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## **The Role of Social Media Sites and the Challenges facing them in Education**

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**Abstract :**

Although the power of social media to impact learning is recognized, little is known regarding their role and use in the field of education, especially in the Algerian context. Therefore, the current study aims to investigate the role of social media sites and the challenges facing them in education. The study also provided a historical background about social media and highlighted the most popular networks which are Instagram, Facebook, YouTube, Twitter and WhatsApp. Nevertheless, some challenges that face social media use in education were found including both the learner's and teacher's roles towards using these platforms. Therefore, educators and scholars in the field of education had better develop more effective instructional strategies that integrate the use of social media platforms into physical and virtual classrooms for better understanding and achievement.

**Keywords:** social media, platforms, role, challenges, education.

## 1. Introduction

### 1.1 Background to the study

Since the beginning of time, people have always found a way to communicate with each other, and language has proved to be the best tool with which human beings could communicate and express their thoughts, feelings, and needs. This unique ability to communicate about one's existence is the very foundation of being human. In fact, "only through communication can human life hold meaning" (freire, 1993).

Over the past several years, the world has seen tremendous technological advancement that facilitated communication. One's ability to communicate through various mediums is rapidly advancing, and this is thanks to social media. This new way of communication allows people to easily communicate and exchange ideas and concepts with others. As a phenomenon of only the past two decades, it has certainly changed the way people interact, work, learn or communicate with each other both at the professional and personal levels.

Thanks to its features, there has been an increasing interest within students' communities in using social networking platforms as an effective tool for educational purposes. As a result, language learning did not only overcome geographical and temporal borders but also went far beyond the traditional paradigms of formal education. Social Network Sites (SNSs) allow learners to cross geographical and temporal barriers, access distant cultures and places, interact with multiple native speakers simultaneously and send and receive messages, as well as upload and share photos and videos. Moreover, social media permits students to discuss and share their educational knowledge, encourages them to ask for the help of other students, increases their participation in online communications, and encourages them to interact for active learning. Because the Net generation grew up with social media, these tools are extremely popular in students' social life, and so they evolved into digital natives (prensky, 2006).

The power of social media to impact learning is now widely acknowledged, and educators are increasingly incorporating these online platforms into their classrooms. The constructive philosophy of teaching and learning that allows learners to create, co-create, and share knowledge with global audiences outside classroom walls is supported by social media features (Seo, 2013) . Although the power of social media is recognized, many institutions still wonder how to adapt to these tools. Therefore, understanding the role, the impact

and expectations towards the use of social media technologies to support learning could help instructors gain a better vision.

## **1.2. Literature Review**

This literature review describes social media within a historical and educational context and establishes the theoretical foundations of social media use in the learning-teaching process. This is a review of the relevant literature and previous findings on the relationship of social media within educational contexts, and studies from an educational standpoint. Gaps in current literature are identified from which the purpose and research questions were derived. It basically reviews the relevant literature on social media, its definition, history, examples, and relates it to the field of education. Moreover, an overview is provided on the key concepts in the study such as learner's role, teacher's role, social media and education, social media and education in Algeria in particular and challenges for using social media in education.

## **1.3. Research Questions**

This study is designed to answer the following questions:

Q1: What are the most popular social networking sites used by students, and what do they use these platforms for?

Q2: What are the challenges that encounter social media use in education?

## **1.4. Objectives of the study:**

Each study or research has a set of objectives that the researcher seeks to achieve. The objectives of this study are determined in the following points:

- Trying to find out the historical and conceptual connection of social media sites.
- Recognize the role of social media sites in the educational aspect.
- Know the challenges facing students and teachers in using social media sites.
- Draw the attention of educational practitioners to the importance of social media sites and their implications in school and cultural lives.

## 2. History and Background

### 2.1. Web 1.0

At the end of the 20th century, with the emergence of the computer and the Internet as advanced technologies, information became globally accessible with a single mouse click. People could not only receive information but could also create information to be published online. This came to be known as Web 1.0, which was not an actual social exchange. There was no way of interacting with this information yet, the telephone and the computer were still essentially different devices (Everson, Gundlach, & Miller, 2013). Web 1.0 was the initial version of the web which lasted from 1989 to 2005. It encompassed read-only websites where users passively received information, and there was no way to react, review or give feedback. The main purpose of Web 1.0 is to create an online presence and to make information accessible to anyone at any time (Patel, 2013). This was the first generation of web technology, which did not have the interactive features of the second generation.

### 2.2 Web 2.0

Web 2.0 refers to the second stage of the web revolution, which is defined by a shift away from static websites and toward dynamic, user-generated content. This new platform allowed the creation of applications that take advantage of network effects and improve as more people use them (O'Reilly, 2006). In other words, Web 2.0 refers to a new technique developed by software designers with the idea of participating and collaborating among users in a new social way different from Web 1.0, which was a one-way information sharing platform. Essentially, Web 2.0 is considered to be the platform upon which contemporary social media have been built (Kocak & Oyman, 2012). The Internet's new interactive social features enable media exchange and user-to-user interactions, changing the way people use social media. Furthermore, Web 2.0 is a read-write web that enables the management and gathering of a global community with shared social interaction interests.

### 2.3. Social Media

Scholars from several fields, such as communication, psychology, and education, have all expressed interest in social media. The immense existing literature on the history of social media has been published in just the last few years. (Boyd & Ellison, 2007) traced back the history of social network sites to 1997 with the launch of sixdegrees.com. This website granted users to establish accounts and list their friends back then. Although several social network sites

were launched from 1997 to 2001, it was not until the introduction of Friendster, Myspace, and Facebook that social network sites started to gain more popularity and became a global phenomenon.

The term social media is made up of two words “social” and “media”. The term “social” refers to a group of people, a social environment, and interactions that take place in a social setting. The term “media” on the other hand refers to a mode of mass communication. (Boyd & Ellison, 2007) defined social media as web-based services that enable users to (1) create a public profile within a constrained system, (2) establish a list of other users to share connections, and (3) browse and navigate a list of interconnections within the system.

These web-based services are also easy to use, can be mastered in a few minutes, and are accessible to everyone. As a Web 2.0 innovation, Social networking sites are applications that allow users to interact by building personal information profiles and exchanging e-mails and instant chats (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010)

## **2.4. Examples of Social Media Sites**

### **2.4.1. Facebook**

Founded by Mark Elliot Zuckerberg in 2004, Facebook is one of the largest and most popular social networking platforms in the world. This social networking site (SNS) was originally designed for Harvard university students and was limited to those with a valid university email account. The popularity of this social networking site increased rapidly, and in 2006, it was opened up to everyone above the age of 13 with a valid email account (Boyd & Ellison, 2007). With over 2.91 billion active users per month as of the 4th quarter of 2021, Facebook has grown to become the largest social network on the globe (Statista, 2022), People generally use Facebook to create virtual connections, build new relationships with other people of common interests, form groups for interacting, and publish personal opinions and views. Facebook users could make and modify their profiles based on the information they provide.

### **2.4.2. YouTube**

First Launched in 2005 as an independent website, YouTube was expanded and developed by Google in 2006 and grew to become the world's largest online video platform, allowing users to publish, share, watch, and discuss video clips from all over the world (Lin & Polqniecki, 2009). The platform is credited for being at the heart of the social media revolution and the development of user-

generated content (Wankel, 2010). YouTube has revolutionized not only the concept of the platform but also the character of its community, going from an interpersonal video-sharing service to the world's largest video community on the web (Snickars & Vonderau, 2009). YouTube allows users to access any public video for free, including videos with educational content that are created by institutions or by individuals (Lo, 2012) .

### **2.4.3. Twitter**

Created in 2006, Twitter is considered a microblog that focuses on sharing information and opinions rather than social interaction. Twitter allows users to update their postings with brief statements known as "tweets," which are restricted to 140 characters and can be "followed" and "retweeted" by other users. This markup feature of Twitter allows users to spread information by adding the symbol '@' followed by the username to address the user or '#' followed by a word that represents a hashtag (Kwak, Lee, Park, & Moon, 2010). Tweets are publicly available and easy for people to read without the need for any permission, therefore the service has rapidly grown in recent years.

### **2.4.4. WhatsApp**

Founded in 2009, and later acquired by Facebook in 2014, WhatsApp is a cross-platform online messaging service, that has grown into one of the world's most important applications. It allows users from all over the world to send and receive messages, make phone calls, send and receive images, and share videos (Cotton, 2013). As a mobile-based social network, WhatsApp can be easily installed on any mobile device to allow users to freely send real-time messages to an individual or groups of users simultaneously across the world.

### **2.4.5. Instagram**

Instagram began as a photo-sharing network in 2010 but has since expanded to include video, texting, and story sharing, which made a significant contribution to its development (Ellison, 2017). Later in 2012, Instagram was owned by Facebook and rapidly gained popularity, reaching two billion monthly active users as of December 2021 (Statista, 2022). Thanks to its free features that allow content sharing, texting, and video calling, Instagram is among the most popular social network sites for young adults.

### 3. Social Media and Education

In recent years, social media has been widely used by students on a regular basis. It has increasingly been adapted for use in education despite its reputation as a sort of technology used primarily for social and entertainment purposes (Top, 2012). The use of these platforms contributes to the development of a social-media-centered culture that has an impact on how people communicate, teach, and learn (Mao, 2014). Academia recognized the power of social media to transform education which encouraged many scholars to investigate this learning environment.

Many studies explored the use of social media in the academic environment indicating that it has the potential to be a beneficial educational tool. Using a content analysis method, (Elitas, 2015) examined the relationship between social media and open education faculties to reveal the purposes for which students used social media during the educational period. Findings indicated that social media provides a plethora of benefits to students, and support them in having a successful educational period. In a similar study, (Mao, 2014) investigated high school students' attitudes and beliefs towards social media. Findings revealed that students showed positive attitudes, and believed that social media could improve their learning and make the assignments more enjoyable. However, some students showed negative attitudes arguing that social media was distracting and time-consuming.

In a qualitative study, (Ellefsen, 2016) examined the perceptions of students and instructors about using Facebook as an interaction tool at the university level. Results showed that students find interaction through Facebook to be most appealing and that they are ready to adopt such initiative in the future, whereas instructors were split in opinions. (Amador, P; Amador, J, 2014) investigated how six university students utilized social media to seek academic advice in their studies. Findings indicated that students considered the use of social media was useful for seeking help, and that they were open to the idea of interacting with higher education staff members through web-based platforms.

Similarly, (Bista, 2015) conducted a study based on the perceptions of graduate students in the education discipline where participants shared their experience of using Twitter as a required tool throughout a semester. Overall, participants reported positive experiences, saw Twitter as a valuable tool to use in the classroom, and recommended it to use in future classes with clear instructions and expectations. (Aydin, 2012) reviewed Facebook as an educational environment, his study showed that although Facebook is mostly used as a



resource for communication and interaction among students, it has the potential use as an educational environment.

### 3.1. Social Media and Education in Algeria

Although various research has been conducted on the potential use of social media in the field of education, only a few studies have been conducted in the Algerian context. Some of these studies indicated that social media has potential as an educational tool that could improve student language skills. (Benmasour, 2021) examined Algerian EFL students' motivation for the use of Zoom, as an asynchronous learning approach. The study involved twenty EFL students at the University of Oran and concluded that students showed positive perspectives about using Zoom sessions with recommendations for more ICT training. Another study by (Mansouri, 2019) looked at the efficiency of weblogs as well as the attitudes of Algerian EFL students regarding this online platform. The researcher used a triangulated approach with both quantitative and qualitative methods to gather data from 19 EFL students. The findings revealed that weblog positively affected students' writing.

Other studies explored the purposes for which Algerian students used social media, for example, (Laifa, 2018) claimed that Algerian students tend to use Facebook for social purposes more than academic ones. However, her findings indicated that students considered Facebook to be important for their academic experience, and therefore called for further investigations to provide a better understanding of Facebook use and its benefits to the learning process. Similarly, Boumarafi looked at the engagement of Algerian students in order to learn more about the developmental implications of academic performance. 300 students were surveyed, and the results revealed that social media is utilized for a variety of purposes, with Facebook being the most popular (Boumarafi, 2015). Accordingly, Battouche investigated the use of social networks among Algerian youth aged 8 to 24. He found that 84% of the surveyed population used Facebook mainly for making new friends or acquiring new knowledge. The findings also revealed that social media helped 65% of the students improve their foreign language skills (Batouche, 2012)

Nevertheless, it is believed that students may have a negative perception of online learning. Blizak, Bouchenak, and Yahiaoui(2020) looked at the perspectives of Algerian students regarding the shift to online learning during the COVID-19 pandemic. 380 students from the faculty of chemistry and hydrocarbons, University of Boumerdes, were surveyed. The findings revealed

that students are skeptical of this new pedagogy and prefer traditional instructional methods (Blizak, Blizak, Bouchenak, & Yahiaoui, 2020).

### 3.2. Challenges for Using Social Media in Education

Although numerous studies have shown the benefits of using social media in the field of education, the integration of these tools in the classroom is creating a challenge for faculty members. Many concerns and challenges arise about social media usage in and outside the class. Seo (2013) argues that students' prior experience with social media, their technological skills, and attitudes regarding social media use for learning are all related. Thus, educators must oppose the presumption that all digital natives have equal expertise in all online activities. Moreover, students may face some barriers when using social media for learning purposes, such as the lack of internet access. According to Seo (2013), students need reliable technology as well as high-speed internet access with minimal interruptions. Another challenge to social media use is the instructors' attitudes and beliefs toward the integration of these platforms into their teaching environment.

In the same way, Latif, Hussain, Saeed, Qureshi, and Maqsood (2019) summarized the major potential negative aspects and barriers to the use of social media including addiction, cyber-bullying, workload and times constraints, privacy, security, lack of interest, and lack of appropriate training (Latif, Hussain, Saeed, Qureshi, & Maqsood, 2019). Similarly, (AL-Rahmi & Othman, 2013) argued for the need to restrict and supervise students' time spent on social media, as it would have a negative impact on their academic performance. Additionally, as long as social media tools are not related to examinations, students may not be motivated enough to participate. Given this evidence, more research is needed to evaluate the efficacy of social networks as tools to enhance the learning process.

### 3.3. Learner's role

Not only does social constructivism recognize the learner's individuality and complexity, but it also supports and rewards the learner as an important part of the learning process. Social constructivism promotes the learner's vision of reality, which is shaped by his/her background, culture, and knowledge. Therefore, it is critical to consider the learner's background and culture during the learning process. The learner's background influences the information and knowledge that he/she produces, discovers, and achieves during the learning process. Additionally, the importance of the learner's social interactions is

emphasized by social constructivism. Students develop their thinking abilities through interaction with peers, teachers, and other educated members of society.

In the social constructivist view, students no longer sit down to be taught and loaded by the teacher, but rather explore the content on their own when they respond to the teacher's demands in the form of questions, assignments, and tasks. Students should learn to work in groups directed by the teacher for effective collaborative learning and to take responsibility to learn through active participation. Students should also learn to value and investigate new ideas learned from other students, which helps them to consider the viewpoints of others. Moreover, they should respect each experience, learn from it, and be willing to share it with their peers in order to continue strengthening their cognitive abilities (Amineh & Asl, 2015).

### 3.4. Teacher's role

In the social constructivist approach, the instructor is considered as a facilitator who assists the learner in developing his/her knowledge, and not as a teacher who offers a didactic lecture on the subject (Cobb & Bauersfeld, 1995). When the instructor lectures only, the learner has a passive position. However, when the instructor promotes the learning process and assists in learning, the learner takes an active role. That is the emphasis in social constructivism shifts away from the instructor and content to the learner, which requires the facilitator to develop a new set of skills different from that of a teacher (Broznstein, 2001).

(Akpan, Igwe, Blessing, Mpamah, & Okoro, 2020) argued that the instructor should adopt teaching methods that are learner-centered, collaborative in nature, and teacher-guided. Therefore, he/she is expected to create a social constructivist learning environment that encourages group collaboration and takes into account the views of students. Furthermore, the instructor should furnish the appropriate tools and instruction to encourage the learners to create knowledge correctly, and make sure students are comfortable asking and answering questions, interacting with one another, and contributing freely to group discussions. The most significant and critical goal is to assist the student in becoming a more productive thinker.

## Conclusion

This study was an exploration of the role of social media and the challenges facing them in education. It attempts to find out the historical and conceptual connection of social media sites and recognize their role in the educational aspect. It also tries to know the challenges facing students and teachers in using social media sites as well as grab the attention of educational practitioners to its importance and implications in school and cultural lives.

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