

Patterns of Social Media Engagement for Learning Arabic among Selected Lower Secondary School Students in Kuala Lumpur

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DOI Link: <http://dx.doi.org/10.6007/IJARPED/v15-i1/27792>

Published Online: 17 March 2026

Abstract

The significant rise of virtual learning can be seen ever since the COVID-19 pandemic. Among the approaches in virtual learning also include the use of social media. The purpose of social media extends from a platform mainly for casual communication to e-commerce and even social media learning. Many studies highlighted the components and benefits of using social media for English language learning. However, it is not the same case for Arabic language, despite it being commonly used for religious learning in Malaysia and taken formally in many religious schools. This study aims to explore further on the underlying patterns of social media engagement for learning Arabic among selected lower secondary schools in Kuala Lumpur. This study applies the quantitative approach using the cross-sectional survey design. An online questionnaire has been distributed to 364 lower secondary school students in Kuala Lumpur, which has been analysed through the exploratory factor analysis (EFA). Results showed three extracted patterns of social media engagement for learning Arabic, which are Critical Cognitive, Social Interactive and Active Language Use. This study highlights the components of learning engagement, which can be used as a framework in planning effective use of social media as complementary curriculum for learning Arabic language among lower secondary school students.

Keywords: Social Media, Learning Engagement, Arabic Language, Language Learning, Lower Secondary

Introduction

COVID-19 has been a great catalyst of evolution of social media from a digital platform mainly used for simple communication, extended into a digital platform supporting remote businesses and even virtual learning (Susanto et al., 2021). The role of social media in education became even more significant, especially with its potential use as a part of complementary curriculum (Cinco et al., 2025). The rising number of social media users

especially among students indicate its relevance and potential as a learning platform. The varied features on social media such as chatting and interactions between learners offer more dynamic and individualised learning engagement (Prajapati et al., 2025). The potential benefits of social media have been proved through different empirical studies, among them emphasizing social media engagement as a way to increase students' participation, interest, critical thinking and real-life practical language use (Budyanto & Ridho, 2024; Sarita & Corsino, 2025).

Even though many studies highlighted social media as a beneficial platform for language learning, the use of it within Arabic language has not been mentioned much in studies, even with its significant presence as a language used for religious learning purposes in Malaysian schools (Mohd Adnan, 2017). The Arabic language learning in general is still stuck within the traditional method adopted from the Islamic scholarly traditions (Rahman & Hamzah, 2025). This method focuses more on textbook and teacher-centered learning. From theory to practical, there are barely studies found mentioning the use of social media for Arabic language learning, which resulted in lack of statistical data to understand the patterns of engagement among students. With regards to this gap, this study aims to investigate the underlying patterns of social media engagement for learning Arabic, in ensuring a statistical-based-data which can serve as the framework components for an effective method of Arabic language learning approaches among educators and policymakers.

Literature Review

The rapid expansion of digital technologies has transformed language learning practices globally. In Malaysia, Arabic holds a distinctive position as both an academic subject and a religious language, particularly among Muslim students. Lower secondary learners in Kuala Lumpur increasingly rely on platforms such as TikTok, YouTube, Instagram, and WhatsApp to supplement classroom instruction, especially following the digital transition during the COVID-19 pandemic (Project ID, 2023; Mulyono et al., 2021). Post-pandemic studies indicate that students continue to use social media as supplementary learning tools, reflecting long-term changes in learning habits (Zulkepli et al., 2025). Despite this growing reliance, existing research often focuses on platform usage frequency rather than engagement quality. Furthermore, theoretical perspectives, platform studies, and contextual analyses are frequently presented in isolation, limiting comprehensive understanding.

Therefore, this review integrates learning theories, engagement dimensions, technological affordances, and sociocultural influences under unified analytical themes to provide a holistic account of Arabic learning through social media among lower secondary students in Kuala Lumpur.

Networked and Socially Mediated Learning Environments

Social media-based Arabic learning functions within digitally networked environments where knowledge is distributed across platforms, users, and content repositories. Connectivism conceptualises learning as the formation and maintenance of these networks, enabling students to access diverse linguistic resources beyond classroom boundaries (Siemens, 2004; Downes, 2010). Through subscribing to YouTube channels, following TikTok educators, and participating in WhatsApp groups, learners construct personalised learning networks.

This networked learning is further shaped by sociocultural processes. Online peer interaction and feedback serve as forms of digital scaffolding that support learners' Zones of Proximal Development (Saed et al., 2021). For example, students often seek clarification in WhatsApp groups or receive pronunciation feedback in comment sections. Social learning theory also explains how learners acquire language through observation and imitation. On TikTok and YouTube, students repeatedly observe proficient speakers modelling pronunciation and sentence patterns, facilitating oral skill development (Meirbekov et al., 2024). This is particularly important in contexts where classroom exposure to spoken Arabic is limited.

However, unregulated digital networks present challenges. Learners frequently encounter inaccurate explanations, informal dialects, and inconsistent language registers that conflict with curricular standards (Ilmiani & Miolo, 2021; Abdurahman et al., 2025). Thus, while networked environments enhance accessibility and autonomy, they also require critical filtering skills and pedagogical mediation.

Engagement, Motivation, and Sustained Participation

Effective language learning through social media depends on sustained and motivated engagement. Self-Determination Theory highlights the importance of intrinsic motivation in maintaining learning behaviours (Ryan & Deci, 2000). In Malaysia, religious motivation strengthens students' internal drive to engage with Arabic content related to Quranic studies and Islamic knowledge (Aminullah et al., 2022).

Within the AsSCAp framework, sustained interest reflects learners' capacity to remain engaged over time (Fredricks et al., 2004). Platform algorithms, particularly on TikTok and YouTube, support this dimension by continuously recommending related Arabic content, thereby reinforcing learning routines. Moreover, by promoting that matches users' interest, the platform algorithm creates a customized learning environment that motivates recurring participation (Zulkepli et al., 2025). Short-form videos on TikTok and YouTube draw viewers in and increase interest in learning Arabic because they offer visually appealing and contextually relevant knowledge (Milah et al., 2025). Nevertheless, algorithm-driven engagement may prioritise entertainment rather than educational value. Studies indicate that students often shift towards non-academic content over time, weakening learning continuity (Zulkepli et al., 2025). Moreover, socioeconomic disparities in internet access affect students' ability to maintain consistent engagement, especially with video-based platforms. Students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds have significant obstacles that hinder their online learning experiences, such as restricted device access, erratic internet availability, and inadequate digital competence (Ojong, 2025). Active participation is another critical dimension. Learners who comment, share materials, ask questions, and produce Arabic-related content demonstrate deeper cognitive engagement and better retention (Chen, 2025; Almohesh & Altamimi, 2024). These behaviours align with connectivist principles of knowledge creation and sharing.

However, many lower secondary students remain passive consumers. Fear of making mistakes, low linguistic confidence, and peer judgement discourage active involvement. This suggests that technological availability alone does not guarantee participatory learning.

Cognitive Processing, Digital Literacy, and Micro-Learning Practices

Social media platforms promote micro-learning through short, visually rich content formats. Cognitive Load Theory explains why such formats appeal to adolescent learners (Sweller, 1988). TikTok clips and Instagram reels commonly deliver vocabulary and pronunciation guidance in digestible segments (Khlaif & Salha, 2021). Although micro-learning enhances accessibility, it often lacks depth and continuity. Grammar structures, discourse patterns, and writing skills require systematic progression, which short-form content rarely provides (Kurniati, 2022). As a result, learners may develop surface-level knowledge without conceptual understanding.

Critical thinking and digital literacy are therefore essential. Arabic's diglossic nature further complicates this process, requiring learners to distinguish between Modern Standard Arabic, regional dialects, and transliterated forms (Abdurahman et al., 2025). Many learners lack sufficient digital literacy to critically assess online materials (Ilmiani & Miolo, 2021).

Knowledge Transfer and Practical Language Application

The educational value of social media engagement lies in learners' ability to apply acquired knowledge in real contexts. Studies show that regular engagement improves vocabulary retention, writing confidence, and oral proficiency when learners actively integrate new knowledge into academic and religious practices (Pakpahan et al., 2025; Wijaya & Rismawati, 2023). YouTube grammar tutorials, Instagram vocabulary posts, and WhatsApp discussion activities often reinforce classroom learning (Bella & Huda, 2022; Barzani & Omar, 2024). These practices illustrate how digital networks facilitate actionable knowledge, consistent with connectivist theory.

However, application remains uneven. Many learners retain vocabulary passively without incorporating it into productive tasks (Kurniati, 2022). Limited opportunities for authentic communication and insufficient corrective feedback constrain skill development.

Platform Affordances and Pedagogical Mediation

TikTok has been found to enhance learners' motivation and pronunciation development through interactive short-video content, although the platform generally lacks structured curricular sequencing (Aminullah et al., 2022). YouTube, in contrast, provides extensive instructional resources that support language learning; however, the large volume of available content may overwhelm learners when guidance is limited (Baroroh & Rizal, 2023). Instagram facilitates visual vocabulary learning through image-based and multimedia posts, yet it offers relatively limited opportunities for communicative language practice (Habibi & Fauji, 2023). WhatsApp supports collaborative learning through group discussions and peer interaction, although effective use of the platform often requires active moderation and guidance (Mulyono et al., 2021). Previous studies consistently report that teacher-designed tasks and carefully curated digital resources significantly improve the quality of students' engagement in social media-based learning environments (Kurniati, 2022; Sivabalan & Ali, 2022). Nevertheless, many educators still lack sufficient training in digital pedagogy, which may limit the effective integration of these platforms into language instruction (Almazroui & Awad, 2025).

Conclusion

This review highlights that social media-based Arabic learning among lower secondary students in Kuala Lumpur is a complex and networked learning process shaped by technological, motivational, and sociocultural factors. Learning occurs through digital networks where students interact with peers, educators, and multimedia resources across platforms such as TikTok, YouTube, Instagram, and WhatsApp. While these platforms enhance accessibility, motivation, and exposure to authentic language input, their educational effectiveness depends on students' digital literacy, sustained engagement, and the presence of pedagogical guidance. Without structured learning pathways and critical evaluation skills, learners may develop fragmented knowledge or encounter inaccurate linguistic information. Therefore, the integration of social media into Arabic language learning requires deliberate pedagogical mediation to ensure that technological affordances align with educational objectives and curriculum standards.

This study contributes to the existing literature both theoretically and contextually. From a theoretical perspective, it integrates connectivism, engagement theory, and cognitive learning perspectives to explain how social media facilitates Arabic language learning within digitally networked environments. This integrated framework provides a more comprehensive understanding of informal digital language learning processes. From a contextual perspective, the study offers insights into the Malaysian lower secondary education context, where Arabic serves both academic and religious purposes. By examining how lower secondary school students in Kuala Lumpur engage with social media platforms to support Arabic learning, the study provides practical implications for educators, curriculum developers, and policymakers seeking to incorporate digital tools into language education more effectively.

Research Objectives/Questions

The research objective of this research is:

To investigate the underlying patterns of social media engagement for learning Arabic among lower secondary school students.

The research question of this research is:

What are the underlying patterns of social media engagement for learning Arabic among lower secondary school students?

Methods

Research Design

Cross-sectional ex-post facto design, which is a research design with no experimental manipulation on involved constructs (Busk, 2005), has been used within this study. Self-developed questionnaire is used for data collection as post-occurrence observation. This study is categorised as quantitative, with the use of a cross-sectional survey method. Data from questionnaire responses is collected and analysed at the same time. These methods are selected to fit the research purpose, as data generalisation for social media, a platform with unlimited number of users requires a large number of responses. In order to collect and summarize data from the selected population, questionnaires have been distributed as the instrument. These questionnaires are shared virtually, in ensuring an effective approach, as

students from different schools may have different preferences and limitations in providing responses.

Samples and Population / Participants

The population for this study comprises 954 lower secondary school students taking Arabic language from different districts in Kuala Lumpur. Four schools within Bangsar Pudu, Sentul and Keramat are selected, which are schools offering Arabic language. 300 students are decided as the minimum sample size based on Raosoft calculation, with 95% confidence level and 5% margin of error.

Stratified sampling and convenience sampling are chosen for this study. Stratified sampling includes two levels of strata, where strata 1 are schools offering Arabic subjects, while strata 2 goes into two categories of schools based on the curriculum taken for Arabic language, namely Kurikulum Standard Sekolah Menengah (KSSM) and Kurikulum Bersepadu Dini (KBD). Final respondents of the four schools are determined through convenience sampling. The summary of the sampling process is shown in figure below.

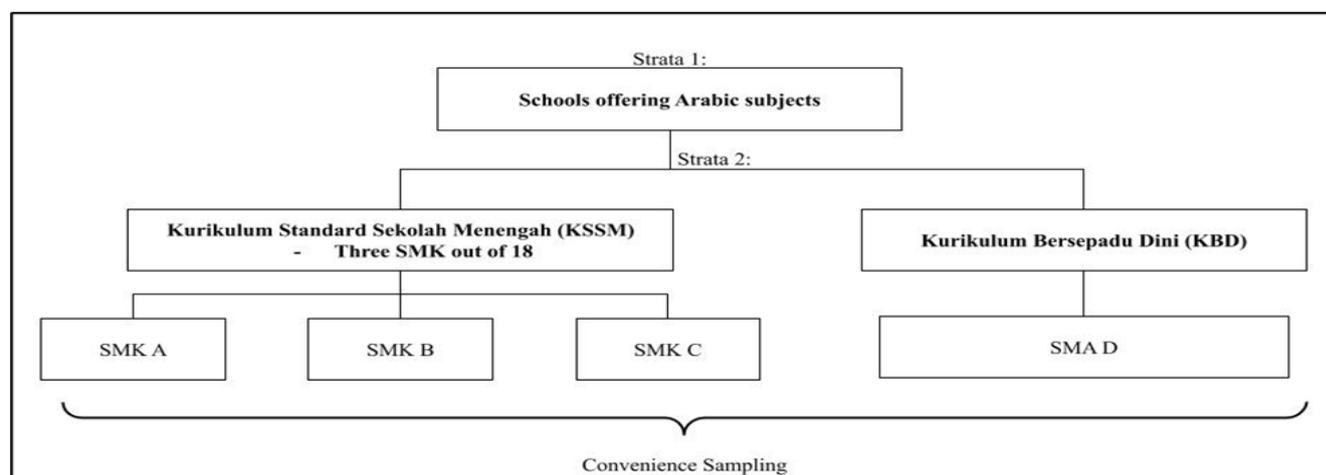


Figure 1. Summary of Sampling

Research Instruments

To fulfil the objective of this research, questionnaire is chosen as the instrument for data collection. Four separate aspects of engagement extracted from literature review are used as the constructs of this self-developed questionnaire. The four aspects include "ApSCAp", which are Active Participation, Sustained Interest, Critical Thinking and Application. The first section of the questionnaire includes nine demographic questions. The second section comprises six items for each aspect mentioned, making it 24 items in total. Each aspect is measured with the Likert scale of frequency, ranging from "Never" to "Always".

Content validation for the 24 items was conducted among two lecturers with Arabic Language expertise and two lecturers with Instructional Technology expertise. (1) Poor Match, (2) Moderate Match and (3) Perfect Match are used as the degree of relevance. Results showed 1.0 content validity ratio for all items, indicating its significance and fulfilled the criteria needed for content validity.

Reliability of the questionnaire is determined through a pilot test conducted with 44 lower secondary school students taking Arabic language. The reliability assessment using Cronbach's Alpha is shown in figure below.

Construct	N of Items	Cronbach's Alpha
Active Participation	6	0.71
Sustained Interest	6	0.84
Critical Thinking	6	0.84
Application	6	0.74

Figure 2. Cronbach's Alpha Reliability Test

Data Collection

The population of this study is determined based on the enrollment data provided by Jabatan Pendidikan Wilayah Persekutuan Kuala Lumpur and the Kementerian Pendidikan Malaysia's official website. The enrollment data consists of the number of Arabic learners among lower secondary school students. The main questionnaire consists of nine demographic items and 24 social media engagement related items undergo three levels of approval, starting from Kementerian Pendidikan Malaysia (KPM), followed by Jabatan Pendidikan Wilayah Persekutuan Kuala Lumpur (JPWPKL) and administration officers of selected schools. The questionnaires are distributed using the Google Forms link to ease each parties involved. Online links also allow a complete, faster and accurate data analysis process. 364 complete responses are taken for data analysis.

Data Analysis

The tool for analysis used in this study is Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA), in order to extract the underlying patterns of social media engagement for learning Arabic. The aspects included initially as the constructs of the questionnaire are taken from literature review, which are then further analysed through the EFA. The four aspects included are 'ApSCAp', namely Active Participation, Sustained Interest, Critical Thinking and Application. EFA is expected to validate whether these four aspects of social media engagement are accurate, based on the responses received by 364 respondents.

The results from Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) are used to answer the research question for this study. The data run is based on the 24 items within the questionnaire, with six items included for each of the four constructs derived from literature review. The Likert scale of frequency is used for each item ranging from 1-Never, 2-Rarely, 3-Sometimes, 4-Often, 5-Always.

Results

To investigate the underlying patterns of social media engagement for learning Arabic among lower secondary school students in Kuala Lumpur, Principal Axis Factoring (PAF) with Promax rotation was employed. PAF was selected to identify the latent structure underlying the observed variables and to categorise items based on shared variance. The grouping of items

with similar characteristics provided the basis for factor labelling and conceptual interpretation.

Prior to extraction, sampling adequacy and factorability of the correlation matrix were examined. The Kaiser Meyer Olkin (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy indicated an excellent value of 0.96, demonstrating that the sample size was highly appropriate for factor analysis. In addition, Bartlett's Test of Sphericity confirmed that the correlation matrix was not an identity matrix, $\chi^2(276) = 4963.44$, $p < .001$, indicating sufficient inter-item correlations to proceed with factor extraction. Community values exceeded 0.40 for all items except one, suggesting that the majority of items shared adequate common variance. Collectively, these results justified the use of PAF for further analysis.

The initial Principal Axis Factoring (PAF) extraction resulted in a three-factor solution, explaining approximately 51.6% of the total variance. However, one item exhibited cross-loading on two factors, suggesting ambiguity in its alignment with a single dimension. This issue was likely attributable to the wording of the item, which appeared to capture overlapping conceptual meanings. Therefore, the item was removed, and a revised PAF analysis was conducted.

The updated analysis produced a more coherent three-factor structure comprising 23 items, accounting for approximately 51.3% of the total variance. The Kaiser–Meyer–Olkin (KMO) measure showed a slight decline to 0.95 but remained within the excellent range. Bartlett's Test of Sphericity continued to be statistically significant, $\chi^2(253) = 4632.84$, $p < .001$, confirming the appropriateness of the dataset for factor analysis. Community estimates ranged from .331 to .682, with only one item falling below the recommended threshold of 0.40. Overall, despite minor variations following the removal of the problematic item, the strength of inter-item correlations and the stability of the factor structure were maintained. A detailed summary of the extracted factors, including factor loadings, eigenvalues, variance explained, and reliability coefficients, is provided in the tables below.

Table 1

Inter-Item Correlation Matrix, Descriptive Statistics and Communalities

TE M	1	2	3	4	5	6	1	2	4	5	6	1	2	3	4	5	6	1	2	3	4	5	6								
1	.00																														
2	.45	.00																													
3	.38	.49	.00																												
4	.34	.48	.52	.00																											
5	.37	.38	.40	.44	.00																										
6	.40	.39	.30	.31	.39	.00																									
1	.59	.29	.35	.26	.38	.35	.00																								
2	.55	.51	.52	.43	.45	.45	.60	.00																							
4	.47	.43	.39	.40	.43	.45	.56	.43	.9	.00																					
5	.54	.31	.34	.40	.33	.55	.53	.55	.8	.00																					
6	.41	.37	.31	.35	.39	.36	.46	.50	.57	.6	.00																				
1	.35	.38	.35	.38	.30	.47	.49	.46	.53	.48	.49	.00																			
2	.52	.28	.33	.24	.30	.29	.49	.43	.51	.44	.53	.42	.9	.8	.9	.00															
3	.40	.39	.34	.38	.38	.53	.53	.58	.49	.61	.63	.56	.4	.1	.9	.1	.6	.4	.7	.5	.4	.00									
4	.45	.25	.29	.25	.37	.28	.49	.49	.43	.54	.43	.57	.56	.64	.4	.4	.1	.5	.6	.5	.5	.00									
5	.44	.23	.31	.31	.41	.34	.45	.43	.41	.50	.35	.47	.53	.59	.54	.9	.5	.9	.9	.2	.8	.2	.9	.5	.2	.5	.7	.6	.1	.4	.00

Table 2

Factor Solution with Items, Factor Loadings, Eigenvalues, Variance Explained and Reliability Index

Factor and Items	Factor Loading	Eigenvalue	Variance Explained	Cronbach's Alpha
Factor 1: Critical Cognitive Engagement		10.15	44.11%	.92
1) Analysing key points on Arabic content shown in social media in detail.	.831			
2) Responding to thought-provoking questions related to Arabic content.	.775			
3) Evaluating the value of information in Arabic content shown on social media.	.773			
4) Ensuring the authenticity of Arabic information sources on social media.	.758			
5) Able to see other perspectives related to the Arabic content.	.696			
6) Questioning other viewpoints regarding Arabic content.	.653			
7) Maintaining interest in learning Arabic language content on social media.	.647			
8) Fully concentrating when watching Arabic language content on social media.	.621			
9) Jotting down notes while engaging with Arabic language content.	.561			
10) Watching Arabic language content on social media.	.507			
11) Using social media content to improve Arabic language.	.433			
Factor 2: Social Interactive Engagement		1.10	4.57%	.84
1) Commenting on Arabic language content shared by other users.	.762			
2) Sharing Arabic language content with other users.	.739			
3) Discussing content about Arabic language with other social media users.	.649			
4) Exchanging Arabic-related resources with other social media users.	.492			

5) Joining live streaming sessions for Arabic language learning on social media.	.453			
6) Looking forward to the next content after watching one Arabic language content.	.443			
7) Minimising distractions when watching Arabic language content on social media.	.413			
Factor 3: Active Language Use		.61	2.64%	.86
1) Using Arabic vocabulary learned from social media for daily communication.	.769			
2) Using different Arabic expressions to communicate ideas.	.659			
3) Using content learned from social media to differentiate Arabic slang from standard language.	.655			
4) Applying the Arabic grammar learned from social media in speaking.	.561			
5) Applying the Arabic grammar learned from social media in writing.	.518			

Discussions

Based on the EFA results, three clear factors were extracted, indicating three underlying patterns of social media engagement for learning Arabic among lower secondary students in Kuala Lumpur. These factors reflect students' cognitive, social, and practical engagement with Arabic content on digital platforms. Consistent with the literature review, the findings demonstrate that social media-based learning operates within networked, motivational, and pedagogically mediated environments, as conceptualised by connectivist, sociocultural, and engagement theories.

Critical Cognitive Engagement

The first factor, Critical Cognitive Engagement, comprises the highest number of loaded items, indicating that cognitive involvement represents the dominant pattern of engagement among students. The 11 items under this factor are mainly related to analysis, evaluation, self-reflection, and responding to others' perspectives when learning Arabic through social media. This finding aligns closely with the literature review, which highlighted the role of cognitive processing and digital literacy in social media learning. As discussed earlier, micro-learning formats on platforms such as TikTok and Instagram promote accessibility but may encourage surface-level learning if not supported by critical thinking skills. The emergence of Critical Cognitive Engagement suggests that many students go beyond passive consumption by actively evaluating and interpreting digital content, consistent with Cognitive Load Theory and digital literacy frameworks (Sweller, 1988; Ilmiani & Miolo, 2021).

The result is also in line with Mystakidis (2021), who stated that deep learning differs from surface learning in that it requires meaningful and active engagement. Similarly, Pellegrino

and Hilton (2012, as cited in Loyens et al., 2023) emphasised the importance of critical thinking as a core learning competency. Through cognitively demanding activities, students are able to enhance their analytical and evaluative skills (Rivas et al., 2022). Zhou and Ye (2023) further reported that online learning environments facilitate cognitive engagement by promoting critical thinking-related activities. Within the connectivist framework discussed in the literature review (Siemens, 2004; Downes, 2010), this factor reflects learners' ability to navigate digital networks, filter information, and construct personal understanding from multiple sources. Given the challenges of inaccurate content and informal language registers identified earlier (Ilmiani & Miolo, 2021; Abdurahman et al., 2025), Critical Cognitive Engagement plays a crucial role in helping learners distinguish reliable academic content from non-standard materials.

Therefore, this factor confirms that effective social media-based Arabic learning requires not only access to content but also instructional strategies that foster reflective thinking and critical evaluation, as suggested by Yuan et al. (2020) and Kurniati (2022).

Social Interactive Engagement

The second factor, Social Interactive Engagement, consists of seven loaded items related to two-way communication, participation in discussions, sharing materials, joining livestreams, and sustained interest in online content. These behaviours reflect students' social involvement in digital learning communities.

This finding strongly supports the literature review's emphasis on networked and socially mediated learning environments. As previously discussed, social interaction functions as digital scaffolding that supports learners' Zones of Proximal Development (Saed et al., 2021) and promotes observational learning (Meirbekov et al., 2023). Through commenting, sharing, and collaborative participation, students co-construct knowledge within their digital networks, in line with connectivist principles. Consistent with Miao and Ma (2022), social interaction enhances social presence, which is essential for sustaining engagement in online learning. Gao (2024) and Ghergel et al. (2023) similarly highlighted that interaction improves learning efficiency and emotional involvement. These findings correspond with the engagement and motivation section of the literature review, which stressed the role of sustained participation and peer support in maintaining learning routines.

Moreover, algorithm-driven recommendations on platforms such as TikTok and YouTube, as discussed by Zulkepli et al. (2025), reinforce repeated exposure to Arabic content, further strengthening social and emotional engagement. However, the literature also noted that many students remain passive due to fear of mistakes and low confidence. The presence of this factor suggests that while interactive engagement exists, it may not be equally developed among all learners. Therefore, this factor highlights the importance of pedagogical mediation. Teachers' guidance in structuring online discussions, encouraging participation, and creating safe learning environments is necessary to overcome students' reluctance and maximise the benefits of social interaction (Sivabalan & Ali, 2022; Almazroui & Awad, 2025).

Active Language Use

The third factor, Active Language Use, contains the least number of loaded items and focuses on the application of Arabic skills in real-life contexts, including writing, speaking, and

grammatical usage based on social media learning. This finding reflects the concerns raised in the literature review regarding uneven knowledge transfer and limited practical application. Although social media provides abundant exposure to vocabulary and sentence structures, many learners retain knowledge passively without consistently applying it in productive tasks (Kurniati, 2022). The relatively weaker loading of this factor indicates that while students engage cognitively and socially, fewer students systematically transform digital input into active language output.

Nevertheless, existing studies support the positive role of social media in enhancing language skills. Muftah (2022) found that social media use contributes to improvements in writing, reading, and communication. Usup and Purwaningsih (2024) highlighted the facilitative role of online collaboration in developing practical language use. Similarly, Iqbal et al. (2025) and Alsenafi et al. (2024) emphasised the value of social media for authentic communication and contextualised language practice. In relation to the literature review, this factor corresponds with the Knowledge Transfer and Practical Language Application theme, which stressed the importance of integrating digital learning with classroom and religious practices (Pakpahan et al., 2025; Wijaya & Rismawati, 2023). The weaker prominence of this factor suggests that current engagement patterns may prioritise content consumption and interaction over systematic production and feedback.

This finding also reflects the limited availability of corrective feedback and authentic communicative opportunities identified earlier. Without structured tasks and teacher monitoring, students may struggle to move from receptive to productive language use.

Integrated Interpretation

Overall, the three extracted factors correspond closely with the main themes identified in the literature review. Critical Cognitive Engagement reflects cognitive processing and digital literacy; Social Interactive Engagement represents networked and sociocultural learning processes; and Active Language Use corresponds to knowledge transfer and practical application. Together, these patterns confirm that social media-based Arabic learning is a multidimensional phenomenon shaped by technological affordances, learner motivation, peer interaction, and pedagogical support. While students demonstrate strong cognitive and social engagement, practical language application remains comparatively limited.

These findings reinforce the review's conclusion that social media alone cannot guarantee effective learning outcomes. Instead, its educational impact depends on structured guidance, critical literacy development, and purposeful instructional design. Teachers should therefore integrate curated digital resources, interactive tasks, and output-oriented activities to balance cognitive, social, and practical engagement in Arabic learning.

Conclusion

This study's main focus is to highlight the underlying patterns of social media engagement for learning Arabic, which is an essential information in providing a clearer guideline framework for educators, content creators and policymakers. Based on the evaluation and measurement of ApSCAp derived from the literature review and the run of EFA as the tool for analysis, three major patterns of social media engagement for learning Arabic are extracted. The patterns are Critical Cognitive Engagement, Social Interactive Engagement and Active Language Use.

With the common indicators interpreted for each of the factors, it will be easier to craft suitable tasks and activities to empower the Arabic language learning through social media. With proper guided and structured instructions, the potentials of social media learning can be further maximised in ensuring its significant presence as a complementary curriculum among lower secondary school students.

Implications of the Study

The findings of this study theoretically contribute to the existing empirical literature on patterns of social media engagement in Arabic language learning. While previous studies have commonly emphasised the ApSCAp dimensions namely Active Participation, Sustained Interest, Critical Thinking, and Application as dominant patterns of engagement, the use of Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) in this study provides a clearer empirical perspective on how these engagement patterns are structured. By analysing data collected from the targeted sample, the study offers a more refined categorisation of engagement patterns based on actual learner responses, thereby strengthening the empirical understanding of how social media engagement manifests in the context of Arabic language learning.

In terms of its contextual contribution, this study focuses specifically on lower secondary school students aged 13 to 15, providing insights into engagement patterns among younger learners. Since engagement behaviours may vary according to age group, the findings offer a more detailed and context-specific understanding of how young learners interact with social media for Arabic language learning purposes. These insights can assist educators, especially teachers, content creators, and curriculum developers in designing more personalised and effective approaches for integrating social media into Arabic language learning, ultimately enhancing students' engagement and learning experiences.

Limitations and Future Studies

Following this study's significant role in extracting noteworthy patterns of social media engagement for learning Arabic, there are some limitations that should be acknowledged. Though all districts in Kuala Lumpur are covered, only selected schools are involved as respondents, which might not be able to precisely capture the social media learning engagement and experiences of students taking Arabic language. Hence, it is very recommended for future research to cover more schools and states, which may allow better understanding and accurate data generalisation.

Moreover, this study mainly focuses on the base aspects taken from literature review, which are ApSCAp (Active Participation, Sustained Interest, Critical Thinking and Application) as the constructs for distributed questionnaires. Future research may include other aspects for the questionnaire items, which may allow a vast and wider range of interpretations and labelings of patterns of social media engagement for learning Arabic.

Conflict of Interest

The author(s) declare(s) that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

Acknowledgment

We would like to extend heartiest appreciation to IIUM Imtiaz Scholarship for providing us the funds needed throughout the completion process of this article.

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