

Study demonstrates the power of social media for terror propaganda

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Samer Al-khateeb, a graduate student in UALR's Applied Science Department, recently presented original research at the International Conference on Digital Forensics and Cyber Crime at Yale University.

"Developing a Conceptual Framework for Deviant Cyber Flash Mobs," the research paper co-written by Al-khateeb and Associate Professor of Information Science Dr. Nitin Agarwal, has been accepted by the *Journal of Digital Forensics, Security and Law*.

The journal will publish the article in a special issue on "Digital Forensics and Cyber Crime."

"Many phone applications and analysis tools now use [[social media](#)] data to predict or analyze behaviors," said Al-khateeb.

"Dr. Agarwal's research on the Women's Right to Drive campaign in Saudi Arabia made me realize how powerful and useful social media is as a communication platform."

He said their research found that many [terrorist groups](#), such as the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant, use flash mob style behaviors to disseminate their propaganda using social media platforms, called deviant cyber flash mobs.

The work is supported by the grants from U.S. Office of Naval Research and U.S. National Science Foundation.

Al-khateeb, who received his bachelor's degree in computer science from UALR, said he enjoyed his experience presenting research at one of the leading international conferences on cybercrime and digital forensics.



"The stimulating and engaging discussions gave me several ideas that I plan to explore as future directions to my work," he said.

He said the power of social media has been harnessed by extremist and terrorist groups to spread propaganda and influence mass thinking, which poses security and safety risks significant enough to merit its study. He plans to bridge the knowledge gap in the understanding of these emerging phenomena through future research.

"I will continue my research in analyzing the role of social media in information dissemination and campaign organization," he said.

Al-khateeb said he is beginning the second phase of the research, and he and Agarwal have some promising preliminary results published at the Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers Joint Intelligence and Security Informatics Conference in Hague, Netherlands.

Provided by University of Arkansas at Little Rock

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