

The Effectiveness of Social Networking in Developing the Educational Process Among University Students in the Sultanate of Oman

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Abstract

In contemporary academia, social networking significantly enhances educational processes and academic achievement. This study, centered on the General Requirements Department at the University of Technology and Applied Sciences in the Sultanate of Oman, evaluates the impact of social networking on student engagement and its efficacy in education. Employing a questionnaire, the research sampled 128 bachelor's students randomly from the department, aiming to assess the role of social networking in the learning process and its value as an information resource. The results highlight social networking's critical role in boosting student interaction and responsiveness, thus contributing to enhanced educational processes and academic performance. These platforms offer an alternative to traditional classroom settings, providing accessible information sources for both students and educators, thereby enriching the educational experience. The study also demonstrates the importance of social networking in stimulating the educational process and promoting academic excellence. These platforms enable educators to monitor students' progress effectively, identify curriculum weaknesses, and implement targeted improvements. The research underscores the transformative role of social networking in the academic domain. By creating an interactive, responsive, and information-rich educational environment, social networking significantly aids in advancing educational methodologies and improving learning outcomes. The findings advocate for the integration of social networking into educational strategies to optimize academic success.

Keywords: Educational Process, Social Networking, Information Sources, Distance Education, Sultanate of Oman

Introduction

The technological revolution has entered most branches of human knowledge and has become a feature of the twenty-first century. It has also contributed to creating a kind of

communication and rapprochement between societies, removing all boundaries, separations, and racial, class, and social differences. Moreover, it has made it easier for users to follow up daily on various events in all areas of life on the scene. Global, hence this type of communication is called social networks (Hantoush, 2017). Although the main goal of designing and creating social media networks is communication between individuals, this goal has expanded greatly to include all aspects of daily life and all cultural, cognitive, political, and social fields. Social networking sites have added a new style of direct and free communication, and thus their users have become involved in one way or another in most educational and cognitive fields.

Specialists are currently interested in developing and increasing the educational level of students in educational facilities and in how to obtain and benefit from learning resources and providing an appropriate environment for learning in line with modern technologies, which are represented by social networking (Evans, 2007). Educational institutions are also interested in increasing practical and academic achievement. For students, this is an indicator of the extent of their progress towards educational and pedagogical goals. Moreover, educational and pedagogical institutions encourage obtaining a high level of academic achievement because it indicates the adequacy of educational institutions and their ability to reach and achieve goals (Al-Khafaji, 2011).

Specialists are also currently talking about the extent of the ability to measure the development of educational and cognitive achievement in the university curriculum and how to obtain information and know its sources through the use of social networking as a platform for education because it provides a different method from traditional education or even e-learning that is known and prevailing at the present time (Khadija, 2014).

Social media is considered an open education that relies on participation and communication as the basis of the educational process and an alternative to traditional lectures and indoctrination, which is considered boring in many cases. It is no wonder that social networking has spread significantly and widely among young people, especially university and high school students, on their mobile devices and has become an integral part of their daily lifestyle. Therefore, using social networking as a means of education will be a natural thing for them and does not represent a burden on them, but rather integrates between the fun of science and entertainment, it breaks the boundaries of the traditional classroom (Al-Far, 2007)

At present, specialists are discussing the extent of measuring the development of academic achievement and obtaining sources of information through the use of social media networks, a modern platform and environment for education that is different from the well-known traditional or electronic education, which will be an alternative to traditional lectures and indoctrination, especially since social media applications and programs have become significantly widespread on the Internet. Mobile devices for young people have become part of the daily routine, and therefore using them as a means of learning will be natural because it mixes the joy of learning and breaks the classroom barrier (Otayeb, 2007).

In this research, the focus was on two basic problems faced by students and teachers in education, which were summarized in knowing the role of social networking in the educational process among students of the General Requirements Department at the University of Technology and Applied Sciences in the Sultanate of Oman, in addition to determine the extent of students' interaction in social networks to enhance the learning process and obtain Sources of information in their university education stage, and this was proven by Al-Juhani (2017) in his research, which addressed the impact of using social

networking on students in developing academic achievement in the research subject and sources of information for the secondary stage in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, where he discussed in his research the role of social networking Social studies and their role in the educational process and how students deal with this technology in enhancing the educational process in public secondary schools in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. The objectives of the study were also determined, on which the questionnaire questions and results will focus and be analyzed:

1. To know the basic areas and tasks through which social media networks contribute to the development of the educational process.
2. Determine the level of interaction of students and teachers in social networks to enhance the learning process and obtain sources of information at the university level.
3. Analyze the extent to which the use of social media influences students' level of knowledge, identifies their academic weaknesses, works to improve them, and increases their educational achievement.

The importance of research in knowing and measuring the increase in the educational process and obtaining sources of information for students at the university level, which works to develop the educational process, is demonstrated through the following:

1. The possibility of using current social networking applications and networks, especially since these applications and networks occupy the largest part of our daily practical life.
2. Informing students that these applications combine fun and learning and that they have great benefits for them and for the community surrounding them, such as speed of communication and obtaining information, enhancing communication with their teachers at any time and in any place, and strengthening social relationships.
3. Explaining the important role that these sites play in enhancing education, identifying the strengths and weaknesses of students, and making it easy for teachers to follow them so that both the teacher and the learner benefit from them, and adopting them as an alternative method to the traditional method of learning, exchanging information, and obtaining resources.

The structure of the paper is organized as follows: Section 2 methodology that has been used in the study. Section 3 the findings of the study. Section 4 presents the discussion of the findings. Section 5 presents the conclusion of the study.

Methodology

The research relied on the questionnaire tool, which is an electronic form that was designed using the Google Forms website and contained questions centered around the research objectives. The link to the form was distributed to the study sample to answer it. The descriptive approach was adopted to measure and know the percentage of students' participation in social networking sites in the educational process, as well as Knowing and measuring students' educational achievement using social media networks to develop the educational process. The researcher also used SPSS version 26 and made graphs using Excel version 2019. Descriptive analysis functions were used to determine the frequency of responses and determine their percentage. Internal consistency analysis, Cronbach Alpha, and the binomial test were also used.

Population and Sample

The research community was limited to the General Requirements Department at the University of Technology and Applied Sciences located in the Sultanate of Oman. The research sample was chosen randomly by selecting a number of (128) students studying in the General Requirements Department at the University of Technology and Applied Sciences in the Sultanate of Oman. The research sample was chosen randomly in order to be consistent with reality. The sample specifications for students included the gender, age, academic level, and branch of the university in which the student is studying in the Sultanate of Oman.

Results

The study aimed to investigate the effectiveness of social networking and its role in the educational process in the General Requirements Department at the University of Technology and Applied Sciences in the Sultanate of Oman, where (128) questionnaires were distributed to the students in the study sample, and after applying the study tool, the responses of the study sample members were collected and their responses were converted into Raw scores, then frequencies and percentages were found. The internal consistency test, Cronbach Alpha and the binomial test, were used at the significance level ($=0.05 \alpha$) using SPSS version 26 and making graphs using Excel version 2019.

Below is an analysis of the study sample, which is students of the General Requirements Department at the University of Technology in the Sultanate of Oman, according to the questionnaire questions and the students' responses to them.

Personal Information of Students

Distribution of sample members by gender

Table 1

Distribution of the study sample by gender.

Gender	Frequency	Percentage%
Female	72	56.3
Male	56	43.8
Total	128	100

It is clear from Table 1 that the percentage of females (56.3%) is higher than the percentage of males (43.8%). Figure 1 shows the distribution of the study sample by gender.

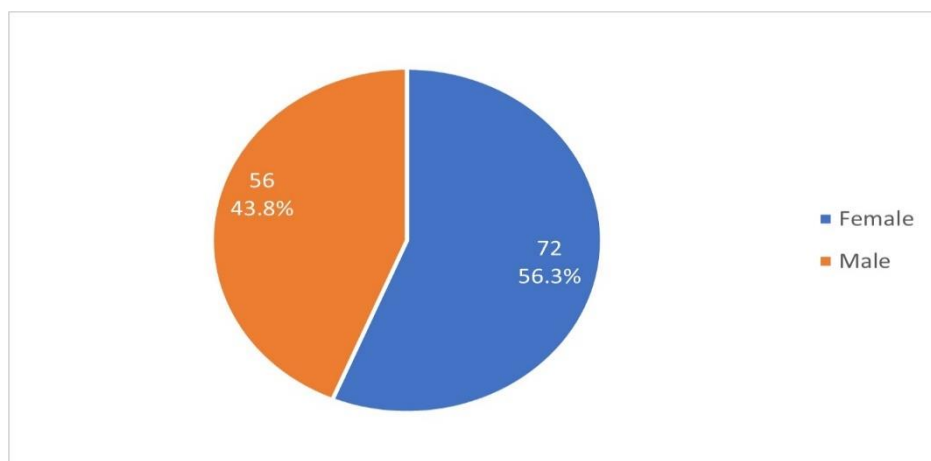


Figure 1: Distribution of the study sample by gender.

Distribution of Sample Members According to Age

Table 2

Distribution of the study sample according to age

Age	Frequency	Percentage%
Less than 20 years	26	20.3
From 20 to 30 years	77	60.2
More than 30 years	25	19.5
Total	128	100

Table 2 represents the distribution of sample members according to age, where the age group ranging from 20 to 30 years had the highest percentage (60.2%), followed by the age group less than 20 years (20.3%), and the age group more than 30 also represented Year is the lowest percentage of the sample (19.5%). Figure 2 illustrates the distribution of the study sample according to age.

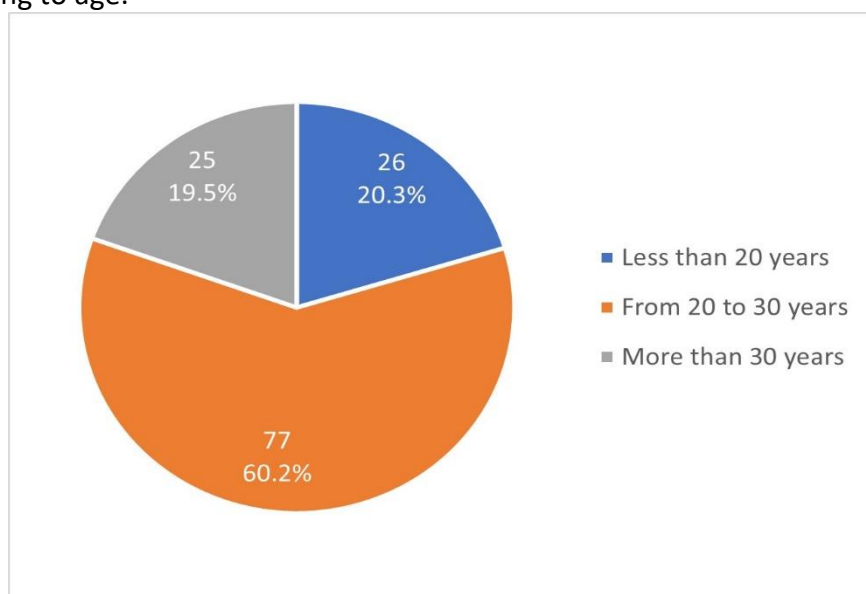


Figure 2: Distribution of the study sample according to age.

Analysis of Questionnaire Questions

The first question: What are the most common social networking programs used to enhance the educational process?

Variable: What are the social networking programs that are most often used to enhance the educational process? Each respondent chose more than one application that he uses to enhance the educational process. Table 3 illustrates distribution of the study sample according to which social networking programs are most often used to enhance the educational process. Figure 3 demonstrates the distribution of the study sample according to which social networking programs are most used to enhance the educational process.

Table 3

Distribution of the study sample according to which social networking programs are most often used to enhance the educational process.

Program	Frequency	Percentage%
Blogers	2	0.9
Twitter	26	11.4
Facebook	15	6.6
Youtube	83	36.2
Whatsapp - Imo - Messenger – Instagram	58	25.3
Linkedin	5	2.2
Google programs & Platforms	40	17.5
Total	229	100

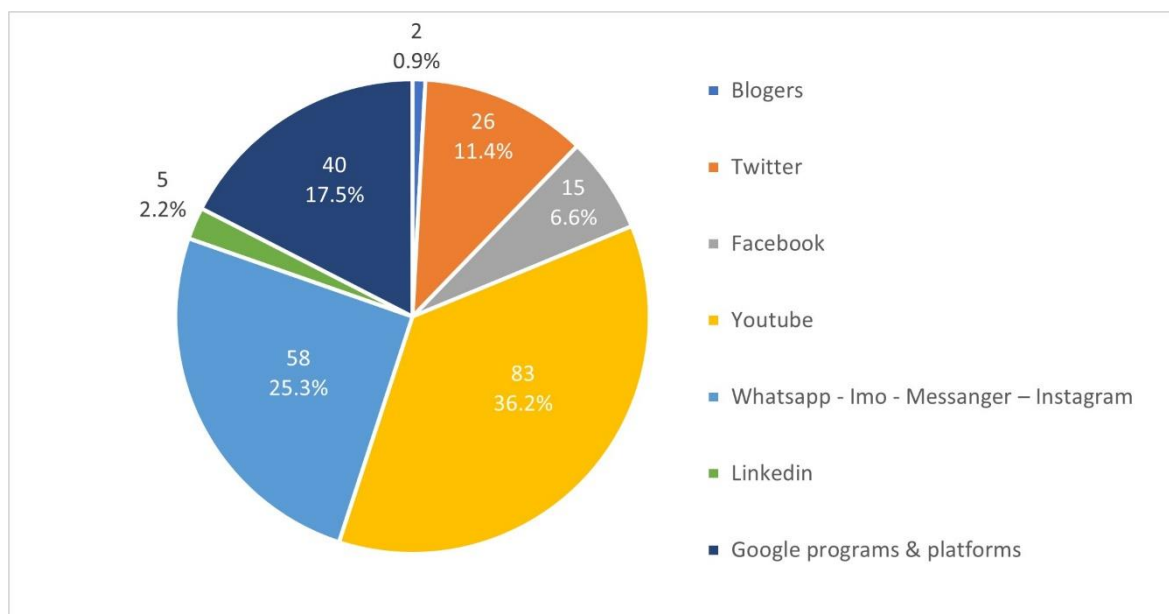


Figure 3: Distribution of the study sample according to which social networking programs are most used to enhance the educational process.

Scale Stability

Table 4 shows the scale's reliability coefficient using the Cronbach's alpha method.

Table 4

Reliability coefficient of the scale using Cronbach's alpha method.

The value of Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient	
Student	0.714

From the previous table, it is clear that the scale is characterized by a high degree of reliability, as the value of the Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient for students was (0.714), which means that the scale is valid for use.

Question two: Social media networks enable students to interact with teachers.

The variable "Social media networks enable students to interact with teachers" follows a binomial distribution with a probability of success equal to (0.9)

Table 5

Results of the binomial test for the social networking variable enabling students to interact with teachers.

Response	Frequency	Percentage%	Test Prop.	Sig.
I do not agree	17	13.3	0.9	0.139
I agree	111	86.7		
Total	128	100		

It is clear from the table 5 that the significance level is greater than (0.05), and therefore we accept the null hypothesis that the variable follows a binomial distribution with a probability of success equal to (0.9), which is statistically significant at the significance level ($=0.05 \alpha$). It is concluded that the probability of success is equal to (0.9) and the value of the probability of success in the sample is (0.867). Figure 4 illustrates the distribution of the study sample according to social media networks that enable students to interact with teachers.

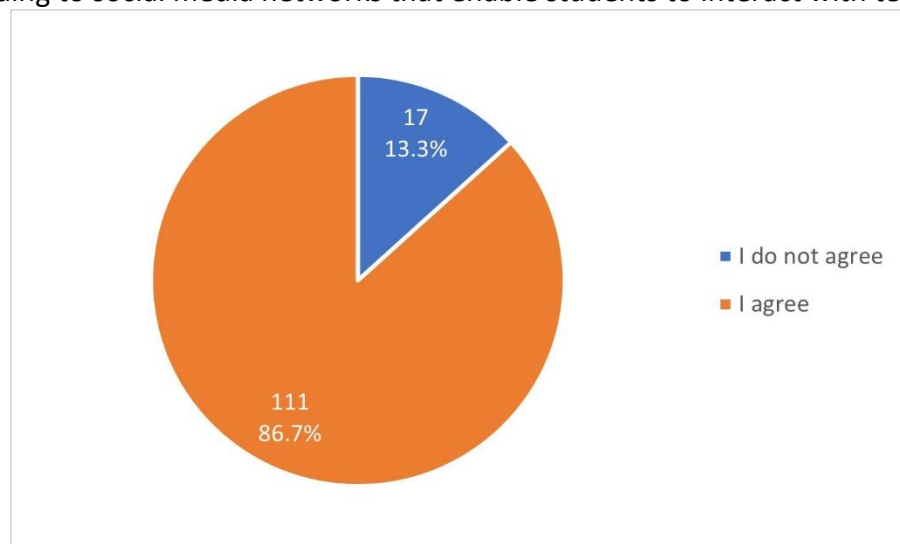


Figure 4: Distribution of the study sample according to social media networks that enable students to interact with teachers.

Question Three: Social networks help clarify many questions that were not clear using normal teaching methods.

The variable "Social media networks help clarify many questions that were not clear using normal teaching methods" follows a binomial distribution with a probability of success equal to (0.9)

Table 6

Results of the binomial test for a variable. Social networks help clarify many questions that were not clear using normal teaching methods.

Response	Frequency	Percentage%	Test Prop	Sig.
I do not agree	14	10.9	0.9	0.404
I agree	114	89.1		
Total	128	100		

It is clear from the table 6 that the significance level is greater than (0.05), and therefore we accept the null hypothesis that the variable follows a binomial distribution with a probability of success equal to (0.9), which is statistically significant at the significance level ($=0.05 \alpha$). It is concluded that the probability of success is equal to (0.9) and the value of the probability of success in the sample is (0.891). Figure 5 shows the distribution of the study sample according to social networks to help clarify many questions that were not clear using normal teaching methods.

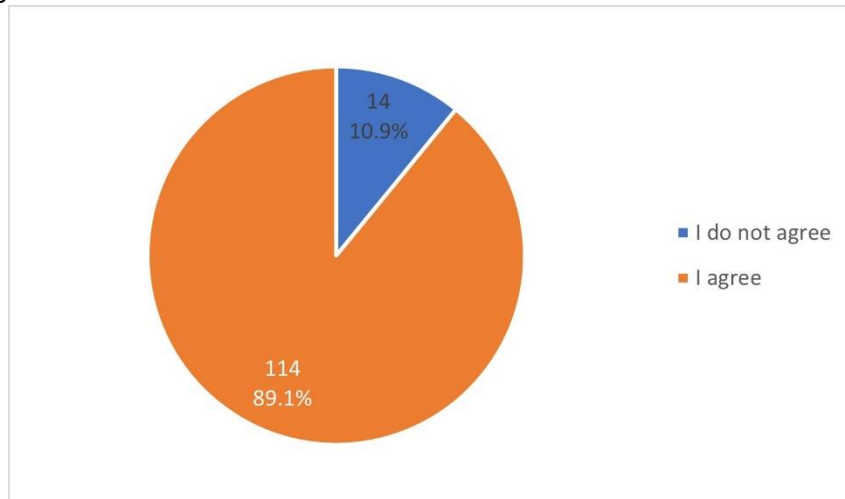


Figure 5: Distribution of the study sample according to social networks help clarify many questions that were not clear using normal teaching methods.

Question Four: Students are increasingly interested in benefiting from scientific courses that are uploaded on social media networks, and this gives them more training.

The variable “Students’ interest in benefiting from scientific courses that are uploaded on social networks increases and gives them more training” follows a binomial distribution with a probability of success equal to (0.9)

Table 7

Results of the binomial test for the variable Students’ interest in benefiting from scientific courses that are uploaded on social networks increases and gives them more training.

Response	Frequency	Percentage%	Test Prop.	Sig.
I do not agree	19	14.8	0.9	0.052
I agree	109	85.2		
Total	128	100		

It is clear from the table 7 that the significance level is greater than (0.05), and therefore we accept the null hypothesis that the variable follows a binomial distribution with a probability of success equal to (0.9), which is statistically significant at the significance level ($=0.05 \alpha$). It is concluded that the probability of success is equal to (0.9) and the value of the probability of success in the sample is (0.852). Figure 6 shows the distribution of the study sample according to: Students’ interest in benefiting from scientific courses that are uploaded on social networks increases and gives them more training.

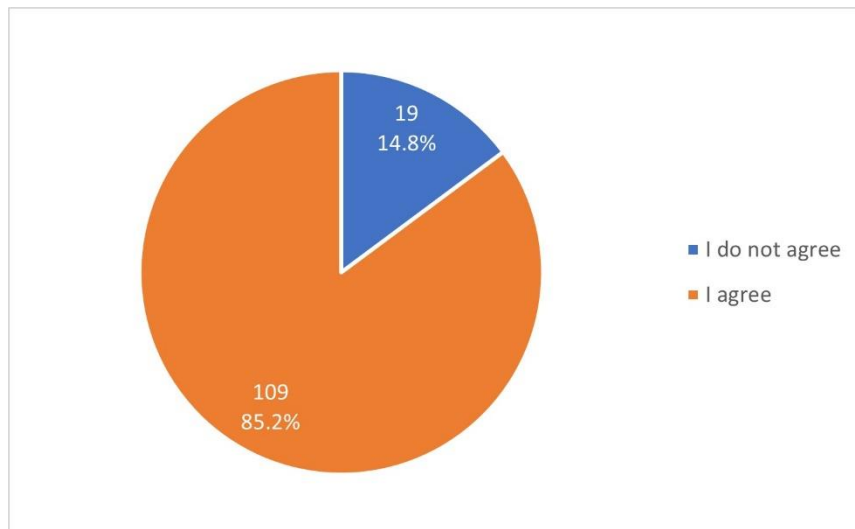


Figure 6: Distribution of the study sample according to: Students' interest in benefiting from scientific courses that are uploaded on social networks increases and gives them more training.

Question five: Students are increasingly responsive to each other in the educational process and exchanging information on social media networks.

The variable "students become more responsive to each other in the educational process and exchange information on social networks" follows a binomial distribution with a probability of success equal to (0.9)

Table 8

Results of the binomial test for the variable Students respond more to each other in the educational process and exchange information on social media networks.

Response	Frequency	Percentage%	Test Prop.	Sig.
I do not agree	14	10.9	0.9	0.404
I agree	114	89.1		
Total	128	100		

It is clear from the table 8 that the significance level is greater than (0.05), and therefore we accept the null hypothesis that the variable follows a binomial distribution with a probability of success equal to (0.9), which is statistically significant at the significance level ($=0.05 \alpha$). It is concluded that the probability of success is equal to (0.9) and the value of the probability of success in the sample is (0.891). Figure 7 shows Distribution of the study sample according to the increase in students' responsiveness to each other in the educational process and the exchange of information on social media networks.

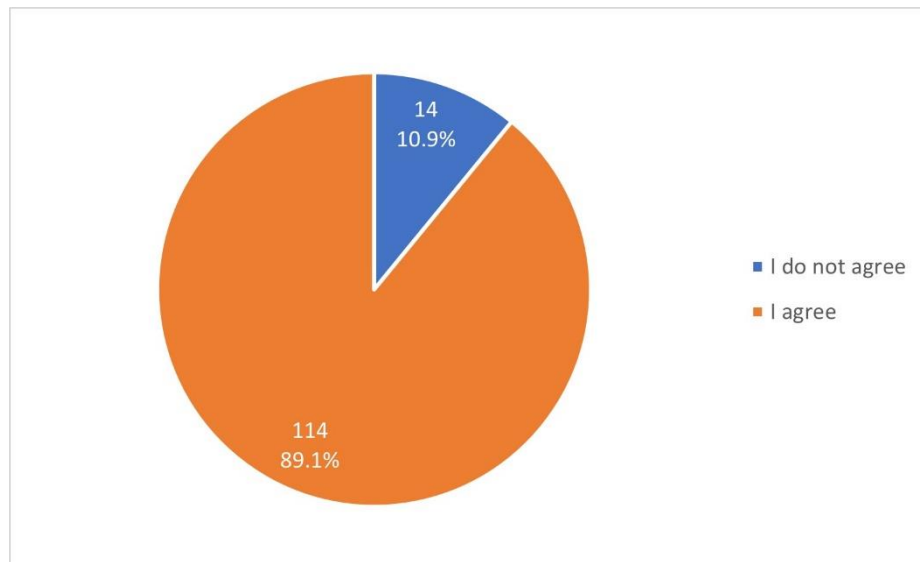


Figure 7: Distribution of the study sample according to the increase in students' responsiveness to each other in the educational process and the exchange of information on social media networks.

Question Six: Social networks help teachers identify students' strengths and weaknesses and work to improve them.

The variable "Social media networks help teachers identify students' strengths and weaknesses and work to improve them" follows a binomial distribution with a probability of success equal to (0.5)

Table 9

Results of the binomial test for the variable social networks contribute to helping teachers identify the strengths and weaknesses of students and work to improve them.

Response	Frequency	Percentage%	Test Prop.	Sig.
I do not agree	41	32	0.50	0.000
I agree	87	68	0.75	0.044
Total	128	100		

It is clear from the table 9 that the significance level is less than (0.05), and therefore we reject the null hypothesis that the variable follows a binomial distribution with a probability of success equal to (0.5), which is statistically significant at the significance level ($=0.05 \alpha$). It is concluded that the probability of success is more than (0.5) and the value of the probability of success in the sample is (0.68). Figure 8 illustrates the distribution of the study sample according to social networks contributes to helping teachers identify the strengths and weaknesses of students and work to improve them.

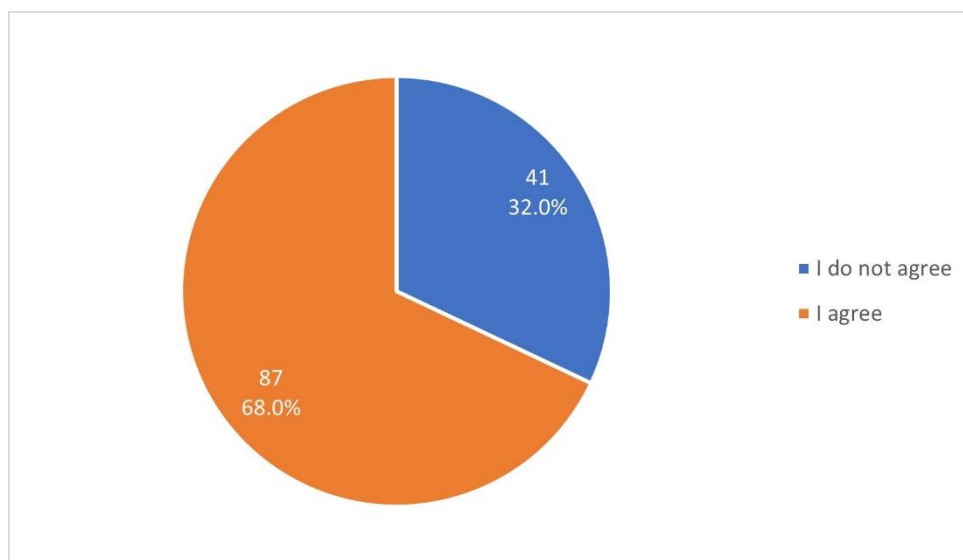


Figure 8: Distribution of the study sample according to social networks contributes to helping teachers identify the strengths and weaknesses of students and work to improve them.

Question Seven: Using social media networks in the educational process raises the psychological and moral state of students as a result of filling the gaps of their lack of understanding.

The variable: "Using social media networks in the educational process raises the psychological and moral state of students as a result of filling the gaps of their lack of understanding." It follows a binomial distribution with a probability of success equal to (0.75)

Table 10

Results of the binomial test for the variable of using social networking in the educational process. It raises the psychological and moral state of students as a result of filling the gaps of their lack of understanding.

Response	Frequency	Percentage%	Test Prop.	Sig.
I do not agree	24	18.8	0.75	0.06
I agree	104	81.3	0.90	0.002
Total	128	100		

It is clear from the table 10 that the significance level is greater than (0.05), and therefore we accept the null hypothesis that the variable follows a binomial distribution with a probability of success equal to (0.75), which is statistically significant at the significance level ($=0.05 \alpha$). It is concluded that the probability of success is equal to (0.75) and the value of the probability of success in the sample is (0.813). Figure 9 demonstrates the distribution of the study sample according to the use of social networking in the educational process. The psychological and moral state of students is raised as a result of filling the gaps in their lack of understanding.

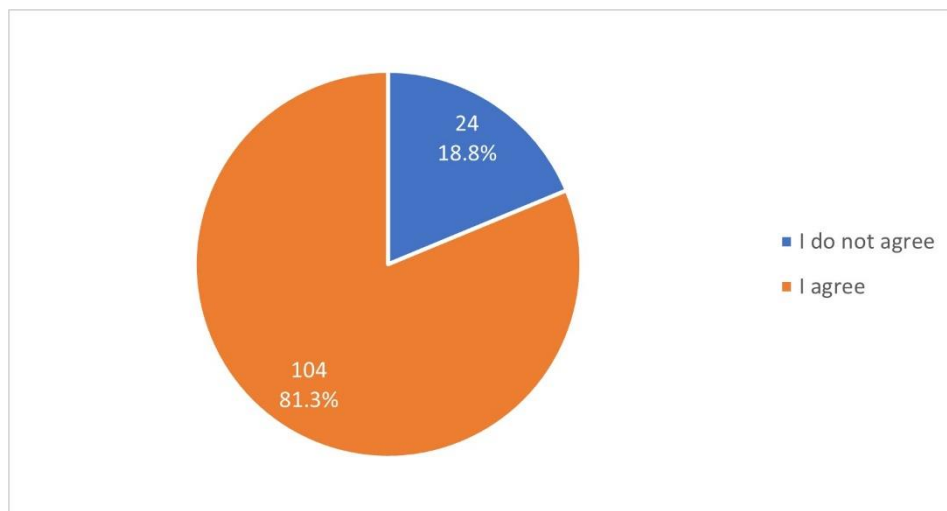


Figure 9: Distribution of the study sample according to the use of social networking in the educational process. The psychological and moral state of students is raised as a result of filling the gaps in their lack of understanding.

Question Eight: The use of social media networks facilitates access to learning resources by students and teachers.

Variable: "Using social media networks in the educational process raises the psychological and moral state of students as a result of filling the gaps of their lack of understanding." It follows a binomial distribution with a probability of success equal to (0.9)

Table 11

Results of the binomial test for the variable, use of social networking facilitates access to learning resources by students and teachers.

Response	Frequency	Percentage%	Test Prop.	Sig.
I do not agree	14	10.9	0.9	0.404
I agree	114	89.1		
Total	128	100		

It is clear from the table 11 that the significance level is greater than (0.05), and therefore we accept the null hypothesis that the variable follows a binomial distribution with a probability of success equal to (0.9), which is statistically significant at the significance level ($=0.05 \alpha$). It is concluded that the probability of success is equal to (0.9) and the value of the probability of success in the sample is (0.891). Figure 10 shows the distribution of the study sample according to the use of social media networks that facilitate access to learning resources by students and teachers.

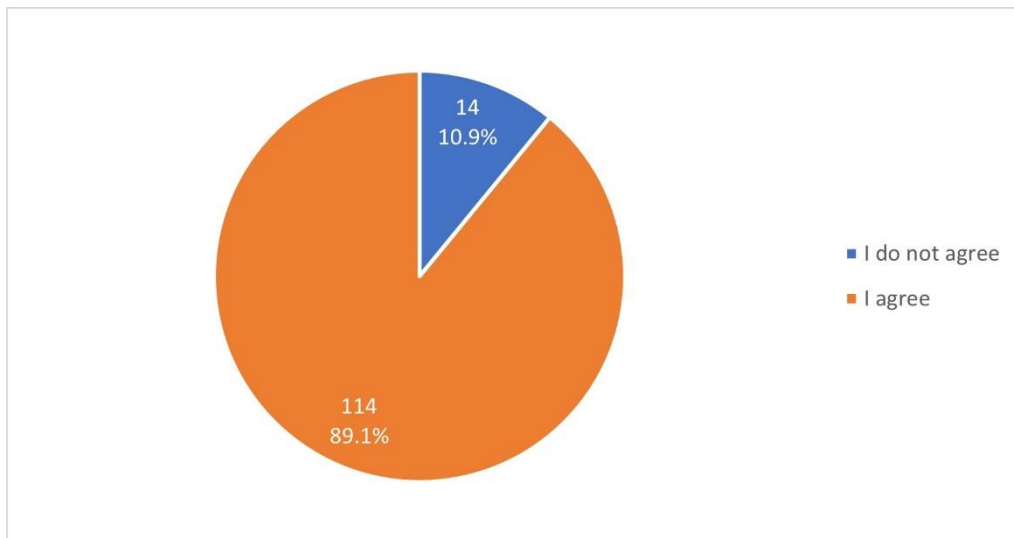


Figure 10: Distribution of the study sample according to the use of social media networks that facilitate access to learning resources by students and teachers.

Discussion

After obtaining the results of the questionnaire that was distributed to the research sample and analyzing these results, it became clear that the percentage of female participants was higher than the percentage of males, and this indicates that the majority of the sample members were female. The reasons for this are that the presence of females was greater than the presence of males at the time of distributing the link to the electronic questionnaire. Also, the age group from 20 to 30 years is the largest group in participating in answering the research results. Therefore, this age group is the most interactive, participating, and understanding of the importance of the research and its results. At the same time, it is the group that most uses social media networks. This result was similar to a study conducted by Al-Obaidi (2010) explained the age groups that most use social networking.

It has been shown that most students use the YouTube application, followed by voice and chat programs, while Google educational platforms and programs ranked third, Twitter came in fourth place, followed by Facebook, and finally, LinkedIn and Blogger ranked last, respectively. This indicates that most students at the university tend to significantly use YouTube and voice chat programs to enhance the educational process, especially since these applications contain a number of educational channels in several fields in a way that displays video, audio, and images, and this in turn makes it easier for the student to learn by watching the channels. While education platforms and Google educational applications, despite the fact that most universities have begun to use these platforms as an alternative to real lecture halls, students do not prefer them except officially because they mimic the traditional style of traditional platforms, and students do not prefer using Blogger and LinkedIn to enhance the educational process, and these results were contrary to a study conducted by Al-Juhani (2010) in which he concluded that the Facebook program occupies the highest rank and percentage in terms of students' participation in it and its use in enhancing the educational process and interacting with teachers. This is due to the fact that Facebook has many features that may not be available in other programs, such as interaction with the other party and the use of means of expression. And comments, likes, and expressive faces. It was noted that YouTube and Blogger came in second place, equal to voice chat programs, in which the use of voice chats is made possible with the availability of a screen for explanations to groups and

individuals by the teacher, as well as asking many questions and responding between him and them.

The results of the study showed that the level of interaction of students and teachers on social media networks is significantly high. This comes through helping teachers at the university monitor the educational level of students throughout the academic year, and this works to enhance the educational process in terms of the rate of response and interaction of students with teachers through it. This is consistent with the study conducted by Al-Duailej (2011), where he explained that social media networks provide business management mechanisms for teachers in educational institutions, and these sites include comments or notes from students and recommendations for teachers, and this creates a type of interaction between students and teachers. Nabil (2008) also found that social networking contributes to helping the teacher monitor the educational level of his students throughout the school year, and this leads to increased activity within the classroom between the teacher and students. The results also positively and significantly determined the extent to which social networking influences the success of teachers' interaction with students through educational platforms and the extent of students' participation in them. Thus, it allows teachers to identify the strengths and weaknesses of students and work to improve them in order to work to increase their efficiency in the educational process. He also pointed out this matter. Al-Kurai (2015) stated in his master's thesis that social networking helps teachers know and identify the strengths and weaknesses of their students at all academic and literary levels and enables the teacher to follow up on assignments, improve students' performance, and find individual differences between them.

Students are also increasingly interested in benefiting from the scientific courses that are uploaded on social media networks and give them more training. It has also obtained a high rate of approval from students. Therefore, uploading courses on social media networks gives the student ease of obtaining them more continuously and at any time and removes all the obstacles that students faced were the difficulty of obtaining printed courses, whether in terms of time or money, and these electronic courses give them more experience, training, and expansion in them. This is similar to what Al-Zahrani (2013) found in his study conducted on a sample of students from the College of Education at Umm Al-Qura University to identify the problems and obstacles that limit students' benefit when using social media networks and benefiting from the courses available on them during the practical training period, focusing on the use of The Facebook network contributed greatly to solving the problems they faced during the practical training period, through students communicating with each other or with the supervisor who provided them with instructions, and the problems were solved quickly and individually. The results also supported that social networking helps clarify many questions that were not clear using regular teaching methods, which is a high percentage, and this is what was supported by the National School Association in the United States of America, stating that 60% of students who use social networking revolve their discussions and inquiries around learning topics (Omar, 2013). This leads us to say that social media networks are effective tools in enriching student discussions and removing all ambiguity in the educational process, as well as increasing understanding more than regular teaching methods.

A high percentage of student responses was also obtained, indicating that social networking contributes to increasing students' responsiveness to each other in the educational process, as well as increasing the exchange of information due to the availability of social networking applications on their devices and the increase in social networking

groups, which make it easier for students to communicate with each other. At any time and in any place, and this is what was confirmed by the study (Brady. al, et, 2010), which was conducted on a sample of American university students, that it is necessary to benefit from social networking as an alternative to e-learning in universities, as the approval rate was 51% for using networks. Social communication in the educational process. 25% strongly agreed that it helps students communicate and respond outside the classroom effectively and continuously, and 54% of them believed that it allows them to think and coexist and increases the exchange of information and ideas. The results also indicated that social networking contributes to raising the psychological and moral state of students resulting from their lack of understanding. This is similar to the study of Mazman & Kocks-Luel (2008), as the study aimed to know the use of social networking in educational content in Turkish universities. It presented a proposal to use social networking in the educational process, as 83% of the sample agreed that social networking plays a major role in the educational process, that it is better than traditional methods, and that it works to increase students' awareness and fill their education gaps, in addition to instilling confidence in themselves. It raises their morale and psychological state, increases information, and strengthens the relationship between the teacher and students.

Finally, one of the most important results obtained is that the majority of respondents supported their reliance on the use of social media networks and that they contribute significantly to obtaining learning resources, whether books, master's and doctoral dissertations, bulletins, scientific articles, and comments, and this is what Al-Aqel (2010) mentioned in her memorandum for obtaining a PhD certificate in that the use of social networking and educational technology makes it easier for students and researchers to obtain learning resources with ease and at the same time is considered an easy, safe and inexpensive means.

Conclusion

In the conducted study, the analysis of questionnaire results revealed a notable trend: a higher participation rate among female students compared to their male counterparts. This disparity was attributed to the greater presence of females at the time of distributing the electronic questionnaire. Additionally, the age group of 20 to 30 years showed the most significant engagement in the study, indicating a keen interest in and understanding of the research's importance. This age group also corresponds to the most active users of social media networks, favoring platforms that offer a blend of visual and auditory learning experiences. Preferences among students were clear, with YouTube and various voice and chat programs being the most favored for educational purposes. These platforms, known for their multimedia content, seem to be more appealing than traditional educational tools or platforms like Google's educational applications. However, there was a noted lack of preference for using platforms like Blogger and LinkedIn in the educational context.

The study also highlighted a high level of interaction between students and teachers on social media networks, enhancing the educational process through continuous monitoring and engagement. This interaction is instrumental in helping teachers gauge the educational level of students and contributes to their academic growth. Additionally, the research pointed out the increasing interest of students in online courses available on social media, which not only provide ease of access but also overcome traditional barriers related to cost and availability. Social networking has shown to be beneficial in clarifying educational ambiguities, enhancing understanding, and fostering a community-like environment among students.

Furthermore, the use of social media in education significantly contributes to the psychological and morale boost among students, filling educational gaps, and instilling confidence. The study concludes that social media networks play a crucial role in the modern educational landscape, not just as tools for enhancing student discussions but also as effective mediums for accessing a wide array of learning resources and fostering a more interactive and responsive educational environment.

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