

Ask ENODO: Saudi Influence on the U.S. Education System



“Here’s the thing, we study in those “liberal” universities for the sake of our beloved country, by studying there we do not forget our culture & values. Ultimately, we won’t sell ourselves.” Saud bin Sulanman, [Twitter](#)

What is the public's perception of Saudi influence on the U.S. education system?

Overview

A recent New York Times (NYT) [article](#) titled, “*Why is There So Much Saudi Money in American Universities?*” heightened public awareness of Saudi Arabia’s influence on the U.S. higher education system. In order to better understand the perceptions of U.S. social media users on the issue, ENODO Global analyzed related online discussions, uncovered associated trending topics, and measured the public sentiment surrounding each.

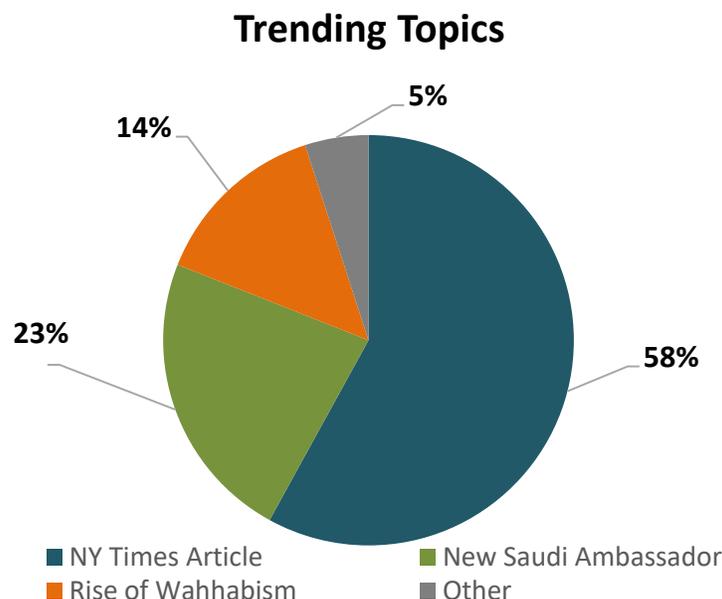
Key Findings

- U.S. public perception of Saudi influence on U.S. universities is predominantly negative
 - The July 2019 NYT [article](#) heightened negative perceptions of the Saudi government’s influence
- U.S. universities’ stakeholders (e.g., parents, students, and general public) are concerned with the lack of oversight of university administrators receiving Saudi money

Topic Modeling

Social media analysis of U.S. online discussions revealed three (3) trending topics:

- **NYT article:** 58% referenced the recent article criticizing Saudi influence on the U.S. education system
- **New Saudi Ambassador:** 23% referenced Princess Reema bint Bandar Al-Saud’s [appointment](#) as the new Saudi ambassador to the U.S.
- **Rise of Wahhabism:** 14% expressed concern over the [rise](#) of Wahhabism and radical Islamic teaching in U.S. universities



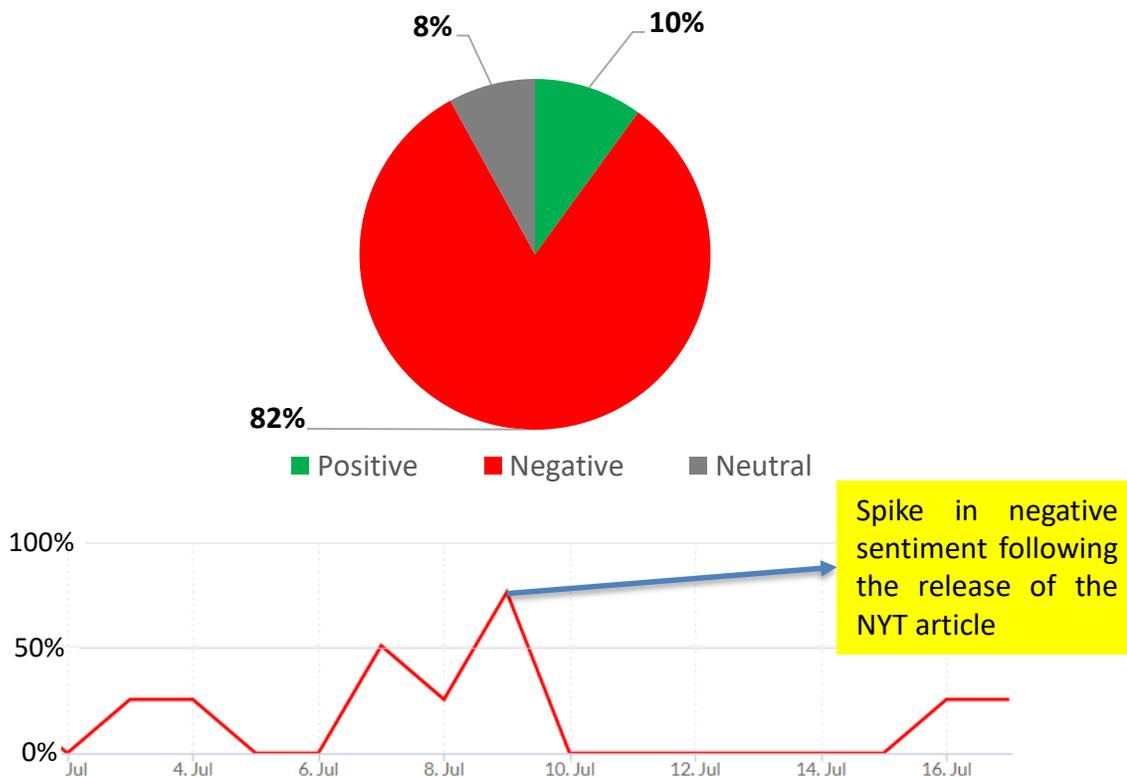
“Saudis are creating a secret intelligence network inside each university to spy on their citizens who are studying in these universities.” *Isaac, [Twitter](#)*

Sentiment Analysis

Measured public perceptions regarding Saudi influence on the U.S. education system:

- 82% of social media users expressed negative sentiment in response to the NYT [article](#) on Saudi influence on the U.S. higher education system
 - 67% of posts expressing negative sentiment referred to the lack of oversight of university administrators who receive money from Saudi authorities
 - 21% of posts expressing negative sentiment emerged from Saudi student groups in U.S. universities concerned with the article’s negative impact on student life
 - Negative public sentiment spiked to 89% immediately after the release of the article, before dropping back to 82%

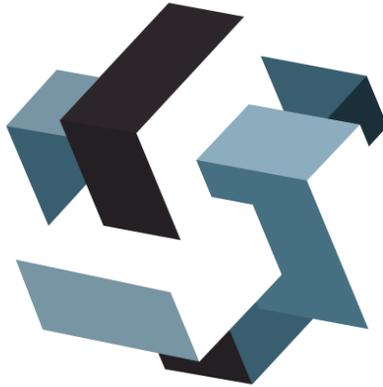
U.S. Public Sentiment



Data Analytics

Negative Sentiment Over Time

ENODO’s social media exploitation examined 19,432 Twitter posts, 15,198 Facebook posts, 11,021 news websites, 9,765 YouTube Videos and comments, 8,145 Instagram posts, and 6,235 blogs in Arabic and English to conduct topic modeling and measure public sentiment.



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