

Social Networks Integration in Moroccan Higher Education during COVID-19: Opportunities and Challenges

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ABSTRACT

The integration of social networks in Moroccan higher education has noticed significant practices ever since the COVID-19 pandemic outbreak to the present time. Apart from entertainment and informational purposes, social networks have accessed many classrooms, affecting their practices in a way or another. The aim of this study is to emphasize that social networks have managed to reach the Moroccan university and turn professors into influencers and networkers despite all the challenges. This study investigates the feedback of 20 students who have used social networks during COVID-19 pandemic with their professors as a substitute for face-to-face learning. Their responses focus on the influence of social networks on their learning in a virtual environment. Three research questions have been used, namely (i) what are the students' attitudes towards the use of social networks? (ii) to what extent has the course content delivered via social networks influenced their learning practices? And (iii) what are their opinions about their professors' pedagogics after taking the course via social networks? The study adopts a qualitative approach, making use of semi-structured interviews with 20 respondents. The content analysis and data coding process have also classified the themes in relation to the research questions. The findings have disclosed that the impact of the course content on students is very limited. They have also yielded very positive views about social networks. The results have stressed the fact that the use of social networks by professors is very informal, which makes students fail to commit themselves to the course.

KEYWORDS: Social networking sites, e-learning, education 4.0, COVID-19.

Like any other country all over the globe, Morocco has been affected by the spread of "coronavirus" COVID-19 on many levels, and the educational field is one of them. Some impacts, which are not immediately visible, are unfortunately very significant and will surface in the medium or long term. Based on health concerns, millions of university students and faculties have had to leave their physical institutions and try to engage with alternative forms of academic networking and affiliation away from classrooms, laboratories, libraries, and auditoriums. This decision of temporarily closing doors of institutions all over Morocco was prompted by the principle that large gatherings of persons present a serious risk to safeguarding public health during the pandemic. No one can predict or know for sure how long these closures are likely to last, but one can easily anticipate that they will be extended until the pandemic subsides. The impact of COVID-19 has been unbelievable and transformative since educators

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scramble to put in place workable short-term solutions for distance teaching and learning, where Social Networking Sites were the easiest for professors to tap into their students' needs. It is important that we, professors and students, start to conceptualize a way out of this crisis, ensuring the highest degree possible of inclusion and equity. The UNESCO IESALC (2020) estimates that the temporary closure affects more than 1.0 million higher education students in Morocco. Indeed, one could say that the pandemic adds a further degree of complexity to higher education; it is a test that the faculty, staff and students should manage in their own means. Still, in the absence of references to similar crises in the past, it is difficult to predict what may happen in the immediate future or how to overcome it. The impact of the pandemic on higher education institutions was abrupt, and in the majority of cases, there was no contingency plan other than to attempt to continue classes remotely using Social Networking Sites. Professors and their students have struggled to continue their mission even in this very critical time, where the context of the lockdown and education has come together, ensuring the highest degree possible of inclusion and equity. The sudden spread of the COVID-19 pandemic has caught us all by surprise, struck our education system like a lightning bolt and shaken it to its core. Just as the Western model has forged today's system of education, we might expect a different kind of educational model to emerge from COVID-19 in the Moroccan context.

Literature Review

Social Networking Sites in the Life of Students

Technology never teaches pupils, it simply creates conditions under which they can learn (Albert Einstein 1879 - 1955). Over the past few decades, the invention and widespread adoption of the Internet has been exponential and has contributed to the spread and value of knowledge creation today. These processes led to the manifestation of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) that has become the subject of debate, research and legislation in many countries including Morocco. Moreover, the internet which led to the invention of social networks from Facebook to WhatsApp and beyond, paved the way for recent and unprecedented learning needs and opportunities that impact how we view and practice learning during the COVID-19 pandemic.

It is unarguably that Social Networks are an increasingly important part of how students communicate and connect day to day. They are key for staying in touch and up-to-date as well as contributing to the world and being creative. The use of these sites received the attention of all ages across Morocco for various purposes, but significantly people around college or university going age are mostly active on these social networks. It is well understood and captured in literature that students over rely on this tool in their social engagements. For instance, Statcounter statistics on social media in Morocco (2020), attest to this claim as it was found that 49.05% use YouTube, 41.06% use Facebook, 5.19% use Pinterest, 2.22% use Twitter, 2.14% use Instagram and 0.14% use Reddit.

Kirschner and Karpinski (2009) state that users of social networking sites (SNS) devote lesser time to their studies than the nonusers and subsequently had lower grades in their academic courses. They argue that among various unique distractions of every generation, social networking sites have been proved as the major distraction of current generation. Given the widespread use of these SNS, they have often been blamed for distracting students and taking more of their concentration and time. However, a growing number of youths, most of whom are students, are greatly immersed in these online communities, and resort to them for many reasons (Bicen & Cavus, 2011). Many studies have revealed that such sites are used by students not only to get connected with family members and friends, meet new people, share thoughts of common interests, or even to communicate and entertain themselves, but also to impact how many different domains are conducted. Education is one of the fields in which the

impact of these sites is very auspicious. This has led many educators to think that this practice and enthusiasm could be turned to educational use since knowledge has become the fundamental component of one's life, both as a process and as a product. To create knowledge, people need free exchange of information and ideas. University students aim to create knowledge and sites with free-access such as Facebook, WhatsApp, Zoom, YouTube, Pinterest, Twitter and Instagram were their only tools. Consequently, the use of the Internet for collaborative knowledge creation is considered as the basis of the Knowledge Age that sets the floor for Online Collaborative Learning (OCL), a new theory of learning that focuses on collaborative learning, knowledge building, and internet to reshape formal, nonformal and informal education for the Knowledge Age. Also, OCL responds to 21st-century Knowledge Age requirements and provides a theoretical framework to guide the transformations in instructional design (Harasim, 2013). In the context of the COVID-19 pandemic and the necessary closures, Online Collaborative Learning based on social networks has been applied in different institutions all over Morocco. This crisis proved that OCL via SNS has the potential to enhance conventional classroom and distance education.

In recent years, social networking has become a tool of communication that influences invention, education and learning. With the extension of the lockdown in Morocco, higher education professors and students use Social Networking Sites not only to deepen their understanding and knowledge in several fields, but also to improve their learning experience and stay connected to transform education. Indeed, embracing Online Collaborative Learning in Morocco has been considered as a key tool during the crisis of COVID-19.

Using Social Networks as Virtual Educational Spaces

As the world moves into the second decade of the 21st century, SNS gain a special value after the emergence of Web 2.0. The evolution of these sites helps us understand and deal with every field in life. Students have become affected too in a way or another, as they became producers and consumers of digital content. Most of them can easily contact their teachers anytime by using SNS as communication tools.

At the present time, several education digitals are being used to help higher education students to be more productive and make their lives much easier. The characteristics of social networking sites are: participation, openness, conversation, community and connectedness (FKII Josayeongu Team, 2006). In educational terms, some authors emphasize the use of social networks for better control and efficiency of resources to complement the work inside and outside the classroom in order to improve students' learning, facilitate teacher-student and student-students interaction, development of skills and competencies and their level of satisfaction into new learning experiences (Ajjan & Hartshorne, 2008). Selwyn (2010) asserts that three inter-connected concepts support the use of social media in education: changes in the nature of learners, who are now highly connected, collective and creative; changes in the relationship between the learner and knowledge consumption and construction; and the emergence of education driven by the user. Indeed, all of these features are key tools for today's distance learning in the context of the lockdown in Morocco.

In recent years, using social networking sites as virtual educational spaces among university students is absolutely being useful. Using SNS at the university level has beneficial styles and designs. Students would not get influenced positively by these sites unless they face some challenges.

Potential Advantages of Using Social Networking Sites in Higher Education

There are several advantages of the use of Social Networks in education that can enhance distance learning process. A social networking site can take on a life of its own, and once it is out here, it is pretty much impossible to take back. Although there are some risks, the benefits can outweigh them.

The vision of the use of ICT in Higher Education in the twenty-first century is associated with the development of lifelong learning, more equity of access, quality improvement of teaching methods, diversification for cooperative-collaborative, autonomous learning, and troubleshooting of the physical environment (UNESCO, 1998). From this angle, we have to say that SNS are very beneficial for higher education students and professors since it is part and parcel of ICT during the lockdown. 1.20 million individuals participate in social networks during the year 2018 according to ANRT (2019). In words, we can say that the number of distance education courses is increasing at a unique speed and the number of learners registering for online courses is increasing daily. Most higher education institutions prefer learning management systems (LMSs), such as WebCT, Moodle and Blackboard, which have been designed especially for educational purposes in distance education (Lane, 2008). This has been possible thanks to the improvement of new information and communication technologies (ICTs), which allow access to a variety of services for free in most cases.

However, all the above findings conflict with the results of some other studies, in which the positive effect of SNSs in educational processes is in question. A literature review was carried and found out that very few related works prove the positive impact of social networks on education. The distance education activities supported by SNSs and face-to-face learning environments were more effective than distance education activities not supported by SNSs in terms of acquisition of behaviors at the comprehension level of the cognitive domain (Ozmen, 2014). Instead, the COVID-19 pandemic came to show the world that distance learning by SNSs is effective and can lead to great results in the field of innovation and education. Certain youth initiatives, aligned with the state's efforts to promote online education during isolation, include innovative electronic platforms for distance learning. These enable a greater number of young people to access free training and educational tools and to participate in meaningful discussions (Rhanem, 2020). In his systematic review of the literature, Datko (2015) listed the following positive implications of using SNS for formal educational purposes:

1. Facilitation of peer communication outside the classroom.
2. Assistance in socialization, community building, development of peer relationships, and demolishing barriers between learners.
3. Online discussions among learners, peer interactions, and ("limitless") access to study materials and course information as students' likely outcomes.
4. Students' experience with social networking for learning purposes as a potential advantage.
5. Prompt feedback (from both teachers and students).
6. Opportunity and motivation for active learning.
7. Independence from time and location.
8. Ability to substitute LMS.

In this respect, SNSs would enable students to get involved in the process of learning with their peers and professors. A student who hardly ever participates in class may get actively engaged in co-constructing his learning experience with his teachers, collaborating with his fellow colleagues, and may feel more comfortable to express himself and to share his resources and ideas on Facebook, Twitter, or YouTube (McLoughlin & Lee, 2007). The educational challenge is not how to create sweeter carrots or sharper sticks, but how to engage learners in

creative work with intrinsic rewards, within the context of the Internet and the Knowledge Age, and how to bridge the gap between 21st-century environments and 20th-century pedagogies (Harasim, 2013). This pandemic has demonstrated that the theory of Online Collaborative Learning is an added value to the field of distance learning as students can apply an instructional method and work together in teams to achieve a common goal.

The Challenges of Online Learning Via SNS

Despite the many advantages associated with the use of SNS in education, still there are drawbacks in a way. Boon and Sinclair (2009) stated that the outcome of taking learning experiences out of the physical world have to be carefully monitored and designed before adopting SNSs as an educational tool. The growth rate of Internet access in households is growing at a steady pace. It demonstrates a strong entry into the information society. Thus, Internet access in households has increased by 181% between 2010 and 2017. Obviously, the Average Annual Growth Rate (AAGR) reveals the strong integration of ICT equipment in the daily life of Moroccans ANRT (2018). This presents, however, challenges not only for higher education students, but also for their teachers to overcome while using SNSs in the process of distance learning. Some students without reliable (or no) internet access and/or technology cannot reach their courses or participate in virtual classes. This gap can be seen in the following statistics by ANRT (2019), which reported that Internet access for families reaches (74%, approximately 6 million households) in the Moroccan context during the year 2018. Likewise, a number of illegal activities and security threats took place on the Internet. Consequently, the e-learning environment is inevitably exposed to constant security threats, risks, and attacks. Three of four people don't realize the dangers of a lack of online security (ANRT, 2019). Social networks (and particularly Facebook) do not prove to be the ultimate educational tools, because both positive and negative implications for higher education can be identified in the cited literary sources (Datko. 2015). Institutions run to adopt online learning systems without giving too much importance to the security aspects of online learning or even sensitizing students. There are potential advantages and obstacles that face higher education students while using social networks as educational tools. The pandemic period proves to the world that it is a potential tool to promote the process of learning since it has a vital influence on education.

Students' Perceptions Towards Using Social Networks

The evolution of Social Networking Sites connected people with common interests and preferences to build new relationships. These connections could be based on friendship, professional relationships or others. The integration of these sites in the life of higher education students as well can be influential in different ways.

Research made by DATAREPORTAL (2020) for Morocco reported an impressive increase in using social networking mobile applications (93% of internet users aged 16 to 64) (Figure 2) in January 2020. Consequently, institutions within the education industry have integrated these SNS and its different features during the lockdown.

A study done by Faizi, Chiheb and El Afia (2018), which aimed at investigating the perceptions of Moroccan higher education students and teachers towards using Web 2.0 technologies in language learning and teaching, proved that Web 2.0 technologies positively influence the process. He found that students use a variety of applications to enhance their language learning. However, social networks are the most popular tools used for this purpose (Faizi, 2018). Only a few students were found to like to mix academic and leisure activities. As a consequence, communication between students with instructors on a Web 2.0 platform is a rare occurrence (Faizi, Chiheb and El Afia, 2018). Nowadays, it is no surprise that one of the most accessible channels that students and professors use to keep in touch with each other is

social networking, which has been considered as of rare occurrence just two years ago. Furthermore, another study by Arezki and her colleagues (2019) focused on the subject of students' perception of digital services in Moroccan Universities – Case of Tuition Services, by providing an online questionnaire for one whole year. According to students' responses, the findings showed that universities must make more effort to digitize their services. The website is still student's preferred channel for information. To carry out digital transformation projects, universities must develop strategies that put students at the heart of its concern with effective change management (Arezki et al., 2019). Students have changed radically; today's students are no longer the people our educational system was designed to teach (Prensky, 2001). The gap between digital natives, “native speakers” of the digital language of computers, video games and the Internet, and digital immigrants, those of us who were not born into the digital world, has been widening ever since the emergence of the digital age. Digital Immigrant teachers assume that learners are the same as they have always been, and that the same methods that worked for the teachers when they were students will work for their students now- such assumption is no longer valid. Today's learners are different (Prensky, 2001). This is what has been said long time ago, and still digital natives suffer from the same issue that occur in most of the Moroccan institutions. Close attention must be paid to the fact that when the Digital Migrants (teachers) accept the situation and adapt to the digital world (students' age), they will become able to overcome the crisis of the digital divide.

Distance Learning in Morocco: From GENIE Program to Covid-19 Survival Program

Regardless of the substantial investments of a number of programs in the context of new technologies, the Moroccan educational sector has been exposed to different kinds of challenges in this context. GENIE program— “Programme de Généralisation des Technologies d'Information et de Communication”—was designed for primary, middle and secondary education by King Mohammed VI in 2005.

GENIE is one of the programs that aim at improving the national educational system and integrating ICT in all public schools by equipping more than 8,600 schools and high schools with computers, video projectors, interactive whiteboards and multimedia rooms by 2008. It sets four complementary axes in its first and second version:

1. ICT Equipment: GENIE intended to provide 8604 schools with a huge number of digital materials. In 2008, the program was evaluated and only 1878 schools with 2,058 computer labs and only 1,543 labs were functional (MEN, 2009).
2. Curriculum Development: its purpose was to install a national laboratory and offer numerous services to the field of education.
3. Training teachers and school administrators was another goal for GENIE program. And again, the 2008 evaluation of the program clarified that only 30,000 teachers benefited from the training, a number way below the planned objectives (230,000 teachers).
4. This one included follow-up (Figure 3). This axis aimed at providing teachers and administrators with ongoing training. The second version (2009-2013) of the GENIE program failed to reach its goals again, just as the first one (2006 – 2008) did.

The Moroccan educational sector has moved from GENIE program to a survival plan during COVID-19 crisis. The use of Social Networking Sites in the field of education in the year 2020 has turned the situation upside down. In other words, Morocco could jump from offline to online program in ONE week for the sake of digitalizing the whole sector of education.

Many countries all over the world abide by the technological revolution, as they believe that it is a key tool to a high-quality education. GENIE program was one of the Moroccan attempts towards the use of ICT in its system, which remained unsuccessful. The survival program during COVID-19 should challenge these allegations and pave the way for successful post-pandemic universities.

Defining Concepts

Social Networks. Boyd and Ellison (2008) defined social networking sites as web-based services that allow individuals to construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system, articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection, and view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system. The nature and nomenclature of these connections may vary from site to site.

Online learning. Online learning (or online education) refers to the use of online communication networks for educational applications, such as: course delivery and support of educational projects, research, access to resources, and group collaboration; an online program is one where at least 80 percent of the program content is delivered online (Harasim, 2013).

Distance learning. Learning activities which occur when instructors and students are separated by geography and time. Distance learning employs a correspondence model in which learning materials are sent to the student who completes and submits the assigned work. The student also has access to a tutor for assistance. Enabling communication technologies include the postal system, telephones, television, videoconferencing, email, and computer conferencing/forums (Harasim, 2013).

E-learning. E-learning could be considered a natural evolution of distance learning, which has always taken advantage of the latest tools to emerge in the context of technologies for structuring education. In fact, some authors consider e-learning to be a new generation of distance education, even as they point to significant differences between the two and highlight a key starting point: “E-learning does not represent more of the same (...) [It is] about doing things differently” (Sangrà et al., 2012).

Virtual Learning. According to Racheva (2017), virtual learning can be defined as Distance learning conducted in a virtual learning environment with electronic study content designed for self-paced (asynchronous) or live web-conferencing (synchronous) online teaching and tutoring.

Blended learning. Allen and Seaman (2010) argue that a blended learning course blends online and face-to-face delivery. Substantial proportion of the content is delivered online, typically uses online discussions, and typically has a reduced number of face-to-face meetings.

Education 4.0. According to Fedena (2018), Education 4.0 essentially uses technology-based tools and resources to drive education in non-traditional ways. This means that students are no longer in traditional classrooms learning from teachers using textbooks, pens and papers only.

The arrival of the Z generation with advanced information and digital capabilities has brought about a state of change in peoples’ personal, professional, social and cultural lives. The computer networking revolution has transformed even our educational systems. Furthermore, all the previously mentioned concepts, are used interchangeably and meet at a certain point together to mean that education can be a successful one when they are used accurately by both digital natives and digital immigrants and create interactive learning environments.

Overview of the Study

This study was conducted to achieve the purpose of emphasizing that social networks have managed to reach the Moroccan university and turn professors into influencers and networkers despite all challenges. However, the way this crisis can lead to an advanced level and be a first step towards Education 4.0 remains an unanswered question. Thus, the current study aims to explore how social networks during COVID-19 pandemic became a substitute for face-to-face learning. To accomplish this objective, the study attempts to answer three research questions:

1. What are the students' attitudes towards the use of social networks?
2. To what extent has the course content delivered via social networks influenced their learning practices?
3. What are their opinions about their professors' pedagogics after taking the course via social networks?

Method

Participants and Design

A qualitative research design was used for a deeper understanding of the above-mentioned issues. Twenty Moroccan higher education students who have used social networks during COVID-19 pandemic with their professors as a substitute for face-to-face learning were asked to participate in an in-depth interview concerning their experiences with distance learning via social networks. Participants in this study are Bachelor students who belong to the English Department of My Ismail University, School of Arts and Humanities.

Materials and Procedure

The study used semi-structured interview tool. A background survey asked the participants to provide their e-mails and answer questions about their experiences with the use of social networks in distance learning during the lockdown. The interview questions were largely based on "purposeful sampling", and were modified to open questions to select information-rich cases related to the phenomenon of interest. Questions reflected the attitude students had towards the use of social networks for learning, the influence of the course content delivered via social networks and if it is the same as face-to-face learning within classrooms, and opinions about professors' pedagogics after taking the course via social networks. The interview was conducted in two main stages. It started with identifying and introducing each other to help participants feel at ease, and thank them as they accepted the invitation to participate in contributing to the aims of the research. In the second phase, the researcher addressed the previously mentioned questions and gave interviewees enough time to feel comfortable and express themselves in a freeway. As a note, it should be stated that the interviews were conducted during June 1st, 2nd, 3rd and 4th 2020.

Data Analysis

The interviews were coded, classified and analyzed following the guidelines of thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006), in which the data collected were reviewed many times in which the qualitative content and concepts were checked against the collected data in both the interviews and the surveys.

Results

Relying on the thematic analysis' guidelines, the interviews were coded and the researchers came up with the following five themes: technical and financial problems, ease of face-to-face learning, time management, need for real interaction between professor and students and Professors pedagogics in e-learning via SNS. A number of them is addressed to higher education students, and others to professors and the ministry of higher education. The themes and subthemes are clarified below.

Not as the Real Interaction

A number of students stated that using social networks in the process of learning is not like being in the physical institution for certain reasons. They claimed that they cannot feel responsible of their studies while being at home even they are the ones who have to get the information. Participant 1 expressed that this way "Now it's all on the students to look for information, because they are the mercy of technology, and technology is never to be trusted. To put this briefly, we have to do extra work now." Participant 2 "Face to face is much better because you can acquire and understand more than just be sitting on your room, feeling lazy, moreover, not motivated". Participant 3 "I prefer to be in the classroom...because the home atmosphere doesn't fit well." Participant 4 "it is not the same level of assimilation as the direct interaction with the professor."

Technical and Financial Problems

Students having their courses online via social networks still indicated that some technical problems might occur from time to time. Participant 5 articulated "Because the increase of the use of Internet connection nationally, we now have hard times attending our virtual classes; at times we even end up with no class at all." Participant 6 "we tend to suffer from those connection issues very frequently." Participant 7 "It needs some ABCs which are mostly absent." Participant 8 "Because I am an Audio-visual learner, I like to be in the classroom to watch professor's body language...and feeling the study vibe." In addition to technical problems that are mentioned earlier, students raised also some financial ones. As participant 5 mentioned "sometimes connectivity is just gone, and you need to push some other Dirhams. So, this is somehow costly."

Ease of Face-to-Face Learning

When participants were interviewed, some of them mentioned that face-to-face learning is much easier than e-learning. Participant 1 stated, "there are some students who do not have access to the internet, so they don't attend classes. And on the day of the exam, they will be asked to answer questions about lessons they could not attend." Participant 2 "face-to-face learning is easier; your instructors can help you more to understand." participant 3 "Face-to-face is much better because you can acquire and understand more." Participant 4 "it is better to meet face-to-face because I understand more and better the learning become easier."

Pros of Taking Courses via SNS

The majority of students claimed that studying online via SNS is helpful especially during the pandemic. Despite the previously mentioned cons, still they mentioned various advantages as the 7th participant claimed "I think it's a great idea to use social networks for learning during this crisis." Participant 2 said, "Learning by internet helps me to continue my

studies and to manage my time.” Participant 3 stated that, “we no longer have to take the trouble of going from our homes to the university.” Participant 4 mentioned that, “It saves some considerable time, which can be used for other activities.” Participant 8 said, “social networks affordances make the learning easier and, of course, it influences positively the learning. You become more comfortable and confident to ask questions, to engage yourself in the course discussion and so on.”

Professors Pedagogics in e-Learning via SNS

Students expressed their opinions about their professors' pedagogics after taking the course via social networks and most of them clarified that they are doing well, but still some gaps need to be filled. Participant 1 noted “I think the professors are doing pretty well.” Participant 2 explained, “In terms of pedagogy, I can say that nothing changed because they use in a way or another the same methods to teach the module.” Participant 3 mentioned that, “The professor delivers his message to us in very good way.” Participant 4 said, “He is absolutely doing a great job.” Participant 5 stated, “The professors pedagogics are good. But I think that they should make some live videos so that we can learn and understand our lessons better.” Participant 6 added, “There are some gaps that need to be filled.” Participant 7 agreed, “It is not that good. ” Participant 8 said, “Bit all of them are doing their best.”

Discussion

The results above clearly announce that students were influenced by the use of social networks in their distance education positively. They faced some challenges that they might overcome in few days or even years with the help of all leaders and officials in the field of education. However, five main themes were identified relying on the thematic analysis strategy. On the one hand, the overwhelming majority of the interviewed students conceded that the kind of challenges they are facing are to some extent technical and financial. Since they had never been introduced into e-learning, they found it difficult to some extent to be integrated in the process of learning. Regardless of connectivity, which has been considered as the most challenging problem by interviewees, the internet that costs them a huge amount of money makes it harder for some students to access their virtual classes. And a question emerges here, who is to blame? In fact, it is noteworthy that here the blame is on the ministry of education, which could not afford free access to students and professors to social networking sites during the pandemic. On the other hand, very few students articulated that the need of face-to-face learning is meaningful. This does not mean SNSs are not of help, but they need a different method of teaching online.

However, this study found out that students are aware of the positive impacts of the use of SNS in their learning. The majority of participants counted numerous pros of using social networking sites in online learning. Interviewees confirmed that with the help of SNS, they are not only able to manage their time and do other different activities, but also engage with the class smoothly in discussions. These online social tools have many educational benefits. Indeed, it is shown that social media can enhance communication as well as interaction among students and between teachers and students (Faizi et al., 2018). Many of them gained their self-confidence and got the chance to be part of the active learning process in a more comfortable way. Even though participants listed a number of advantages of learning via social networking sites, still they wish they could learn how to use it and be secured while using it since it will take over the world. Professors were turned into influencers and networkers and made the learning go smoothly hand in hand with the pandemic despite all difficulties. Also, they are asked to do more effort and engage themselves in the circle of connected professors via social networks to enhance students' performance. Consequently, a lot of work at the level of

pedagogy and facilities should be done to improve distance education. All students have developed a positive attitude towards the use of SNS in distance learning with the aim of further improvements.

Conclusion

The aim of this study has been to emphasize that social networks have managed to reach the Moroccan university and turn professors into influencers and networkers despite all challenges. A thorough examination has actually revealed that the impact of the course content on students is very limited. They have also expressed their very positive views about social networks. Thanks to these sites, professors and students are able to go further and complete the learning process during the pandemic. It has also been found that social networks push students forward to get rid of their shyness and become confident. The results have also proved that the use of social networks by professors is very informal, which makes students feel bored and fail to commit themselves to the course. Taking into consideration the aforementioned ideas, it is believed that the integration of SNS in higher education is not very influential, so the need for a structured online education system is highly recommended for future generations.

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