

## The Impact of Virtual Social Networks on Teaching and Learning



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**ABSTRACT:** Today, social networks have become an inseparable part of human society and because of the facilities they provide to users, they are very popular and are used every day. Social media, through online tools, group critical thought, team-centered project-based learning, and group problem-solving, and their power lies not only in producing and sharing knowledge among its members, but also in reflecting and producing new knowledge. The use of virtual social networks in mobile education and learning in various forms increases innovation in education. Audiences can perform through the knowledge production, thinking, disseminating knowledge and tolerating criticism. As the results and findings of this study showed, one of the main features of using social networks in teaching and learning is the emphasis on participatory and interactive learning, individual communication and classroom interaction, and the possibility of discussion with all classmates, the possibility of understanding. And provides acceptance of the opinion of others and the formation of knowledge based on social agreements. Also, using this tool solves the problem of lack of time and lack of facilities and it can be claimed that by using this method, it is possible to increase productivity in the field of education and learning.

**KEYWORDS:** Social Networks, Virtual Education, Mobile Education

### Introduction

Social networks, have as much history as the history of human social life. [1] Of course, it has undergone an evolutionary process since then. A social network is a part of social relationships that connects a person to others and through them, connects more people. Social networks can be an important tool in disseminating information, exchanging news, talking about others, and etc. [2] After the emersion of the Internet, the Web was created to increase the efficiency and organization of resources on the Internet. After the Web, Web 2 was created, which is an extension of the traditional Web. Web 2 was introduced by O'Reilly in 2004 to address the most important limitation of the traditional Web, which was the inability to interact. This restriction made users passive in this environment, but after the emergence of Web 2, it became possible for users to interact, participate, collaborate and produce content [3]. The modern social network was first introduced in 1960 at the University of Illinois in the U.S .This was followed by the emergence of social networking sites in 1995 with the Classmate site, which helped members find friends in elementary school, high school and college. [4] It can be said that Web 2 is one of the virtual social networking platforms. These networks have emerged since the late 90's and their evolution has continued to now and we are witnessing its development and improvement every day. In fact, social networking sites are like a flood that is sweeping and advancing communities [5]. Most Internet users in the world and in Iran are now members of one of the social networks [6] And social network has become effective in establishing social communication [7]

In the third millennium, known as the age of knowledge and the age of information explosion, the development of virtual social networks, learning approach at any time and place, with the advancement of wireless technologies and mobile learning has greatly brought learning closer to reality. Mobile as a model of e-learning refers to the acquisition of knowledge, attitude and skills using mobile technologies [8] In fact, virtual social networks have three main features: 1- multimedia 2- full member and 3- interactive. The growing influence of virtual social networks such as Facebook, Twitter and Telegram has made significant changes in the dissemination of information and crossing the boundaries of cultural norms, and has provided information to individuals in a very different way [1] Despite the high importance of these sites, there is still no definition that is accepted by experts in this field, but what is agreed among the majority of them is the ability to communicate, interact and share content on such networks by creating an account and linking it to other people's accounts to build a personal network. [9] These sites can be used for business issues, emotional relationships, identifying people with similar characteristics and interests, entertainment, and great sharing such as music, sports, art. [10] The changes brought about by virtual social networks are fundamental, which is why organizations, especially educational organizations, must use the latest technology to stay competitive in order to maximize their ability to compete. To achieve their goals. Statistics show that virtual social networks have attracted many users, so educational institutions should use

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this technology to involve learners[11]. In their definition of mobile learning, Vovula & Sharples (2002) emphasizes the aspects that characterize mobile services; Leung and Chen (2003) focus on characteristics related to communication infrastructure such as wireless networks. In another definition, ambulant learning is the ease of learning and access to educational materials for users of mobile devices through a wireless medium [8]

These social networks are very flexible and provide users with a wide range of easy-to-access facilities that are able to meet all the needs associated with constructive learning. Since the advent of social networks, many researchers have conducted research on their use in education and have concluded that social networks enhance group critical thinking, team-centered project-based learning, and group problem-solving. It does not produce and share knowledge among its members, but also enables the reflection and production of new knowledge. In these networks, ideas are generated, challenged, changed, critiqued and evaluated and all these happen in just a few minutes. An overview of the research shows that the use of these networks in learning, in addition to the many opportunities it creates; Such as empowering teachers and learners, access to learning content, participation, facilitating social interactions, increasing the pace of knowledge production and dissemination, lifelong learning and learner independency, also face challenges and disadvantages. [11]

There are different definitions in the definition of mobile learning. Some articles consider mobile learning to be learning at any time and in any place [12] Studies emphasize that in this learning, the student is constantly searching, accessing and retrieving information on a particular subject. Information retrieval has entered the age of mobile learning by increasing the capacity of information storage devices and building portable devices. Some papers describe mobile learning as the equivalent of using mobile devices for learner interaction. However, there is no precise definition of mobile learning. Others have suggested the aggregation of e-learning and the combination of individual training in any place and time for mobile learning [13]

In addition to the entertainment aspect, Social networks are used to access and diffuse information related to learning [14] and their use to achieve educational goals has been studied in detail. [15] [Social networks are not only the workplace and they affect people's personal lives and, more importantly, show a new perspective on education. [16] Attention to social networks in the field of education increased as the debate over the learning process focused on social relations and technology intensified.

In the field of schoolfellow and cultivation, virtual social networks are the resources for comprehensive student information and are rapidly developing. With the emerge of social networks, the use of these networks has become an inseparable part of many students' lives and has had a direct impact on all aspects of student life, including the amount of study, academic performance and other academic skills [17]. Some of the main reasons for using virtual social networks in education are: communication with other learners, exchange of lessons, high speed, free or relatively cheap; Increasing the analytical ability of learners, strengthening the critical spirit, crossing geographical borders; Formation and strengthening of collective wisdom [18].

## BACKGROUND

In an article, Ariani et al. discussed the virtual role of social networks on the ability of graduate students. In this paper, they conclude that network socials, by relying on hypertext content, have the potential to make a difference in the level of research capabilities of students using virtual networks compared to others. Therefore, education and culture and expert and continuous monitoring of the space of these networks and planning for the future can be a basic proposal for policy makers and practitioners in the virtual field. The text and the main body of the article should be appropriately divided by the author or authors. [4]

Sanders In his study outlined the opportunities and challenges of advancing the curriculum through available technologies, the availability of high quality educational resources, easy use of these devices, especially in clinical situations, the use of games and virtual patients in presenting content, meaningful learning, providing opportunities to interact with other learners and sharing opinions with other people, and easy information retrieval. On the other hand, he considers the challenges of presenting the curriculum in the lack of information and digital literacy among literate students, inappropriate use of social networks and disclosure of private and professional information. It seems that the use of mobile learning methods to provide the curriculum to students is more related to the characteristics of this method, including availability in all places and times, as well as mobility. [19] A study entitled "The effect of using virtual social networks on the academic performance of students in Birjand University of Medical Sciences" conducted by Javadinia et al., Found that students with lower grades and academic performance than students with higher grades , Use social networks more, and 57.9% of students become members of social networks after entering the university, so they have suggested information about the use of virtual social networks and its various effects at the beginning of students entering the university. [9]

In an article, Yaghoubi et al. Examined the use of social networks in the educational and research activities of agricultural students of Zanjan University. The results of path analysis showed that 17% of the variability of the use of virtual social networks is explained by the intention to use virtual social networks. Also, 21% of the variability of the variable of intention to use virtual social networks is explained by the variable of attitude towards virtual social networks and 21% of the variability of attitude towards virtual social networks is explained by two independent variables of perceived usefulness and ease of use. [1] In a study conducted by Papenzadeh and Rasekh named the effect of using the telegram on the performance of physical education teachers in Gialn province, the results indicate that There is a significant relationship between the use of the telegram social network and their performance in teaching –

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learning There is a significant relationship. [11] Another study was conducted by Movahedi et al. In 2015 to examine the effect of integrated learning based on social networks on self-efficacy of high school students in mathematics that the results showed the positive effect of using integrated learning based on social networks on self-efficacy. [6] Najmeh Khosravi et al. In their study emphasize that in the production of mobile learning tools, the taste and needs of learners should be considered and according to the positive attitude of students in using mobile phones in educational activities, the use of these tools in teaching and learning activities are prominent. The results of this study showed that students' attitudes in the learning dimension are more towards using mobile phones as educational tools, to interact with classmates in the social dimension using mobile phones and in the interactive dimension, using mobile phones in educational and research activities during the night. Today, in the field of social technology, the use of e-books in education is effective. Finally, researchers focused on designing mobile learning tools based on user and learner preferences [20].

In his study, Spala considered the use of mobile learning to be effective for teacher's education and shared ideas about teaching methods through text messages and digital photos, the usefulness of ease of using the information, directness and flexibility of this type of learning [21]. Researchers in a study in 2010 named the use of virtual social networks (Facebook) in higher education for students showed that by integrating social networking tools and services into the e-learning system, users can use them in schools, colleges and universities and create a virtual community [22]. In another study examining the effect of using virtual social networks on students' academic performance, researchers have shown that students with lower grades and academic performance use social networks more than students with higher grades and grades [23]. Researchers have found that social software that has the ability to interact, can provide content and receive feedback and social networking and communication between people can improve the learning process and acquire basic skills such as critical thinking, creativity and problem solving [24]. In another study by researchers at the University of Rhodes on increasing the educational value of integrating the learning management system network platform, they increased the level of informal learning by using social networking in the education system [25]

Recent research on the use of social networking software in higher education has shown that the use of social networking software for educational purposes such as inventing new ways to learn, giving control to students and Students provide transferable skills to support the education of colleagues to each other, increase constructive learning, create digital identity and foster social interaction [26]. Other studies on the technology of Web version 2 and virtual social software also show that Web version 2 tools facilitate communication and social participation, discover and share information in groups, and produce and manage content, Continuous collection of knowledge and content modification, attention to personal preferences and needs, the possibility of communication between members of a specific group, the possibility of communication with diverse and unknown sources and individuals, the possibility of receiving and providing feedback to learners, knowledge producing process and related skills [27]

### **The role of virtual social networks in mobile education and learning**

Students employ social media to study individually and in groups. The function of these networks is not limited to information and network-based training can be planned and implemented in these sites [30]

The world's advanced universities make significant use of social networks, and even universities, in line with their educational policies, are investing in the construction of their own virtual social networks [31]. These networks, create the possibility of establishing information, Provide sharing, exchange of information and views for learners via computer or smartphones [32]

At least one of these networks in universities can be applied in communication between students, classmates and professors, and through them to discuss topics. Some of its benefits in business and education have also been confirmed [33]

Today's instructors need to improve their relationship by applying the knowledge transfer process and adapting advanced teaching strategies to suit students' lives. [34].

A review of research in the field of social networks and education showed that the use of these networks in teaching provides the following facilities for teachers: increases the acceptance of the professor and his involvement in the new student culture, constructive educational outputs Provides the teacher with a variety of disciplines, enables the teacher to practice different teaching methods according to the interests of the students, as well as the use of virtual social networks in teaching the teacher enables him / her to Enhance effective teaching activities. [35]

Through virtual social networks, users are able to create profiles, share information, view other users' notes, etc. [36] As virtual networks continue to grow in popularity, most academics have begun to successfully teach a new generation of students. Virtual social networks have been used in many university classrooms. Most of the professors who have used this technology believe that these networks are a way through which they have a positive relationship with their students while teaching. In addition, its experts have stated that virtual social communication between students can be a factor for successful learning [37].

Virtual social networks have even changed the way students and teachers communicate and the way they teach at different levels of education. In a way that learners have expanded the scope of their learning process beyond the classroom and use social networks as a key factor in the process of knowledge creation and content sharing [38].

Cole (2010) believes that mobile learning enhances and improves learners' ability to communicate and access information through mobile and wireless devices. [39] The results of Valva (2005) indicate that mobile learning leads to results such as greater

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enthusiastic interaction among learners, collaboration and communication in the educational space. [40] Rabiler 3 (2010) in studies on network application Virtual social networks (Facebook) in higher education have done on students showed that by integrating social networking tools and services in the e-learning system, users can have extensive communication with each other in different schools, colleges and universities and society create virtual [41]. Using the interactive activities of students and teachers through virtual social networks can help improve learning outcomes [42]. Many social network users are young, and in fact most of them are university students; Therefore, the introduction and implementation of a virtual classroom as an innovative support in the education process is essential to overcome the traditional teaching methods that have existed so far [43]. Virtual social networks play a significant role in performing scientific tasks and transferring knowledge among learners. Therefore, virtual social networks have the ability to implement a variety of educational opportunities in learning [44].

### Benefits and Challenges of Using Virtual Social Networks in Mobile Education

Some articles consider the most important advantage of mobile learning to be easy access to information resources [5]. In his article, Zolfo considers learning opportunities with new portable technology as one of the benefits of mobile learning. Trax also points out that mobile devices not only provide new forms of knowledge and new ways to access them, but also this form of learning involves a new art and practice of accessing them. From another perspective, this form of learning includes not only the creation of knowledge and access to knowledge, but also how to create knowledge and access to the above knowledge [12].

Social networks are not just a learning network but also they are a research network too. In addition, many researchers have found that the design process based on structuralist learning theories is highly consistent with the use of Web 2 tools, including virtual social networks. These two learnings are a process of activating knowledge to the hand and also teaching is a process of engaging in knowledge rather than writing knowledge. [45]

The need to address the challenges in this area and related factors is such that today virtual colleges are growing around the world and will undoubtedly turn the use of mobile learning into a new discussion in teaching, learning and evaluation of students and curricula[46].

Statistics show that young people and most students form a large and important part of social networking groups use virtual networks for 10 to 60 minutes a day [47]. The use of these networks also has consequences, including reducing students' study time and disrupting their education. Among the important negative effects of such databases, especially among students, is the increase in anxiety and tension in them; But social networks do not have only negative effects and can be used in the educational process, they can be used optimally for educational purposes [48]

According to studies, students spend a lot of time using electronic media. Despite the lack of reinforcement and students' lack of access to specific information resources outside the classroom, leveraging virtual social networks is a promising solution. The existence of social networks in order to meet the communication goals of communities, provide guidance and support to new users, provide useful information and opportunities for personal growth and development and help members as a communication channel to build community culture are essential. The researchers also examined the role of virtual social media in the growth and development of students and found significant results [4]

Research by Jones et al. In 2008 showed that universities that use this technology can effectively and positively motivate their students in their field of expertise and work. Increasing students' motivation can be effective and useful in their successes, grades and other psychological aspects of individuals. In contrast, there are other professors who see Facebook and other virtual social networks as a useful and commercial technology and a way to connect with students. [49]

Virtual social networks can also create contexts in an educational center's programs, including support for research training, Scientific activities, assignments of learners and specialized training for special cases [31]

As more and more students rely on the use of virtual social networks, they conclude that these social networks are a meaningful aspect of their lives, and this leads to the extreme use of these networks, which can have a negative effect. On their university performance. This means that the use of these social networks reduces the focus on academic performance and affects individual study habits. Research has shown that students who regularly use Facebook study one to five hours a week, while students who are not members of the network study between 11 and 15 hours [50].

It seems that before applying this type of learning, familiarity with the complexity of this type of intervention and the challenges of using this learning should also be considered. Challenges such as small screen, keyboard, limited storage of mobile devices, lack of applications to run special educational programs, high cost of using these devices have been mentioned [51].

Social networks give learners the opportunity to organize information, share their ideas, receive feedback and most importantly, learn from others. In addition, these networks enable communication between teacher and student at any time and place. Factors such as visibility, participation, content production instead of content consumption, communication through resource sharing, getting help from others to improve production, personal motivation and using other people's educational products can be considered as reasons for accepting the social network phenomenon and its effect on self-efficacy [6].

Two other opportunities that the use of social networks in learning and teaching creates for the users of this network are access to learning content and participation. Research in the field of learning environments shows that the use of virtual social networks,

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enables teachers and learners to easily access the content of their learning needs and to distribute and publish it easily [35] In an article published by Al-Rasheedi, the most important factors influencing the success of mobile learning were: 1- Learners understanding of participatory opportunities 2- Learning anywhere and anytime. In addition, the provision of functional content was emphasized as the initial expectation of a mobile learning program. Also, in this article, some aspects such as teachers' technical competencies and development of methods of evaluation and organizational support were mentioned as factors that have less impact on the success of mobile learning programs [52]. In fact, it can be said that one of the main obstacles using the social networks in learning is the resistance of teachers to change the method of teaching and learning new techniques and their lack of skills.

### CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

According to the results of the present study, it seems that despite the negative effects of repeated use of virtual social networks, including reduction in studying, social networks can be used as a platform for teaching and learning for teachers and students. Studies have shown the positive effects of this method in mobile education and learning. The most important characteristics of this type of learning were availability, learner-centered, personal and informal. On the other hand, the lack of infrastructure, high cost, unfamiliarity with these methods, and lack of application software are some of the challenges of this method of learning and teaching. According to the results of various studies, the use of these methods requires the training of faculty members and educational administrators. A noteworthy point in this educational method is the personal and informal nature of learning at any time and any place. People are aware of the obstacles to the progress of this educational method. Collecting and sharing educational videos and photos on social media and displaying them in the classroom can partially compensate the lack of laboratory facilities and the lack of time for laboratory activities.

What is certain is that the massive functions of these media necessitate a deeper study to better understand the cultural issues of the society and to pay attention to the potential capacities of social media to achieve the goals of growth and development of the country. In this case, we can offer suggestions such as promoting the culture of education and mobile learning by social networks by creating specialized groups and channels by professors and teachers, providing free internet in educational centers, and creating indigenous education-oriented social networks.

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