

Social Networking Sites Mediated Course Reflections on Instructional Technology: A Case Study of Female Students at Women's University

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Abstract: This study investigates the efficacy of a Facebook-mediated online instructional technology program at Lahore Women's University. The researchers collected data from 45 students who participated in a one-month course on instructional technology via Facebook, along with their course comments and feedback. The results showed that students maintained their interest and acquired knowledge about teaching resources and computer programs that aligned with their comfort and interests. Facebook provided them with the freedom to converse with friends and discuss course materials without the pressure of strict deadlines. Social media platforms offer an effective means of facilitating international interactions, collaboration, and unstructured learning for both on-campus and off-campus students, thanks to their accessibility, affordability, and civic features. A significant number of female students strongly advocated for using Facebook as a platform for online teaching and learning due to its capacity to allow them to openly express and address their concerns while studying instructional technology. The report recommends leveraging social media platforms for instructional delivery, training, and collaborative endeavors, and encouraging universities to incorporate these channels into their academic calendars and activities.

Keywords: Reflections, Social sites, instructional technology, female students, graduate and postgraduate level.

1. Introduction

The use of social media platforms in educational settings has garnered significant attention in recent years (Manca, 2020). Research has demonstrated that these platforms can effectively serve various purposes, including facilitating discussion, peer learning and assessment, content development, content delivery, resource sharing, and supporting self-organized learning (Manca & Ranieri, 2013).

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Furthermore, social interaction and networked learning among peers play a crucial role in enhancing online learning, supporting self-reflection, and not merely providing access to information. In the context of online education, it is essential for students to establish a connection with the educator, fellow students, and the course content. This sense of connection can be fostered through the appropriate utilization of online resources and social media platforms. However, not all studies have reported a positive impact on learning outcomes when additional media are introduced into online instruction.

The COVID-19 pandemic amplified the relevance of technology-mediated teaching and learning processes. Nevertheless, challenges in implementing technology-mediated education in higher educational institutions underscore the need for further research and exploration in this area. In the field of instructional design and educational technology, ongoing discussions and reflections on the emergence of learning technologies, including the use of social media platforms for educational purposes, reflect the continuous evolution and exploration of these tools and their potential impact on teaching and learning (Levin & Wadmany, 2008). When assessing the effectiveness of online teaching and learning, it is crucial to consider various factors, including the course environment, learner outcomes, and the impact of different instructional strategies and tools (Castro & Tumibay, 2021).

Social networking sites (SNSs) like MySpace, Facebook, Cyworld, and Bebo have become integral to daily routines, attracting millions of users. These platforms offer a wide range of interests and behaviors, with some catering to users based on linguistic traits, ethnic, sexual, religious, or national identity-based qualities. Most SNSs encourage users to maintain their existing networks, while some facilitate connections based on common activities, political beliefs, or interests. The introduction of new information and communication tools, such as mobile connectivity, photo/video sharing, and blogging, also varies.

Any website, including dating sites, that features a public or semi-public profile page is considered an SNS (Social Networking Site). SNSs provide facilities for quickly and efficiently sharing and exchanging various types of online information, in addition to creating profiles and connections. Although social networking services have varying standards for establishing connections, they often allow users to explore connections made through confirmed associations with other users and may even suggest additional connections based on an individual's existing network. While some SNSs, such as LinkedIn, are primarily used for making professional contacts, others, like Facebook, blur the lines between personal and professional use. SNSs form an online community where users connect and create public profiles. Users compile lists of connections and request approval or rejection. Once connections are established, users can browse their networks to find new friends. These web-based services enable users to create public or semi-public profiles, engage in discussions, exchange information, and connect with others. These networks may have different characteristics and terminology from site to site.

Various studies have confirmed the prominence of SNSs in higher education. Dumpit and Fernande (2017) and Al-Shboul and Maros (2013) focused on the role of SNS operators in higher education. Lau (2017) investigated the effect of using SNSs and multitasking on students' educational performance at universities. Manca and Ranieri (2016) pinpointed some of the potentials and hurdles of social media in higher education. Chawinga (2017) examined the usage of Twitter in the teaching process.

According to Junco, Heibergert, and Loken (2011) as cited in Astin (1984), social networks represent "the amount of physical and psychological energy that the student devotes to the academic

experience" (p. 120). By engaging in these activities, several advantages can be obtained. Researchers have observed that regular users of SNSs have larger connections and participate in various campus organizations and activities (Yan, 2011). By incorporating more learning content into social media, institutions like Pamplin College of Business hoped to increase engagement in the mobile world. However, engagement is not limited to students but also extends to other stakeholders through social media.

1.1. Statement of the problem

Social networking sites can distract students, hinder their focus on coursework, and cause time management issues. Balancing coursework. SNSs can be challenging, potentially reducing academic performance. Some platforms may not be accessible for students with disabilities, exacerbate the digital divide. Copying content from social networking sites can lead to plagiarism and academic misconduct. Teachers may need additional training to integrate these platforms effectively. Research on their effectiveness for course reflections is limited, making informed decisions difficult.

1.2. The objective of the study

The study aims to investigate the impact of social media platforms on the learning outcomes and engagement of female students in online courses. Additionally, it seeks to identify the potential benefits and challenges associated with the use of social media platforms in online teaching and learning. It has been observed that some educators continue to rely on traditional teaching methods and are reluctant to incorporate social networking sites (SNSs) in the field of education.

1.3. Significance of the study

The study aims to use social media usage by graduate and postgraduate students to distribute higher education courses. It will benefit teachers, universities, policymakers, underprivileged students, curriculum developers, and students seeking assistance in their difficult courses offered on social media platforms. The outcomes will benefit teachers, universities, policymakers, underprivileged students, curriculum developers, and students seeking additional assistance in their areas of interest.

2. Literature Review

There are already hundreds of social networking websites available online, but Facebook is the most well-known and frequently used, with over 35 million users in the UK and 955 million monthly active users on the World Wide Web (WWW) as of June 2012 (SocialBakers, 2014). While there has been some research on the use of social networking websites in an academic context (Estus, 2010; Madge, Meek, Wellens, & Hooley, 2009; Selwyn, 2009), given their popularity in general society, there is still much to learn about the usage of social websites like Facebook. Earlier studies emphasized the significance of Facebook usage among the student population (Hoyer, Thompson, Lebleu, & Collard, 2010; Smith & Caruso, 2010; Connell, 2009). Given their popularity in general society, and despite some research on the use of SNSs (Social Networking Sites) in an academic setting (Estus, 2010; Madge, Meek, Wellens, & Hooley, 2009; Selwyn, 2009), there is still much to learn about the use of social websites like Facebook in a higher educational theoretical context.

Madge et al. (2009) examined how lecturers in a UK institution observed students using Facebook. The majority of studies have found that American university students use these platforms more frequently than other users (GrayAnnabell & Kennedy, 2010; Pempek et al., 2009). Therefore, further research on this subject is necessary. Thus, understanding the perceptions of UK users regarding the usage of Facebook in teaching and learning is vital for adapting practices in these larger and fast-changing markets for higher education institutions.

In higher education, the use of modern technologies is not a newly emerging phenomenon, as most higher education institutes utilize online systems such as learning management systems (LMS) like Portfolio and Blackboard for their professional development and learning activities, both within and outside the classrooms. Teachers establish classrooms using these systems and selectively add students as part of this platform. An admirable aspect of these learning management systems is their promotion of effective teaching approaches (Salavuo, 2008), while social sites facilitate better connections between students, aligning with the pedagogical paradigm of social constructivism (Huijser, 2008).

According to Kelm (2011), social networking technology has recently been viewed from a collaborative perspective, leading to calls for its adoption in both learning and teaching. Maloney and Altmaier (2007) consider SNSs as examples of Web 2.0 technologies that embody a model of learning characterized by interactivity, productive collaboration, and active learner participation in the co-creation or construction of information (Gunawardena et al., 2009; Ahmed, 2021; Zitouni et al., 2021).

SNSs have been both a valuable and challenging tool for students to integrate academic and informal learning experiences (Mason & Rennie, 2006; Hoyer et al., 2010). While blended forms of e-learning are generally favored by instructors, some students who prefer individual and group learning may find it challenging to adopt these techniques. Students have concerns about their online privacy and crossing boundaries that define personal space in the digital realm. The use of Facebook by students in educational settings is a reality, especially for student-to-student communication (Ophus & Abbitt, 2009; Selwyn, 2009).

A study conducted on university students in Turkey by Baran (2010) revealed that more than 60% of students believed that engaging in conversations and sharing ideas with peers through the creation of a Facebook user group motivated them to learn new things. However, a distinction can be made between instructors' and students' initial use of Facebook, with learner-initiated use being more successful than teacher-initiated use (Whedon, 2011; Mahdy et al., 2020; Ali et al., 2023). Teacher-initiated usage was perceived as less effective (Ipsos, 2008).

Social networking sites, whether at the level of families or entire countries, are crucial for the sustainability of communities, as stated by Wasserman and Galaskiewicz (1994). Theories of social networking existed before the Internet and computing, but only recently have these systems become accessible to a wider audience thanks to the development of new technology and the Internet (Hiltz & Turoff, 1993).

Another platform is Facebook, a free social networking web platform that promotes and facilitates collaboration among friends, family, and colleagues. Facebook was created by a student at Harvard University in 2004, originally intended for use by students at that university for social purposes (Yadav, 2006). However, students from other universities and colleges were eventually allowed to join, and membership quickly spread. Users could create new groups or pages, although access to specific graduate and postgraduate institution networks was somewhat limited. Facebook was not

only used for formal purposes but also for informal work. Some websites are related to areas of interest within an educational institution, such as sports clubs.

Other social networks often represent a specific company, city, or region. This variation could be a response to the competition from other social networking sites, where some may fear becoming too prominent. However, Dunbar's Number sets an optimal limit on the size of an individual's social network at 150. Therefore, in practice, there may be limitations to the benefits of being members of a larger network.

2.1. Social Networking and Education

A significant number of students are using social networking websites, and teachers have begun to adapt to this pattern by employing them as a means of communication and collaboration with their students. Both lecturers and teachers engage in creating online groups and chat rooms, managing forums for educational discussions, assignments, tests, quizzes, and homework assistance (Hazhar, 2020). According to the National School Boards Association, nearly 60 percent of students use social networking to discuss online educational topics, and over 50 percent engage in conversations related to schoolwork. However, the majority of school districts have strict rules against almost all forms of social networking during the school day, despite few reports of online behavioral issues from students and parents (US National School Board Association, NCBA).

In an investigation conducted by the US National School Boards Association in 2007 to understand the internet habits of US youth aged 9 to 17, 96% of young pupils reported using social networking technologies in some capacity. According to the survey results, 60% of their time was spent discussing education-related subjects, while 50% was devoted to coursework. It is evident that young people view social networking services as just another component of their social, often educational, activities.

Greenhow (2011) reported that we cannot overlook the contributions of informal learning (such as using Facebook), even with the application of formal pedagogical approaches in educational settings, especially at the university level. Young people have ample choices regarding what, how, and with whom they want to learn in a wide range of locations: classrooms, formal online learning programs, web-enabled spaces, after-school programs, and homeschooling, all of which are influenced by popular culture.

2.2. Previous Studies

Mason (2008) regarded social networking as a tool for disseminating information by connecting like-minded individuals with shared interests. In the Web 2.0 environment, social networking sites (SNSs) related to modern technology services and software enable users to communicate with each other at any time and from anywhere. SNSs offer a high degree of customization, allowing subscribers to provide personal profile details that they complete to connect with other individuals. Bush and Mott (2009) explained that student-centered learning technologies are flexible in addressing students' academic needs. Social media allows users to enhance educational content production and fosters interaction between students and educators globally, contributing to improved student engagement, communication, collaboration, a sense of belonging, and academic performance, as indicated by studies (Junco et al., 2011; Rasiah, 2014). However, the use of social media should be accompanied by consideration for digital rights, professionalism, and online safety. In 2013, higher education institutions faced repeated calls to establish policies regarding the use of

social media in teaching and learning, prompting the need for guidance and support for students. Sheffield Hallam University, for example, provided users with confidence and direct support to enable them to effectively incorporate social media into their teaching and learning endeavors.

Junco (2014) suggested that many students can enhance their learning freely through interactive and collaborative networks, which he described as a user-generated system for organizing online content into different categories using metadata. Some students can fully increase their capabilities this way, while others require more guidance and support in developing their online and distance learning skills (Parkes, 2015).

As practices evolved and became more commonplace, and with enhanced prospects from various perspectives, the implications for higher education became increasingly urgent and visible (Poore, 2013). Beetham (2015) stated that recent research supports the development of digital skills, including the confident use of social media for communication and collaboration, which is essential for the skills and abilities of future graduates. Therefore, it was time to review teachers' skill sets and advanced needs to support students' learning.

Researchers have already provided insights into the issues and facilitators highlighted in this survey. The relationships between teachers' skill sets and the requirements for developing student competencies were also explored. The researcher aims to publish the results of the next stage of this research in due course.

Learners can acquire information about any course by using SNSs, which become a more engaging, valuable, and inclusive platform for learning due to the course-related knowledge (Hovorka & Rees, 2009). According to Wikipedia (2016), social media refers to "Internet-based platforms dedicated to human information sharing, discussion, and participation."

Earlier research indicates that SNSs can both positively and negatively influence student participation and information sharing. Some studies suggest that students who spend more time on social media platforms are more likely to perform poorly academically. However, other research has shown that utilizing social media as a teaching tool can enhance student engagement and improve learning outcomes.

SNSs like Facebook have proven to be effective in online teaching and learning, enabling students to interact with friends and discuss course content without anxiety or pressure. Social media has also been shown to facilitate the sharing of academic knowledge through collaboration. It is recommended that educators and students collaborate to create a safe and productive learning environment that harnesses the benefits of social media while mitigating its potential negative effects.

3. Methodology

The study follows qualitative paradigms. As a teacher or facilitator, after completing this online course, I collected feedback from participants to gauge their opinions.

- a) Taking into account the strengths and weaknesses of existing programs, a contextualized social site module was designed and developed.
- b) Finally, based on the participants' reflections and experiences, the content was refined and adapted for future use."

3.1. The population of the study

All postgraduate students (M.S./M.Phil & Ph.D.) majoring in 'Education' in Pakistan constituted the study population.

3.2. Sample of the study

For this research, a sample of 50 mixed-ability postgraduate students who were willing to participate in the course was selected for the assessment phase. After completing the course, the researchers collected feedback from the students.

3.3. Data analysis

The data obtained from students' reflections were analyzed inductively, and major themes were derived to identify the strengths and weaknesses of the course. These themes encompass both content-related and learning process-related aspects of the module."

3.4. Delimitations of the study

The study was limited to the

- *Discipline of Education*
- *Postgraduate students*

3.5. Module Development & Dissemination

A Facebook-mediated module titled 'Instructional Technology' was developed following online course construction principles, including the 5Cs: communication, collaboration, community, convergence, and creativity, to attain the required level of mastery in the subject. The students' reflections added interest and value to this study as various ideas and themes emerged after completing the course. The module development process is elaborated upon in the following themes:

Table 1. Cohort One:

Themes of Responses	Code	Response	No	%
Which topic do you like the most, and the Animation section	1a	Like most PowerPoint	15	30%
	1aii	use of Design and theme commands	7	14%
Use of Excel program	1b, 1bi	Excel program	17	34%
	1bii	applied different formulas	9	18%
	1biii:	use of Excel short keys	16	32%
Use of Access	1c	usages of the Access program	12	24%
	1cii:	relationship b/w different tables	11	22%
	1ciii	use of table command	14	28%
	1civ	use of form command	8	16%

Use of Word	1d 1di	used Word program in education and professional fields	19	38%
	1dii	use of the snipping tool command	20	40%
	1diii:	Use of short keys	15	30%

Table 1 indicates that all participants had different responses regarding their favorite topics. It was observed that 15 students favored PowerPoint and Animation commands, while seven respondents expressed satisfaction when applying design commands and different themes to slides. Additionally, 17 students used the Excel program to create mark sheets with bar graphs, and nine students felt content when working with various formulas. Sixteen users found the Excel program's shortcuts to be beneficial for better academic performance. Twelve students expressed their happiness when using the Access program, particularly since they had no prior knowledge or experience with it. Eleven students utilized relationship commands with different tables, and 14 students were pleased when employing table commands. Eight students noted their interest in using the form command. Nearly 19 students expressed their preference for the Word program, highlighting its facilitation of both students' and business people's educational and professional endeavors. Moreover, approximately 20 respondents found the snipping tool to be one of the most informative and technically valuable aspects of online courses. In contrast, fifteen respondents mentioned that the Word program's keyboard shortcuts had been particularly helpful in their education.

Table 2. students perspectives

	Themes	Code	Response	N	%
	The Online course is useful for	2a	useful in professional life	15	30%
	Education/ professional life	2aii :	interested, creative for education	12	24%

Table 2 indicates that 15 students had differing perspectives regarding the use of Facebook pages for their online courses. Simultaneously, twelve students mentioned that they had used Facebook to establish a strong connection between their educational and professional lives.

Table 3. expernceing networking issues

	Themes	Cod e	Response	N	%
5	Feedback regarding Improved next course and what factors are missing	5a	5a i: Network issue	9	18%
			5aii: YouTube video issues	3	6%
			5aiii: timing issues	5	10%
	Unpleasant/ not clear/ missing	5b	5bi: Different commands of the Access program were not clear	6	12%

Table 3 reveals that nine respondents reported experiencing significant networking issues. Additionally, three students mentioned encountering issues with YouTube links. Five participants stated that they faced timing-related problems in the online class. Furthermore,

six users expressed difficulty with understanding or using the Access program, finding it unclear.

Table 4. Cohort Two

	Themes	Code	Response	No	%
	which topic you like the most and Animation command	1a 1ai:	like the most PowerPoint	15	30%
	Use of Excel program	1b	Excel program	17	34%
		1bii:	applied different formulas	9	18%
		1biii:	use of Excel short keys	16	32%
	Use of Access Program	1ci:	Access programs like the most	12	24%
		1cii:	relationship b/w different tables	11	22%
	Use of Word Program	1d, 1di:	used Word program in any fields	20	40%
		1dii:	like most snipping tools,	20	40%
		1diii:	Use of short keys	15	30%

Table 4 in Cohort 2 reveals the following: 15 students favored PowerPoint and Animation commands the most. Seventeen respondents used Excel to create mark sheets with bar graphs. Nine students expressed satisfaction when working with different formulas. Nearly sixteen users noted that the Excel program's keyboard shortcuts benefitted students in achieving better results. Twelve students were content when using the Access program, particularly as they had no prior knowledge or experience with it. Eleven students employed relationship commands with various tables. Almost 20 students preferred the Word program, finding it beneficial for everyone. Additionally, nearly 20 participants highlighted the snipping tool as one of the best, most informative, and technically valuable aspects of online courses. Simultaneously, fifteen users indicated that the keyboard shortcuts of the Word program had been helpful in both their educational and professional lives.

Table 5.

S.No	Themes	Code	Response	No	%
	This Online course is useful for Education/ professional life	2a , 2ai:	useful in professional life	16	32%
		2aii:	online interested, creative for education	10	20%

According to this table, students have expressed various viewpoints concerning the use of Facebook pages for their online courses. Sixteen respondents indicated that it may have had a positive impact on their professional lives. Simultaneously, ten respondents mentioned that they had used Facebook to establish a strong connection between the educational and professional systems.

Table 6.

Sr.No	Themes	Code	Response	No	%
5	To Improve the next online course, what factors are missing	5a	5a i: Network issue	7	14%
			5aiii: timing issue	2	4%

	Unpleasant/ not clear/ missing	5b	5bi: Different commands of the Access program were not clear	6	12%
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Table 6 above indicates that seven respondents reported experiencing significant networking issues. Additionally, two students mentioned having timing issues. Six users expressed difficulty with understanding the Access program, finding it unclear.

4. Discussion

In the previous century, online courses began to be taught worldwide with the introduction of communication technologies. However, social sites like Facebook have not been fully leveraged for educational purposes, despite their frequent use for social and recreational activities (Lau 2017; Manca and Ranieri 2016). The reflections from this study led the researchers to develop teaching methods through Facebook. A two-month course on 'Instructional Technology' was designed, taking into consideration the principles of online course development and the modifications suggested by the first cohort of students. It was observed that social networking sites (SNSs) have great potential for disseminating education in the future. The students appreciated the online course, stayed connected, and remained informed (Mack et al 2007; Mahdy, Samad, & Mahdi, 2020). The participants suggested that education through social sites is feasible in the future due to their rapidly evolving features. Most of the students agreed that social sites can be useful for international connections, discovering new materials, establishing global collaborations, sharing audio and video files, disseminating pictures, and engaging in mutual discussions (Junco et al. 2011, Ratneswary and Rasiah 2014; Wikiversity, 2016; Gunawardena et al, 2009).

Furthermore, most of the students supported the idea that universities can use social sites for organizing educational programs, advertisements, and schedules. Students also agreed that social sites are the most accessible, cost-effective, and engaging platforms for non-formal and informal learning, making them effective for both on-campus and off-campus students (Hoyer et al, 2010). The students appreciated the community features that allowed them to share their ideas, views, opinions, receive feedback on assignments, engage in online discussions, follow a flexible class schedule, access reading materials, and watch short clips related to course concepts (Baran, 2010). The study recommends that universities introduce short-term and long-term purpose-built courses with certification and rewards for pre-service and in-service students. This would provide a flexible and engaging way for students to gain education in their desired professions.

5. Conclusion

The utilization of social media platforms, such as Facebook, for educational purposes has been explored in various studies. While online courses have been offered for many years, social media platforms have not been fully harnessed for educational use. However, the current study demonstrates that social networking sites (SNSs) have substantial potential for disseminating education in the future. The advantages of employing social media platforms for educational purposes encompass international linkages, access to new materials, the establishment of global collaborations, the sharing of audio-video files, the dissemination of images, and interactive discussions. Furthermore, social media platforms are not only the most accessible and cost-effective but also the most engaging medium for non-formal and informal learning. Hence, they can be employed effectively to benefit both on-campus and off-campus students. Students particularly appreciate the community-oriented features that enable them to share ideas, express their views and opinions, receive feedback on assignments, participate in

online discussions, enjoy a flexible class schedule, access reading materials, and view short clips related to course concepts.

5.1. Recommendations

The current study recommends the following:

1. Encourage the use of social media platforms, such as Facebook, as supplementary material for teaching the English language in classrooms.
2. Provide training and support for instructors and students to effectively utilize social media for educational purposes.
3. Integrate social media into the classroom to offer a smoother and more direct communication tool between students, teachers, and parents.
4. Create opportunities for students to share their ideas, views, and opinions, and to receive feedback on assignments, engage in online discussions, access flexible class schedules, reading materials, and short clips related to course concepts.
5. Encourage universities to utilize social media platforms for organizing educational programs, advertisements, and schedules.

This study suggests a promising opportunity for further research to explore the effectiveness of using social media platforms as supplementary materials for teaching the English language in classrooms.

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