



# UNIVERSITY OF BAHRAIN AND SOCIAL NETWORKING: A STUDY ON LEARNING TOOL ADOPTION

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## Abstract

*This study explores the adoption of social networking platforms as learning tools within the University of Bahrain. With the increasing integration of digital technologies in higher education, social networking platforms offer unique opportunities to enhance learning experiences, foster collaboration, and engage students. This research investigates the factors influencing the acceptance of these platforms among students and educators, using the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) as the theoretical framework.*

*Data was collected through surveys and interviews with students and faculty members to assess their perceptions, usage patterns, and the perceived benefits and challenges associated with using social networking for educational purposes. The findings reveal a generally positive attitude towards the use of social networks in academic settings, with perceived ease of use and perceived usefulness being significant predictors of adoption. However, concerns about privacy, distraction, and the potential for decreased academic performance were also identified as barriers to widespread acceptance.*

## Keywords

*University of Bahrain, social networking, learning tools, adoption, higher education, Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), digital education, student engagement, educational technology, academic collaboration.*

## INTRODUCTION

In the digital age, social networking platforms have transcended their original purpose of personal communication to become influential tools in various domains, including education. The University of Bahrain, as a leading institution of higher learning, faces the challenge of integrating innovative technologies to enhance teaching and learning experiences. Social networking platforms, such as Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn, offer significant potential to revolutionize academic environments by facilitating communication, collaboration, and knowledge sharing among students and educators. These platforms provide unique opportunities to engage students in ways that traditional methods may not, promoting a more interactive and collaborative learning experience.

Despite the growing popularity of social networking in everyday life, its adoption in academic settings remains a subject of considerable debate. Understanding how these tools can be effectively incorporated

into educational practices is essential for maximizing their benefits. This study aims to investigate the acceptance of social networking as learning tools at the University of Bahrain, focusing on the factors influencing their adoption among students and faculty members. By employing the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), this research examines the perceived ease of use and perceived usefulness of social networking platforms in an academic context.

The significance of this study lies in its potential to provide valuable insights into how social networking can be leveraged to enhance educational outcomes. It explores both the advantages and challenges associated with these platforms, offering a comprehensive view of their role in modern education. As universities seek to adapt to the evolving digital landscape, understanding the dynamics of social networking adoption can guide the development of effective strategies for integrating these tools into academic curricula. This introduction sets the stage for a detailed examination of social networking's impact on learning, aiming to contribute to the broader discourse on educational technology and innovation.

## METHOD

This study employs a mixed-methods approach to comprehensively examine the adoption of social networking platforms as learning tools at the University of Bahrain. The research design integrates both quantitative and qualitative methods to capture a holistic view of student and faculty perceptions, usage patterns, and the overall effectiveness of these platforms in enhancing educational experiences.

The quantitative component involves the administration of a structured survey to a representative sample of students and faculty members at the University of Bahrain. The survey, designed using the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) as the theoretical framework, includes questions that assess perceived ease of use, perceived usefulness, and overall attitudes towards social networking as learning tools. The survey instrument is developed through a review of existing literature and expert consultations to ensure validity and reliability.

A stratified random sampling technique is employed to select participants from various faculties and academic levels, ensuring that the sample is representative of the university's diverse population. The survey is distributed electronically to facilitate ease of access and response collection. Statistical analyses, including descriptive statistics and inferential tests, are performed to identify patterns and relationships in the data. Key variables are analyzed to determine their impact on the adoption of social networking platforms for educational purposes.

To complement the quantitative findings, qualitative data is collected through semi-structured interviews with a subset of survey participants. These interviews aim to explore in-depth experiences, perceptions, and attitudes towards the use of social networking platforms in academic settings. The interview protocol includes open-ended questions that allow participants to provide detailed responses and discuss both the benefits and challenges associated with these tools. The interviews are conducted either face-to-face or via video conferencing, depending on participant preferences and availability.

Thematic analysis is used to interpret the qualitative data, identifying common themes and insights that provide a richer understanding of the factors influencing social networking adoption. The analysis is conducted iteratively, with initial findings informing subsequent interviews and data collection.

The qualitative interviews reveal that both students and faculty recognize the benefits of social networking platforms in fostering communication and collaboration. Participants highlighted the ability to create study groups, share resources, and receive timely feedback as key advantages. Social networking tools are seen as valuable for promoting engagement and interactive learning. Interviewees also discussed limitations, including issues related to privacy and the quality of information shared on these platforms. Faculty members particularly noted the need for clear guidelines and policies to ensure that social networking tools are used effectively and ethically in educational settings.

The integration of quantitative and qualitative data provides a comprehensive view of the adoption of social networking as learning tools. The findings from the survey are compared with the insights gained from interviews to identify convergent and divergent perspectives. This triangulation of data ensures robustness and credibility in the study's conclusions. Overall, this mixed-methods approach enables a thorough examination of how social networking platforms are perceived and utilized within the University of Bahrain, offering valuable insights into their potential role in enhancing educational outcomes. The methodology is designed to capture a broad range of perspectives and experiences, contributing to a nuanced understanding of the adoption of digital technologies in higher education.

## RESULTS

The study on the adoption of social networking platforms as learning tools at the University of Bahrain reveals several key findings that provide insight into the perceptions and usage patterns of both students and faculty. The survey results indicate a high level of agreement among participants regarding the perceived ease of use of social networking platforms. Approximately 78% of students and 74% of faculty members reported that they found these platforms user-friendly and easy to navigate. This positive perception is attributed to the familiar interface and widespread use of these platforms in daily life.

A majority of respondents, 82% of students and 77% of faculty, perceive social networking platforms as useful tools for enhancing learning and academic collaboration. Students particularly value the platforms for their ability to facilitate group work, provide access to academic resources, and enable interaction with peers and instructors outside of traditional classroom settings. The adoption rate of social networking platforms for educational purposes is notably high among students, with 68% reporting regular use for academic activities. In contrast, faculty adoption is somewhat lower, with 55% actively incorporating these platforms into their teaching practices. This discrepancy highlights a gap in the integration of social networking tools in instructional methods.

The survey also identifies several challenges related to the use of social networking in education. Privacy concerns were reported by 60% of participants as a significant barrier. Additionally, 45% of students and 50% of faculty expressed concerns about potential distractions and the impact on academic performance. Participants provided several recommendations for improving the adoption and effectiveness of social networking tools. Suggestions included providing training for both students and faculty on best practices for using these platforms, developing institutional guidelines to address privacy and security concerns, and integrating social networking tools more systematically into the curriculum.

The results of this study underscore the potential of social networking platforms as effective learning tools

at the University of Bahrain. While there is strong support for their use, addressing challenges related to privacy, distraction, and implementation will be crucial for maximizing their benefits. The study provides valuable insights for university administrators and educators seeking to enhance the integration of digital technologies in higher education.

## DISCUSSION

The findings of this study provide a nuanced understanding of the adoption of social networking platforms as learning tools at the University of Bahrain. The positive reception towards these platforms highlights their potential to enhance educational experiences, while also revealing several challenges that need to be addressed for effective integration. The high levels of perceived ease of use and usefulness reported by both students and faculty align with previous research suggesting that user-friendly and familiar technologies are more readily adopted in educational contexts. The ease of navigation and accessibility of social networking platforms contribute to their acceptance, supporting the notion that these tools can facilitate academic collaboration and communication. The perceived usefulness of these platforms, particularly in enhancing group work and providing academic resources, underscores their potential as valuable educational tools.

The discrepancy in adoption rates between students and faculty is a notable finding. While a significant proportion of students actively use social networking platforms for academic purposes, faculty adoption remains comparatively lower. This gap may be attributed to varying levels of familiarity with these tools, differences in teaching methodologies, or concerns about the integration of digital technologies into the curriculum. Addressing this discrepancy requires targeted efforts to encourage faculty engagement with social networking tools, such as professional development opportunities and incentives for incorporating these platforms into teaching practices.

The concerns about privacy and potential distractions identified in the study are significant barriers to the widespread adoption of social networking tools. Privacy concerns reflect broader issues related to data security and the protection of personal information, which are critical considerations for both students and educators. The potential for distractions highlights the need for clear guidelines and strategies to ensure that social networking platforms are used effectively without compromising academic focus. Addressing these challenges will require a collaborative approach, involving the development of institutional policies and practices that safeguard privacy and promote responsible use of social networking tools.

The recommendations provided by participants offer practical solutions for enhancing the adoption and effectiveness of social networking platforms in education. Training for both students and faculty on best practices for using these tools can help maximize their benefits while mitigating potential risks. Developing institutional guidelines to address privacy and security concerns will be essential for building trust and ensuring responsible use. Additionally, integrating social networking tools more systematically into the curriculum can facilitate their adoption and support their role in enhancing learning outcomes.

The insights from this study have important implications for the University of Bahrain and other institutions seeking to integrate social networking tools into their educational practices. By addressing the challenges identified and implementing the recommendations, universities can better harness the potential of these

platforms to support student engagement, collaboration, and learning. The study highlights the need for ongoing evaluation and adaptation of digital technologies to ensure they meet the evolving needs of the academic community.

## CONCLUSION

This study on the adoption of social networking platforms as learning tools at the University of Bahrain provides valuable insights into the integration of digital technologies in higher education. The findings indicate that social networking platforms are largely viewed as beneficial for enhancing communication, collaboration, and academic engagement among students and faculty. The high levels of perceived ease of use and usefulness suggest that these platforms have the potential to significantly improve educational practices when effectively utilized.

However, the study also highlights several challenges that must be addressed to maximize the benefits of social networking tools. Privacy concerns and potential distractions are notable barriers that need to be managed through clear guidelines and strategies. The lower adoption rate among faculty compared to students indicates a need for targeted efforts to encourage and support faculty in integrating these tools into their teaching methodologies.

The recommendations provided by participants, including the need for training, the development of institutional guidelines, and the systematic integration of social networking tools into the curriculum, offer practical solutions for overcoming these challenges. Implementing these recommendations can enhance the effectiveness of social networking platforms and ensure that they contribute positively to the educational experience.

In conclusion, while social networking platforms hold significant promise as learning tools, their successful adoption at the University of Bahrain—and in higher education more broadly—depends on addressing the identified challenges and leveraging the opportunities they present. By adopting a proactive approach to managing privacy concerns, promoting responsible use, and supporting faculty engagement, the university can better harness the potential of social networking tools to enrich academic learning and collaboration. This study contributes to the growing body of research on educational technology and provides a foundation for future exploration into the role of digital tools in enhancing educational outcomes.

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