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Investigating Student's Attitudes Towards the Use of Social Media for Learning Purposes: A Case Study of EFL Students at the University of Ghardaia

Submitted by

Saadeddine KHELALFA

Supervised by

Dr. Slimane ABDELHAKEM

Board of examiners

01. Dr. Smail HADJ MAHAMMED	President	University of Ghardaia
02. Dr. Youcef HADJ SAID	Examiner	University of Ghardaia
03. Dr. Slimane ABDELHAKEM	Supervisor	University of Ghardaia

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Dedication

I dedicate this work to:

The soul of my father, may Allah bless him and grant him Jannah

My beloved mother

My dear brothers and sisters

My angels and gorgeous nieces Joujou and Michmich

My sweet little nephews Boubou and Ahmed

Thank you for your unconditional love, encouragement, and support.

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Abstract

Although the power of social media to impact learning is recognized, little is known regarding students' attitudes towards its use in the field of education, especially in the Algerian context. Therefore, the current study aims to investigate Algerian students' attitudes towards the use of social media for learning purposes. The participants of the study were 110 EFL students at the University of Ghardaia who volunteered for an online survey questionnaire during the second semester of the academic year 2021/2022. The researcher adopted a quantitative research approach using descriptive and inferential statistical methods to analyze the collected data. The main findings of the study revealed that students showed positive attitudes regarding the use of social media, and suggested more use of these platforms to support their learning. Findings also showed that Instagram, Facebook, and YouTube were the most popular networks among students. Nevertheless, the findings also showed that there was no significant difference in students' attitudes based on gender, age, or level of study. The reported findings could assist educators and scholars in the field of education to develop more effective instructional strategies that integrate the use of social media platforms into physical and virtual classrooms.

Keywords: social media, platforms, learning, attitudes.

List of abbreviations

AFH: Affective Filter Hypothesis

ANOVA: Analysis of Variance

CMC: Computer-Mediated Communication

Df: Degrees of Freedom

EFL: English as a Foreign Language

E-learning: Electronic learning

E-mail: Electronic mail

F: F-ratio

H: Hypothesis

ICT: Information and Communication Technology

M: Mean

N: Number

P: Probability value

PEU: Perceived Ease of Use

PU: Perceived Usefulness

Q: Question

SD: Standard Deviation

Sig: P-value

SNS: Social Networking Sites

SPSS: Statistical Package for the Social Sciences

TAM: Technology Acceptance Model

U: U-value

Z: Standard score

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General introduction

1. Background to the study

Since the beginning of time, people have always found a way to communicate with each other, and language has proved to be the best tool with which human beings could communicate and express their thoughts, feelings, and needs. This unique ability to communicate about one's existence is the very foundation of being human. In fact, "only through communication can human life hold meaning" (Freire, 1993, p. 77)

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

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

The power of social media to impact learning is now widely acknowledged, and educators are increasingly incorporating these online platforms into their classrooms. The constructive philosophy of teaching and learning that allows learners to create, co-create, and share knowledge with global audiences outside classroom walls is supported by social media features (Seo, 2013). Although the power of social media is recognized, many institutions still wonder how to adapt to these tools. Therefore, understanding students' attitudes and expectations towards the use of social media technologies to support learning could help instructors gain a better vision.

2. Statement of the Problem

With the powerful emerging technologies of social media, using and interacting with the Internet has become a required component of life and education is no exception. The Internet plays a significant role in developing the learning and teaching process by providing the students with an enormous amount of resources and information. However, the use of Social media in educational settings is still not well understood or explored, and little attention is given to students' attitudes and perceptions of these tools (Alzouebi & Isakovic, 2019). Therefore, a good starting point is to explore the students' current use of social media in educational settings and their perceptions and attitudes towards the value of these tools to be used inside and outside the educational settings.

3. Purpose of the Study

This study investigates the attitudes of EFL students at the University of Ghardaia towards the use of social media to support their learning. The study also investigates the factors that influence students' attitudes and intentions to utilize social media for educational purposes and students' perceptions of the educational values and benefits that social media have. Moreover, the study explores the most popular social media platforms that EFL students use and interact with, and the purposes of using such tools. The degree of students' technology

acceptance and their perceptions of the values that these emerging technologies can bring to the learning environment are still not well explored (Salaway & Caruso, 2008). Therefore, the purpose of this study is to contribute to the Algerian educational resources related to social media technologies and students' learning, and to help the instructors get a better understanding of the students' attitudes, expectations, practices, and barriers that they might encounter when utilizing these technologies in the learning environments. This understanding will fill in the gap between the students' needs, interests, expectations, and the instructors' adoption of social media technologies in teaching and learning environments.

4. Motivations

The rapid pace at which digital technologies are advancing is offering a great opportunity for administrators and educators. In order to stay ahead and keep up to date, higher education in Algeria should take advantage of such technologies and find appropriate ways to integrate them into the field of education. To help meet the needs of our educational system, investigating students' attitudes towards social networking technologies is of major importance. Yet, there has been little research on the topic in the Algerian context. For that reason, the researchers elected this topic due to the current relevance of social media in various sectors of life, particularly in the field of education. Understanding students' attitudes and perceptions is a key factor in the learning process.

5. Significance of the Study

The challenge facing educators today is discovering how students currently experience social media in their education and learning, and the ways and contexts they use social media for educational purposes. This research focuses on these experiences from students' perspectives, and the results will provide Algerian education, particularly the University of Ghardaia, with resources that instructors will benefit from. This may help them to better understand the ways students use social media in formal and informal situations. The results of

this study also have implications for both students and educators for using social media in higher education learning contexts. This understanding will help the instructors at the University of Ghardaia to consider how to deal with the net generation and help them utilize these tools appropriately to improve their learning

6. Research Questions

This study is designed to answer the following questions:

Q1: What are the students' attitudes towards using social media for learning purposes?

Q2: What are the most popular social networking sites used by students, and what do they use these platforms for?

Q3: What do students perceive as advantages or disadvantages of social media, and what suggestions do they make for better usage of online platforms to support learning?

Q4: Do factors like age, gender, and level of study affect the overall attitudes of students regarding the use of social media for learning?

7. Limitations of the Study

Several limitations of this study should be noted. First, the selection of participants was limited to one geographical location, restricting the study to a small subpopulation of students at the University of Ghardaia. Second, this study is limited to a cross-sectional study during the second semester of the academic year 2021-2022. Finally, only one instrument was used in this study, namely an online survey questionnaire. It was important to recognize these limitations and the implications they had for interpreting and extending the findings of this study.

8. Structure of the Dissertation

This thesis is constructed of a general introduction, two chapters, and a general conclusion. It starts with a general introduction in which the study background, the purpose of the study, and research questions are presented.

The first chapter (literature review), divided into two sections, deals with the theoretical

part of the thesis. Section one of this chapter reviews the relevant literature on social media and relates it to the field of education. However, section two provides an overview of the theoretical framework on which the current study is based.

On the other hand, the second chapter (research methodology) deals with the practical part of the study. It outlines the research design, data collection, and data analysis methods and procedures. This chapter also discusses the findings in relation to research questions and hypotheses proposed in the study.

The dissertation ends with a general conclusion which draws the general picture of the research findings. It briefly discusses recommendations for the use of social media in learning environments.

9. Definition of key- terms

The following definitions are provided to clarify major concepts and to establish how these terms were used for this study.

Applications: limited software programs that facilitate the use of platforms on specific devices (e.g., smartphones, tablets, or PCs).

Digital natives: a term coined by Prensky (2001) to describe individuals who grew up in the information age. They are comfortable with technology and the internet at an early age.

EFL: English as a foreign language; English taught in a country where English is not used as an official language.

Formal learning: learning that happens in courses, classrooms, and schools, resulting in learners receiving grades, degrees, diplomas, and certificates (Aifan, 2015).

Informal learning: learning that is spontaneous, experiential, unplanned, and does not use a formal set of guidelines, objectives, or curriculum(Greenhow & Robelia, 2009).

Net Generation: defined as someone who is paramount in technology use and proficient with emerging technologies (Held, 2009).

Platforms: systems for the delivery of various social media content that is accessed via a broad range of devices.

Social media: Web-based platforms, applications, and technologies that enable people to socially interact with one another online

Chapter I

Literature Review

Introduction

This literature review describes social media within a historical and educational context and establishes the theoretical foundations of social media use in the learning and teaching process. This chapter contains a review of the relevant literature and previous findings on social media within educational contexts, and studies related to students' perceptions from an educational standpoint. Gaps in current literature are identified from which the purpose, significance, and research questions were derived.

This chapter is divided into two parts. The first part reviews the relevant literature on social media, its definition, history, examples, and relates it to the field of education. On the other hand, the second part provides an overview of the theoretical framework of the current study which is based on the social constructivism theory by Vygotsky (1978), the Affective Filter Hypothesis (AFH) by Krashen (1982), and the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) by Davis (1989). Moreover, part two reviews the key concepts in the study such as informal learning, formal learning, learner's role, teacher's role, attitudes, and links them to social media.

Part One: Social Media

1. History and Background

1.1. Web 1.0

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

1.2 Web 2.0

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

is a read-write web that enables the management and gathering of a global community with shared social interaction interests.

1.3 Computer-Mediated Communication

Computer-mediated communication (CMC) is the process through which people produce, exchange, and interpret information utilizing network communication systems that allow coding, transferring, and decoding of messages (December, 1996). CMC enables advanced synchronous (real-time) and asynchronous (delayed-time) computer network communications. The term CMC first appeared in the 1980s referring to human communication through computers, such as e-mail and discussion forums.

Synchronous CMC: real-time communications which include various types of text-based online chat, computer, audio, and video conferencing(Simpson, 2002).

***Asynchronous CMC*:** communications forms wherein time delay between sending and reading of a message. This encompasses emails, discussion forums, and mailing lists (Simpson, 2002).

1.4 Social Media

Scholars from several fields, such as communication, psychology, and education, have all expressed interest in social media. The immense existing literature on the history of social media has been published in just the last few years. Boyd and Ellison (2007) traced back the history of social network sites to 1997 with the launch of sixdegrees.com. This website granted users to establish accounts and list their friends back then. Although several social network sites were launched from 1997 to 2001, it was not until the introduction of Friendster, Myspace, and Facebook that social network sites started to gain more popularity and became a global phenomenon.

The term social media is made up of two words “social" and "media”. The term "social" refers to a group of people, a social environment, and interactions that take place in a social

setting. The term “media” on the other hand refers to a mode of mass communication. Boyd and Ellison (2007, p. 211) defined social media as web-based services that enable users to (1) create a public profile within a constrained system, (2) establish a list of other users to share connections, and (3) browse and navigate a list of interconnections within the system.

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

2. Examples of Social Media Sites

2.1 Facebook

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

2.2 YouTube

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

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

2.3 Twitter

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

2.4 WhatsApp

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

2.5 Instagram

Instagram began as a photo-sharing network in 2010 but has since expanded to include video, texting, and story sharing, which made a significant contribution to its development (Ellison, 2017). Later in 2012, Instagram was owned by Facebook and rapidly gained popularity,

reaching two billion monthly active users as of December 2021 (Statista, 2022). Thanks to its free features that allow content sharing, texting, and video calling, Instagram is among the most popular social network sites for young adults.

3. Social Media and Education

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

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

In a qualitative study, Ellefsen (2016) examined the perceptions of students and instructors about using Facebook as an interaction tool at the university level. Results showed that students find interaction through Facebook to be most appealing and that they are ready to adopt such initiative in the future, whereas instructors were split in opinions. Amador and

Amador (2014) investigated how six university students utilized social media to seek academic advice in their studies. Findings indicated that students considered the use of social media was useful for seeking help, and that they were open to the idea of interacting with higher education staff members through web-based platforms.

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

4. Social Media and Foreign Language Learning

While in the past the only way to learn a foreign language was to study the language or travel abroad, nowadays social media offers a variety of ways to do so, from watching videos and listening to theaudio, to reading posts and writing comments. Several studies indicate that social media can positively contribute to the development of foreign language learning both in formal and informal contexts. In their article, Blattner and Fiori (2009) shed the light on how social media websites can offer opportunities to language learners by allowing them to observe and participate in group discussions from all around the world using the target language.

In Another study, Akbari, Eghtesad, and Simons (2012) evaluated students' perceptions regarding the usage of social media for learning. The study enrolled twenty Iranian PhD students in an online English course via Facebook, and the results showed that every participant considered social networks to be a highly effective and potential educational tool. Similarly, Sitthirak (2012) illustrated in his article how Social Media influenced teaching and learning

English, and recommended a reconsideration of teachers' and learners' roles in a Social Media educational environment.

Likewise, Mali (2015) reviewed EFL students' opinions of the advantages and disadvantages of using blogs in writing sessions. The students were able to receive constructive feedback from a wider audience including their classmates and teachers, and they experienced effective learning. Another study was conducted by Wang & Chen (2013), in which they looked into the effects of Facebook on children learning English as a second language. A total of sixty (60) elementary kids were randomly divided into two groups, a Facebook group, and a traditional classroom group. Both groups received the same instruction on communication, collaboration, and information-sharing strategies. The results showed that children from the Facebook group had higher achievements than those from the traditional classroom group.

5. Social Media and Education in Algeria

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

Other studies explored the purposes for which Algerian students used social media, for example, Laifa (2018) claimed that Algerian students tend to use Facebook for social purposes

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

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

6. Challenges for Using Social Media in Education

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

speed internet access with minimal interruptions. Another challenge to social media use is the instructors' attitudes and beliefs toward the integration of these platforms into their teaching environment.

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

Section Two: Theoretical Framework

Learning is a long-term change in behavior that results from a learner's interaction with the outside world. Therefore, learning is a social process that is developed not just by memorizing information, but also by actively interpreting and relating this information to our previous knowledge. This constructing process is the foundation on which learning is built. Social constructivism theory is at the heart of current research on the use of social media for learning purposes. To further frame the study, two models were used, the Affective Filter Hypothesis (AFH) and the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) which are both carried out by a considerable number of researchers. Moreover, this section of Chapter II provides an overview of the key concepts in the study such as informal learning, formal learning, learner's role, teacher's role, attitude, and relates them to the current research.

1. **Social Constructivism**

Social constructivism focuses on individual learning that occurs as a result of group interaction. The origin of this theory is generally attributed to the Russian psychologist Lev Vygotsky. Language, according to Vygotsky (1978), is an external tool used for social interaction in which the learner actively produces knowledge rather than passively receiving information. Knowledge is constructed collaboratively with others in a social context and then acquired by individuals. Because it is built on interaction, discussion, and sharing among learners, social constructivism is also referred to as collaborative learning. Vygotsky defines cooperative learning as an important aspect of developing a deeper understanding, and an essential part of establishing a social constructivist classroom. In such a classroom, students collaborate not only with teachers but also with other students. This teaching technique provides for a variety of groupings and collaborative methods such as whole-class or small-group discussions, and teamwork on specific projects or assignments.

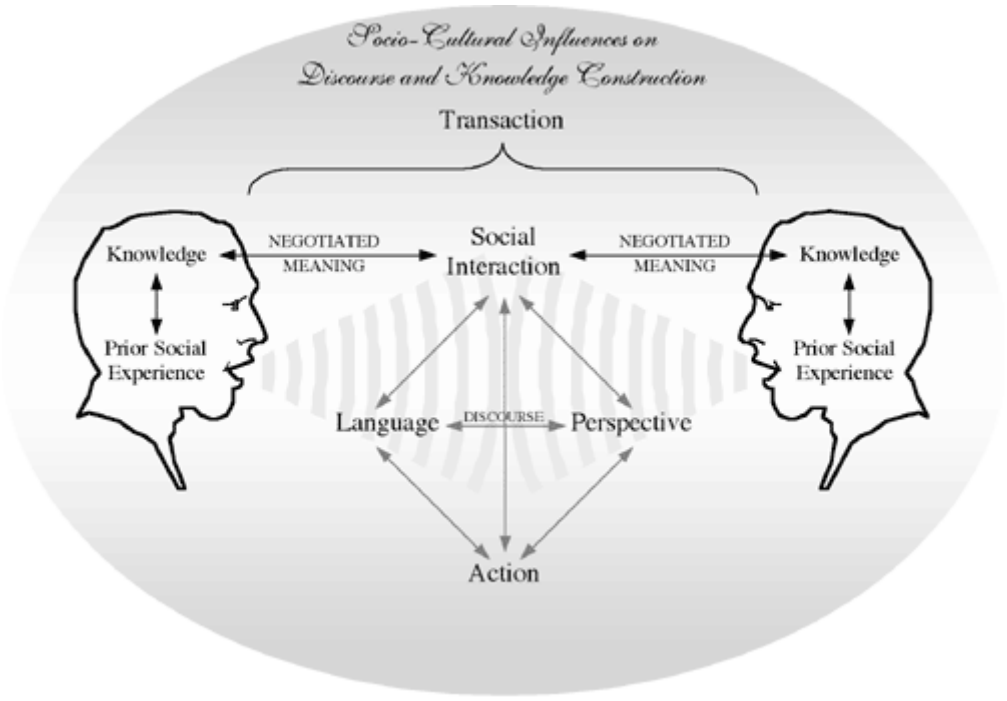

Figure 1. A diagram representing social constructivism(Doolittle, 2001)

2. Social constructivism and social media

The fast growth of social media has piqued the curiosity of scholars from a variety of fields who want to learn more about how new media affects learning. This emerging discipline focuses on collaborative learning and draws on ideas such as constructivism, social learning theory, cooperative learning theory, and, more recently, collaboration theory, which stress group interaction and co-construction of knowledge (Hmelo-Silver, 2006). Social media activities appear to be conceptually associated with social constructivist notions of learning as interaction in a social environment, as well as values of knowledge as decentralized, accessible, and co-constructed among a diverse group of users (Dede, 2008).

In the light of the social constructivism theory, social media can be seen as a process by which learners and teachers can co-construct knowledge, develop necessary skills and interact positively in social relationships. Seo (2013) suggested that social media characteristics foster a constructive teaching and learning philosophy that allows students to create, co-create, and share information with people around the world. Unlike passive traditional methods that focus on the

one-way transfer of information from instructors to students, social media offers a collaborative environment that allows more communication. Moreover, students can cooperate with one another in a collaborative context that is not restricted by the constraints of time and place. According to Dede (2008), learners, in a social media environment, can negotiate the validity of knowledge through peer review in an active community.

3. Social Media and Informal Learning

Social media is usually associated with informal learning as it provides an informal setting for learning to support and enrich formal learning processes and studies (Greenhow & Robelia, 2009). Informal learning results from social interactions as it occurs in many social contexts such as families, communities, and recreational activities. Since the internet has evolved as a social platform, social media have been identified as a potential instrument for facilitating informal learning. Hence, it is reasonable to argue that social media can be utilized to promote informal learning and experiences. Social activities such as exploring, exchanging resources and information, searching the web, and experimenting with new techniques can be considered as a form of informal learning that students get involved in through social media platforms (Lohman, 2006). In the sense of social constructivism theory, informal learning occurs as a result of online social interactions through virtual platforms.

3.1Linking Informal to Formal Learning

Despite the growing amount of research on social media and informal learning, the form of that learning, as well as the connection between formal and informal learning, have received little attention (Merchant, 2012). Henceforth, educators must investigate the best material and pedagogies for bridging these in- and out-of-school. This will allow the transformation of informal use of social media outside of school into applicable activity inside the school. Notably, universities represent an excellent environment to accomplish this. The present generation, known as Generation Y, is the first to spend their whole lives engaged in digital technologies.

Almost every student in the present generation owns a computer or a smartphone. They make great use of communication technologies and social media, and so they became digital natives. The term “digital natives” was first coined by Prensky to describe this generation who are native speakers of the digital language of computers and the internet.

Due to the lack of access to external social opportunities, the current formal learning environment lacks connectedness and openness. Therefore, the use of social media as a learning tool has the potential to connect informal learning to formal learning. Students can use social media platforms to interact with communities, field experts, and peers all around the world. These platforms also provide interactive multimedia channels for learner-learner, learner-instructor, and learner-content interactions (Chen & Bryer, 2012). Users may become more engaged in the learning process as a result of this atmosphere of participation and invention, which also encourages users to cooperate on projects in real-world settings. The use of social media technology to connect students to educational environments in new and significant ways outside of the traditional classroom environment has the potential to help bridge the gap between formal and informal learning.

3.2 Learner’s role

Not only does social constructivism recognize the learner's individuality and complexity, but it also supports and rewards the learner as an important part of the learning process (Wertsch, 1997). Social constructivism promotes the learner's vision of reality, which is shaped by his/her background, culture, and knowledge. Therefore, it is critical to consider the learner's background and culture during the learning process. The learner's background influences the information and knowledge that he/she produces, discovers, and achieves during the learning process. Additionally, the importance of the learner's social interactions is emphasized by social constructivism. Students develop their thinking abilities through interaction with peers, teachers, and other educated members of society.

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

3.3 Teacher's role

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

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

4. The Affective Filter Hypothesis

The affective filter hypothesis (AFH) was Proposed by Krashen (1982). It describes how affective variables influence language learning. The filter affects the rate of language development by influencing how much input the learner is exposed to and how much of that input is turned into intake (see figure 2). Suthiwartnarueput and Wasanasomsithi (2012) explained that the affective filter is an invisible psychological filter that can facilitate or hinder language competence and comprehension. Learners with high affective filters experience low self-confidence and motivation, but high anxiety and stress which hinders linguistic input and language production. On the other hand, learners with low affective filters experience high self-confidence and motivation, but low anxiety and stress which help them obtain and allow a large amount of linguistic input. Moreover, low affective filters encourage risk-taking behavior when practicing and acquiring a second language, especially in a social context.

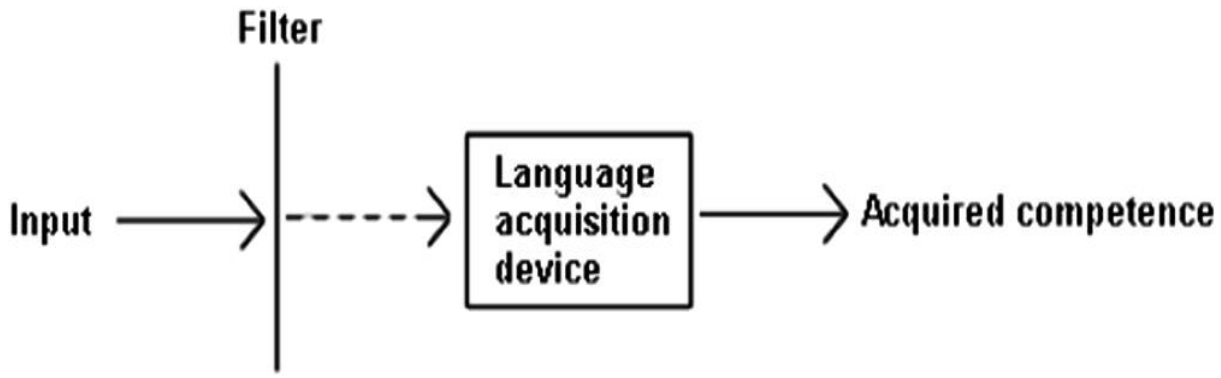

Figure 2. Operation of the "affective filter" Krashen (1982)

Affective factors are believed to be particularly essential in language learning; therefore, this study looks into them. Understanding these affective variables is crucial to comprehending the affective filter and what is supposed to happen as we learn a language. according to some researchers, affective factors such as motivation, self-confidence, anxiety, and attitude are the most significant aspects of language learning.

4.1 Motivation

According to Gardner (1985), motivation refers to a person's desire and enjoyment of learning a language. This desire and enjoyment are combined with an effort to achieve goals. There are two types of motivation intrinsic and extrinsic. Intrinsic or integrative motivation is often referred to as the good sort of motivation that comes from within. This suggests that the learner appreciates the target language, and he/she is willing to participate in order to achieve a goal. Instrumental or extrinsic motivation, also known as negative motivation, is usually characterized by an external desire to get something external, such as passing a test or studying abroad. Motivation is believed to aid in driving and directing behavior in language learning. It also has an impact on how people learn languages, the amount of input they receive, and their level of competency (Oxford, 1992).

4.2 Self-confidence

Another important factor that has a significant effect on a learner's language proficiency is self-confidence. lack of confidence usually leads students to be nervous, timid, hesitant to share their thoughts, and often unable to complete a coherent statement (Ni, 2012). Self-confidence is essential because it pushes learners to try new things and take risks. As a result, a confident student has a better chance of succeeding in language acquisition. With this in mind, creating an atmosphere in which learners approach learning with confidence, and feel comfortable using the target language, will help language learning to be successful.

4.3 Anxiety

Anxiety is another affective aspect to consider which influences language learning regardless of the setting. Students who are anxious in class will be nervous and afraid of cooperating with teachers. As a result, they are unable to focus on the learning topics and thus waste their time and energy. According to Krashen (1981), students who feel more comfortable in the class and like their teacher may look for additional feedback by volunteering. Language

learning research has paid close attention to the study of situational anxiety which is triggered by a specific setting or event, such as public speaking, examinations, or participation in class (Ni, 2012).

4.4 Attitude

Attitude is a crucial notion and component in comprehending any individual's behavior, it is a combination of effort and desire to reach a learning goal, as well as positive attitudes toward language learning (Gardner, 1985). Attitude describes both internal and external dimensions that are linked to a variety of psychological concepts such as likeability vs. dislike ability, good vs. bad, and happy vs. sad. According to Wu (2010), attitude is one of the most important variables in achieving EFL proficiency. Learners with a high level of motivation, desire, and enjoyment in learning the language effectively. To put it another way, learners must be motivated to use and speak the target language in order to learn it effectively.

Educators have long recognized that student attitudes and responses are linked and that there is a positive association between the two. According to Burns (1997), attitudes are ideas that predispose a person to respond in a particular way. Therefore, educators have a challenging job of enhancing and upgrading the curriculum to foster positive student attitudes in the hopes of increasing the learning outcomes.

4.5 Social Media and Affective Filter

Depending on the learners' environment and interactions, the affective filter can be raised or lowered. The impact of social media environments on affective factors has been studied, and the results have consistently been positive (Chotipaktanasook, 2016). It is assumed that using social media creates a low-stakes environment in which learners can test their language abilities with more confidence and motivation. Students can engage with people all over the world by using various social media platforms. This not only aids in the acquisition of new languages but can also provide insight into the culture of such languages. Students may feel less uncomfortable

about language learning by interacting with other users of different language levels using social media.

Another benefit of using social media is that users are not obliged to use their real identities, which can help to reduce anxiety and, as a result, increase motivation and risk-taking. As Kabilan and Zahar (2016) study revealed, participants expressed that they feel more confident and motivated to acquire language when utilizing social media as it creates an environment that does not require face-to-face interaction. Thanks to its features and characteristics, social media has the potential to lower the affective filters which increases the possibility of applying meaningful input, and thus, makes it more likely to acquire the target language.

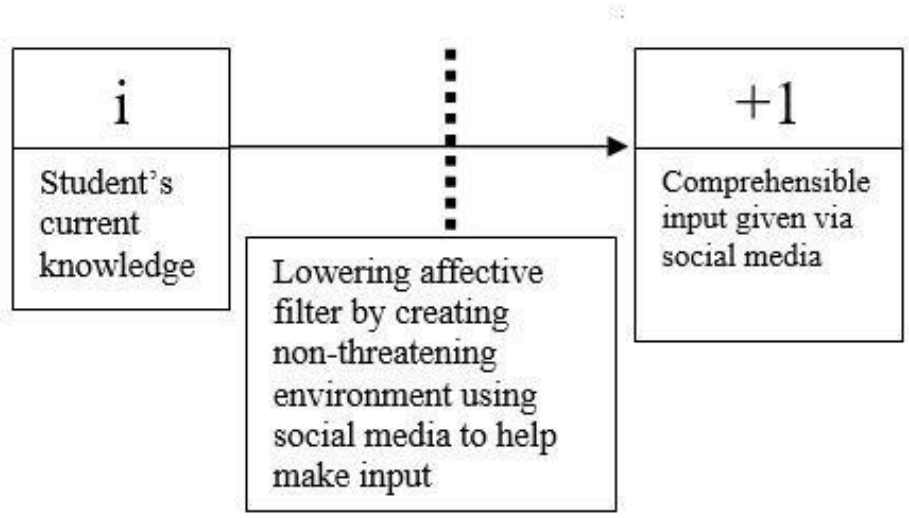

Figure 3. Social media and the Affective Filter(Sivagnanam & Yunus, 2020).

5. Technology Acceptance Model (TAM)

Davis' (1989) Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) is one of the most popular models used in studies related to people's attitudes towards using technology in the field of education. This theory illustrates how users come to accept and use computer-based technology, and suggests that learners' adoption of technology is influenced by two key factors: perceived usefulness (PU) and perceived ease-of-use (PEU). To put it another way, TAM claims that when users are presented with new technology, a number of factors impact their decision on how and

when to use it (Masrom & Hussein, 2008). Moreover, TAM predicts under what circumstances users accept and understand technology.

Perceived usefulness (PU): the degree to which a person believes that implementing a specific system will improve his performance.

Perceived ease-of-use (PEU): a person's perception of how easy it would be to use a technology without spending much physical and mental effort.

According to Davis (1989), a user's intention to utilize a system or technology is determined by its perceived usefulness and ease of use. The user will have a positive attitude technology if he believes it is useful and simple to use. As a result, he will accept and use this technology, in our case social media technology.

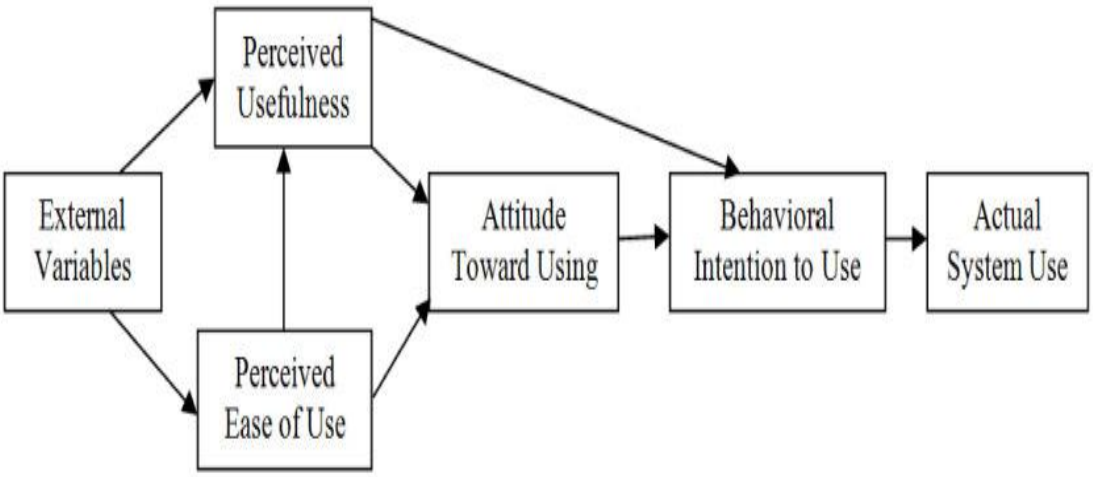

Figure 3: Davis (1989) Technology Acceptance Model (TAM)

Summary and conclusion

The first chapter examined the related literature on social media technologies and learning. The first part of the chapter reviewed the relevant literature on social media and how it connects to learning. The researcher correlated the findings of previous studies and applied them to the current study. The second part gave an outline of the theoretical framework of the study which is based on the social constructivism theory and the Affective Filter Hypothesis.

In conclusion, despite the research that has been made on the potential of social media in educational settings, more information on how students use these platforms for learning, both formally and informally, is needed. More data on students' attitudes towards social media and the innovative ways they are already using it in their learning should help educators and administrators better integrate these tools into the learning-teaching process.

In Chapter 2, a description of the methodology used for this research will be provided. The methodology chapter includes a description of the research setting, participants, data collection instruments, study procedure, and methods of data analysis.

Chapter II

Research Methodology

Introduction

Recently, the use of social media in the field of education has increasingly attracted the attention of researchers. This study is designed to investigate the attitudes of EFL students towards using social media to support their learning, particularly English students at the University of Ghardaia. This chapter presents the methods and procedures that were used to conduct this study. It includes research design, population and sample, data collection, and research instrument used in the study. It also describes data analysis methods, and discusses the results in relation to the research questions and hypotheses proposed by the researcher.

1. Research Design

To best achieve the research objectives, a quantitative research design method was used based on an online survey questionnaire. The survey was cross-sectional which is best suited to studies aimed at investigating attitudes by taking a cross-section of the population at one time. This method was chosen by the researcher since it allows him to collect data from a large number of respondents in a short period of time. To analyze collected data, descriptive and inferential statistical analyses were carried out using the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS).

2. Research Hypotheses

The current study aims to test the following hypotheses:

H1: EFL students have positive attitudes towards the use of social media for learning purposes.

H2: Students believe that using social media can lower the affective factors and increase motivation and self-confidence.

H3: There is a significant difference in students' attitudes based on age, gender, and level of study.

3. Population and Sample

The population of the study consisted of EFL students at the University of Ghardaia during the second semester of the academic year 2021/2022. Voluntarily sampling was employed to choose the sample as the study used a Google Forms online survey questionnaire. Students from all levels were asked to volunteer for the survey. The sample of the study consisted of 110 students (N=110) who volunteered to complete the survey questionnaire.

4. Data Collection

The primary data for this research was self-reported data collected from the participants' answers to the online survey questionnaire. According to Dörnyei and Taguchi (2009), a questionnaire is one of the most common methods of data collection in second language research. It provides respondents with a series of questions to which they respond by writing their own answers or by selecting from already prepared answers. Questionnaires are popular because they are simple to create, adaptable, and capable of collecting a significant amount of data from a large number of participants.

To achieve the main purpose of the study, the researcher developed a suitable questionnaire through reviewing the related literature. The questionnaire was constructed using Google Forms, then distributed electronically. The survey questions were mostly close-ended questions with few open-ended questions. Additionally, a five-point Likert scale was used for most parts of the instrument. According to Dörnyei and Taguchi (2009), Likert scales are a collection of statements that focus on people's attitudes towards the issue in question. The total scale scores are calculated by adding the item scores for similar questions. This is why these scales are often known as summative scales which are based on the assumption that each statement on the scale has equal attitudinal value.

4.1 Structure and content of the instrument

The questionnaire opened with an introduction that provided general information

including the title and purpose of the study. The opening greeting was designed to make the respondents feel more comfortable with the survey, and thus increase the response rate by ensuring confidentiality. The present questionnaire was composed of four sections:

Section one: Demographic information

This section was composed of five items that sought to collect demographic information about the respondents. The first three items of this section asked the students about their age, gender, and current level of study of the students. The last two items asked the students whether or not they possess personal computers and smart devices.

Section two: Social media usage

This section aimed to investigate the popular social media platforms used by the respondents and their frequency of use using multiple response options and two open-ended questions. This section also contained two five-point Likert scales: the purpose of use, and level of experience with online platforms.

Section three: Perceptions

This section sought to investigate learners' attitudes and perceptions toward the use of social media. The section consisted of 22 statements answered on a five-point Likert scale (1=Strongly Disagree, 2=Disagree, 3=Uncertain, 4=Agree, 5=Strongly Agree). The first part consisted of three statements created to investigate the perceived ease of use (PEU) of social media. The second part is made of six questions that tend to explore the perceived usefulness (PU) of these platforms. The third part is composed of four statements designed to identify the affective factors related to the use of social media. The fourth part also comprised four statements built to look into the negative aspects of online learning. However, the fifth part was created to inspect the challenges that may face students when using social media for learning. The last statement of this section was designed to examine to what extent the students recommend the use of these websites as learning tools.

Section four: Opinionnaire

The last section aimed to inspect whether the academic courses include activities that involve the use of social media, and whether or not students would like the teachers to include more of such activities. The section also included an open-ended question that asked the students to make their own suggestions on how to better use social media in the educational field.

5. Data Analysis

Designing and implementing data gathering methods is essentially the first half of the research process. However, after completing that phase, the following step is to analyze the data. In this study, the researcher adopted descriptive and inferential statistics to analyze, describe, interpret, and explore the data collected from the questionnaire. Descriptive statistics provide information about the mean, standard deviation, frequencies, and the percentage of respondents per category. However, Inferential statistics were used to predict the relationship between the variables. The researcher used SPSS software to analyze the collected data according to the research questions and hypotheses of this study. Moreover, the results of the five-point Likert-scale were interpreted based on the following mean scores (see table 1).

Table 1. Five-point Likert scale interpretation

Score range	Mean rating	Interpretation
4.21-5.00	strongly agree	very positive
3.41-4.20	Agree	Positive
2.61-3.40	Neutral	Moderate
1.81-2.60	Disagree	Negative
1.00-1.80	strongly disagree	Very negative

5.1 Reliability of the instrument

According to Field (2013), reliability is whether an instrument can be interpreted consistently across different situations. Reliability determines if the research instrument consistently provides the same results. Data was collected from the Online Survey questionnaire, then analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) software. Cronbach's

Alpha was calculated and produced an internal consistency of more than 0.7 for all the scales (**α=.72, .83, .86**). Therefore, the instrument was reported to be valid, reliable, and efficient.

Table 2. Reliability Statistics

	Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
Experience with social media	.725	6
Purpose of using social media	.836	11
Perceptions towards social media use for learning	.860	22

6. Results

The following section is devoted to the analysis of data collected from the students' questionnaire. In order to investigate their attitudes and perceptions towards using social media for learning purposes, the participants were asked to complete a survey questionnaire. As mentioned before, the questionnaire comprises four sections dealing with different research angles. Accordingly, the analysis of these responses will consider each item in a respective manner.

Section one: Demographic Information

This section prompts to collect general demographic information about the participants' gender, age, level of study, possession of personal computers, and possession of smart devices.

Item 1: Age

This question reveals the age of the students. Results showed that 45 participants were aged under 20 (40.9%), 48 participants were aged 20-25 (43.6%), and 12 participants were aged 26-30 (10.9%). Moreover, four participants were aged 31-40 (3.6%), and only one participant was aged above 40 (0.9%).

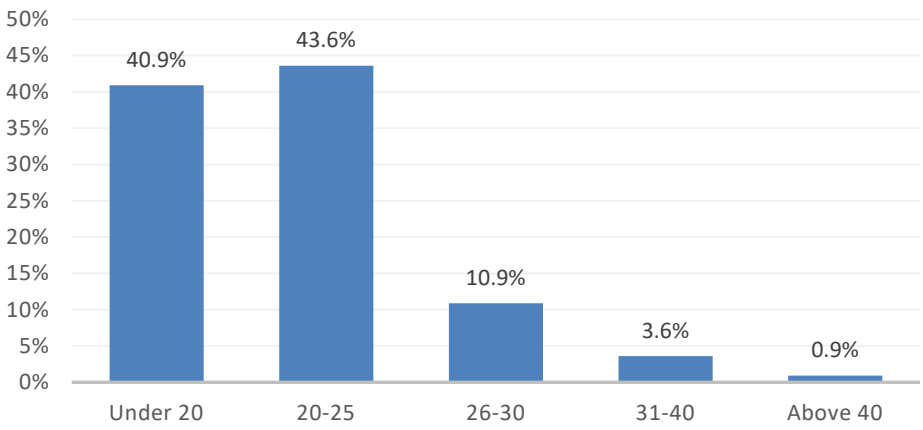

Figure 4. Participants' age

Item 2: Gender

This question reveals the students' gender. The total number of participants in the survey was 110 students; 35 males (31.8%), and 75 females (68.2%).

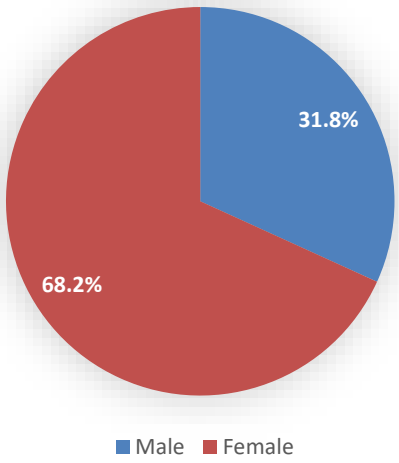

Figure 5. Participants' gender

Item 3: Level of study

Participants were asked to report their current level of study (1=1st year, 2=2nd year, 3=3rd year, 4=Master1, 5=Master2). As shown in the table below, 43 participants were 1st-year students (39.1%), 20 participants were 2nd-year students (18.2%), and 21 were 3rd-year students (19.1%). For the master's level, nine participants were Master1 students (8.2%), and 17 were Master2 students (15.5%).

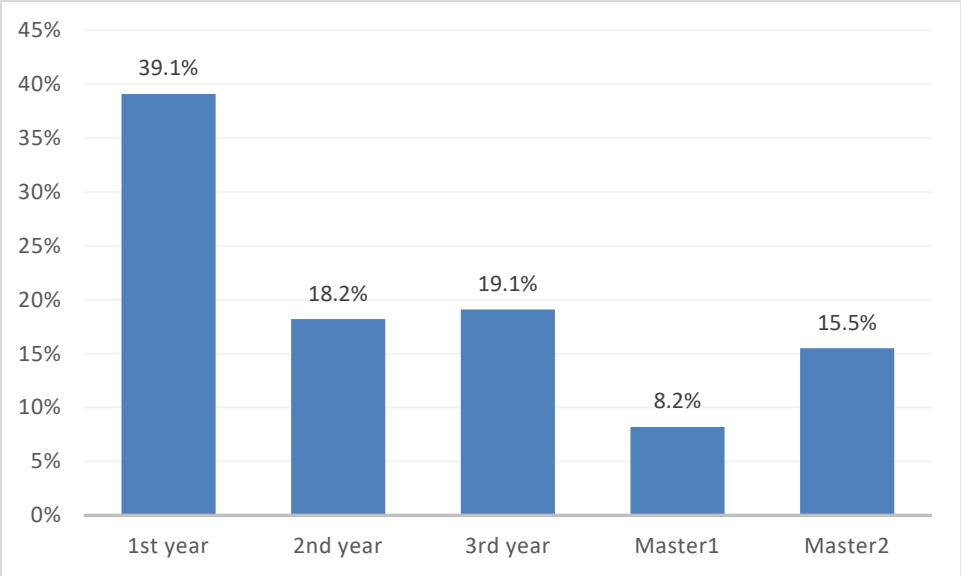

Figure 6. Participants' level of study

Item 4: Possession of personal computers

Participants were asked whether or not they possessed a personal computer. Results showed that the majority of the participants have a personal computer. Exactly, 74 respondents reported that they have a personal computer at home (67%), compared with 36 who reported not having a personal computer (33%).

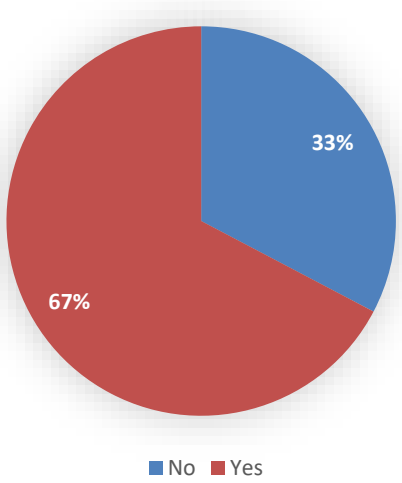

Figure 7. Participants' possession of personal computers

Item5: Possession of smart devices

This item asked the participants to report whether or not they have any of the smart devices such as smartphones and tablets. Results showed that nearly all participants (108) stated

that they have smart devices (98%), while two students stated that they did not own a smartphone (2%).

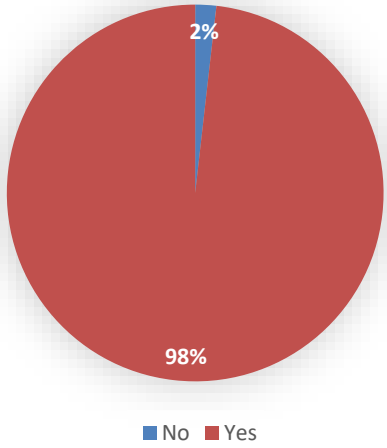

Figure 8. Participants' possession of smart devices

Section two: Social Media Usage

A. Having accounts

This question asked the respondents to answer a yes or no question about whether or not they have social media accounts. The vast majority of the participants (109) reported that they have at least a valid social media account (99%). However, one participant reported not having any active account (1%).

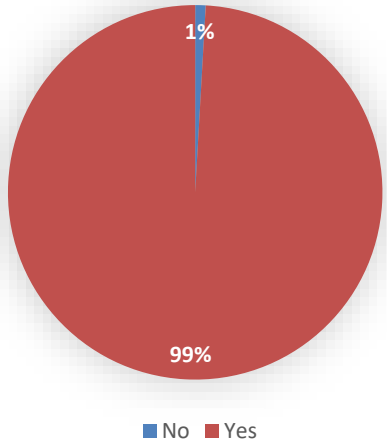

Figure 9. Do you have any social media accounts?

B. Preferred networks

In this question, students were asked to select which platforms they prefer to use, with the option of selecting multiple responses. This means that each participant can choose more than one platform (1=Facebook, 2=YouTube, 3=Twitter, 4=WhatsApp, 5=Instagram, 6=other). However, when selecting "Other", participants are instructed to specify which other platforms they prefer. Results show that participants selected multiple platforms with a total number of cases N=333. As shown in the table below, the most popular platform was Instagram which was selected by 89 students (80.9%). The second most popular platform was Facebook which was selected by 85 participants (77.3%), followed by YouTube which was selected by 78students (70.9%). Additionally, 42 students selected WhatsApp (38.2%), whereas 22 selected "Other" (20%). The most frequent platforms that emerged from the students' answers to "Other" were Telegram, TikTok, Viber, and Reddit. Results also showed that Twitter was the least popular platform which was selected by 17 participants (15.5%).

Table 3. Preferred Platforms

		Responses		Percent of
		N	Percent	Cases
Platform	Instagram	89	26.7%	80.9%
	Facebook	85	25.5%	77.3%
	YouTube	78	23.4%	70.9%
	WhatsApp	42	12.6%	38.2%
	Other	22	6.6%	20.0%
	Twitter	17	5.1%	15.5%
Total		333	100.0%	302.7%

a. Dichotomy group tabulated at value 1.

C. Frequency of use

In this item, the participants were asked to describe how frequently they use the popular platforms. A five-point Likert scale was used to measure the frequency of use (1=never, 2=rarely, 3=often, 4=always, 5=more). As shown in table 9, results revealed that Instagram is the most frequently used platform by the students (M=3.68, SD=1.05), followed by YouTube

(M=3.49, SD=0.87), Facebook (M=3.44, SD=0.95), Other (M=2.43, SD=1.24), WhatsApp (M=2.23, SD=1.15), and lastly Twitter (M=1.65, SD=1.08).

Table 4. Frequency of using social media

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Instagram	105	1	5	3.68	1.052
YouTube	105	1	5	3.49	.878
Facebook	109	1	5	3.44	.957
Other	60	1	5	2.43	1.240
WhatsApp	91	1	5	2.23	1.155
Twitter	85	1	5	1.65	1.088

D. Purpose of use

This question consisted of 11 items that asked the participants to state the purpose for which they usually utilize social media platforms. A five-point Likert scale was used for each item (1=never, 2=rarely, 3=often, 4=sometimes, 5=always). As shown in Table 5, the most common purpose of use stated by the participants was “following updates from the university administration” (M=3.84, SD=1.16). The second highest-rated item was watching funny content (M=3.61, SD=1.17), followed by “entertainment” (M=3.56, SD=1.22), and “informal learning” (M=3.43, SD=1.18). The next most common purpose was “searching for online courses” (M=3.25, SD=1.20), followed by “further understanding of academic content” (M=3.01, SD=1.20), “sharing posts” (M=2.99, SD=1.13), and “seeking help from peers and teachers” (M=2.97, SD=1.12). Remarkably, the least common purposes reported by the participants were “completing given assignments” (M=2.88, SD=1.21), “online group discussions” (M=2.83, SD=1.21), and finally “collaborative learning” (M=2.74, SD=1.31).

Table 5. Purpose of using social media

		N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
1.	Following updates from the administration	110	2	5	3.84	1.162
2.	Watching funny content	110	1	5	3.61	1.174
3.	Entertainment	110	1	5	3.56	1.223
4.	Informal learning	110	1	5	3.43	1.184
5.	Searching for online courses	110	1	5	3.25	1.207
6.	Further understanding of the academic content	110	1	5	3.01	1.208
7.	Sharing content	110	1	5	2.99	1.137
8.	Seeking help from colleagues and teachers	110	1	5	2.97	1.121
9.	Completing given assignments	110	1	5	2.88	1.210
10.	Online group discussions	110	1	5	2.83	1.218
11.	Collaborative learning	110	1	5	2.74	1.318
	Valid N (listwise)	110				

E. Level of experience with social media

This question was designed to determine the participants' level of experience with social media technologies. Results showed that participants are more experienced in using YouTube (M=4.10, SD=0.87), followed by Facebook (M=3.98, SD=0.93), Instagram (Mean=3.95, SD=1.12), and WhatsApp (M=3.19, SD=1.29). Results also showed that the participants have a moderate level of experience in using "Other" platforms (M=3.19, SD=1.37), and a low level of experience in using Twitter (Mean=2.35, SD=1.29).

Table 6. Participants' level of experience with social media technologies

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
YouTube	106	1	5	4.10	.872
Facebook	109	1	5	3.98	.933
Instagram	104	1	5	3.95	1.127
WhatsApp	96	1	5	3.19	1.292
Other	58	1	5	3.16	1.374
Twitter	88	1	5	2.35	1.296
Valid N (listwise)	52				

Section Three: Perceptions

This section was composed of four parts. Each part consisted of a five-point Likert scale (1=Strongly Disagree, 2=Disagree, 3=Uncertain, 4=Agree, 5=Strongly Agree).

A. Perceived ease of use

This part consisted of three items designed to ask the participants to what degree they find it easy to use social media platforms. As shown in table12, the overall mean was high (M=3.92) with a standard deviation (SD=.706). The highest-rated item was "I find it easy to use social media platforms" (M=4.12, SD=.906), followed by "social media can be easily used for learning purposes" (M=3.87, SD=.987), and finally "my interactions through social media are clear and understandable" (M=3.76, SD=.801).

Table 7. Perceived ease of use of social media

	N	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Deviation
1. I find it easy to use social media platforms	110	1	5	4.12	.906
2. Social media can be easily used for learning purposes	110	1	5	3.87	.987
3. My interactions through social media are clear and understandable	110	2	5	3.76	.801
Valid N (listwise)	110				
Overall	110	2	5	3.92	.706

B. Perceived usefulness

The participants were asked to what extent they agree with six questions on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1=strongly disagree, to 5=strongly agree. Results showed that the overall mean of perceived usefulness is high (M=3.80) with a standard deviation (SD=.702). As shown in Table 10, the highest-rated useful feature of social media reported by the participants was developing listening skills (M=4.25, SD=.921). The second highest-rated feature was improving critical thinking (M=3.85, SD=.985), followed by improving the ability to communicate with others (M=3.72, SD=1.15). The fourth highest rated item was convenience (M=3.66, SD=1.086), followed by developing writing and reading skills (M=3.65, SD=1.019), and productivity in class (M=3.65, SD=1.046) which was relatively high.

Table 8. Perceived usefulness of social media

	N	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Deviation
1. Watching videos and listening to audio have developed my listening skills	110	1	5	4.25	.921
2. Debating ideas online and exchanging opinions with others improves my critical thinking	110	1	5	3.85	.985
3. Using social media has improved my ability to communicate with others	110	1	5	3.72	1.150
4. For me, social media is more convenient than other communication tools	110	1	5	3.66	1.086
5. I have developed my writing and reading skills through communication via social media	110	1	5	3.65	1.019
6. Using social media makes me more productive in language classes	110	1	5	3.65	1.046
Overall	110	2	5	3.80	.702

C. Affective factors

The participants were asked to what extent they agree with six questions on a five-point Likert scale. As shown in Table14, the respondents agreed that online platforms motivate them to learn more than traditional methods do (M=3.65, SD=1.154). Confidence also scored a high rate (M=3.62, SD=1.084), and less anxiety (M=3.44, SD=1.169). However, for the last question, the respondents were unsure that using social media may cause distraction or lowering levels of concentration (M=2.88, SD=1.216).

Table 9. Affective factors associated with social media

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
1. Online platforms motivate me to learn more than traditional methods	110	1	5	3.65	1.154
2. I feel more confident when using these platforms for learning	110	1	5	3.62	1.084
3. I feel less anxious when I communicate online	110	1	5	3.44	1.169
4. Using social media for learning distracts me and lowers my level of concentration	110	1	5	2.91	1.216
Valid N (listwise)	110				
Overall	110	1	5	3.40	.761

D. Attitudes

The participants were asked to what extent they agree with four statements on a five-point Likert scale. Results showed that the overall mean of attitudes is positive (M=3.69, SD=.692). As shown in table 15, the students agreed that online communication with classmates and teachers is a good learning experience (M=3.82, SD=.969). For the second statement, respondents expressed their positive attitude towards online platforms (M=3.73, SD=.928). Also, the third statement which is related to willingness to participate scored a relatively positive score (M=3.63, SD=1.012). However, the fourth statement scored the lowest mean in this category (M=3.57, SD=1.184) which is somewhat moderate.

Table 10. Attitudes towards using social media for learning

	N	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Deviation
1. Online communication with classmates and teachers is a good learning experience	110	1	5	3.82	.969
2. I have a positive attitude towards the use of social media for learning	110	1	5	3.73	.928
3. I feel more willing to participate and express my ideas through online platforms	110	1	5	3.63	1.012
4. It is a waste of time to use these platforms as learning tools	110	1	5	3.57	1.184
Overall	110	1	5	3.69	.692

E. Challenges

This subscale was designed to examine the challenges that may face students when using online platforms for learning. The subscale is composed of four statements answered on a five-point Likert scale. As shown in table 16, the first statement related to cyber-bullying and addiction scored the highest mean (M=3.82, SD=1.159). The second statement related to experience in using technology also scored a high mean of (M=3.76, SD=.918). However, the third statement, “I am concerned about using technology due to privacy and security issues” scored a moderate mean (M=3.29, SD=1.160). Finally, the fourth statement associated with high-speed internet access has also scored a moderate mean of (M=3.10, SD=1.125).

Table 11. Challenges for using social media in learning

		N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
1.	Social media has some negative aspects such as cyber-bullying and addiction	110	1	5	3.82	1.159
2.	I am sufficiently experienced in using technology	110	1	5	3.76	.918
3.	I am concerned about using technology due to privacy and security issues	110	1	5	3.29	1.160
4.	I have high-speed internet access with minimal interruptions	110	1	5	3.10	1.125
	Valid N (listwise)	110				

Section four: Opinionnaire

This section was designed to test the students' recommendations and suggestions to use social media effectively in the learning environment.

Item1: Recommending the use of social media

The participants were asked to what extent they agree with recommending the use of social media to facilitate learning. To measure their attitude, a five-point Likert scale was used (1=strongly disagree, 2=disagree, 3=Uncertain, 4=agree, 5=strongly agree). The overall mean was calculated which was relatively high (M=3.76) with a standard deviation (SD=1.022) (see table 14). In detail as shown in figure 11, 49 participants agreed with the statement (45%), 26 strongly agreed (24%), and 22 were neutral (20%). However, nine participants disagreed with recommending the use of social media for learning (8%), and four of them strongly disagreed (4%).

Table 12.Overall statistics for recommending social media.

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Recommending social media	110	1	5	3.76	1.022
Valid N (listwise)	110				

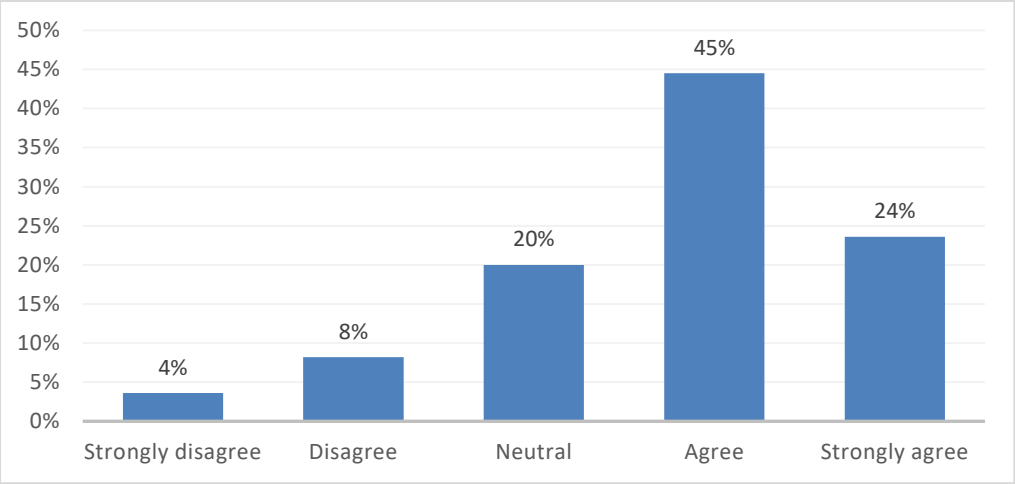

Figure 10. Recommending the use of social media for learning

Item2: Do university courses include activities that involve the use of social media?

The students were asked to answer whether or not university courses include activities that involve the use of social media (1=No, 2=Yes). Results showed that 61 students confirmed that some activities did include the use of social media (55%), while 49 students disproved the statement (44%).

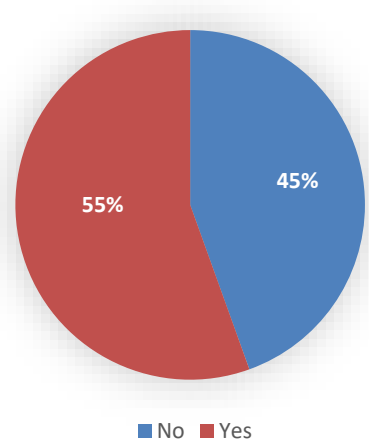

Figure 11. Do university courses include activities that involve the use of social media?

Item3: Should teachers include more activities that involve the use of social media?

This question aimed to ask the students whether or not they would like their teachers to include more activities that involve the use of social media. Results showed that 92 students recommended more of such activities (84%), while 18 disapproved of the idea (16%).

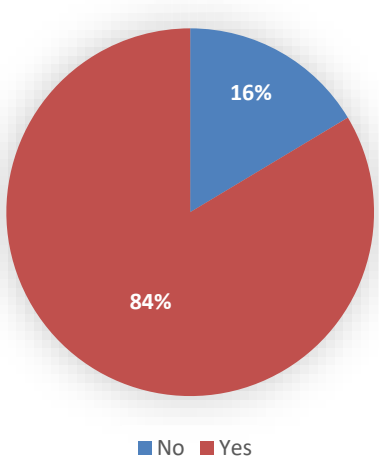

Figure 12. Should more activities involve the use of social media?

Item4 suggestions

The last item of the survey was an open-ended question that asked the participants to make their suggestions for better usage of social media in the educational field. Most of the participants suggested that social media should be more used inside and outside the classroom as tools to aid the learning environment. They recommended more creation and innovation of e-learning content such as posting content by teachers in the forms of lectures and videos. They also suggested more activities and assignments that involve the use of online platforms. Moreover, few respondents suggested the association of these activities with games and quizzes.

Other participants proposed more use of applications and websites such as Google classroom, Zoom, and YouTube. They recommended the use of online meetings and group discussions via these platforms which involve engaging and interacting with peers of the same interests. Also, students emphasized more contact among teacher-students via emails and other tools to send courses, and keep informed of the latest announcements.

Over and above that, some participants suggested raising awareness about the advantages and disadvantages of social media among both students and teachers. For students, they suggested more education about the downsides of social networks in order to use them correctly, and time monitoring to avoid excessive use. For teachers, they recommended more awareness

regarding the integration of social media in education that is not necessarily negative, but rather could be beneficial for the learning process.

Nevertheless, few participants were conservative and disapproved of the use of social networks for learning. They expressed their fear of time-wasting, and non-accessibility to high-speed internet. Therefore, they suggested the use of other methods such as the traditional method.

7. Discussion of the Findings

This section discusses the findings of the study. First, the research questions were re-visited and addressed according to the findings of this thesis. The following research questions were proposed for the study:

Q1: What are the students' attitudes towards using social media for learning purposes?

Q2: What are the most social networking sites used by students, and what do they use these platforms for?

Q3: What do students perceive as advantages or disadvantages of social media, and what suggestions do they make for better use of online platforms to support learning?

Q4: Do factors like age, gender, and level of study affect the overall attitudes of students regarding the use of social media for learning?

7.1 Findings in relation to Q1:

The findings of this study revealed that students have positive attitudes towards the use of social media for learning and consider it a good learning experience. Participants expressed that using these platforms for learning increases their willingness to participate in classes. This is consistent with findings in the literature by Mao (2014) which revealed that students showed positive attitudes, and believed that social media could improve their learning and make the assignments more enjoyable.

This is in line with the social constructivism theory by Vygotsky (1978) that views learning as social and accomplished through social interactions. Consequently, the findings support the first hypothesis (**H1**) suggested by the researcher which says that students have positive attitudes towards the use of social media for learning.

Moreover, data showed that participants believe that social networks increase motivation and confidence, and lower the level of anxiety. The results are consistent with the second hypothesis (**H2**) which says that students assume social media features to lower the affective factors. This is also in line with chotipaktanasook's (2016) findings which confirmed that social networks enhance motivation and willingness to communicate. Combining the results of the current research with the affective filter hypothesis by Krashen (1982), it is evident that the implementation of social media in education may help the students in obtaining and allowing a significant amount of language input.

7.2 Findings in relation to Q2:

Based on the data of the study, it was showed the vast majority of the students (99.1%) have smart devices, and at least one social media account that they use on a daily basis. Findings also showed that the most popular platforms among students are Instagram, Facebook, and YouTube respectively. This result is consistent with participants' responses to their level of experience with social media tools and frequency of use. Results also revealed that the students use these platforms mainly to follow the latest updates from the university administration, for entertainment, and academic purposes.

Data also showed that students have a high level of experience in using these platforms. Participants reported that these online platforms are easy to use and very useful particularly in developing listening skills and critical thinking. This is consistent with TAM by Davis (1989) that says individuals have good attitudes about technology when they consider it to be simple to use and useful.

7.3 Findings in relation to Q3:

Results showed that students perceive using social media as advantageous. Based on the participants' responses, developing listening skills was the highest-ranked feature of social media. Convenience, developing reading and writing skills, developing critical thinking and ability to communicate, and productivity in the classroom were associated with the advantages of using social media for learning.

Nevertheless, results also showed that respondents reported some negative effects of social media. The fear of cyber-bullying and addiction were the most frequent answers associated with the disadvantages of online platforms. This supports the findings by Blizak et al.(2020) who looked at the perspectives of Algerian students regarding the shift to online learning during the COVID-19 pandemic. Their findings revealed that students are dubious of this new pedagogy and prefer traditional methods. Moreover, data from the current study revealed that some students have moderate access to high-speed internet. This may be a challenge for administrators to improve the quality of internet access for everyone.

Concerning the suggestion made by students for more effective use of social media to aid learning, participants recommended more integration of social media in the learning environment. They suggested more creation and innovation of e-learning content and more activities and assignments that involve using online platforms such as Google Classroom, Zoom, and YouTube. They also suggested raising awareness about the advantages and disadvantages of social networks among both students and teachers.

7.4Findings in relation to Q4:

In order to answer the research question (**Q4**), and to test the hypothesis (**H3**) proposed by the researcher, inferential statistics were used. Inferential statistics is a method for using collected data from a sample to make judgments, predictions, or conclusions from a population, as well as comparing different groups. In the current study, the researcher examined the

relationship between the independent variables (gender, age, level of study), and the dependent variables (purpose of use, level of experience, perceptions). The analysis was conducted using (p<0.05) as the level of statistical significance.

7.4.1 Differences based on gender

In the process of examining the relationship between variables, the researcher chose the Mann-Whitney U test to determine whether attitudes towards the use of social media for learning differ based on gender. According to Nachar (2008), the Mann-Whitney U test is a nonparametric test used to compare differences between two independent groups when there is no normal distribution of the dependent variables. In our case, the two independent groups are males and females, whereas the dependent variables are the purpose of use, level of experience, and perceptions. As shown in the table below, the 2-tailed p-value is higher than 0.05 (p>0.05) for all the subscales. For purpose of use (U = 1117.5, p= 0.210), for level of experience (U = 1245, p= 0.745), and for perceptions (U = 1243.5, p= 0.658). The Mann-Whitney U test revealed that there was no statistically significant difference in students' attitudes between males and females.

Table 13. Mann-Whitney U test statistics

	Purpose of use	Level of experience	Perceptions
Mann-Whitney U	1117.500	1245.000	1243.500
Wilcoxon W	1747.500	4020.000	4093.500
Z	-1.252	-.326	-.443
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	.210	.745	.658

a. Grouping Variable: Gender

7.4.2 Differences based on Age

To examine the relationship between variables, the analysis of variance One-Way ANOVA was used. The analysis of variance (ANOVA) is used to compare the means of two or more groups on the dependent variable(Field, 2013). The independent variable here is the age of students, whereas the dependent variables are the purpose of use, level of experience, and

perceptions. Results showed that for purpose of use ($F(4, 105) = [0.879]$, $p = 0.479$), for level of experience ($F(4, 105) = [0.604]$, $p = 0.661$), and for the perceptions ($F(4, 105) = [0.885]$, $p = 0.475$). The One-Way ANOVA test showed that the *p*-value is higher than 0.05 ($p>0.05$) for all the subscales which means that there is no significant difference in students' attitudes based on age.

Table 14. ANOVA test based on age

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig
Purpose of use	Between Groups	1.917	4	.479	.879	.479
	Within Groups	57.230	105	.545		
	Total	59.146	109			
Level of experience	Between Groups	1.432	4	.358	.604	.661
	Within Groups	61.661	104	.593		
	Total	63.092	108			
Perceptions	Between Groups	.995	4	.249	.885	.475
	Within Groups	29.508	105	.281		
	Total	30.503	109			

df: degrees of freedom. F: F-ratio. Sig: p-value

7.4.3 Differences based on Level of study

The same analysis of variance One-Way ANOVA was used to examine the relationship between variables. Once again, the dependent variables are the purpose of use, level of experience, and perceptions whereas the independent variable here is the participants' level of study. Results revealed that the *p*-value is higher than 0.05 ($p>0.05$) for all the subscales. For purpose of use ($F(4, 105) = [0.879]$, $p = 0.479$), for level of experience the ($F(4, 105) = [0.604]$, $p = 0.661$), and for the perceptions ($F(4, 105) = [0.885]$, $p = 0.475$). The One-Way ANOVA test indicated that there was no statistically significant difference in students' attitudes based on the Level of study.

Table 15. One-Way ANOVA test based on Level of study

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Purpose of use	Between Groups	2.944	4	.736	1.375	.248
	Within Groups	56.202	105	.535		
	Total	59.146	109			
Level of experience	Between Groups	.547	4	.137	.227	.922
	Within Groups	62.545	104	.601		
	Total	63.092	108			
Perceptions	Between Groups	.833	4	.208	.737	.569
	Within Groups	29.670	105	.283		
	Total	30.503	109			

The inferential statistics were performed using a Mann-Whitney U test and One-Way ANOVA test to examine the relationship between variables. Results revealed that there was no statistically significant difference in the overall attitudes of students based on age, gender, or Level of study. The findings, therefore, rejected the hypothesis (**H3**) proposed by the researcher which said that factors like gender, age, and level of study may affect the overall attitudes of students.

Summary and conclusion

Overall, this chapter outlined the methodology of the present study. Initially, it provided an overview of the research methodology adopted in this study including a research design in which a quantitative method was used. The chapter also presented the population and sample of the study, data collection, and instrument used for gathering data, mainly an online survey questionnaire. Also, a description of the data analysis methods was provided which contained both descriptive and inferential statistics. Finally, it presented the discussion of the findings with regard to the research questions and hypotheses. Accordingly, the chapter was an attempt to answer the research questions and verify the suggested hypotheses.

General Conclusion

This research was an exploration of EFL students' attitudes towards the use of social media for learning purposes. The participants of the study were 110 EFL students from the department of English of the University of Ghardaia. The purpose of the study was to investigate their attitudes and perceptions regarding online platforms as learning tools, and suggestions they make for better usage of such tools. The researcher used a well-established quantitative research method including descriptive and inferential analyses of the data collected from the online survey questionnaire. The aim was an attempt to answer the research questions and verify the suggested hypotheses

The results of this study strongly indicated that EFL students at the University of Ghardaia have positive attitudes towards the use of social networks for learning purposes. EFL students are already using these platforms on a daily basis to follow the latest announcements from the university administration, for entertainment, and to learn in both formal and informal contexts. The participants of this study viewed social media technologies as easy-to-use and very useful. Convenience, developing listening, reading, and writing skills, along with critical thinking and the ability to communicate were associated with the advantages of using social media for learning.

The study indicated that the interactive features of social media were motivating and engaging for students. Nevertheless, some disadvantages of social media such as cyber-bullying, addiction, security, and privacy issues were noted. The results of this study clearly suggested that social media platforms could be powerful tools for both teaching and learning. Participants made several suggestions for both educators and students about how to best use these networks for learning. They suggested that educators must include more activities and assignments that involve using social networks, without neglecting to set specific guidelines for such use in a given class to maintain focus and productivity. Also, they suggested that educators should limit

the number of platforms to be used, and focus on more useful ones such as Google Classroom, Zoom, and YouTube. Respondents emphasized on time management skills and focus that are critical for students to avoid distraction and time-wasting. They also stressed that students need to know how to establish the credibility of the information they find via social media platforms. Finally, both educators and students must be aware of the impact of online platforms in order to use them correctly and minimize their negative effects.

The findings of the study supported the social constructivism theory. Social media platforms were consistently reported as being central to working with others to solve problems and clarify concepts and issues. The importance of interaction in the learning process reported by the participants in this study provided support for social constructivism theory. Students highlighted the role of interaction within structures to create a rich learning experience. Social constructivism posits that people create meaning through interactions. Furthermore, these interactive experiences create new knowledge, perceptions, and relationships with both physical and social environments.

The findings of this study could assist educators and scholars in the field of education. They could use these findings to develop more effective instructional strategies that integrate the use of social media platforms into physical and virtual classrooms. Nevertheless, the researcher recommends scholars and educators to carry out more research on learners' and teachers' perceptions and attitudes toward using different kinds of technologies for educational purposes, especially in the field of foreign languages. Conducting such future studies would contribute to the enhancement of higher education in Algeria.

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Appendix

Students' questionnaire

Dear students,

You are kindly asked to answer the following questionnaire which is designed to investigate the students' attitudes toward the use of social media for learning purposes. Your contribution will be of great help to the success of this research. All responses will be used for research purposes only and will be kept confidential. Thank you very much for your time and cooperation.

1. Age *
   - ◯ Under 20
   - ◯ 20-25
   - ◯ 26-30
   - ◯ 31-40
   - ◯ above 40

2. Gender *
   - ◯ Male
   - ◯ Female

3. Level *
   - ◯ 1st year
   - ◯ 2nd year
   - ◯ 3rd year
   - ◯ Master 1
   - ◯ Master 2

4. Do you have a personal computer (PC)? *
   - ◯ Yes
   - ◯ No

5. Do you have a smart phone or a tablet? *
   - ◯ Yes
   - ◯ No

6. Do you have any social media accounts? *
   - ◯ Yes
   - ◯ No

7. What type of social media platforms do you usually use? *

   Tick all that apply.

   - ☐ Facebook
   - ☐ YouTube
   - ☐ Twitter
   - ☐ WhatsApp
   - ☐ Instagram
   - ☐ Other: _____

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8. How often do you use these platforms?

	Never	Rarely	Often	Always	More
Facebook					
YouTube					
Twitter					
WhatsApp					
Instagram					
Other					

9. For what purpose do you usually use these platforms? *

Mark only one oval per row.

	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always
Entertainment					
Sharing posts, pictures, videos...etc.					
Completing given assignments					
Searching for courses					
Following up the latest updates from the university administration					
Seeking help from colleagues and teachers					
Online group discussions					
Further understanding of the academic courses					
Collaborative learning					
Watching funny videos, movies...etc.					
Informal language learning					

10. How good are you at using social media?

Mark only one oval per row.

	Very poor	Poor	Acceptable	Good	Very good
Facebook					
YouTube					
Twitter					
WhatsApp					
Instagram					
Other					

11. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements? *

Mark only one oval per row.

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
I find it easy to use social media platforms.					
My interactions through social media are clear and understandable.					
Social media can be easilyused for learning purposes.					
For me social media is more convenient than other communication tools (emails, instant messages...etc.)					
Using social media makes me more productive in language classes.					
Using social media has improved my ability to communicate with others.					
Using social media has improved my ability to communicate with others.					

APPENDIX

I have developed my writing and reading skills through communications via social media.					
Watching videos and listeningto audios have developed my listening skills.					
Debating ideas online and exchanging opinions with others improved my critical thinking.					
Online platforms motivate me to learn more than traditional methods do.					
I feel more confident whenusing these platforms forlearning.					
I feel less anxious when I communicate online.					
Using social media for learning distracts me and lowers my level off concentration.					
It is a waste of time to use these platforms as learning tools.					
Il have a positive attitude towards the use of social media for learning.					
I feel more willing to participate and express my ideas through online platforms.					
Online communication with classmates and teachers is a good learning experience.					
I have a high-speed internet access with minimal interruptions.					

I am sufficiently experienced in using technology.	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
I am concerned about using technology due to privacy and security issues.	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Social media has some negative aspects such as cyber-bullying and addiction.	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
I recommend the use of social media to facilitate learning.	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯

12. Do university courses include activities that involve the use of social media? *

- ◯ Yes
- ◯ No

13. Do you think that teachers should include more activities that involve the use of social media? *

- ◯ Yes
- ◯ No

14. What do you suggest for better use of social media in the learning process? *

ملخص

على الرغم من الاعتراف بقوة وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي في التأثير على التعليم، إلا أنه لا يُعرف سوى القليل عن مواقف الطلاب تجاه استخدام مثل هذه التكنولوجيا في مجال التعليم، لا سيما في الجزائر. تهدف الدراسة الحالية إلى تقصي مواقف الطلاب تجاه استخدام وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي لأغراض تعليمية. هذه الدراسة شارك فيها 110 طالب من طلاب اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية في جامعة غرداية، الذين تطوعوا لاستبيان عبر الإنترنت خلال السداسي الثاني من السنة الدراسية 2022/2021. اعتمد الباحث منهج البحث الكمي باستخدام الأساليب الإحصائية الوصفية والاستنتاجية لتحليل البيانات التي تم تجميعها. كشفت النتائج الرئيسية للدراسة أن الطلاب أظهروا مواقف إيجابية فيما يتعلق باستخدام وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي لأغراض تعليمية، واقترحوا استخدام أكثر للمنصات الرقمية لدعم تعليمهم. النتائج أظهرت أيضًا أن انستغرام، فيسبوك، ويوتيوب كانت أكثر المنصات انتشارا بين الطلاب. إضافة إلى ذلك، أظهرت النتائج أنه لا يوجد فرق كبير في مواقف الطلاب بناءً على العمر أو الجنس أو المستوى الدراسي. وعليه يمكن للنتائج المتحصل عليها أن تساعد المعلمين والباحثين في مجال التعليم على تطوير استراتيجيات تعليمية أكثر فاعلية تدمج استخدام منصات وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي في الأقسام الدراسية الواقعية والافتراضية.

الكلمات المفتاحية: وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي، المنصات، التعليم، المواقف.