



## Current Challenges Facing Students in the Use of E-Learning Platforms: A Field Study at the University of Djelfa

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### **Abstract:**

This field study aims to explore the key obstacles that hinder students' commitment to academic learning and their engagement with official e-learning platforms. The research addresses the hypothesis that factors such as students' seniority at the university, difficulties in accessing and interacting with formal educational platforms—when compared to unofficial alternatives—as well as students' physical absence from lectures, contribute to reduced academic involvement. These issues are particularly significant in light of recent developments that have affected teaching and communication methods in higher education. Furthermore, the study seeks to uncover students' perceptions regarding the rapid transformation of the university education system, in terms of instruction, training, assessment, and academic progression.

### **Keywords:**

Challenges, official e-learning platforms, alternative educational platforms, communication barriers, academic achievement

## **Introduction**

The Algerian university is currently facing significant challenges, chief among them the desire to keep pace with advances in the field of communication and information technologies, without straying from its primary objective: the dissemination of knowledge and the training of individuals with high academic standards. This training must be structured, avoiding randomness, and aimed at producing qualified graduates capable of adapting to and managing diverse academic and professional demands in a scientific manner. The ultimate goal is to cultivate creative individuals who can confront various societal and educational phenomena using informed, research-based approaches.

Academic achievement, therefore, is not isolated from these developments; it is inevitably influenced by the changing landscape of higher education and must remain flexible in the face of these changes. A student's success in their field of study or in a particular course largely depends on the degree of learning they achieve, which in turn is closely linked to continuous assessment and instructional methodologies.

With the university system increasingly embracing digital transformation, the widespread adoption of distance learning has become imperative. This shift is aimed at facilitating access to modern educational competencies. In this context, we are faced with a central problem: to what extent are students capable of using modern tools—such as official university platforms and educational websites—in a positive and effective manner? This leads us to the following research question:

## **What are the barriers preventing students from effectively using official e-learning platforms?**

### **General Hypothesis**

Students tend to rely on unofficial communication platforms as an easier and more efficient alternative for studying and conducting research, due to their user-friendliness.

### **Sub-Hypotheses**

1. Students create private spaces on social media platforms as an alternative to official educational platforms.
2. Social media has enhanced communication between students and professors but has also contributed to increased absenteeism from lectures.
3. The more a student advances academically, the more likely they are to rely on unofficial learning platforms.

### **Key Concepts**

#### **Challenges**

Challenges refer to crises brought about by new developments that necessitate a societal response to overcome them. Linguistically, the term “challenge” implies a desire to confront and match a certain matter or situation.<sup>1</sup>

#### **Distance Learning Platforms**

These are technological tools used by both learners and educators to access instructional materials and training content when the two parties are separated by time or space. Distance learning utilizes a variety of new

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<sup>1</sup> عائشة راتب- المنظمات الدولية " دراسة نظرية وتطبيقية " دار النهضة العربية، القاهرة مصر

media and technologies to keep up with digital advancements, facilitate access to educational resources, enhance interaction and collaboration, and ultimately save time and reduce geographical constraints.<sup>2</sup>

Such platforms can be defined as user-friendly technologies that facilitate educational and training processes across different locations and times, effectively overcoming the barriers of time and space.

### **Foundations of the Educational Process:**

The educational process is a set of principles and foundations that guide and define instructional tasks for educators. These principles contribute to the effectiveness of teaching and, consequently, to the academic achievement of the learner. It is crucial that those responsible for educational programs take these principles into account—especially in terms of efficiency and goal orientation—given their direct influence on the learner's academic attainment. Among the most important principles are the following:<sup>3</sup>

#### **1. Principle of Innovation and Modernization :**

This principle emphasizes the need to integrate and keep pace with developments in the learner's environment and conditions. It advocates moving away from conventional, often ineffective methods and exposing the educational process to new instructional scenarios and situations. In this context, the learner is required to exert personal effort in order to find suitable solutions to problems they may encounter, thereby engaging in cognitive training and the development of problem-solving skills for both current and future challenges.<sup>4</sup>

The educational process, therefore, becomes dynamic and interactive. It offers learners the opportunity to acquire knowledge and methods that enrich their personal experiences, making learning a meaningful and constructive process that benefits the individual both in the present and in the future.

Moreover, repetitive routine can become a barrier to the learner's

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<sup>2</sup> احمين شفير: التحولات الاقتصادية والاجتماعية واثارها على البطالة والتشغيل في بلدان المغرب العربي، مطبعة النور القليعة نوفمبر 1999

<sup>3</sup> طيبي إبراهيم، أثر مشكلات المراهقين في علم النفس التربوي، جامعة الجزائر، سنة 1993، ص: 312

<sup>4</sup> نايفة قطامي: علم النفس المدرسي، الطبعة الثانية، عمان، الأردن: دار الشروق، 1999، ص: 189

motivation to confront challenges—such as creating digital accounts, following up on educational content, and maintaining personal data privacy—which have now become essential educational and training components in modern learning.

## **2. Collaborative Learning and Reinforcement:**

Collaborative learning serves to stimulate the learner and enhance their technical and scientific capabilities. It also fosters a sense of competition, encourages critical thinking, promotes error correction, and cultivates creativity for both the learner and the instructor. Here, the learner is not merely a passive recipient of information; rather, they can actively contribute to generating participatory ideas and even innovative concepts. This leads to harmony and coherence among the participants in the educational process and helps achieve psychological compatibility.

Reinforcement, in this context, involves directing the learner's activities through motivational, psychological encouragement—and at times, corrective discipline.

Remaining engaged in the learning process is driven by a desire to achieve psychological equilibrium, linked to the outcomes of that process. Therefore, a participatory approach that incorporates competition and motivational reinforcement becomes a key element in establishing a successful and productive educational process.

## **Motivation Theory**

Motivation plays a vital role in strengthening an individual's determination toward the educational process. It can be either **intrinsic** or **extrinsic**.

**Extrinsic motivation** is often derived from family, social upbringing, and the broader societal environment surrounding the individual. In contrast, **intrinsic motivation** is reflected in personal inclinations, individual preparedness, acquired skills, and one's attachment to academic subjects and educational tools. This form of motivation can be refined, corrected, and enhanced through continuous assessment and guidance programs, aiming to align educational goals with students' revealed interests and capabilities.

## **4. Principle of Interaction**

Interaction serves as a valuable enhancer of the educational process by fostering a dynamic exchange between teachers and students, as well as among peers. It provides students with the opportunity to actively participate, express ideas, and harmonize personal experiences with their

surrounding context. However, experience alone is not sufficient. Effective interaction requires a balance between personal experience, interpersonal engagement, and both internal and external factors. Teachers must play a guiding role to ensure more fruitful educational outcomes.

## **5. Principle of Readiness and Inclination**

Personal factors, such as a student's mental and physical readiness and academic inclinations, should never be overlooked. A student's natural tendency or interest toward a particular field can significantly contribute to their success within it. These inclinations, coupled with previous learning experiences, form an essential part of academic development.

## **6. Principle of Individual Framework and Application**

The use of **practical tools** and **hands-on application** significantly enhances the comprehension of theoretical knowledge. Field-based experiences lead individuals to acquire new skills, while also allowing for better adaptation and integration within the learning process. Tools such as computers and social media platforms serve as effective aids that support and expand the learner's knowledge, or reinforce what has already been theoretically acquired.

## **Research Methodology**

As is widely acknowledged, the nature of a research topic often determines the most appropriate methodology.

In the case of this study—which aims to identify the major obstacles faced by students in using official online learning platforms—we adopted the **descriptive-analytical method**. This approach allows us to both quantitatively and qualitatively describe and analyze the phenomenon under investigation by collecting, organizing, and interpreting relevant data.

Our application of the descriptive-analytical method followed these steps:

- **Exploratory Study:** We began with an exploratory phase to understand the range of courses and materials integrated into

distance learning platforms. This stage involved preliminary data gathering.

- **In-depth Description:** This was followed by the formulation of research questions directly aligned with the study's core problem. These questions were then adapted into practical tools for field application.
- **Tool Development and Fieldwork:** We designed a closed-ended questionnaire and administered it to students at the Faculty of Social Sciences. The collected data was then analyzed and interpreted in light of the study's objectives.

## Study Population and Sample

The fieldwork was conducted at the Faculty of Social Sciences at the beginning of the second semester, immediately following the winter break, during the 2024–2025 academic year.

We aimed to include the largest possible number of participants; however, the final sample consisted of **90 students** from various academic backgrounds including **Sociology, Psychology**, and the **common core program**.

The sample was **non-probabilistic**, as it was deliberately chosen based on variation in both academic specialization and gender. Consequently, the sample was **quota-based**, ensuring a balanced representation without bias toward any specific discipline or study field.

Due to our professional position within the university teaching staff, the data collection process was relatively smooth. However, a notable challenge involved **convincing students to respond honestly and seriously** to the **18-item closed-ended questionnaire**.

Initially, the study was intended to target **all faculty members across different departments and disciplines**. However, we were eventually compelled to revise the target population for several reasons, including:

- The abundance of existing studies and research focusing on university faculty as the primary subject of analysis.
- A desire to approach the issue from the perspective of the **directly affected party**—the students.

- The need to explore **students' attitudes and engagement** with modern teaching methods and academic reforms.
- Aiming to identify **differences in students' perspectives** based on their academic specializations.
- Understanding **students' goals and interests** concerning instructional strategies.
- Proposing avenues for **collaborative practices** between professors and students.

**Table: Distribution of Respondents Based on Their Commitment to Using Communication Tools in Studying**

| Use of Communication Tools | Count | %           |
|----------------------------|-------|-------------|
| Yes                        | 54    | <b>%60</b>  |
| No                         | 36    | <b>%40</b>  |
| Total                      | 90    | <b>%100</b> |

This table illustrates the distribution of respondents based on their use of communication tools. It is evident that the majority use them, not only due to their necessity in daily life but also because they serve as an essential means of interaction within professional and personal networks.

The commitment to using communication tools has become inevitable in our time, regardless of one's profession, status, or role in society. The world today is driven by the speed and reach of information, making communication tools not only prevalent but indispensable in both social and professional spheres. Within the university environment, most members increasingly rely on specialized platforms that utilize various tools to disseminate information efficiently, thereby saving time and effort.

**Table showing the relationship between the use of official platforms and the extent to which communication tools meet your expectations**

| <div> <div>alignement with expectations</div> <div>Use of official platforms</div> </div> | YES                 | NO                  | TOTAL             |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------|---------------------|-------------------|
| YES                                                                                       | 12 <sup>28.57</sup> | 30 <sup>71.42</sup> | 42 <sup>100</sup> |
| NO                                                                                        | 30 <sup>62.5</sup>  | 18 <sup>37.5</sup>  | 48 <sup>100</sup> |
| TOTAL                                                                                     | 42 <sup>46.66</sup> | 48 <sup>53.33</sup> | 90 <sup>100</sup> |

This table illustrates the relationship between students' use of official educational platforms and their opinions regarding the extent to which these platforms meet their academic expectations.

It is noticeable that there is a tendency toward perceiving these platforms as ineffective, with 53.33% of respondents believing they are insufficient for comprehending the course content. According to this survey, the main reason may be that the platform content does not align, even partially, with exam questions.

When we introduce the variable of educational platform usage, we find that 71.42% of the respondents who do follow the educational platforms still declare that they do not meet their academic expectations. Upon calculating the correlation coefficient, it was found that the association is a moderate inverse relationship between the two variables. In other words, students show little interest in using official platforms and constantly seek more accessible alternatives for studying.

This issue appears to be linked to other variables, such as studying primarily for exam purposes, which they may find better supported by alternative communication means. These include joining group chats, using free and easy-access websites, or subscribing to popular social media

applications, which only require a smartphone—unlike official platforms that often demand access through desktop computers.

**Table Showing the Relationship Between Lecture Attendance and the Use of Educational Platforms**

| Use of platforms<br>Attendance of lectures | YES                 | NO                  | Total             |
|--------------------------------------------|---------------------|---------------------|-------------------|
| YES                                        | 36 <sup>66.66</sup> | 18 <sup>33.33</sup> | 54 <sup>100</sup> |
| NO                                         | 6 <sup>16.66</sup>  | 30 <sup>83.33</sup> | 36 <sup>100</sup> |
| Total                                      | 42 <sup>46.66</sup> | 48 <sup>53.33</sup> | 90 <sup>100</sup> |

This table illustrates the relationship between students' attendance of lectures and their use of distance learning platforms. It is evident that nearly half of the respondents rely on these platforms for their studies, indicating that the results are relatively balanced. When introducing the variable of lecture attendance, it was found that **16.66%** of students who do not attend lectures use the platforms, compared to **66.66%** of those who attend lectures and also follow the educational platforms—an outcome that seems logical.

However, when the correlation coefficient was applied, an **inverse relationship** was identified between in-person lecture attendance and the use of online educational platforms. This could be interpreted as students who regularly attend lectures are also more committed to following up on the lessons, which contradicts the initial hypothesis. This can be further explained by the fact that students may be primarily interested in the content for exam preparation, and tend to engage more with alternative, non-official platforms—mainly social media pages—where lecture progress, assignments, updates, research activities, schedule changes, and

summaries are frequently posted and easier to access through personal smartphones.

**Table showing the relationship between lecture attendance and communication with the professor**

| Communication with the Professor<br>Lecture attendance | Contact exist       | No Contact          | Total             |
|--------------------------------------------------------|---------------------|---------------------|-------------------|
| Always                                                 | 06 <sup>25</sup>    | 18 <sup>75</sup>    | 24 <sup>100</sup> |
| Sometimes                                              | 06 <sup>25</sup>    | 18 <sup>75</sup>    | 24 <sup>100</sup> |
| Never                                                  | 12 <sup>28.57</sup> | 30 <sup>71.42</sup> | 42 <sup>100</sup> |
| Total                                                  | 42 <sup>46.66</sup> | 48 <sup>53.33</sup> | 90 <sup>100</sup> |

This table illustrates the relationship between students' communication with the professor and their attendance at lectures. Here, lecture attendance refers to sessions where, according to students, absence is generally tolerated. The data reveals that most students do not communicate with the professor through either official or unofficial communication channels.

When introducing the variable of lecture attendance, we found that nearly three-quarters of the respondents do not contact the professor. This proportion slightly decreases among students who are absent from lectures, with 71.42% not maintaining contact. This indicates that communication with professors is not necessarily driven by academic purposes through official platforms. Instead, it often aims at obtaining ready-made educational materials, providing excuses for absences, or using alternative methods unrelated to digital platforms—which may require time and equipment such as desktop or personal computers, or the use of personal or institutional email.

Other means of communication were also identified, such as phone calls or simpler tools. Naturally, these methods are available when the professor shares their email address or has public profiles on social media platforms. In some cases, professors may also be active participants in unofficial

pages or online groups, given that many students report their inability to access official platforms due to various technical issues.

**Table showing the relationship between attending lectures and communication with the professor**

| Communication with the Professor<br>Academic Specialization | Yes                 | No                  | Total             |
|-------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------|---------------------|-------------------|
| Common Core                                                 | 06 <sup>25</sup>    | 18 <sup>75</sup>    | 24 <sup>100</sup> |
| Sociology                                                   | 06 <sup>25</sup>    | 18 <sup>75</sup>    | 24 <sup>100</sup> |
| Psychology                                                  | 30 <sup>71.42</sup> | 12 <sup>28.57</sup> | 42 <sup>100</sup> |
| Total                                                       | 42 <sup>46.66</sup> | 48 <sup>53.33</sup> | 90 <sup>100</sup> |

This table shows the relationship between the student's seniority, their specialization, and communication with the professor. It appears that communication with the professor increases after the first academic year. The level of communication is lower among students in the common core year compared to those in specialized programs after the first year.

This can be attributed to the lack of experience during the student's first year or the fact that the new student has not yet adapted to university teaching methods. Additionally, the student may still be following their previous study habits from high school, where the curriculum and teaching methods are standardized and differ from the more flexible study approaches in university. The proposed logic here is that new students still apply the study habits they learned in high school, which rely on standardized methods, unlike the new methods at university that allow more freedom in studying and following up on courses.

**Table Showing the Relationship Between Using Official Platforms and Using Informal Media**

| Using Infomal Media<br>Using Offic-Edu Platforms | Yes                 | Sometimes           | No                  | Total             |
|--------------------------------------------------|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|-------------------|
| Common Core                                      | 12 <sup>36.36</sup> | 09 <sup>27.28</sup> | 12 <sup>36.36</sup> | 33 <sup>100</sup> |
| Sociology                                        | 03 <sup>50</sup>    | 03 <sup>50</sup>    | -                   | 06 <sup>100</sup> |
| Psychology                                       | 03 <sup>05.88</sup> | 30 <sup>58.8</sup>  | 18 <sup>35.29</sup> | 51 <sup>100</sup> |
| Total                                            | 18 <sup>20</sup>    | 42 <sup>46.66</sup> | 30 <sup>33.33</sup> | 90 <sup>100</sup> |

This table shows the relationship between students' use of informal media and official media. What stands out here is the group of students who sometimes use informal educational media. When we introduce the variable of using official methods, we find that students who use official methods also use informal methods to an equal extent. Furthermore, students who do not use informal platforms are also not using unofficial methods or media. When we applied the correlation coefficient, we found a moderate relationship between the two variables.

### Conclusion

The observation here is that a student who regularly attends their lectures through official platforms still continues their studies using alternative official methods, as they are easy and sometimes semi-official. These methods may be mandatory because some professors still use them. Additionally, it can be explained by the fact that official methods are often more tiring compared to new communication tools that require creating accounts and passwords, while traditional methods are often more consistent, with educational materials from the previous season that are ready to be used seasonally if not updated.

**Table Showing the Relationship Between the Alignment of Communication Tools with Teaching and the Use of Informal Media**

| Use<br>Alignment or<br>Keeping Up | YES                 | NO                  | Total             |
|-----------------------------------|---------------------|---------------------|-------------------|
| YES                               | 30 <sup>45.45</sup> | 36 <sup>54.54</sup> | 66 <sup>100</sup> |
| NO                                | 18 <sup>75</sup>    | 06 <sup>25</sup>    | 24 <sup>100</sup> |
| Total                             | 32 <sup>53.33</sup> | 42 <sup>46.66</sup> | 90 <sup>100</sup> |

This table shows the relationship between students' use of informal educational media and how well it aligns with their academic expectations. Statistically, it is clear that most students use traditional study methods to a greater extent. When introducing the variable of alignment between teaching tools and their academic expectations, it is found that three-quarters of the respondents, who do not see the alignment of these educational platforms with their academic needs, rely on alternative communication tools for their university studies.

The reality here is driven by the ease and speed of obtaining information or educational materials more efficiently. This often relies on personal relationships between students and professors, which help provide these educational opportunities through other means. For example, this can be done through class representatives, who are selected for their superior attendance and engagement in lectures and various academic activities. Additionally, their good relationship with professors allows them to establish communication channels, even through informal methods.

## Conclusion

In this field study, we aimed to address the key factors hindering students' commitment to studying and following official educational platforms. This was done through the hypothesis regarding the student's seniority at the university, the difficulty of accessing and interacting with educational platforms compared to informal methods, as well as the physical absence of students from lectures, given that university education has undergone recent changes in teaching and communication methods. On the other hand, we also sought to uncover students' opinions on the rapid transformation that has dominated the university education system, concerning teaching, training, assessment, and progression.

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