survey ment Model	91 91 93 94 95 99 99 101 102
5.3 5.5 5.5	DATA Introd Pilot S 5.2.1 5.2.2 5.2.3 Main Demo Data A 5.5.1	COLLEC uction Study Items Re Construc Discrimi Survey Da graphics o Analysis Measure 5.5.1.1	TION AND ANALYSIS Liability at Reliability and Validity nant Validity ata Screening of Participants for Main Survey ment Model Reliability of Internal Consistency	91 91 93 94 95 99 99 101 102 102
5.3 5.5 5.5	DATA Introd Pilot S 5.2.1 5.2.2 5.2.3 Main Demo Data A 5.5.1	COLLEC uction Study Items Re Construc Discrimi Survey Da graphics o Analysis Measure 5.5.1.1 5.5.1.2	CTION AND ANALYSIS liability et Reliability and Validity nant Validity eta Screening of Participants for Main Survey ment Model Reliability of Internal Consistency Convergent Validity	91 91 93 94 95 99 99 101 102 102 103
5.3 5.5 5.5	DATA Introd Pilot S 5.2.1 5.2.2 5.2.3 Main Demo Data A 5.5.1	COLLEC uction Study Items Re Construc Discrimi Survey Da graphics o Analysis Measure 5.5.1.1 5.5.1.2 5.5.1.3	CTION AND ANALYSIS	91 91 93 94 95 99 99 101 102 102 103 107
5.3 5.4 5.5	DATA Introd Pilot S 5.2.1 5.2.2 5.2.3 Main Demo Data A 5.5.1	COLLEC uction Study Items Re Construc Discrimi Survey Da graphics o Analysis Measure 5.5.1.1 5.5.1.2 5.5.1.3 Structura	CTION AND ANALYSIS	91 91 93 94 95 99 99 101 102 102 103 107 109

			5.5.2.2	Stru	ictura	l Model Path Co	efficients	112
			5.5.2.3	Coefficient of Determination (R ²)			116	
			5.5.2.4	Effect Size f ²				116
	5.6	Discussion of Hypothesis Results						118
		5.6.1	Discussio Hypothes	n is	of	Environmental	Category	120
			5.6.1.1	Hyp	oothes	sis (Ha1)		120
			5.6.1.2	Hyp	oothes	sis (Ha2)		121
			5.6.1.3	Hyp	oothes	sis (Ha3)		122
			5.6.1.4	Hyp	oothes	sis (Ha4)		123
			5.6.1.5	Hyp	oothes	sis (H5)		124
			5.6.1.6	Hyp	oothes	sis (Ha6)		125
			5.6.1.7	Hyp	oothes	sis (Ha7)		125
			5.6.1.8	Hyp	oothes	sis (Ha8)		127
		5.6.2	Discussio	n of	Perso	onal Category Hy	pothesis	127
			5.6.2.1	Hyp	oothes	sis (Hb1)		128
		5.6.3	Discussio	n of	Beha	vioral Category	Hypothesis	128
			5.6.3.1	Hyp	oothes	sis (Hc1)		129
	5.7	Concluding Results of Hypothesis						129
	5.8	Chapter Summary					131	
CHAPTER 6		CONC	LUSION A	AND	REC	OMMENDATIO	NS	133
	6.1	Introdu	uction					133
6.2		Research Achievements					133	
		6.2.1	Research	First	t Obje	ective		133
		6.2.2	Research	Seco	ond O	bjective		134
		6.2.3	Research	Thir	d Obj	jective		135
	6.3	Resear	ch Contrib	outio	n and	Implications		136
		6.3.1	Theoretic	al Co	ontrib	oution		137
		6.3.2	Practical	Cont	ributi	ion		138
	6.4	Research Limitation						139
	6.5	Future	Works					140

6.6	Chapter Summary	140
REFERENCES		141
Appendix A	Students Preliminary Study	159
Appendix B	Academic Staff Preliminary Study	161
Appendix C	Questionnaire Validation	169
Appendix D	Pilot Study	177
Appendix E	Main Data Collection	189

LIST OF TABLES

TABLE NO.	TITLE	PAGE
Table 2. 1	Saudi Arabia Universities	15
Table 2.2	Under-developed Universities in Saudi Arabia	17
Table 2. 3	Result of Portal Usage Survey	24
Table 2. 4	Summary of Factors Classification	36
Table 2. 5	Theories Used in Web Portal	38
Table 3. 1	Differences between the Quantitative and Qualitative Research Methodologies	45
Table 3. 2	Statistical Analysis Tools Usage	47
Table 3. 3	Steps of Phase Three	53
Table 3.4	Constructs and Generated Items	55
Table 3.5	Experts' Profile	61
Table 3. 6	Deleted Items Based on Pilot Test Results	63
Table 3.7	Morgan's Table for Sample Size	65
Table 3.8	Population of Students in Saudi Arabia Universities	66
Table 3.9	Student Population in Four Public Universities	67
Table 5.1	Demographic of Participants	92
Table 5.2	Factor Loading	93
Table 5.3	Constructs' Reliability and Validity	95
Table 5.4	Items' Cross Loading for All Constructs	96
Table 5.5	Participants' Demographic	101
Table 5.6	Measurement Model Standard Criteria	102
Table 5.7	Reliability of Internal Consistency	103
Table 5.8	Items Outer Loading and Average Variance Extracted (AVE)	104

Table 5.9	Cross Loadings of Discriminant Validity	107
Table 5.10	Fornell-Larcker of Discriminant Validity.	109
Table 5.11	Structural Model Evaluation Procedures	110
Table 5.12	Collinearity Test	111
Table 5.13	Result of Hypothesis Test	113
Table 5.14	Significant Level of The Result of The Study Hypothesis	114
Table 5.15	Coefficient of Determination (R ²)	116
Table 5.16	The Effect Size of (f ²) Result.	117

LIST OF FIGURES

FIGURE NO	D. TITLE	PAGE
Figure 2.1	Literature Review Framework	11
Figure 2. 2	Academic Staff Participants	27
Figure 3. 1	Research Design	49
Figure 3. 2	Factors Derivation Process	52
Figure 4.1	Social Cognitive Theory (SCT) domains (Bandura, 1986)	69
Figure 4.2	Portal Enhancement based on (SCT)	71
Figure 4.3	Student Portal Usage	73
Figure 4.4	User Satisfaction	74
Figure 4.5	Information Quality	75
Figure 4.6	Interaction	76
Figure 4.7	Availability of Content	78
Figure 4.8	Portal Service Quality	79
Figure 4. 9	Design	80
Figure 4.10	Navigation	81
Figure 4.11	Portal User Support	81
Figure 4.12	Efficiency	83
Figure 4.13	User Intention	84
Figure 4.14	Study Proposed Model	90
Figure 5.1	Pilot Study Measurement Mode	98
Figure 5.2	Measurement Model Final Result.	106
Figure 5. 3	Structural Model Path Coefficient	115
Figure 5.4	Student Portal Usage Model	118

LIST OF APPENDICES

APPENDIX	TITLE	PAGE
Appendix A	Students Preliminary Study	159
Appendix B	Academic Staff Preliminary Study	161
Appendix C	Questionnaire Validation	169
Appendix D	Pilot Study	177
Appendix E	Main Data Collection	189

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

Nowadays, with the development of web portals, new features exposed to students which support interactivity and personalization. Amongst the significant of development in the digital era are portals. Higher education institutions are seriously involved in portals that turned to be an essential tool for delivering services and increased the interaction between students and academic staff (Shaltoni et al., 2015). According to Gul and Saqib (2015) educational portals are destined to provide information to a wide variety of users. Users of these types of portals are mainly concerned with the ease of finding information in a timely manner. Also, Al-Dossari (2017) and Mansourvar and Yasin (2010) defined student portal is referred to as the general knowledge management system that helps the companies to share, reuse, create or exchange any type of information or knowledge. A well designed student portal will help the user to get access to different backend resources'; it acts as a gateway between the users and the backend resources (Al-Dossari, 2017; Bringula, 2013; De Luca et al., 2011). Student portal will help and provide its final individual customers with a specialised view which matches their need of both the software as well as the hardware resources that is very specific to the user's domain. One of the major challenge is to build a university student portal which is updated regularly with the latest information and also is ready to adapt to the increasing services (Thomas-Alvarez and Mahdjoubi, 2013). Therefore, the main concern of the university is to build a portal that controls and coordinates as well as it interacts and takes feedback from the customers (visitors, staff, or may be the students) which will support the endusers to achieve to build a portal that will meet the expectation (Hassan, 2013). By understanding what students hope/expect from a university portal should increase their satisfaction and consequently have a positive impact on performance and reputation (Akanmu and Bahaudin, 2018; Li, Asimiran, and Suyitno, 2018; Shaltoni et al., 2015).

1.2 Problem Background

Nowadays, web portal is known as a one-stop website to receive an organisation's latest updates. High-quality web portals are very important to commercial and non-commercial organisations (Al-Dossari, 2017; Nasirun et al., 2012). Mansourvar and Yasin (2010) defined the portal as a general knowledge management system that helps companies to share, reuse, create or exchange information. Educational web portals become more of a responsive portal and also has turned out to be very dynamic based on the demands and the requirements of the different academic community. These days the communication between the teachers and students are also done through these websites sometimes. These portals actually integrate the application, content and the information together to help the end user. University students' portal will help provide customers with a specialised view that matches their needs and meets their software and hardware requirements. The understanding of the users need is a key element in the university students' portal usage. It mainly includes four important things namely the accessibility standards, page layout, the graphic design and most importantly the content design (Hassan, 2013). Therefore, the main concern of the university is to build a portal that able to controls, coordinates and received feedback from the customers (i.e. visitors, staff, or may be the students). Such input contributes to developing a portal that will meet the expectations of end-users as well as meet industry standards (Al-Dossari, 2017; Hassan, 2013).

According to the Ministry of Education of Saudi Arabia and academic institutions of ranking international universities, King Saud University and King Abdul-Aziz University are the top five universities in Saudi Arabia (QSRanking, 2019; TimeHigherEducation, 2019). Bahaj, Aljaaidi, and Ahmed (2019) indicated that information technology infrastructure is a key success factor that increases students' confidence in using Saudi university portals. As such, Al-Harbi (2016) recommended updating the information of the portal, e-services, and redesigning the portal in order to increase its use. According to Al-Harbi (2016) examine the attitudes of faculty members towards the of virtual learning portals in teaching language programs at a major university in Saudi Arabia. The result revealed that there is main problem was

their opinions about using e-service technology tools in their portal. Gul and Saqib (2015) evaluate the level of usage of King Abdul Aziz university portal by using Heuristics evaluation. The results revealed that the university portal does not match standards of design, content, user support and navigation which make students dissatisfied and decreased the usage of portal. Also, this study recommended to improve university of King Abdul Aziz portal usage. Ahmed and Al-Reyaee (2017) evaluate and compare the awareness and the level of usage electronic resources portal among students in Al-Jouf University. The study concludes that the undergraduate students at Al-Jouf University lack the necessary information skills needed to meet their academic and research requirements in order to continue to use their portal.

Alhabeeb et al., (2017) examine different factors that affect student to use their portal and to determine the level of use e-learning portal in Saudi Arabia and doing comparison for these results with previous studies conducted in other countries. The results revealed that technical infrastructure of portal, and instructor knowledge with using portal technologies and student knowledge of using computer systems are important to success and increase the usage of the portal. Alshamari (2016) conducted a comprehensive literature to identify the current state of the level of use of health information systems' portal in Saudi Arabia. The result findings revealed that different factors such as: design, privacy, and efficiency effect on the portal usage. Also, this study recommended to consider these factors in the developing and designing the portal for producing successful implementation portal and increase the portal usage. Elsayed (2016) examine the current situation of King Abdulaziz University portal content and applied propose a content strategy. The study is an important because the portal content strategy will help the university to solve portal content issues and encourage users to use the portal. also, this study recommended to examine perceptions of student with using their portal.

Al-Mashaqba (2017) examine the level of usage of academic members in Alqassim University in Saudi Arabia. The results showed that the academic members don't have awareness about using the available services in the portal which can use in their teaching through the portal. This study revealed that there is need to increase the level of usage by training the academic members on how to use their services in the portal. Almahamid et al., (2016) examine the level of usage of university portal by identifying the factors that effect on lectures to use their portal. the result revealed that there some issues facing them to use university portal such as: navigation, a quick response time, minimum download time, and portal accessibility issues. This study recommended university decision makers and web designers have to take into consideration these issues to increase the level of usage of the portal. Alkahtani (2016) examine students attitudes towards using electronic information resources of Princess Nora University students library portal. The study results revealed that management should take this investigation into account and attempt to decrease the gap between student attitude and their use to increase portal usage. Also, to increase the level of awareness and the importance of library portal electronic resources and its actual use. According to Benaida et al., (2018) the study examines the level of usage King Abdul-Aziz university portal among of undergraduate students. The result revealed that students dissatisfied with their students' portal. The study recommended to improve the level of portal usage by solving the problems that face students.

In spite of the advancements being made in the domain of mobile portal in Saudi Arabia, there are aspects that present obstacles in the progress of mobile portal in the nation. According to Badwelan et al., (2016) ascertained several limitations related to mobile learning in Saudi Arabia, such as the limitations with regards to processing performance, memory size, battery life, elementary user interface and various platforms. Other concerns encompass the availability of dependable and inexpensive web access from home, because campus IT security in universities of Saudi Arabia makes it tough for students who are away from campus to access the systems on campus. Also, Alkhalaf (2015) highlighted that there are challenges which students encountered, like substandard wireless network and technical concerns, considerably limited these benefits. Utilising mobile phones for education would render likely issues regarding hardware specifications of the devices involved: small screen sizes, inadequate input options, inadequate battery life, inadequate memory capacity and video quality; all these restrict M-learning assimilation if it is not conforming to a homogenous setup and system (Albazie, 2018; Alkhalaf, 2015). Therefore, based on these limitation, this study focus on student web portal in Saudi Arabia universities.

Furthermore, the researcher of this study conducted two preliminaries studies on academic staff and students in Saudi Arabia universities. In order to observe the problem from the ground, the researcher conducted the first preliminary study based on the students' perspective about their portal. The researcher performed an online survey to collect data about the student portal in different universities in Saudi Arabia. The sample of the study involved 19 questions and 91 responders distributed randomly across many universities in Saudi Arabia. The second preliminary study was conducted on academic staff to make sure that there is a problem in the student portal from the point of view of institutions. The researcher conducted an online survey with 40 academic staff from various universities in Saudi Arabia. The finding of both preliminary, highlighted some of the problems faced by students in Saudi universities such as: lack of the portal content, lack in training and guidelines, lack interaction between students and their lecturers, and lack of awareness about using the portal. These issues affect students to use their portal. Therefore, according to above results this level of using portal in Saudi universities doesn't match the advantage of portal.

Also, this study used social cognitive theory SCT, which is regarded as a very powerful theory related to human behaviour. Two studies D. R. Compeau and Higgins (1995b) and D. Compeau, Higgins, and Huff (1999) applied the SCT for investigating the computer utilisation. They investigated the computer usage however, the nature of their proposed model along with its theory allowed its extension to the acceptance and usage of the web portals. The SCT was regarded as the base model because of the following reasons; first, the constructs that were used in the model represented the important variables that were analysed as the factors which were responsible for improving the web portal. Second, since the SCT was a relatively less-represented model in the adoption of the web portals, it was important to investigate its performance and application in the existing context. Finally, this model included all the appropriate and vital constructs that helped in understanding the behaviour of an individual. According to several previous studies that indicate to the important of student behaviour to enhance the use of university portals. According to M.-Y. Wu et al., (2011) this study approved that user behaviour is important key to enhance and continue using the website. According to Benlian (2015) this study indicates that user behaviour and perceived enjoyment on websites are important to increase the usage of website. Also, considering user behaviour provide useful guidelines for designers to

This research focus on undergraduate students in Saudi Arabia universities to understand what are their needs based on their experience in using students' portal. that will help universities to improve the students' portal based on their students' demands and requirements.

This research selected four under developing public universities in Saudi Arabia as case studies. These universities are :(University of Tabuk, Taibah University, Taif University, and King Faisal University) which located in different states in Saudi Arabia to determine the potential respondents to achieve the study goals. The private universities are not involved in this study.

1.7 Significance of The Research

This study is a contribution to research through identifying the most important factors which affect students to use their student portal in Saudi Arabia universities. The study emphasises the challenges and issues that face students to use their portal and which ways that can help to solve these issues. This study investigates the perceptions of undergraduate students towards the using of students' portal based on their experiences.

The study further contributes to knowledge for theoretical and practical aspects of using students' portal. Theoretically, the study assesses the importance of student portal which enhance student portal usage and increase students' satisfaction in Saudi Arabia universities. In particular, the study illustrates how can the most important factors that affect students to use their student portal in Saudi Arabia universities can enhance the level of using university student portal. Also, this study is the first study to use Social Cognitive Theory (SCT) to examine the personal, behavioural and environmental factors to enhance student portal usage and increase student satisfaction in Saudi universities. The recommendations and implications of this research of how can these factors can be implemented to enhance and improve the communication and relationship management with students to encourage them to use their portal.

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