

Students' Use of Social networks for Academic Purposes in Moroccan Higher Education

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Abstract—Recently, social networking platforms have been increasingly integrated into students' academic lives, reshaping the ways they communicate, collaborate, and access learning resources. The current study explores students' utilization of social networks for academic purposes, focusing on tools being used, their frequency of use, motives, benefits and challenges encountered, if any. To this end, a questionnaire was administered online to 163 graduate and undergraduate students enrolled in Moroccan higher education institutions in the 2025-2026 academic year. Following data collection, the data were coded and statically analyzed using Microsoft Excell software. The findings revealed that the vast majority of the participants used social networks in their studies, with YouTube, WhatsApp, Instagram and LinkedIn being the most frequently used. Their utilization mostly took the form of text messages, audio messages or calls and collaborative documents like Google Docs. The participants reported that they used social networks for various academic purposes, most of which involved communication. In fact, they demonstrated that these networks were beneficial as they facilitated communication with classmates and teachers as well as group works. Nevertheless, using these platforms resulted in some difficulties such as reduced face-to-face interactions, superficial online conversations, and an increased risk of addiction. The present study concludes that using social networks was common among students in the Moroccan educational context. However, their misuse generated multiple adverse effects which necessitate making strategic interventions. These include increasing the involvement of students in peer and group discussions to foster face-to-face social interactions and encourage more in-depth discussions.

Keywords— Social Networks, Communication, Morocco, Higher Education, Benefits, Challenges

I. Introduction

There has been an increasing shift towards the use of social networks recently [1]. A notable shift towards the use of social networks has been noticed, as the number of social networks users has risen to 5.66 billion active "social networks identities" at a worldwide level in 2025, representing 68.7% of the total global population[2]. Among them, 22.8 million users were Moroccans and represented 59.1% of the total Moroccan population. This move is driven by a number of factors including COVID 19, which urged the world to integrate technology into the vast majority of practices, including education [1], [3]. As a matter of fact, students' learning style has changed from a traditional mode to the use of social networks platforms to accomplish their academic tasks. Nevertheless, access to these platforms is not always accessible due to some constraints like lack of connection and the unavailability of digital resources [4]. Additionally, the use of social networks may result in challenges despite their efficiency in some aspects [5]. The current study aspires to explore this issue from the perspective of students enrolled in Moroccan higher education to identify their familiarity with these platforms, motives, benefits and challenges, if any.

II. Literature Review

Students' motives for the use of social networking platforms are multiple. They get engaged with social networking sites, like Facebook and Instagram, for entertainment, searching for enjoyable contents and activities [9]. In addition, students use such tools for academic purposes [10]. These include seeking information [9], [10], sharing resources, collaborating on coursework [11], and staying updated with relevant academic events such as webinars, conferences or lectures [12], [13]. Another essential motive is social interaction, which entails

using social networking applications to establish new friendships and connections as well as maintain the existing ones [11] including getting in contact with friends and relatives [14]. Furthermore, self-documentation is another pertinent motive [15], [16], as the users can publish contents in the form of videos, pictures and stories about their daily routines with the possibility to watch them at any time [17], [18].

At the academic level, using social networking platforms has many advantages for students. Social-media platforms provide virtual spaces in which students can interact with their teachers and classmates, including posting and reacting to contents [19]. Such participations boost their engagement and collaborative learning skills [20], maintain their privacy and eliminate the fear of judgement, mainly when their interactions are anonymous [21]. Furthermore, great participations and discussions lead to finding answers to questions, clarifying illusions and increasing engagement with course materials, which positively impact students' performance [22], [23]. Additionally, social networking platforms like LinkedIn enhances professional networking [24], which facilitates finding internship and training opportunities for their studies [24], [25]. Furthermore, social networking platforms boost digital creative skills as they combine text, images, videos, animations, and graphics to create unique productions [26], [27].

Despite its academic benefits, social-networking platforms present several disadvantages. They facilitate the spread of inaccurate and misleading information, as everyone can post any contents online [28]. This might negatively impact students' knowledge and understanding because they struggle to identify accurate information out of fake contents [29], [30]. Also, they can distract students' attention and concentration due to frequently receiving notifications and online interactions [31]. Moreover, extensive use of social networks leads to addictive behaviors which interfere with students' academic responsibilities and tasks [32]. Furthermore, students' performance is at risk as a consequence to their frequent online interactions which reduce their study time and concentration [31], [33]. In addition, students' use of social networks exposes them to cyberbullying and cybervictimization, which can negatively influence their psychological and academic lives [34].

III. Methodology

A. Research Question

The present study explores higher education students' attitudes towards the use of social networking platforms in the academic context. It aims to identify the platforms they most frequently engage with, their underlying motivations, perceived benefits and potential drawbacks. Hence, it answers the following research question:

What are students' attitudes towards the use of social networks in Moroccan higher education?

B. Sample

163 students enrolled in Moroccan higher education institutions participated in this study. Among them, there were 159 Bachelor (BA) students from economics, English and engineering departments. The sample also included two Master (MA) and two Doctorate (PhD) students from the English department (see table 1).

Table 1. Students' Academic Level and Specialty

Academic Level and Specialty	Number
BA	159
Engineering	116
English	33
Economics	10
MA	2
English	2
PhD	2
English	2
Total	163

Half of the participants were teenagers. The largest portion of the students were aged 17-19 years old, representing 53.99% of the total participants, while 33.13% were aged 20-22 years old. The remaining students were aged 23-25, 26-28 and over 29 years, representing 4.29%, 5.52% and 3.07%, respectively (see figure 1).

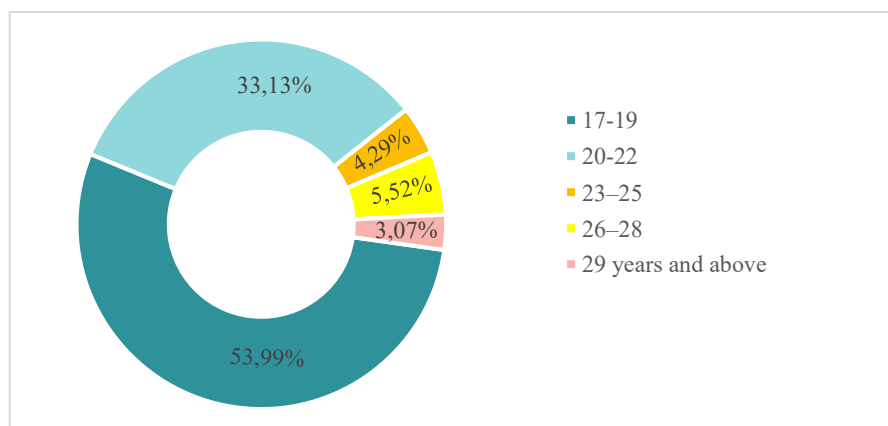


Fig 1. Students' Age Distribution

With regards to their nationality, the vast majority of the participants were Moroccans, representing 90.80% of the total responses. The remaining participants were from different places such as Gabon, Mali, United Arab Emirate, Benin, Burkina Faso and Belgium (see figure 2).

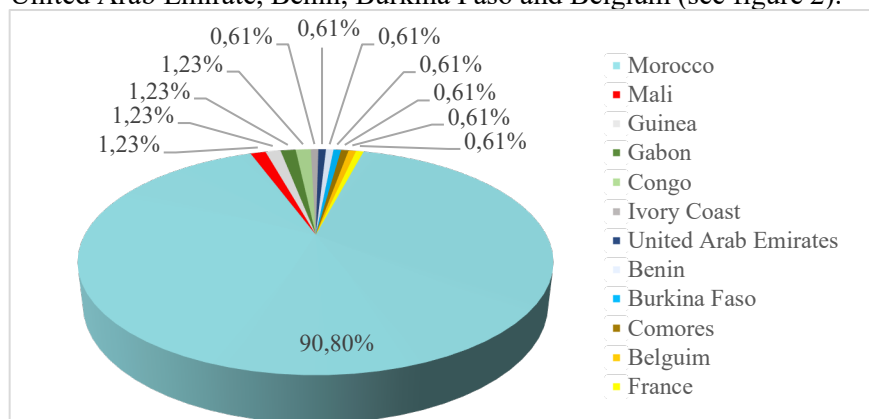


Fig 2. Students' Home Country

C. Procedures

The questionnaire was administered online to students. In the first phase, the instrument was prepared in both French and English and handed in to an expert in the field of education for piloting. After modifying the instrument to meet the scope of the study, it was distributed to students through WhatsApp groups in the 2025-2026 academic year. In the second phase, data was coded and statically analyzed using Microsoft Excell software.

IV. Results

The present study explores students' utilization of social networks in Moroccan higher education. It sheds light on the tools being utilized, their motives, advantages and disadvantages of using these networks.

A. Social Networks Being Used in the Academic Context

Students utilized various social networks in the course of their academic studies. Table 2 shows that they relied on different social networking platforms, but the mostly used ones were YouTube, WhatsApp, Instagram

and LinkedIn, representing 31.89%, 28.06%, 11.51% and 7.91%, respectively. Other tools included TikTok, Research Gate, Facebook, Academia.edu, Snapchat and Twitter.

Table 2. Social Networks Being Used in Academia

Social Networks	Percentages
YouTube	31.89%
WhatsApp	28.06%
Instagram	11.51%
LinkedIn	7.91%
TikTok	6.00%
Research Gate	6.00%
Facebook	3.36%
Academia.edu	2.40%
Snapchat	1.92%
Twitter	0.96%
Total	100.00%

B. Social Networks' Forms of Communication

Students mostly utilized different forms of communication. Table 3 demonstrates that the most widely used form of communication was text messages as it represented 33.91% of the students' total responses. The second most preferred way of communication was audio-based and took the form of voice messages and audio calls (18.92%). This is followed by collaborative documents such as Google Documents (18.43%) and video calls and conference (12.04%).

Table 3: Students' Social-Network Communication Forms

Ways of Communication	Percentage
Text messages	33,91%
Voice messages / Audio calls	18,92%
Collaborative documents (e.g. Google Docs)	18,43%
Video calls/ conferences	12,04%
Posts	5,65%
Other	4,42%
Reactions / Comments	3,44%
Polls / Surveys	3,19%
Total	100,00%

C. The Frequency of Students' Use of Social Networks in Academic Settings

Students frequently integrated social networking platforms into their academic endeavors. Figure 3 reveals that 41.10% and 28.83% of the students utilized the networking platforms frequently and very frequently, respectively. Furthermore, 42.54% of others used them occasionally. On the other hand, 3.68% and 1.84% of others reported rare and very rare uses, respectively.

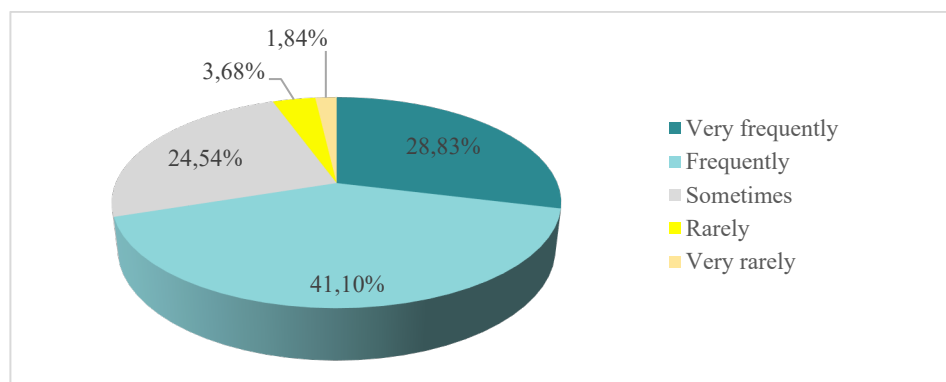


Fig 3. Students' Frequency of Use of Social Networks in Academia

D. Students' Academic Motives for Social Networking Platforms

Students used social networks for a number of individual and interactive motives. Table 4 shows that students' top motive is communicating with their classmates as it represented 26.73% of the students' total responses. The second most reported motive is participating in group works or project-based discussions, representing 21.39%. This is followed by an individual motive which is asking and answering academic questions (12.67%). In addition, they utilized social platforms to share academic contents such as announcements, deadlines and resources (11.68%).

Table 4: Students' Motives for Using Social Networks in Academia

Motives for Using Social Networks	Percentage
Communicating with classmates	26,73%
Participating in group work or project-based discussions	21,39%
Asking or answering academic questions	12,67%
Sharing academic information (announcements, deadlines, resources)	12,08%
Contacting teachers or teacher assistants	11,68%
Connecting with students from other institutions	7,72%
Advertising or searching for national or international events	5,15%
Encouraging students during exams or stressful periods	2,57%
Total	100,00%

E. The Effectiveness of Using Social Networks in Education

Students considered using social networking platforms effective. Figure 4 shows that the largest proportion of the participants (46.01%) reported that using social networks had a positive impact on their academic endeavors, while a third (35.58%) confirmed a high level of effectiveness. Contrary to these findings, 17.18% and 1.23% of the participants reported a neutral stance and perceived social networks as ineffective, respectively.

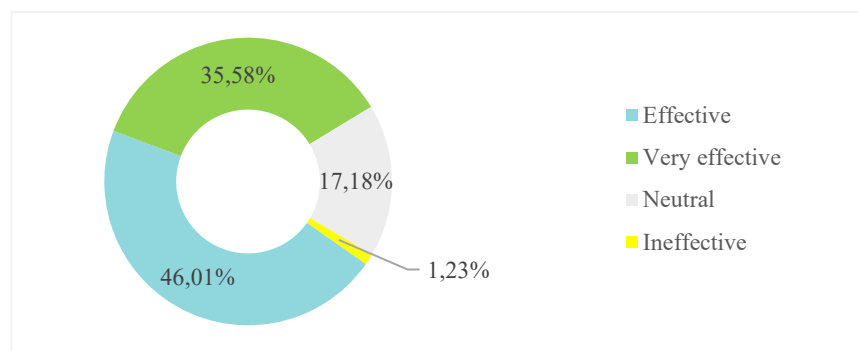


Fig 4. The effectiveness of social networks on students' academic performance

F. The Advantages of Using Social Networks in the Academic Context

Using social networks in education had numerous academic benefits for students. Table 5 shows that receiving notifications on events and announcements as well as quick feedbacks to academic questions were among the advantages of utilizing social platforms. Moreover, they facilitated students' communication and group works like projects and presentations. Furthermore, they streamlined academic publications, access of resources and profile recognition. Additionally, they boosted students' imagination as they used them to get new ideas.

Table 5. Academic Benefits of Social Networks Use

Advantages	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Social networks help for staying updated on academic announcements and study-related events.	46.63%	40.49%	11.66%	0.61%	0.61%
Social networks help in receiving quick feedback on academic questions or assignments.	44.17%	36.81%	13.50%	3.07%	2.45%
Social networks make it easier to initiate communication with classmates.	50.92%	37.42%	9.20%	1.23%	1.23%
Social networks facilitate group works like projects, presentations, etc.	56.44%	30.67%	9.82%	1.23%	1.84%
Social networks help me to easily access resources (documents, videos, PPT, etc.)	48.47%	40.49%	8.59%	0.61%	1.84%
Social networks allow me to get new ideas for projects, presentations and other school works.	47.85%	35.58%	12.27%	3.07%	1.23%
Social networks allow me to publish my academic works (ex: projects).	29.45%	38.04%	23.31%	5.52%	3.68%
Social networks allow others to recognize my profile.	26.99%	42.94%	19.63%	5.52%	4.91%

G. Drawbacks of Social Networking Platforms in Education

Contrary to the previous findings, students' utilization of social networks had some drawbacks. Table 6 demonstrates that the use of networking platforms limited students' face to face interactions, which made expressing thoughts in real conversations difficult. Not only that, the online conversations were superficial because they tended to be brief and sketchy. In addition, there were misunderstandings among students, because online talks lacked voice tone and emotions. Furthermore, they diminished students' self-confidence at the level of sharing ideas with others. Last but not least, they increase the risk of addiction as students reported their inability to spend more than 24 hours without getting access to social networks.

Table 6. Disadvantages of Using Social Networks in Academia

Disadvantages	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
I spend more time online than talking face-to-face with others	17.79%	33.13%	26.99%	17.79%	4.29%
My conversations online are often brief and not very deep.	21.47%	50.92%	3.07%	18.40%	6.13%
I often misunderstand messages because it's hard to know the tone or emotion.	19.02%	49.08%	7.98%	18.40%	5.52%
I often feel accepted or valued online based on likes or comments.	4.29%	58.90%	7.36%	11.66%	17.79%
I find it harder to express my thoughts clearly in face-to-face conversations than online.	11.04%	38.65%	14.72%	20.86%	14.72%
I feel more confident sharing my thoughts online than in face-to-face conversations.	29.45%	38.04%	23.31%	5.52%	3.68%
I feel that I can't spend 24 hours without getting access to social networks.	26.99%	42.94%	19.63%	5.52%	4.91%

V. Discussion

The present study explores higher education students' experiences with the integration of social networks into their academic practices in the Moroccan context.

Students frequently used some social networking platforms to accomplish their academic tasks. The most commonly used tools among were YouTube, WhatsApp and LinkedIn. This aligns with findings reported by researchers in [35] [36], [37], who confirmed that social networks became vital sources of information for students. At the level of forms of communication, students often used text messages, voice messages such as audios and audio calls, video calls and collaborative documents such as Google Documents, Sheets and Slides. The use of each one may be based on students' preference. For instance, students with a high level of shyness or social anxiety often prefer text-based messages over audio or video calls [38]. This is because the former allows users to compose messages at their own pace [39] and avoid immediate social evaluation which tends to be based on different factors, including physical appearance [40].

Students engaged with social networks for some personal and interactive motives. Among the individual motives, students utilized networking platforms to ask and answer academic questions. Furthermore, they tended to post academic contributions, which would increase their visibility as they could reach other students, professors and experts worldwide [41]. Such initiatives lead to invitations to collaborate, speak or participate in events like conferences and workshops within their domains [42]. Students also used social platforms for some interactive motives. These included participating in group works or projects-discussions and interacting with classmates and teachers. This result provides further evidence for the conclusion drawn in [43], which confirmed that adolescents preferred digital media use over face-to-face interactions for communicative reasons.

Social networks platforms enhanced multiple dimensions of student learning. They boosted their imagination as they sparked new ideas for projects and presentations. This findings is also confirmed by researchers in [44], [45], who demonstrated that social networks use fostered students' creativity. In addition to that, they facilitated students' communication and group work. Furthermore, they allowed them to get immediate feedback on academic inquiries like questions. Moreover, they facilitated access to resources like documents, PowerPoint presentations and videos and publishment of their academic contributions. Furthermore, they enabled them to stay updated. Last but not least, social networks increased the visibility of students' profiles, due to the possibility to make the information, connections and creations visible to anyone who has access to the users' profiles [46], [47]. Actually, all of these shape users' identity as they can create their profiles with self-degenerated contents and others' contents [48].

Nevertheless, utilizing social networks in academia resulted in some negative outcomes. The use of social networks limited students' face to face interactions, which made expressing thoughts in in-person conversations difficult. Additionally, they held superficial conversations which were brief and not deep. This led to misunderstandings among students, as online talks, mainly texting messages, lacked non-verbal cues. These findings are in consonant with what researchers confirmed in [49], who reported that the observer's ability to understand the communicator's true thoughts and feelings, when reading an email, decreased in comparison to when hearing the same message via speech like voice messages. Furthermore, they diminished students' self-confidence and led to addiction as students reported their inability to spend more than 24 hours without getting access to social networks. In fact, the literature confirmed this findings, as there is a correlation between the time spent on mobile devices and addictive behaviors [50].

VI. Conclusion

The present study explores higher education students' attitudes and experiences with the use of social networks for academic purposes. They showed consistent engagement with platforms like YouTube, WhatsApp and LinkedIn. They utilized these networks for multiple academic tasks, including interacting with their classmates and teachers. In fact, using such tools were considered beneficial as they positively contributed to their academic learning, including easier access to resources and publishing academic contents. Nevertheless, they led to some serious drawbacks such as increasing the risk of addiction, lack of confidence, superficial conversations and misunderstanding. In order to mitigate the intensity of these drawbacks, effective strategies are required. For instance, teachers are recommended to make extra-interactive activities to boost their social skills, self-confidence and encourage them to conduct deep-conversations.

In the light of the present study's findings, there are essential areas of research which warrant further investigations in future studies. Conducting an experiment to examine the impact of the use of social networks on students' cognitive, social and academic aspects is an important subject for research. It would enable researchers to make a comparison between users and non-users of these platforms in the light of their efficiency. From another perspective, shedding lights on teachers' perceptions and experiences with the use of these platforms in not only their professionalism but also in academic research is another key research area to focus on. Last but not least, exploring parents' perceptions towards their children's use of social networks in academia constitutes an important topic. It would broaden to the societal perspective towards the use of technology.

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