

Distance learning in the context of the spread of social media networks - Facebook as a model -

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Abstract:

This work aimed to analyze the reality of distance education in light of the widespread use of social networking sites, with a primary focus on Facebook as the most popular platform among students in both personal and academic contexts. After reviewing the concepts of distance education, social networking sites, and Facebook, the study evaluated the positive use of the platform in distance education to highlight its beneficial applications. The work concluded that using Facebook in this context is a double-edged sword. On one hand, it can build trust and enhance social participation in learning by facilitating the exchange of ideas and resources and providing pivotal social-cognitive experiences for effective learning. On the other hand, Facebook has adverse effects on students' academic performance, especially when overused, in addition to other consequences such as electronic fraud, account breaches, and information theft. Furthermore, the exchange of information in this social environment can be distressing and may lead to the unintended disclosure of personal data, reputational damage due to rumors, and unwanted contact.

Keywords: Distance Learning, Social Media Networks, Facebook, the Spread, the Context.

1. INTRODUCTION

The era of science for the sake of science is past, and the 21st century, an era of communication and media technology, has introduced a new pattern of education called e-learning or distance learning, based on mobile devices. Laptops enable students to access learning resources even when they are not at university, fostering an active learning environment that serves as an alternative to traditional classroom settings and contributes to a unique learning experience both in and outside the classroom.

This type of education produced a new generation of students Known as members of the "Network and Digital Generation," Surrounded by information and communication technologies that include the Internet, smartphones, and social networks that have imposed a new type of virtual knowledge, which requires the student to be familiar with an adequate virtual culture, Where Facebook lessons are used to facilitate communication among students, and Promote positive learning condition based on online dialogue and virtual participation, by engaging the student as a learning tool to share knowledge and information with others in voice and image. To access educational experiences that are difficult to access by traditional means .

While traditional-style education is based on memorization, indoctrination, and physical student attendance, distance education represents a complete transformation of the educational paradigm—a shift in the structure and culture of education—based on the premise that students are the foundation of the learning process and take responsibility for their learning. In their places, it is about individual independence, thus transforming the student from a passive recipient into an active participant in the educational process.

According to this understanding, university students use Facebook as the leading social media site, using it not only as an essential communication tool but also for electronic socialization. Using Facebook groups, teachers and students have the opportunity to become learning partners, with the potential to create a continuous community of learners. In other words, a community in which participants use this tool regularly and independently. This sustainable process also enables the use of digital technology in teaching and learning.

Despite the positives that Facebook provides for interaction, cooperation and sharing of resources and information, as part of a virtual education to enable quick and easy communication between a teacher and a student, However, the use of Facebook is not without other harmful consequences that

its use may have, including cyber addiction, In addition to feelings of insecurity and inadequacy, violation of privacy, cyberbullying, stress and anxiety, and a sense of isolation and cyber alienation.

In this context, we seek through this paper to highlight the subject of distance education in the context of the spread of social media networks, focusing mainly on Facebook as the most widely used social media network by students in both the personal and academic spheres, first identifying the concepts of distance learning, social media networks, b Facebook, and then again reviewing the positive use of Facebook in distance education, Finally, we conclude to identify the positive use of Facebook in distance education.

2. Define concepts

2.1 distance learning

The term distance education represents a modern approach that focuses on providing access to education, training, and liberating learners from the constraints of time and place. Providing flexible learning to individuals and groups is therefore the fastest-growing sector of the education industry. The potential impact of distance learning at all levels of education, facilitated by the development of education through Internet-based technologies, was therefore emphasized and could be described as flexible learning, involving the implementation of ICT applications across multiple locations (BUŠELIĆ, 2012, p. 25).

In other words, distance education is a modern educational model that has broken the barriers of traditional learning, where students are no longer required to be present in a specific place or at a specific time. This model has become so popular and widespread that it is now the fastest-growing and most developed part of the entire education sector, a success largely due to the internet and digital technologies that have made this type of learning possible and effective. At its core, this education is "flexible learning" that relies on digital tools and applications to access knowledge from wherever the learner may be.

Distance learning relies on the exchange of data and information through the interconnection of multiple computers, either directly or over a network. For example, communication begins with written text, audio tools,

video, and other techniques. Asynchronous learning applications deliver course content in a one-directional format, with minimal interaction, often through television systems or media such as books, CDs, and videos (Tavukcu & et al, p. 4000).

In this sense, distance learning is fundamentally based on the transmission of knowledge through digital channels that connect computers, whether directly or via the internet, utilizing various media such as text, audio, and video. However, not all distance learning is characterized by direct, immediate interaction; there are two main models. The first is ****synchronous learning****, which resembles a virtual classroom where students and instructors interact in real-time. The second model, which the original paragraph focused on, is ****asynchronous learning****. This is a one-way format that delivers content to the learner without requiring them to be present at a specific time, such as watching a pre-recorded lecture on a CD, reading a dedicated book, or following an educational television program. This model offers the learner great flexibility in choosing the time and place for their studies, but it lacks the immediate interaction with an instructor or peers, making it a more isolated learning experience, albeit one that is easier to access and distribute on a wide scale.

In another context, several scholars argue that the term "distance learning" encompasses a range of instructional modalities, including online learning, e-learning, technology-mediated instruction, online collaborative learning, and virtual learning. These modalities are characterized by complex interactions between learners and instructors, often facilitated through digital platforms. (Learner and instructor) At various times and places, different forms of education utilize applications, programs, websites, or other non-traditional educational tools (Moore & et al, 2011, p. 130).

In this sense, distance learning focuses on the design of education, technology, and educational systems for students who are not physically present in the same location as the instructor. By focusing education on the network, technologies, and learners, they are generally away from the institution and the instructor. Accordingly, the needs of this type of education differ from those of students in the formal education system, and the successful and effective results they require necessitate appropriate

guidelines and support from the government, trained organizations, and others (HAFEEZ & et al, 2014, p. 170).

Distance learning can be described as an alternative to traditional education, which has the following characteristics:

- Physical separation between learners and teachers.
- A structured educational programme conducted by an educational organization.
- The use of modern media such as low technology, books, media technology, and television, audio cassettes, video cassettes, radio, high technology - such as computers, the Internet, and others (IBARA, 2008, pp. 119- 120)

In this context, it is worth emphasizing that distance learning offers a viable means of expanding access to education without increasing pressure on students. The considerable educational resources of the traditional system make distance education an urgent necessity imposed by successive variables in the modern world, particularly during crisis periods, such as the Covid-19 crisis. Therefore, it is necessary to adapt to this educational model, which shifts investment from physical infrastructure to technology-based education.

Based on previous cognitive data, we can adopt a procedural definition of distance learning as follows:

Distance learning is a formal method of teaching or education, where a teacher is located at home or in the office, and students are in contact with the college and other students via email, electronic forums, video conferences, and other computer-based forms. It also enables students to create their social network to share knowledge and information, in the sense that distance learning is a social network that forms people associated with each other through personal relationships, such as friendship, shared interests, or ideas (Zaheer, 2020, pp. 222- 224).

2.2 Social Networks

Social networks are defined as online platforms that facilitate virtual social interaction, created and maintained by users on the Internet. ("social network") that consists of nodes linked to more than one type of relationship, and combines individual personal pages with various interaction tools, such

as chats, blogs, forums, and others. This promotes a sense of association and cooperation (Alvarez & Marialexa Olivera-Smith, 2013, p. 315).

In this sense, social networks are considered dynamic digital spaces that users build and develop themselves. They are not merely sites for communication, but rather complex structures resembling real "networks," where each user represents a connection point (a node) linked to others through multiple relationships that could be friendships, professional ties, or shared interests. These platforms provide users with diverse tools for expression and interaction, such as personal profiles that express their identity, blogs for sharing ideas, forums for group discussions, and chats for instant communication. This integration of tools not only facilitates the exchange of information but also fosters a sense of belonging to digital communities and encourages collaboration among individuals who might never meet in the physical world.

Social networks provide an interactive platform that enables their users to connect with other members, and establish social relationships to exchange information and knowledge regarding individual resurrection activities. The social networking site includes a representation of user data information such as profile name, age, gender, and marital status, and direct links to a diverse social network site with additional services that allow users to share common ideas, images, activities, events, and interests (Alassiri & et al, 2014, p. 47).

From a functional perspective, social media networks such as Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, and Instagram are social arenas that attract millions of users worldwide, the primary purpose of which is to create virtual online links with four components: A place for developing a personal profile and a list of contacts with other users, the ability to monitor information (activities of those appearing on the list) and the ability to create new links. Although social networks are primarily intended for social interaction, they also facilitate professional communication. For example, Facebook groups serve as modern alternatives to discussion forums and mailing lists that were prevalent in the late twentieth century (Meishar-Tal & Efrat Pieterse, 2017, p. 2).

In a similar semantic context, social networks are referred to as platforms for virtual social interaction that individuals create on the Internet. Within these networks, users construct identities to communicate with others who share similar backgrounds and cultural dimensions, facilitated by robust communication tools. The first known network in this area is SixDegrees, built in 1997, especially after 2003, which brought about rapid and significant developments in the social sphere and networks, thus rapidly increasing the number of users, and the global growth of social communication networks has gained incredible speed and popularity, among which is the most common Facebook site (Tiryakioglu & Funda Erzurum, 2011, pp. 135- 136)

It is clear from this definition that social media networks encompass social groups where individuals share discussions, engage in dialogues, and express common interests, interacting spiritually and emotionally to form social relationships in virtual space.

As for the sociological aspect, some sociologists assert that social networks are the essence of the social structure, because they are the social mechanisms that link the micro and macro levels of social life. The strength of this network lies in shifting the focus of social structure from fixed categories, such as age, gender, and race, to the hypothetical nature of social communication among individuals in Siberian space. (For example, size, density, or types of relationships), content reflects content and what flows through network links, which are "channels for transferring material or non-material resources, that is, attitudes and views, as well as more concrete experiences and collective memory held within networks." Finally, networks perform a variety of functions, including emotional support, practical assistance, and monitoring (Pescosolido, 2007, p. 208).

Based on the foregoing, we can say that social networks like Myspace, Facebook, Windows Live Space, Orkut and Hi5 are sites that aim to provide people's interaction with each other within a set of principles, thanks to Web 2.0, while people can read information within the network, and they can communicate and share information, The structure of social networks may vary according to their website. Individuals can use them for very different purposes, such as distance learning, where they provide attractive

communication tools for everyday life and e-learning environments, allow students to form digital identities and express themselves digitally, and provide them with social communication tools that allow freedom, flexibility and fluency in virtual learning processes (Bicen & Nadire Cavus, 2010, p. 5864).

2.3 Facebook

Facebook is a global website that enables users to present themselves online, share personal information with friends, encourage them to participate in various social activities, upload photos, post comments, check-in at places, provide hobby information, and update their status. In other words, users are encouraged to share their personal information and information on their networks, relationships, online behaviour, and personal preferences through the platform (Padyab & et al, 2016, p. 1).

In other words, this definition clarifies that Facebook is not merely a social communication platform, but a comprehensive digital environment designed to encourage users to transform their personal and social lives into shareable digital content. The platform doesn't just provide tools like posting photos or updating a status; it creates an integrated system that incentivizes the user to reveal intricate details about their relational networks, daily behaviors, and personal preferences. At its core, it invites the user to construct an extensive digital version of their identity and share it continuously, thereby transforming them from a mere "user" into a "producer of content" and a "subject of surveillance" within the vast data ecosystem managed by the platform.

Furthermore, Facebook can be defined as a globally dominant social media platform that enables users to create profiles, connect with friends and family, and share various forms of digital content. Founded by Mark Zuckerberg in 2004 while he was a student at Harvard University, the platform initially had exclusive access for Harvard students. Its reach expanded in 2005 to include other universities and high schools before it was ultimately opened to the general public in 2006. Today, Facebook stands as one of the most visited websites worldwide, boasting over 845 million monthly active users and is available in more than 70 languages (Alhomod & Mohd Mudasir Shafi, 2012, p. 53).

From a functional perspective, Facebook is recognized as a prominent social networking platform. that allows individuals to build a profile, create a network of their connections, and see their contacts. It is similar to other networks that came before and after it, such as Friends Reunion, MySpace, Twitter, YouTube, and LinkedIn. However, the main hallmarks of Facebook are that it has grown rapidly into a center (Pearce & Sarah Learmonth, 2016, p. 13).

In another context, Shane Tilton asserts that Facebook is one of the most popular online social networks that has benefited from computer-mediated communication services. (CMC) Such as instant messaging, forums, and direct messaging, as well as publishing services like blogging and content sharing, to form a service that connects members within the system with each other. This connectivity was one of the key aspects that led to the rapid adoption of Facebook by the class of students entering most colleges and universities around the world, where Facebook was a point of interest for student development professionals as it allowed these professionals to take a comprehensive view of how to survive (TILTON, 2014, p. 32).

At its core, Facebook is defined as a comprehensive social network that transcends being merely a platform; it is a powerful communication tool designed for sharing ideas, thoughts, and feelings with friends and family. Its distinction lies in its capacity to host multiple types of content, such as photos, videos, and audio clips, with few restrictions. This fundamental function is what makes it the top choice for youth, who use it not only for social interaction but also as a platform to showcase and develop their talents by sharing their creations with a wide audience. This is where the essence of studying it lies; while Facebook is viewed as a tool for connection and sharing, its true impact is found in how youth leverage these vast capabilities, and the profound psychological and behavioral effects that result from this, which deserve to be researched and analyzed (Ahmed & et al, 2025, p. 1225).

Based on the foregoing, we can define Facebook as a popular social networking site and Internet communication tool, which allows users to interact and collaborate within a predetermined virtual community, enabling

them to create a public or private image of communication and collaboration with people who are part of their extended social network. Given the significant growth in users and their utility as a collaborative learning platform, most high school students and universities utilize this site daily for both academic and social purposes.

3. Facebook positive use of distance learning

A new generation of students, often referred to as 'Digital Natives,' is growing up surrounded by information and communication technologies, including the Internet, smartphones, and mass media. uses Facebook tutorials to facilitate communication among students, create a favorable social climate in the classroom, create dialogue and engage students, serve as a learning tool, where Facebook supports active learning for students and acts as alternatives to traditional classmates, creating a personal learning environment in the classroom and beyond, and also uses personal learning (Davidovitch & Margarita Belichenko, 2018 , p. 9).

In this sense, Facebook is no longer just a social media platform in the world of education; it has transformed into a multifaceted pedagogical tool that meets the needs of the generation of "Digital Natives" who grew up surrounded by technology. Its role is not limited to facilitating communication among students and fostering a positive classroom climate; it goes further to act as a catalyst for active dialogue and engagement, transforming students from passive recipients into active partners in the learning process. Most importantly, Facebook enables the creation of a personal learning environment that extends beyond the classroom, where it supports active learning and offers an interactive alternative to traditional methods, thus making it a cornerstone in shaping a modern and flexible educational experience.

One possible way to utilize Facebook for teaching and learning is to employ a learning package that offers numerous benefits for both teaching and learning. This approach enables faculty to shift the focus from content-based learning to treatment-based learning, thereby enhancing student learning. "Facilitating change from passive learning to active learning. Many research studies have also confirmed that using Facebook increases student motivation, satisfaction, and that students who have seen the instructor's

website with high levels of intermediate acy report high levels of motivation, emotional learning, teacher credibility and positive attitudes towards the curriculum and teacher, but their studies warn that the information released by the teacher must be correct and do no harm (Wang & et al, 2012, pp. 429-430).

Thus, Facebook can be transformed from a mere social platform into an effective educational tool by adopting what is known as a "learning package," which radically changes the method of teaching. Instead of focusing solely on delivering content to students (passive learning), this approach turns the educational process into an interactive activity where students process and apply information (active learning), thereby enhancing their comprehension and retention. Research confirms that this approach not only improves academic outcomes but also boosts student morale and satisfaction, especially when they feel the instructor is "present" and interactive on the platform, fostering a positive relationship built on trust and credibility. However, these studies also issue a crucial warning: the success of this educational model hinges on the instructor's responsibility to ensure the accuracy and safety of the information they share, as any error or harmful content could turn these benefits into significant detriments.

In this context, it is worth noting that the option of creating a "study team" with students and lecturers is gaining popularity, as Facebook groups are becoming an increasingly important alternative to traditional learning management systems. Because any Facebook user can create their own group. The group founder can invite another group. To promote, share, and discuss common themes, groups can choose to limit membership to specific individuals or open membership. Unlike open Facebook groups, a closed learning group does not appear to any user. Activity logs, published only among members, and the primary uses of Facebook learning groups include asking questions about homework, tests, and test materials, as well as sharing summaries provided by students (Davidovitch & Margarita Belichenko, 2018 A, p. 52).

The benefits of these groups extend beyond direct academic purposes, they work to build a virtual educational community that supports

collaborative learning and enhances a spirit of cooperation among students. When a student feels they are part of a group where they can ask questions without hesitation and share their summaries with peers, it reduces the intensity of individual competition and replaces it with a culture of mutual support. Furthermore, this closed environment provides a safe space for more reserved students to express their opinions and allows instructors the opportunity to intervene quickly and correct misconceptions before they become ingrained. This makes Facebook a dynamic tool that is not limited to disseminating information but also contributes effectively to creating a more integrated and holistic learning experience.

Socially, we can explain the reasons for the increased use of Facebook in distance learning due to its easy access, affordability, and apparent benefits. The use of Facebook groups has the potential to provide communication between teachers and students when traditional forms of communication are limited. Facebook users can interact through posts such as comments, likes, and questions. In addition, opportunities to expand knowledge and interact with others are the most prominent features of Facebook (DOĞAN & Yasemin GÜLBAHAR, 2018, p. 207) .

Regarding educational advantages, Facebook provides teachers with tools that enable students to help and support one another, thereby increasing interaction between teachers and students through internet connections. Similarly, students can use Facebook to contact classmates about questions about tasks or class exams, as well as to collaborate on group tasks and projects in an online environment. It also provides students with a profile of teachers that includes personal information about their interests, backgrounds, and friends, which can enhance student motivation and emotional learning. In this sense, Facebook is particularly used by students today (Balcikanli, 2015, pp. 84- 85).

In sum, we can explain how to create, share, and sustain knowledge on the Internet using Facebook:

1. Domain: The field in Facebook is the space where members share ideas, knowledge, and experiences, which fosters personal

meaning and a sense of belonging, mainly through connections with acquaintances and friends.

2. Distance Learning in the Context of Social Media Networks: Facebook as a Model. Society: Virtual community members collectively create value and share knowledge through their interactions and transactions. Like Facebook, it can help build a virtual community by serving as a forum for dialogue and discussion.
3. Practice: Practice is the specific knowledge base on which a virtual community is based, Maintained jointly, Facebook offers ways of learning, through interactive dialogue and discovery, that can involve multiple perspectives and levels of expertise, and in addition, whenever individuals refine and share their ideas, these processes distribute knowledge production (McLOUGHLIN & MARK J. W. LEE, 2014, p. 47) (McLOUGHLIN & MARK J. W. LEE, 2014: p 47).

4. Facebook's negative use of distance learning

Although the use of Facebook in the distance learning system has enabled learners to achieve more independence and flexibility, it lacks social interaction (face-to-face) both among students and between students and teachers. Students may need to discuss topics with others outside of class time. Due to this limited interaction, learners feel isolated and experience electronic alienation, which leads to high dropout rates and reluctance to learn (Kocdar & et al, 2018, p. 100).

In this context, it can be argued that while the use of Facebook in distance education facilitates the exchange of ideas and resources, supports online discussions, and enables students to communicate and interact with their peers and teachers easily, it also faces several educational, social, and technological limitations. On the educational and technological front, the platform suffers from constraints such as its lack of support for direct file downloads and the difficulty of organizing discussions in a structured manner, which can hinder the learning process. More importantly,

fundamental concerns arise regarding student privacy and confidentiality. Facebook does not provide a completely secure environment, and this perceived lack of confidentiality can hinder its effective use in distance education, where students must feel safe and comfortable to achieve the maximum benefit from the available tools.

These findings are supported by a recent study on the adverse effects of using Facebook among high school students in the Yarmouk region of Jordan, which revealed serious repercussions for adolescents. The study showed that Facebook use has negative psychological effects such as stress, social anxiety, withdrawal, frustration, and depression. These issues are often linked to feelings of laziness, psychological loneliness, jealousy, and sadness resulting from a perceived loss of happiness, as well as diminished psychological well-being and personal identity. The study also confirmed that the spread of lies on the platform negatively impacts social relationships, increases students' sense of isolation, and leads to a loss of realism as a result of living in a virtual world. It also highlighted a loss of privacy and exposure to spying, which can make students victims of blackmail and threats from individuals with fake accounts. Finally, the excessive use of technology has contributed to students becoming increasingly dependent, with diminished self-discipline and weakened family oversight. This is primarily attributed to a lack of cultural awareness and the absence of legal frameworks regulating the use of these technologies (Freewan, 2019, pp. 92- 102) .

Several adverse effects of using Facebook within the distance learning system can also be highlighted, as discussed below:

- The popularity of Facebook and the rapid dissemination of information have created a permissive attitude towards proper spelling and text, which reduces students' ability to write effectively without relying on the computer's spell check feature.
- The reliance of many students on Facebook for access to information to provide answers means less focus on learning and information retention.
- Students' ability to retain information and willingness to spend more time have decreased, owing to their habit of easy access to information on Facebook.

-The more time students spend on Facebook, the less they want to study due to the numerous distractions they encounter, resulting in a lower academic level.

-Facebook communication often involves the use of short phrases and incomplete sentences. It can lead to an informal conversation that may negatively impact academic writing, as Facebook writing differs from formal writing in the classroom.

-Facebook communication may not replace face-to-face communication. Students who spend too much time in virtual communication are less able to communicate effectively than they are exposed to electronic addiction (Raut & Prafulla Patil, 2016, p. 284).

-Most students are eager to access Facebook just to check their profile or view updates posted on their wall, so many of them spend a considerable amount of time on this site chatting with their friends. Unfortunately, this activity is often a waste of time without any positive outcome.

-Through Facebook, several images, videos, or political shares may divert the carrier's attention, which may adversely affect their life, thus reducing reading and learning time among students.

Using Facebook reduces the importance of writing letters, as most students spend their free time on this site chatting with their friends and do not have time to write to them.

-By Spending more time on Facebook makes students more selfish, and thus turns them into oppressive beings who are more interested in researching and reading extensive information about their non-friends (chowdhury & Biswajeet Saha, 2015, p. 30).

5. CONCLUSION

Given the sense of belonging within the Facebook community, its use in distance learning is often viewed as a double-edged sword. By building supportive relationships with friends and engaging in constructive dialogue, students become more positive about the learning space, which enables them to interact socially, cognitively, and emotionally, enhancing their psychological sense of community. The dimensions of engagement, on the one hand, support cognitive development and academic achievement.

On the other hand, numerous field studies have highlighted the potential adverse effects of Facebook, particularly when used excessively, suggesting that excessive time spent on the site may negatively impact students' academic performance. Given its widespread use, there may be negative consequences such as cyber fraud, hacking of personal accounts, and information theft. Furthermore, sharing information in a social environment may intimidate and upset users, including through non-disclosure.

Following this work, it is essential to emphasize that knowledge is not exclusively reflected in Facebook and membership in social networks, nor does it occur solely through the creation of these growing electronic connections. Education is a social process in which the protagonists of the educational process are more likely to engage in discussion or dialogue based on a culture of give and take. Therefore, we note that despite the advantages offered by distance learning, it is no substitute for in-person, analytically based learning.

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