

# Discovering Facebook as an Appropriate Environment for Learning from the City University College of Ajman Students' Point of View

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## Abstract

The main purpose of this research study is to better understand the university students' perspectives and attitudes towards using social network (Facebook) sites for enhancing their academic and social skills as well as to determine if there is a difference between male and female university students in terms of using social networking sites (Facebook) for acquiring different academic and social skills inside and outside the classroom. The study also tries to illustrate the importance of Facebook as a social networking site that is most regularly used by male and female university students in order to improve their academic and social skills. The participants of this study were 30 female and male undergraduate students in the City University College of Ajman, United Arab Emirates. The instrument of the study was a survey, designed and assigned to students in order to measure their perspectives towards the use of Facebook as a conventional learning environment. The expected findings of this study would reflect that male students had positive tendency and attitudes toward using Facebook as a social network site for acquiring academic and social skills more than female students who had negative tendency and attitudes. The results also would show that students can use Facebook pages for different purposes such as watching videos and writing blogs which is frequently used as a social network site for improving social and academic skills by male students while the majority of the female students can use Facebook for reviewing fashion and shopping more than studying and learning.

**Keywords:** social network, E-learning, Facebook.

## 1. Introduction and literature review

The term of FB (Facebook) is produced as a version of OSN (Online Social Network) which is mainly reflected from social and communicative skills. Facebook institutes a valuable site for people attentive to the affordances of social networks according to its heavy usage patterns and technological competences that link online and offline connections (Ellison, Stein field & Lampe 2007). Also, this type of social applications is considered as one of the most popular ones between users. The development and acceptance of online social networks has formed a new world of partnership and communication. More than a billion persons around the world are linked and networked together to form, cooperate, and share their knowledge and ideas. Despite the rank of online social networks, there is reasonably little theory-driven empirical research presented to tackle this new kind of communication and interaction facts (Cheung, Chiu & Lee 2011).

### 1.1 The past perspective of learners towards learning through social networking sites:

The literature review directed classifies the role of many articles emphasizing the utilization of social networks and its impacts in learning for many decades since the rise of knowledge and communication technology in e-learning settings. Research papers argued that using social networks with a promise to replace learning improvement approaches has an academic, social and technological side which tolerates circulations of statement, distributing thoughts and knowledge and implementation of online discussions. Also, social networking sites, providing attractive communication equipment for everyday life and e-learning settings, encouraging learners to shape digital individualities and state themselves numerically. Moreover, they give the opportunities to learners to be socially collaborative and build a learning environment in online seats.

As the utilization of the online websites for learning and improving the social skills was afforded by a great number of researchers and studies, the profits are also increased for teachers and students as well. Through the past 10 years, the use of internet has been changed, along with the need of communication and interaction technologies (YAKIN & TINMAZ 2015).

### 1.2 Theoretical Framework:

- Learners perspectives toward E-learning.

The literature review assured the importance of using technology in the educational process and emphasized the importance of e-learning in reforming the learning goals. While the recent years are considered as the ages of information revolution directed by e-learning. In many places of the world, different areas of life such as finance, travel, accounting, entertainment, government sectors, security have saw fast revolution as a result of the emergence of Information Communication Technology, ICT. Significant research and improvement in e-learning

have shaped a body of text books, referenced journals, articles, and reports on web pages to develop e-learning experiences (B Al-Juda 2017).

Also, there is a main obstacle in using the social networking sites in education. Some students are not socially constructed to involve in a group of people on the social media as they are usually afraid to fail in dealing with others. The sense of getting failed and isolated in groups as a reason of skill lack will influence students' directions towards their goal (Meriläinen, M, & Kuittinen, M 2014). In this regard, there was another perspective towards the use of social networking sites in the educational process which is providing learners with appropriate place, settings, and resources in order to encourage them achieving their technological and educational goals.

### **1.3 Review of related literature:**

According to the reviewed literature, using online social networks such as Facebook is considered as a suitable setting for learning in universities.

Bosch (2009) conducted a research study on the importance of Web-based learning in enhancing the course content and giving students the chance to download the course notes. The writer presented Facebook as one of the most suitable web pages for teaching and learning in the University of Cape Town. The findings of this research showed students positive perspectives toward the use of Facebook as a suitable application for learning.

While Delaney (2015) constructed an online survey in Dublin City University (DCU) to fill in the gap of literature in examining the implementation of distance learning and its importance in order to build students social skills.

Another study examined learners' experiences on utilizing Facebook as a learning setting in teaching an online course. 18 junior education faculty students were the participants of this study who had to take a required distance education undergraduate course provided by the Computer Education and Instructional Technology team at a university in Turkey. The learners used Facebook in this course for 14 weeks and they were requested to answer nine essay questions. The findings show some benefits and some obstacles in using Facebook as a suitable learning environment (Filiz KALELIOĞLU, 2017).

Gray, Annabell & Kennedy (2010) indicated that Facebook is considered as an interesting tool for university students learning. In this study, the researcher assigned 759 university students to be the participants and divided them into four learning groups on Facebook. The analysis of the survey showed that 25.5% of the participants used to use Facebook in education. In conclusion, the research showed that Facebook is considered as a part of teaching and learning process for the majority of students.

Irwin et al (2012) conducted a research to explore the students' perspectives towards using of Facebook. The writer indicated that Facebook helps in acquiring skills from learning activities at university. Facebook pages were modified to provide students with all information about the online courses and offer them the interaction opportunities. The researcher designed a survey for students to examine the role of Facebook in improving students' interaction. The majority of students stated that Facebook facilitates their learning tasks and their interaction with the instructors.

### **1.4 Theoretical consolidation:**

Based on the revised research studies from literature, we can notice that employing online Facebook pages is crucial for all of instructors, learners, and the educational organizations as well. For instructors as it frees up their time and energies in the classroom timing. For learners, it constructs their social skills and their expansive abilities by getting them in constant dialogues. Also, it is essential for educational organizations as a type of educational industry.

It is significant that the revised papers emphasized the appropriate role of Facebook in higher education and universities. These theoretical studies permitted the present paper to examine the importance of Facebook as suitable and essential setting for learning in universities. Finally, it is recommended that the present research paper would clarify the relation between the academic and social attainment of undergraduate students as a result of utilizing Facebook in education

## **2. The study problem:**

Investigating the importance of social applications such as Facebook in the educational process is limited, despite of the great attentiveness towards technology in the higher educational sector in the UAE. The main purpose of this article is to investigate the effect of using Facebook as a convenient educational environment from the undergraduate students' perspectives. In order to determine, clarify, and distinguish the college students' point of view towards using Facebook as a suitable learning environment, the researcher forms the following questions:

Do male and female students differ in the amount of hours they spend using Facebook?

What is the impact of using Facebook as an online environment for learning in college students social and

academic skills?

Is there a past experience for college students in using Facebook as an online learning environment?  
Will Facebook be used in the future as an environment of the learning process?

### **3. The study objectives:**

The purpose of this study is to explore Facebook as an effective environment for learning from the City University College of Ajman (CUCA) students' perspectives. Also there are only few number of research studies to explore the impact of social network sites SNSs in the sector of high education (Brady et al., 2010). So, the major objectives of the recent research paper would be to:

- Examine the impact of using Facebook (FB) application as an appropriate environment for learning.
- Categorize the importance of using FB in the higher education sector from the City University College of Ajman (CUCA) students' perspectives.
- Determine if FB would be implemented as an effective learning environment or not.
- Investigate both of male and female students' opinions toward using Facebook as a convenient learning environment.

### **4. The importance of the study:**

Despite the fact of; the importance of Face To Face (F2F) interaction, there are some required applications and technologies those are mostly essential for improving the educational process, students' social and academic skills. Social networking sites are considered as effective places that are provided to a specific population where people of comparable interest meet to communicate, share, and discuss ideas (Raacke & Bonds-Raacke 2008).

While the augmented usage of the Internet as a creative tool in communication has enhanced the way of people interaction. This fact is even more distinct in the present growth and use of friend-networking pages and sites. Moreover, researchers did not assess these sites and their effect on college students' achievement.

Moreover, the Internet has deeply transformed people experience. They use the Web to find information, make shopping, watch videos and films, have fun, and follow news. Over the past five years social networking sites (SNSs) have been developed to be one of the most noticeable fields of social software, promoted by the MySpace and Facebook applications that now each claim hundreds of millions of users (Selwyn 2009).

Additionally, there are many arguments about the combination of technological teaching methods into pedagogy between colleges' instructors from all disciplines in higher education in the UAE, and that discussion was another reason for this paper. There was a significant movement over the decade to integrate technology in higher education by decanting huge quantities of money into the organized development of technological structures appears to have exceeded the capacity of educational institutions to influence the effective transmission of skill and technological "know how" into the usual classroom. (Georgina & Olson 2008).

Despite of the public belief that Facebook could be used only for personal purposes, advocates recommended Facebook as an appropriate tool for learning in higher education. Learners commonly need Facebook for educational reasons, although in an unofficial manner. This has increased discussion in the literature around confidentiality concerns of such online interactions and the forming of these to pedagogy (Menzies, 2017).

According to the idea of social media as an indeed method which is most often used for personal tasks rather than academic/professional tasks by both students and instructors at universities, it seems popular to examine social media use in this regard if it is used for other determinations than personal ones, especially given that there is much research papers which suggest that it could be valuable to utilize Facebook in higher education (Ellefsen 2015).

## **5. Method:**

### **5.1 Study design:**

Methodologically, the researcher would follow the quantitative research method in which she would investigate a research problem based on tendencies in the field or on the need to identify why something happens. Defining a trend shows that the research questions can be answered by a research study in which the researcher strive for forming the overall propensity of replies from the participants and to notice how this propensity is different between people. For example, you might seek to learn how learners illustrate their perspectives toward online learning topic. Findings from this study can tell how a large population perspective has an issue and the variety of these perspectives would be explained.

This research study would be a quantitative survey study investigating learners' general use of Facebook as an appropriate learning environment in the higher education. All items would be developed by the author according to a number of previous studies which investigated students' practices and abilities in using technology, computers, and Facebook application. Survey projects are strategies in quantitative research design in which the researchers process a survey or questionnaire to a small group of people (called the sample) to

determine tendencies in attitudes, perspectives, behaviors, or features of a large group of people (called the population) (Creswell 2012).

### **5.2 Research approach:**

Based on the survey research and despite of the wide spread of using technology in education specially the social networking websites such as Facebook, the number of survey research in this regard is limited. The major aim of this research study is to explore students' perspectives towards using Facebook as a suitable online learning environment for undergraduate students. A survey would be administered by the researcher to 60 of city university college of Ajman students to illustrate their point of view towards using Facebook as an online learning setting. Richardson, (2005:387) stated that Survey and questionnaires are and constructed and applicable tools to retrieve verification that can be used to help and enhance the quality of teaching.

According to connectivism which seeks to learning from theory that connects the recent updated network settings and the technological movement. Also, the present setting of learning has been changed to a huge cooperative learning environment, the Internet is included of information pools namely, (a) online classrooms, (b) social networks, and (c) practical reality or virtual settings, to create, provide, distribute, and convey information into the hands of teachers and learners (Hung 2014).

On the other hand, constructivism emphasized the importance of the activity quality when linking both of the learning process and the social networking sites. It is clear that not only the ontological and epistemological considerations about learning but also the quality of students' achievement had misled with a big amount of concentration to the constructivist ideas (yakin el al. 2015).

### **5.3 Data collection:**

This quantitative survey study had been conducted in the second semester of the academic year (Spring, 2018). The survey would be administered in the middle of the semester to give students a chance to look for some required topics and inquiries on the Facebook pages that would help them in their study.

As indications help specify answers to the research questions and hypotheses. To have these answers, the researcher involved in the step of collecting or gathering data. This step shows determining and choosing participants for the study, taking their permission to study them, and collecting information by asking people questions or observing their attitudes (Creswell 2012). The researcher sent a consent letter through the email to all students who registered in the computer fundamentals course in the City University College of Ajman (CUCA) in spring 2018. The request email would include a consent letter with some details about the research and asking for permission from students to participate in the study (see appendix 1).

### **5.4 Plan for piloting the instrument**

In the current study, the researcher would conduct a pilot research in the City University College of Ajman (CUCA) based on the research objectives and questions. While the students' age is suitable to sign a consent letter, the researcher found out the most suitable instrument for this study would be a constructed survey.

The pilot research study has:

- Sending a consent letter form for all students.
- Oral explanation for students about the nature of the study, its aims, and objectives.
- Conducting a constructed survey with 20 items and assigning it to the participants.

### **5.5 participants**

This study would be carried out in the higher education sector, in the city university college of Ajman, in the UAE. Thirty undergraduate students would be the participants of this study. The participants are 12 males and 18 females. The researcher would administer the survey for the participants who registered in the course of Computer Fundamentals, in spring 2018. The major aim from the constructed survey is to explore undergraduate students' use of Facebook as a valuable environment for learning social and academic skills.

### **5.6 Instruments**

The researchers use a survey to collect the research data. This survey has two sections, the first section has all personal information about students and the demographic information assembled was gender, students' abilities to acquire knowledge in the course of computer fundamental. The second section has twenty items inquiring information about students' use of Facebook, their practices on Facebook, the activity types they prefer to join on Facebook. Also the second sections items are constructed as a 5-level likert scale of (strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree, and strongly disagree).

## **6. Study findings and their discussion:**

In data analysis, the strategies are quite different in analyzing the survey quantitative data. In quantitative

research, the researcher went through statistical analysis (mathematical analysis) of the data, which is usually in numeric shape (Creswell 2012). In the recent study, the consent letter would be sent to all students to determine the number of the participants who would like to participate in the study. Then the survey would assigned to the participants to explore their point of view towards using Facebook as a suitable environment for learning social and academic skills. Students' answers on the survey items would be analyzed. The total survey items would be 25 items between personal and general points.

Based on the items analyses and the research questions, the researcher would rely on some statistical analyses in order to find out the results. A t-test would be done on the results to distinguish if males or females differ in the amount of time they spend using Facebook. Correlation test would follow the t-test to determine the relation between the variables such as the relation between gender and the ability to use the computer.

- In order to answer the first research question: *Do male and female students differ in the amount of hours they spend using Facebook?*

Question	Results	
1	12 males	18 females
2	All participants are between 18 to 20	
3	7 males are professional users and five are medium level.	10 females are professional, five are on medium level and 3 are bellow level.
4	All used to be on face book over 10 times a week.	12 females used to be on face book over than 10 times a week. 6 females used to be from 6-10 times.
5	All females are outstanding users	All females are average users

Table1. Survey part1 results.

Table 2 introduces the personal information and personal abilities of the participants in this research study. It can be noticed that females used to be on face book over than 10 times a week for different purposes, while males used to be on face book less than 10 times a week. Also, females are professional in using face book than the males.

- The second research question: *What is the impact of using Facebook as an online environment for learning in college students social and academic skills?*

**I use my Facebook account only to communicate with my family and friends**

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid strongly disagree	1	3.3	3.3	3.3
disagree	5	16.7	16.7	20.0
neutral	2	6.7	6.7	26.7
agree	4	13.3	13.3	40.0
strongly agree	18	60.0	60.0	100.0
Total	30	100.0	100.0	

Table2.

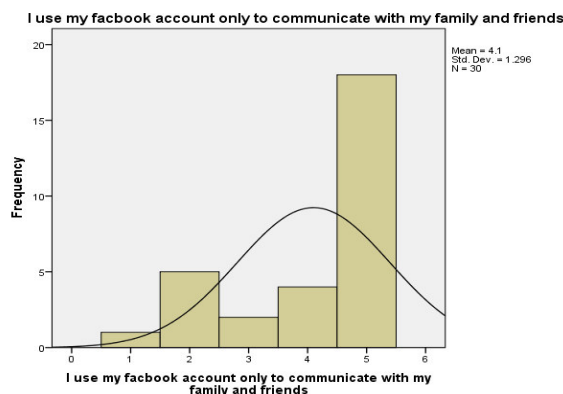


Figure1

It can be recognized from table2 and figure1 that majority of students strongly agree on having face book as a communication tool with their friends and families which strengthen the social side of using such applications in improving students socially.

**Using Facebook waste my time**

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid strongly disagree	14	46.7	46.7	46.7
disagree	6	20.0	20.0	66.7
neutral	4	13.3	13.3	80.0
agree	3	10.0	10.0	90.0
strongly agree	3	10.0	10.0	100.0
Total	30	100.0	100.0	

Table3.

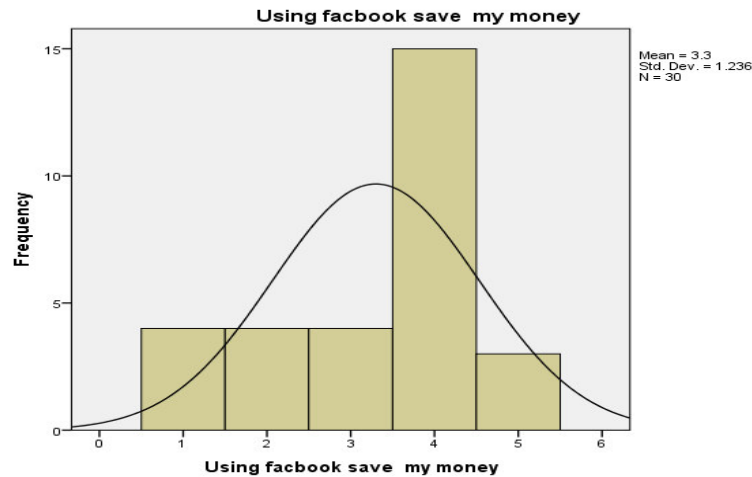


Figure2.

From table 3 and figuer2, majority of students refused the view of face book as it wastes their time. Some of them agreed on that opinion but the others disagreed on that. So, it became clearer that using face book does not waste the time of students. Also from the following table, big number of students agrees on having face book to save their money.

**Using Facebook save my money**

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid strongly disagree	4	13.3	13.3	13.3
disagree	4	13.3	13.3	26.7
neutral	4	13.3	13.3	40.0
agree	15	50.0	50.0	90.0
strongly agree	3	10.0	10.0	100.0
Total	30	100.0	100.0	

Table4.

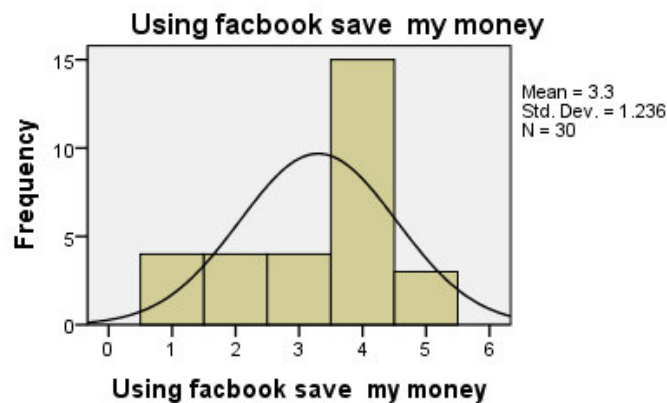


Figure3



In order to answer the third question- *Is there a past experience for college students in using Facebook as an online learning environment?*- the following tables and figures will explain the results.

**I learned many things from different count**

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid strongly disagree	2	6.7	6.7	6.7
disagree	2	6.7	6.7	13.3
neutral	6	20.0	20.0	33.3
agree	17	56.7	56.7	90.0
strongly agree	3	10.0	10.0	100.0
Total	30	100.0	100.0	

Table5

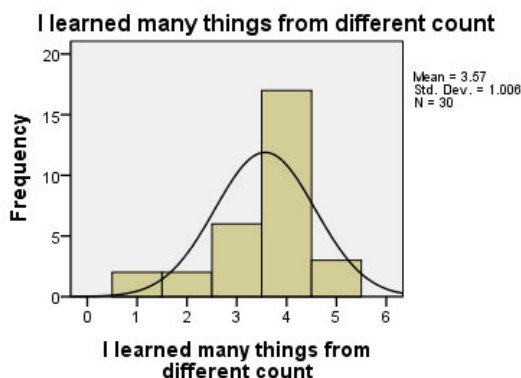


Figure4.

**I believe that there is no privacy in using facbook**

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid strongly disagree	14	46.7	46.7	46.7
disagree	7	23.3	23.3	70.0
neutral	1	3.3	3.3	73.3
agree	5	16.7	16.7	90.0
strongly agree	3	10.0	10.0	100.0
Total	30	100.0	100.0	

Table6

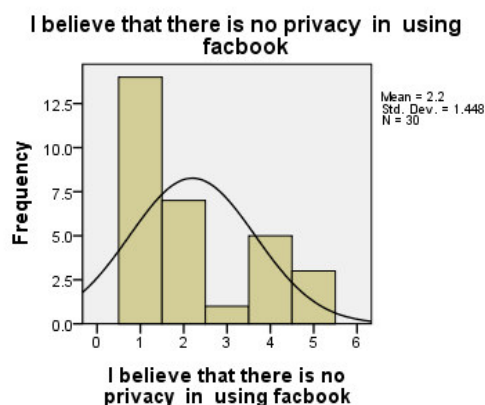


Figure5

**I can find everything about my lesson in Facebook pages.**

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid strongly disagree	2	6.7	6.7	6.7
disagree	3	10.0	10.0	16.7
neutral	3	10.0	10.0	26.7
agree	8	26.7	26.7	53.3
strongly agree	14	46.7	46.7	100.0
Total	30	100.0	100.0	

Table7.

**I can find everything about my lesson in facbook pages.**

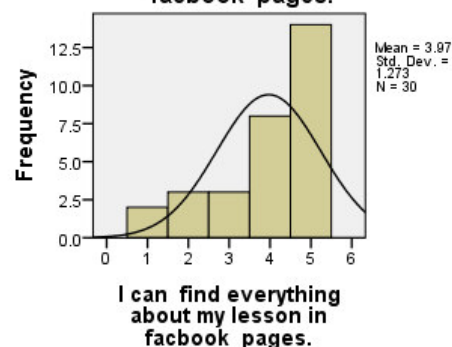


Figure6.

From the previous collected data, we can notice that majority of college students have their own experience in using face book to improve their social and academic skills positively. To answer the forth question of this research paper, *Will Facebook be used in the future as an environment of the learning process?*, students answer the following survey questions.

**I use my account on Facebook to improve my learning skills.**

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid strongly disagree	2	6.7	6.7	6.7
disagree	1	3.3	3.3	10.0
neutral	2	6.7	6.7	16.7
agree	22	73.3	73.3	90.0
strongly agree	3	10.0	10.0	100.0
Total	30	100.0	100.0	

Table 8.

**I use my account on facbook to improve my learning skills.**

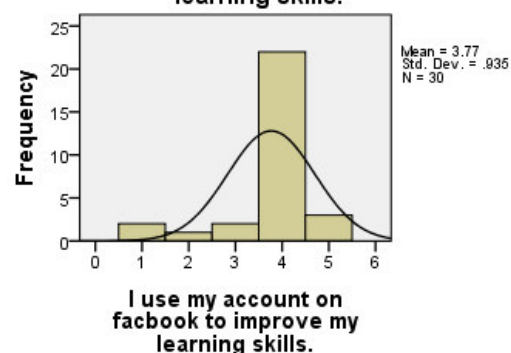


Figure7.



**I use my account on Facebook to improve my social skills.**

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid strongly disagree	4	13.3	13.3	13.3
disagree	2	6.7	6.7	20.0
neutral	2	6.7	6.7	26.7
agree	6	20.0	20.0	46.7
strongly agree	16	53.3	53.3	100.0
Total	30	100.0	100.0	

Table9.

**I use my account on facbook to improve my social skills.**

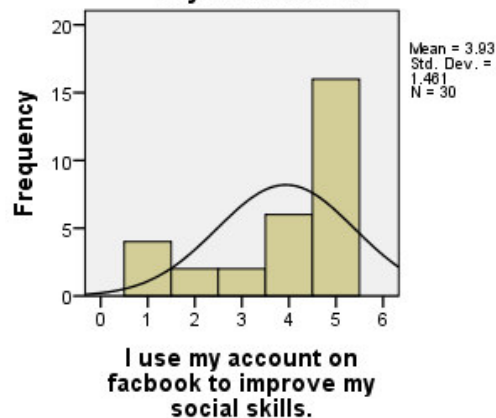


Figure8.

**Facebook is considered as the most useful on line website provides social skills**

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid strongly disagree	4	13.3	13.3	13.3
disagree	3	10.0	10.0	23.3
neutral	17	56.7	56.7	80.0
agree	2	6.7	6.7	86.7
strongly agree	4	13.3	13.3	100.0
Total	30	100.0	100.0	

Table10.

**Facbook is considered as the most useful on line website provides social skills**

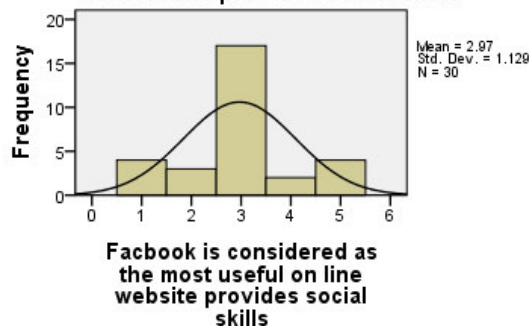


Figure9.

**Facebook is considered as the most useful on line website provides learning skills**

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid strongly disagree	2	6.7	6.7	6.7
disagree	2	6.7	6.7	13.3
neutral	3	10.0	10.0	23.3
agree	19	63.3	63.3	86.7
strongly agree	4	13.3	13.3	100.0
Total	30	100.0	100.0	

Table11.

From the previous tables and figures, face book will be keeping providing students with the main and most important tool of communication and improving their skills. Predictions also indicate that face book will be improved and developed to suit all students' needs even academically or socially.

### 7. Conclusion and recommendations :

In the recent years, social media has surged internationally. Also the utilization of social media technologies—such as websites, emails, and social networking is growing at an unbelievable rate. One area of implementing the use of social media is the educational settings where practioners hope the new technologies will support important educational processes.

Moreover, researchers had largely failed to clarify if and how uses of social media in educational institutions vary from existing uses of computer as a communication tool in schools. While in the Recent years, a huge number of commentators have argued that social media technologies—blogs, wikis, social networking sites (SNS), micro blogs, or social tagging1 tools—may ease communication skills in organizations that vary from those linked with usual computer mediated communication (CMC) technologies like e-mail, teleconferencing, intranets, decision-support systems, and instant messaging (Grudin, 2006; McAfee, 2006; Steinhuser, Smolnik, & Hoppe, 2011).

Facebook is considered as a public website which could be used by everyone freely. Over the past five years social networking sites (SNSs) turned out to be one of the most obvious sorts of social software, announced by the MySpace and Facebook applications which of them has hundreds of millions of users. SNSs are private and special spaces for online discussions and distributing of content based normally on the preservation and sharing of 'profiles' where any users can introduce themselves to other users through the introduction of personal information, hobbies, photographs, social networks and so on (Selwyn 2009).

The recent paper presented an overview about students' satisfaction about using the application of Facebook as an online learning environment which is matching with Selwyn (2009) who stated that Facebook (FB) and MySpace (MS) have been exposed to much new deliberation within the educational community. Whilst increasing figures of educators praise the ability of social networking to (re)engage students with their studies, others worry that such applications negotiate and disturb young people's involvement with 'traditional' education establishment.

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