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Investigating the Necessity of Applying Digital Minimalism in Reducing Social Media Distraction in Online Education

A case study of master 2 students of language and communication at the University of
Abdel Hamid ibn Badis.

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the
Master Degree in “Language & Communication”

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Abstract

The aim of this study is to investigate the value of applying digital minimalism in minimizing social media distraction while studying online and to advocate for its implementation in higher education. The circumstances that were placed on most nations by the COVID 19 epidemic have resulted into fundamental changes in the way universities operate. Creating online platforms for students was the only way to progress in Algerian higher education. However, ignoring the fact that most Algerian students frequently go online for self-entertainment may result in the failure or partial success of online teaching due to distractions caused by social media, paving the way for the necessity of applying digital minimalism in order to reduce digital distraction in online education. To investigate this dilemma, a questionnaire containing both open-ended and closed-ended questions was prepared and delivered online to 10 master two students of Language and Communication at Abdel Hamid Ibn Badis University's English department. The majority of participants were distracted by social media notifications, according to the findings. Furthermore, most students had no understanding of what digital minimalism was, and after being introduced to it, 90% of participants agreed that using digital minimalism may reduce social media distraction when studying online. In fact, it is recommended that students should switch off all social media notifications before attending online lectures, and it is critical that students recognize the dangers of digital distraction when conducting online courses, and lead their online existence away from social media distraction.

Keywords: Digital minimalism , Social media , Internet Distraction , Online education

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Dedication

In the name of God, most merciful, most compassionate

I dedicate this humble work to the most loving people surrounding me:

My Mother and Grand Mother for their endless love and support and care

To My brothers

To the long list of my friends;

I love you all

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General introduction

Over the past couple of years, a tremendous change has occurred in the lives of all students around the globe, especially university students. After the COVID-19 pandemic was confirmed and recognized as a widely spread disease in March 2020, most countries of the world were obliged to suspend all the academic activities including the closure of all universities around the world, which, paved the way for the idea that studies must be carried out online.

As a result, most universities have chosen to create MOODLES for students to finish the second half of the academic year. Algerian universities had to do the same and stay on track, so the stakeholders have created MOODLES that allow teachers to upload the remaining lessons in PDF or Word forms so that students could get access to the uploaded lessons. This sudden shift from the face to face to the virtual world was not an easy transition for the great majority of students, mainly because the virtual world for students is a place of entertainment and social media scrolling, and turning such space into an academic space was hard for most students.

As Algerian universities created MOODLES to resume studies, students have seen the idea of uploading lectures in PDF or Word form are less effective and similar to searching for information on research engines. Most Algerian higher education students are more familiar with social media platforms than with educational platforms, however, when students preferred social media as a tool to study online, most of them did not acknowledge the major obstacle which is "digital distraction". Social media platforms are mainly made for texting, browsing, and self-entertainment that is why most of the world population uses social media frequently,

in fact, since a decade social media have become an integral part of youth's everyday life. Logically and psychologically speaking, it is quite hard to use the same means for self-entertainment and educational purposes. Since students are glued and constantly using social media for entertainment, this frequently causes distraction whenever they want to study online . Nowadays, social media platforms represent a source of distraction to most users by using different strategies such as notifications and exploiting certain vulnerabilities. The number one hurdle faced by most students while studying online is social media distraction, in fact, social media distraction is a type of distraction caused by social media platforms by breaking the concentration chain using different strategies. Digital minimalism as a philosophy aims at making an end to social media distraction among students while studying online. Indeed, one has deemed it necessary to present this concept to students in order to assist them to overcome being continuously distracted by social media when they have an online class, as well as to enhance and raise their awareness regarding the danger of becoming Internet and social media addicts.

In the current study, two questions were formulated to investigate the issue tackled in this research:

- 1- Does social media represent a source of distraction for students while studying online?
- 2- Is it essential to apply digital minimalism in reducing social media distraction in online education?

The present research study investigates the paramount importance of applying digital minimalism in reducing social media distraction in online education. to answer the aforementioned questions, the researcher hypothesizes that social media platforms are considered the main source of distraction for students whenever they study online and applying digital minimalism could reduce social media distraction and online education. Therefore, it is

important to guide students toward a minimalist effective online existence. This work is broken into three sections. The first chapter provides an overview of relevant literature on topics such as social media distraction online education and digital minimalism.

The second chapter contains information on the study design and methodology whereas the third chapter is devoted to a discussion of our research findings. To conclude, by interpreting the replies of the participants, we will have been able to reach a set of recommendations and findings on the need to apply digital in order to reduce social media distraction while studying online.

CHAPTER ONE

THEORITICAL BACKGROUND

1- Introduction :

The present chapter displays the overview that is relevant to the concept of this current study. Accurate and authentic theoretical background about different aspects discussed on this research, by approaching the main idea which is the necessity of applying digital minimalism in order to reduce social media distraction in online education from different angles, and from a wide to a narrow scope by defining the concept of the online learning and digging deeper to Social media distraction, till reaching the corner stone of this research which is digital minimalism ,and discover how it could help reducing social media distraction in online education.

2- Online Education :**2.1-What is Online Education :**

A term that refers to a modern type of learning supported by digital tools and internet use. The first-ever online course was offered by the University of Toronto, Canada in 1984 (Soumik Sarkar,2020) .

Online learning is one of the most desired advancements in the education market worldwide . This kind of instruction is delivered over the internet. This technique of learning has been

simplified by sophisticated and upgraded technology. Higher education institutions choose online education as well .

Before digging deeper, it is of utmost importance to distinguish the difference between these terms: E-learning, Distance learning, and Online learning. the three types of learning are similar in that they all allow the learning process in a distinct location from an instructor or the classroom learning, these terms are usually used in a sense of interchangeability, while these three types of learning are each unique.

The definite characteristics that tend to differentiate the previously mentioned learning types are mainly: types of access, types of media, and types of interaction.

The main learning method included in this study is online education/online learning.

This method allows a variety of students to be connected and experience convenience, this type of learning connects learners with educational material, as well as instructors.

2.2- The Evolution of Online Learning:

Online educational programs firstly emerged in 1989, in the university of Phoenix (Arizona, united states) when it began using CompuServe, one of the first online services (Tikkanen,2021). With the unveiling of the world wide web, Phoenix University became among the first to offer online education programs through the internet. Despite being a for-profit institution, the move of the phoenix university toward online education has prompted many reputable institutions, colleges, and non-profit universities to follow suit (Hope kentnor,2015).

In the early to mid 1990s, universities and colleges began experimenting with online courses. By 2002 more than 1.6 million post-secondary students were enrolled in various online courses and six years later that number had almost tripled (Allen & Seaman 2008)

during the last two decades, a noticeable change occurred in the learning/educational field which paved the way for online learning to impose itself, due to the emergence of the digitalized world.

The covid-19 pandemic has effected automatically the education field, as universities closed , and teachers, learners were obliged to continue the academic year, online education/learning was the saviour. At that specific period, the educational world witnessed an enormous evolution of online learning, most if not all universities have and still use online education primarily as the suitable alternative of the classical learning methods (face to face). As a result of the pandemic, education has changed tremendously, which caused a parallel rise in online education. The statistics show that by the next few years online education will take the full mission of the traditional face-to-face education.

2.3 - Online Education and Digital Maturity

The sudden shift from face-to-face- education to online education caused several problems and many hurdles were faced by students while trying to adopt a type of education which is totally new to many countries and universities . The need of students to be digitally mature is crucial while moving to the digital world to pursue education.

3-Social Media

3.1- About Social Media

Social media are computer-mediated interactive tools that allow people to create and share information, ideas, career interests, and other kinds of expression through virtual communities and networks. Social media is described as a broad spectrum of internet-based and mobile services that enable users to participate in online exchanges, contribute user-created content, or join online communities. The significance of social media is seen as a crucial instrument in our everyday lives, such as Facebook or Instagram in laptops or mobile devices. According to Walter and Riviera (2004), "social media is the interaction that exists between the network and people"

In order to clearly understand the meaning of the term « Social media » it is required to break it into simpler terms :

'Social' refers to engaging with other people and exchanging and receiving information from them.

'Media' refers to an instrument of communication, like the internet (while TV, radio, and newspapers are examples of more traditional forms of media).

We may get a fundamental definition from these two distinct terms: Social media are web-based communication platforms that allow individuals to communicate by sharing and consuming information.

3.2- Social Networking Sites :

Social networking sites are simply applications that allow users to connect with each other by establishing personal information profiles, allowing friends and colleagues to view those profiles, and communicate via e-mail and instant chats. These personal profiles can include any sort of digital material, such as images, videos, audio files, and blogs. People are highly influenced by social networking sites. It allows people to virtually socialize, exchange information and ideas, share hobbies, and so on. Facebook, Tiktok, Instagram, YouTube, and

other social media platforms that allow users to live a virtual life in a virtual world and share it with others regardless of time or place (Biba. 2001).

4-Social Media and Online Education :

4.1 - The Use of Social Media for Academic Purposes :

At the beginning of the covid-19 pandemic, when the online education was seen as the ultimate alternative to complete the academic year and carry on the learning process, all Algerian universities had to create online platforms in order to stay updated and tuned, which were MOODLES " Modular object-oriented dynamic learning environment "(Cambridge dictionary,2022) .Teachers were asked to upload the remaining lectures, nevertheless, uploading lectures in word or Pdf forms ,was the same as searching lectures online. The failure of MOODLES in most of the Algerian universities is because of the passive way of delivering lectures, and also the technical issues regarding the platform such as bugs and several difficulties when trying to log-in, teachers/learners were automatically obliged to rely on social media platforms to continue the educational year in a more effective way due to the fact that students and teachers are more familiar with social media platforms. However, the issue faced is that most of Algerian students' online existence is mainly for entertainment and not for education. The most used social media platforms where most learners dwell all time are mainly: Facebook, Instagram, YouTube and Tiktok .

Most lectures and explanations were posted using two main social media platforms Facebook and YouTube .

4.2 - Hurdles in Online Education

Moving to online education is not simple as it may sound. The transition from face-to-face to online education was originally for reducing covid-19 pandemic spread, but later seen as a new way of teaching, especially in higher education which was beneficial to some extent, but the reality shows that this move was not fruitful as experts expected. Many if not most students faced several obstacles while conducting online courses. one of the main obstacles faced by students is "Distraction" more specifically "Digital distraction" (Sandy Botros 2020). Learners that are not digitally mature and cultivated, will not adopt and adapt to such a method easily.

4.3 - What is Digital Distraction

Digital distraction is a type of distraction caused by digital devices((Rosen & Samuel, 2015),the use of media and social media by breaking the chain of concentration from the main piece of work that is being done. It is also defined as a situation where one is distracted by a technology device (e.g, Smartphone, laptop) while engaging in another activity (Abraham & Scott ,2022).

5- Social Media and Digital Distraction :

5.1- The Psychology of Distraction :

Although the temptation of check-in and other different forms of engagement are concerned from an attentional perspective (Dontre Aj), it is important to explore why it is so appealing and alluring to so many people. The pioneering psychologist Skinner used Humans in his experiment while exploring different modifications of behaviour through feedback following an action, Skinner found that behaviours can be encouraged through positive reinforcement or discouraged through negative reinforcement (1953).

Positive reinforcement may dramatically affect and influence people, especially when the "surprise" element is introduced in a certain activity, by offering intermittent positive rewards, the desired behaviour is formed whether it is positive or negative (Courtney E.Ackerman 2019).

5.2- Social Media as a Source of Distraction :

It is quite impossible in the 21st century to find non-social media users among the youths. 2021 statistics showed that in March 2022 4.7 billion people were using social media, an equivalent of 58.4% of the world's population uses social media actively (Dave Chaffey.2022). This rapid change is increasing every day.

The covid-19 pandemic was a priceless opportunity for social media companies such as Meta, Google, Tiktok...etc to attract as many users as possible and exploit their time so they become addicted to social media and always distracted. Social media companies are deliberately addicting users to their products for financial gain .Since the pandemic, there was a significant increase in average time spent by users on social media, in late 2021 the average time spent on social media apps and platforms was 2 hours and 27 minutes on average by users (Dave Chaffey.2022), whereas the reality is more than that.

5.3- The effect of Social Media on Academic Distraction:

Many scholars consider the effects of different digital devices and their implications on academic distraction, other researchers consider a specific list of applications used on digital devices known as social media, which can encourage and provide a continuously high level of connectivity and participation among users (Papademitriou.2022). The top three most popular

social media platforms are Facebook Instagram and YouTube. Facebook is considered the world's most widely used social media platform ever, with roughly a 2.91 billion monthly active users as of the 4th last quarter of 2021, on the other hand, Instagram possesses 1.07 billion users in 2021 (To add both Instagram and Facebook belongs to the same company meta 2022), And in 2021 there were approximately 1.86 billion YouTube users worldwide (Statista website,2022). These huge and enormous numbers and statistics show clearly the way these social media platforms are dominating most parts of people's academic, personal and professional lives the clear ubiquitous presence of social media apps is, therefore, a primary concern for educators in online classes.

5.4- The impact of Social Media on Learners:

Undoubtedly, the extensive use of social media has negatively affected people around the globe, and students are no exception (netsweeper).

Learners are more connected than every time before through social media, as a result of this connectivity social media's poison began to spread among students due to many factors that forced students to be addicted in the name of education. Social media can be extremely addictive, most social media users have experienced this type of addiction and got affected by it.

The negative impacts of these social media platforms are listed as:

5.4.1 - Poor sleep and eye Fatigue:

The light the digital devices produce is called "blue light" if users are exposed to this light around bedtime, it tricks our bodies and the brain automatically sends signals to the body that it is still daylight, which upsets our natural system and rhythm, as a result to this sabotage,

users become physically inactive. The negative effect of social media does not only affect the users' physical health but also worsen their mental health and provoke illnesses such as anxiety and depression.

5.4.2- Social Media Depression:

Researchers in the field of psychology and mental health centres claim that "there is a significant link between social media and depression" (Nittle.N .2021) . Experts see that these noticeable spikes of depression rates are the ultimate evidence that the type of connectivity formed by social media users in a virtual world is less emotionally satisfying, leaving users feeling socially abandoned and isolated. This negative impact has affected the academic performance of those who experienced this type of depression

5.5 -How Social Media keep users Distracted :

Digital distraction is mostly associated with social media Platforms .The huge companies and the engineer's responsible of the development of social media platforms are all aware of what every single user want to see on his/her screen, they probably use what could keep users distracted as long as possible, because the more users spend time on their apps the more the income is higher (Tristan Harris . 2013).

5.5.1- The Design of Social Media Platforms

A huge amount of money is spent as the main budget for social media companies in order to create the most tempting design so that it could attract as many users as possible. This design mainly exploits several psychological vulnerabilities by using a well-studied

combination of colours to put users in a certain mood at a specific time. To illustrate most dominant apps use the red colour for all types of notifications that appear on screens. According to studies done by experts on colour perception, red is the most attention-grabbing colour. These types of design tricks are crucial when it comes to attracting the audience.

5.5.2- Notifications

A notification is a message that basically appears on the screen when an application wants your attention. As previously mentioned most types of notifications use the red colour to attract users, but developers wanted more than that, so they added buzzes and light flashes even if the device is locked. In other words, notifications serve as a distraction. These alerts are mainly designed to get the users' attention. From a psychological perspective, notifications are practically hard to ignore, that is why they break the concentration chain, and these intermittent concentrations will affect automatically the performance of users negatively when doing daily mandatory tasks. Several studies claim that on average it takes 23 minutes to recover the focus after a distraction (Lastoe,2020). To add in every social media app downloaded, notifications on that app are ON by default, and every app has a specific sound made when receiving a notification, in order to make sure that the user will check the app. To conclude, users should never underestimate the power of notifications to keep us distracted.

5.5.3- Psychological vulnerabilities

Everyone should acknowledge the fact that humans have certain vulnerabilities that can be exploited and amplified by developers in order to reach their aim of making users as addicted and distracted as possible, the design of products that developers make can take advantage of these vulnerabilities and make people act impulsively. As a result, we mostly act against our better judgment. This point was tackled by the former design ethicist at Google "Tristan Harris.2013", by creating a movement inside Google's company, by making a presentation

under the name of " A call to minimize distraction and respect user's attention". (Tristan.H,2013) listed these vulnerabilities as :

5.5.3.1-Bad Forecasting

When a user receives a notification, he/she instantly says " that will not take long " whereas it takes a minimum of 15 minutes and interrupts the work that the user was doing (Tristan.H.2013).

5.5.3.2-Intermittent Variable Rewards:

Rewards are the most addictive and hardest to stop. Companies such as Meta provide users with rewards when they first use their apps, these rewards are in a form of social acceptance (likes, subscribers, comments..etc), if a user opens for instance a new Instagram account, Instagram will automatically suggest the new user's profile to others so he can get likes and subscribers, this way the user experience a type of pleasure "aka reward"(Tristan.H.2013).

5.5.3.3- Loss Aversion (Fear of missing out):

If the user actually wants to stop checking social media, loss aversion will grab the user back to check those apps and spend more time than usual, because of the fear of missing something of utmost importance. This FOMO according to a study(Fioravanti et al 2021) published in the scientific journal called "computers in human behaviour", the results were clearly addressing that people who had more FOMO showed in parallel more problematic social media use. The results showed that FOMO is highly associated with problematic social media use, and this fear could really cause serious mental health issues such as anxiety and depression(Tristan.H.2013).

6- I.W.M effect " I want more effect" :

Humans always feel the urge to do a certain action based on the rewards they expect to receive. Dopamine is a naturally occurring "feel good" chemical that triggers our inner rewards(Mcnamara,2021) this chemical is released whenever humans experience pleasure, it mainly occurs when eating delicious food, experiencing successful social communication, and most importantly when taking addictive drugs. Social media designers have exploited the use of this chemical, by providing users with certain rewards according to each user's psychology. Social media is quite similar to gambling when it comes to dopamine spikes, that is why they share the same addiction level (Tristan Harris) . Dopamine is automatically released when expecting rewards. IWM effect represents an attitude of a social media user, which the first amount of dopamine becomes not enough for the user to experience pleasure as experience the first time, so the user wants more, and that is how users fall victim to this psychological game and become addicts unconsciously .

7- The Effect of Digital Distraction on Learners :

Many scholars and researchers have seen digital distraction as a way to destroy the human ability to use the brain at its fullest extent, Jim Kwik the professional memory trainer and the author "LIMITLESS" the instant New York Times bestseller and number 1 Wall Street Journal bestseller for 2020, argued on his book that nowadays villains are no more humans, but considered the 4Ds (Digital deluge, Digital distraction, Digital dementia, and Digital deduction) as the modern-day super villains.

7.1-Digital Deluge:

It is the information overwhelm and information anxiety. Enormous amount of information created every day is affecting the human brain tragically. Too much extra neural activities are mainly caused by this vast amount of information, which could lead to several mental issues (Jim Kwik.2020).

7.2- Digital Distraction

It is a situation when one is distracted mainly by technological devices while engaging in another task. Several researchers showed that the main sources of distraction nowadays are digital devices, especially smartphones, which affect negatively one's performance in other daily life tasks (Jim Kwik.2020).

7.3-Digital Dementia:

A term used to describe how the overuse of digital tools (technological devices) is responsible for the breakdown of cognitive abilities, which affect in parallel the human memory and the ability to remember simple information(Jim Kwik.2020).

7.4- Digital Deduction:

A term used when one is over-relying on technology when doing the simplest tasks. nowadays users rely on technology and the internet more than the self, this problem confuses peoples' perception of their own abilities, intelligence, poor Critical thinking, and weak self-esteem (Jim Kwik.2020).

8 - Digital Minimalism :

According to "Meriam Webster ", minimalism is a style or technique that is characterized by extreme sparseness and simplicity.

Minimalism is defined as a design or style in which the simplest and fewest elements are used to create the maximum effect, or also as a lifestyle practice focused on minimizing distraction that helps people from doing what most matters. The notion of minimalism applies the principle that less can be more, it has invaded most fields in order to make an end to overwhelm and help appreciate what is more important, reclaim the value of time ad reduce distraction. The origin of minimalism has roots in the world of arts, it has emerged in the 1950s by artists in that century and later become part of various fields such as literature, software, UI design, and science communication.

8.2- Who is a Minimalist :

The term "minimalist" is mainly used to describe a person whose interest is in keeping things very simple by reducing quantity and rising quality (Joshua Fields Millburn & Ryan Nicodemus. 2016).

8.3- What is Digital Minimalism :

It is a philosophy of technology use in which the user focuses the time spent online on carefully selected and optimized activities, that strongly support valuable things and happily miss out on everything else. Digital minimalism is a lifestyle based on a philosophy that aims to minimize the unfruitful use of digital tools and decrease the reliance on such tools, and only use technology as a tool, not as a distraction (Cal Newport .2019).

8.4- Digital Minimalism and Online Education:

The notion of digital minimalism is strongly related to online education due to the fact that the education system has changed dramatically during the past two years when most of the education moved to the virtual spaces. In 2019 the face-to-face method was dominant in the Algerian universities, but now, online education is taking control, since students are not used to this kind of virtual space for academic purposes, the necessity of applying digital minimalism is crucial, because by minimizing digital distraction while studying online, the concentration will rise and the students will be able to maintain focus for a long period of times, and the online education will be more effective rather than a passive, boring and ineffective learning environment .

9-Conclusion :

This chapter represents a general overview about the theoretical framework of the present study. Within the first chapter, the study deals with different points mainly with some key concept like knowing some facts about online learning and how social media take advantage of the attention of the human being in order to keep users distracted, and moving forward through different concepts by previous scholars . Furthermore, it presents general facts about online learning and how students are affected by distraction caused by social media especially while studying online. The importance of Digital minimalism was presented And explained on this chapter In order to be implemented while studying online.

CHAPTER TWO

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

1-Introduction :

This chapter deals with research methodology and data collection employed for this study. It also provides the description of the participants and the data collection tools.

2-Research method :

This research work aims at exploring the necessity for students to practice digital minimalism in reducing social media distraction in online education.

The main issues refer to in this study are as follows:

_ Does social media represent a source of distraction for students while studying online.

_ Does students need to apply digital minimalism in order to reduce social media distraction in online education faced by master two students specialized in language and communication at the department of English of Abdel Hamid Ibn badis , Mostaganem ,Algeria.

To answer these questions and online questionnaire was designed and delivered to master two – Language and communication students, in order to collect qualitative and quantitative information.

3- Context of the study:

This study took place at the department of English at the University of Abdelhamid Ibn Badis from 15 April 2022 to 04 June 2022 with 10 Master two students specialized in language and communication

4- Participants

In total, 10 participants of second year master students in the English department specialized in language and communication at the university of Mostaganem were chosen to take part in this study .

5- Research instruments:

For this research the data collection instrument used is students questionnaire, an explanation of the tool is provided in detail below (1).

5.1-Students' questionnaire :

The delivered questionnaire was presented online using Google Docs via students' Facebook group mainly in order to reach students easily to explore the necessity of applying digital minimalism in reducing social media distraction in online education among master two students specialized in language and communication at the university of Abdel Hamid Ibn badis , Mostaganem.

(1) A questionnaire is usually designed to collect some different types of data including facts about people or events, people's descriptions about something that has happened to them; for example, knowledge- what people know about something, opinions- what this opinion is about they have experienced or know about, attitudes/values-their attitudes toward other people, institutions, ideas and so on, and background information about the respondent which may be linked to the research topic (Matthews & Ross, 2010).

Online questionnaire offers a wide range of answers to the researcher, according to (DeVaus ,1991) and (Fink,1995) ” A questionnaire enables responses to be gathered from large numbers relatively quickly, and cost-efficiently”.

The questionnaire is considered an essential tool in any study because it can allow the collection of both quantitative and qualitative information and the use of open and closed formal questions (Patton, 2002).

Online questionnaires were chosen over the printed one, mainly because they are easy to fill , and also to reach the desired number of participants .

Unlike the printed questionnaire participants cannot skip obligatory questions whereas in the printed versions they can.

Both close ended and open ended questions were asked in the questionnaire to collect qualitative and quantitative data using , 5 open-ended And 17 close ended questions for the 10 participants .

The chart below represents the different themes that questions and students’ answers were categorized into :

Part 1	Part 2	Part 3	Part 4	Part 5
Personal information	Students and online education	Social media in the life of students	Social media distraction and online education	Introducing digital minimalism
Question 1	Questions 2,3,4,5,6	Questions 7,8,9,10,10.1,10.2	Questions 11,12,13,14,15,16,17	Questions 18,18.1,19,19.1,20,21

Part 6

How students deal with social media distraction in online education
Question 22

Table 1 – Themes of the questions

5.2- The aim of the questions :

Part one : Personal information

This section was designed in order to know the profile of the participants in this study.

Part 2 :

The questions in this part were mainly designed to explore students perspective about online learning.

Q 02 : The aim of this question is to see how was the online learning experience of students participating in this study.

Q 03 : The purpose of this question is to discover what most students use in order to study online.

Q 04 : Discussion was asked to see what is the most used platform to study online.

Q 05 : The aim of this question is to have an idea about what students prefer to use in order to study online.

Q 06 : This question was asked to explore the hurdles that students have faced while studying online.

Part 3 :

The present part was mainly designed to investigate the relation that participants have with social media.

Q 07 : The current question was asked to discover how frequently students use social media platforms.

Q 08 : The aim of this question is to determine how much time students spend on social media every day.

Q 09 : The question was posed in order to determine what is the most and the less used social media platform by the participants .

Q10 : The purpose of this question is to see if students have previously use social media platforms in order to study online .

Q 10.1 : This sub question was asked to explore how was the experience of online learning using social media platforms .

Part 4 :

The questions in part four were mainly asked to examine if social media represent a distraction for students while studying online.

Q 11 : The aim of this question is to discover what is the main source of distraction faced by students whenever they study online .

Q12 : The current question aims at exploring the students fees distracted by social media notifications when studying online.

Q13 : The purpose of this question is to examine the effect of extensive social media use on students academic performance.

Q 14 : This question was asked to see if students agree that they should turn off social media notifications while studying online or not.

Q15 : The aim of this question is to investigate the circle of concentration of students participating in this study while having an online session.

Q 16 : This question was raised in order to see student thoughts about if decreasing the time spent on social media could help them maintain focus for longer periods of time.

Q 17 : This was an open ended question asked to explore the students point of view on how they can limit their time spent on social media.

Part 5 :

This part was mainly designed to raise the idea of digital minimalism to students and to draw learners attention to the concept of a meaningful online presence .

Q 18 : The aim of the asked question is to see if students no what is digital minimalism.

Q 19 : The question was asked to determine if students participating in this study have try to log out from social media apps before conducting online sessions .

Q 19.1 : This sub question what's ask to complete and support question 19 and see if their act was beneficial.

Q20 : The goal of this question is to investigate if the participants have previously disconnected from the virtual world.

Q21 : The aim of this question is this truly know if students think that applying digital minimalism could reduce social media and digital distraction in online education.

Part 6 (Q22) :

The present part was raised to explore how students deal with the dilemma presented in this study and how they managed to say focus on the academic life away from digital distraction.

6- Conclusion :

This Chapter was devoted to show the data collection tools that we used to gather information and further thoughts of our participants about the subject matter, and other

knowledge that we have optionally collected. Besides; it shows the methodology and information about the participants of this study. The information gathered in this chapter will be eventually presented in the third chapter.

CHAPTER THREE

DATA ANALYSIS & RESULTS

1- Introduction

In the present chapter, the findings of this study will be examined. The current chapter, furthermore, attempts to testify the research hypothesis that will either be affirmed or negated. Therefore, the analysis of the collected data is to determine the following objectives :

1. Does social media represent a source of destruction for students while studying online.
2. Is it crucial to apply digital minimalism in order to reduce social media distraction in online education.

Finally, in this chapter findings of this research study will be eventually illustrated ,analysed and discussed.

2- Students' participation in the study :

Master 2 students specialized in language and communication at the department of English of most university where chosen over other Proms due to two major reasons

- 1-They represent the most experienced students who have studied both in traditional face to face learning and online learning.
- 2- Since the questionnaire contains open-ended questions that needed to be answered accurately, master two students are the best choice for this kind of questions.

3- Data analysis:

Answers to open-ended questions, in contrast to closed ones, are more difficult to evaluate and comprehend. Content analysis was used to analyse open-ended questions. In fact, content analysis is a research approach for assessing and drawing conclusions from a given text as well as other types of qualitative data such as open-ended questions. It categorizes, compares, and contrasts a corpus of data using a number of analytic methodologies ,while on the other hand, descriptive statistics method was used to analyse the quantitative data .

Part one : (Personal information)

Q01: Students gender

As ” Chart 1 “shows below that the gender of the participants represent a portion of 50% male and the other 50% were female .

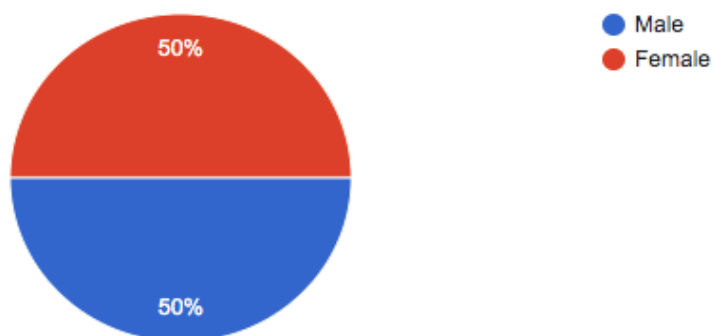


Chart 1 – Students’ Gender

Part 2 : Students and online education.

Q 02: How would you describe your online learning experience?

This was the first open ended question asked in the delivered questionnaire, the collected data showed that the majority of the participants had an acceptable and generally positive experience while the minority did not share the same point of view, they reportedly said that it was not very helpful as they expected. In a more detailed analysis, the minority who said that they did not have a good experience with studying online were two males, one of these two said because it was sometimes distracting and the other directly said that it was not helpful.

Q 03 : What device do you use to study online?

The data obtained revealed that 90% of the participants (9 Participants) use their personal smartphone as the main digital tool to study online, and only one participant uses his laptop as a tool to study online.

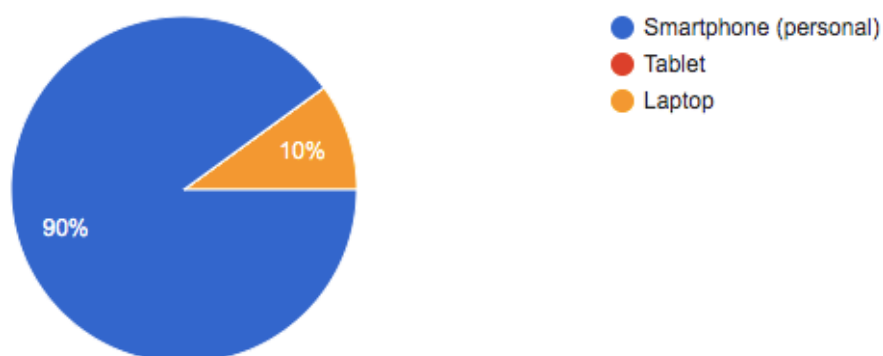


Chart 2 – The device used by students to study online

Q 04: Which one of these platforms you have been using for online learning?

The gathered data reveal that all participants use Google Classroom as an online learning tool and 90% of them have used Google meet, only 20% have used zoom and 30% use other platforms. The settings of this question gave the students the option to choose multiple responses that is why there are different portions given in the analysis.

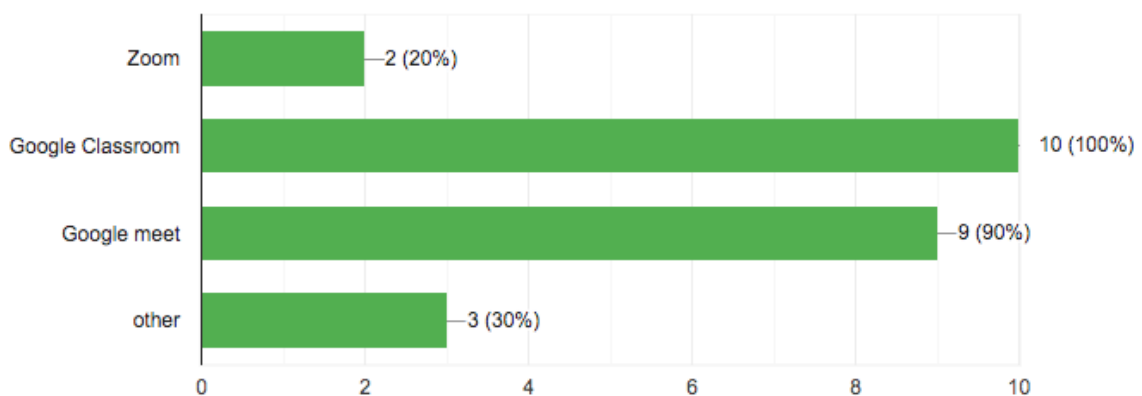


Chart 3 – platforms used by students to study online

Q 05 : What do you prefer to use in order to study online?

The results gathered show the 50% of participants prefer to use social media platforms as the main platform to study online, whereas 40% said that they prefer to use Moocs and the 10% left which represent one male student that reportedly said he preferred different type of tools.

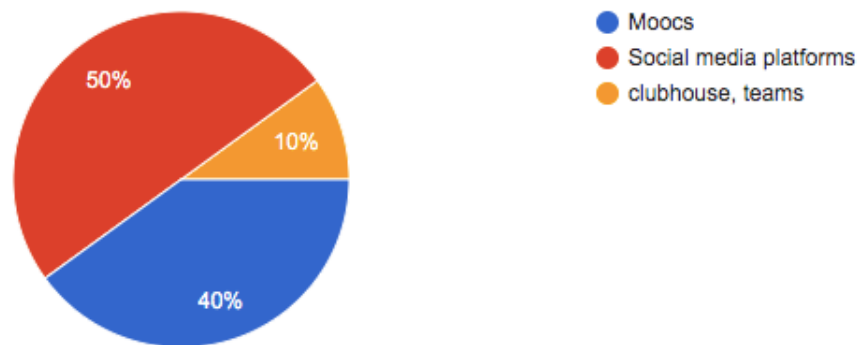


Chart 4 – What students prefer to use to study online

Q 5.1: Why?

This question was asked to get extra information about why students prefer to use a certain type of platform. The 50% of participant who have chosen social media as the preferred platform in order to study online they said that it is mainly because they are already familiar with it and social media platforms are easy to use. The 40% of the participants that have chosen Moocs said that Moocs are easy to use , efficient and because of the high credibility of information is provided in such . The one student who said who preferred other options recommended clubhouse because it is a well-organized platform where you can join English sessions that are devoted and organized by native English speakers.

Q 06: What are the hurdles that you have faced when studying online?

The results show that the two major problems that the students I faced while studying online our social media (Notifications) distraction at network issues, whereas some of the students said that they lack motivation.

Part 3: Social media in the life of students

Q 07: How often do you use social media?

The result revealed that 100% of the participants use social media every day “Chart 5”.



Chart 5 – Social media usage

Q 08: Please select the estimate time you spend on social media per day.

The average time spent by most of the participants was +3 hours on a daily basis as 90% of the participants reported and only 10% of the participant use the social media estimated from one hour to two hours per day as “Chart 6” shows.

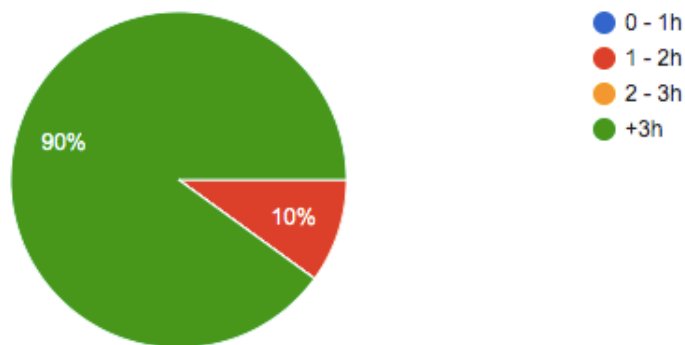


Chart 6 – the time students spend using social media

Q 09 : Classify these social media platforms from the most to the less used.

The answers show that Facebook and Instagram were the two most used social media platforms by students (+60%) as “Chart 7” reveal, Whereas 70% of the participants said that they do not use Tiktok.

All participants uses these platforms but on a different basis (portions).

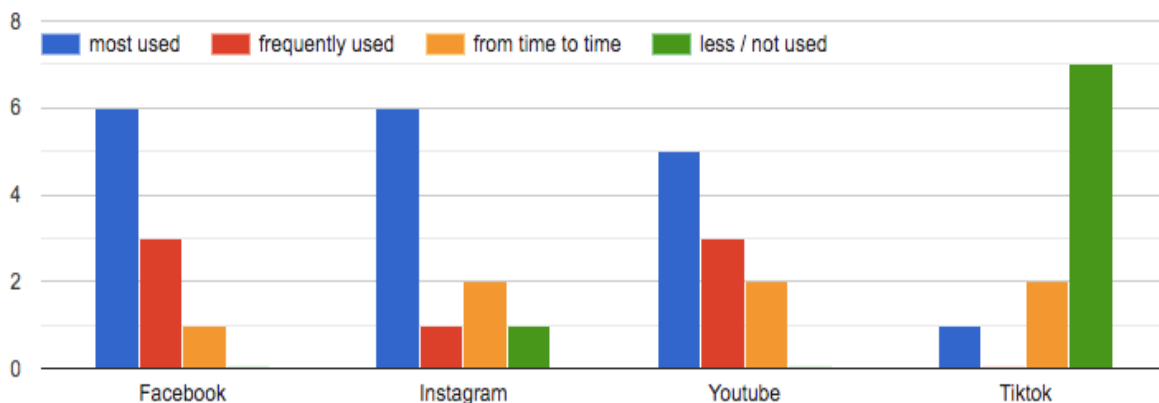


Chart 7 – the most and least used social media apps used by students

Q 10: Have you used social media platforms for online learning ?

The results show that all students included in the study have used social media platforms for online learning (100% of participants).

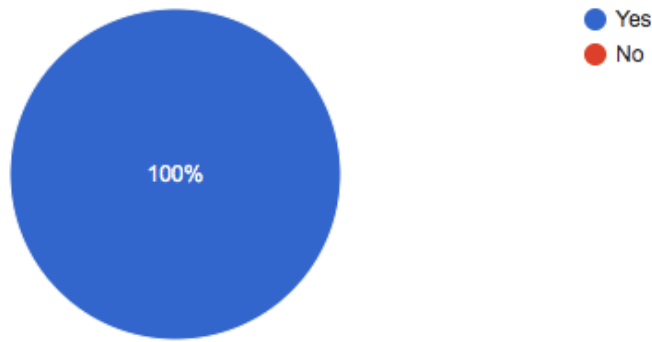


Chart 8 – Social media for online learning

Q 10.1: If yes, describe how was the experience ?

The answers to this sub-question revealed that 80% of students found online learning using social media was beneficial because these platforms are easy to use And 20% of the participants said that it was a bad experience due to several reasons.

Part 4 : Social media distraction and online education

Q 11: What is the main source of distraction in online education ?

The gathered data revealed that 80% of students see that digital distraction is the main destruction that they have faced when studying online. Social media notifications are the major

distraction, while the other 20% of the participants said that they see network quality as the main distraction.

Q12: Do you feel distracted by social media's notifications while studying online ?

The results showed that 90% of the participants are distracted by social media as notifications whilst studying online.90% of the participants answered yes to this question whereas only one participant out of 10 answered “No” as the Chart below reveal.

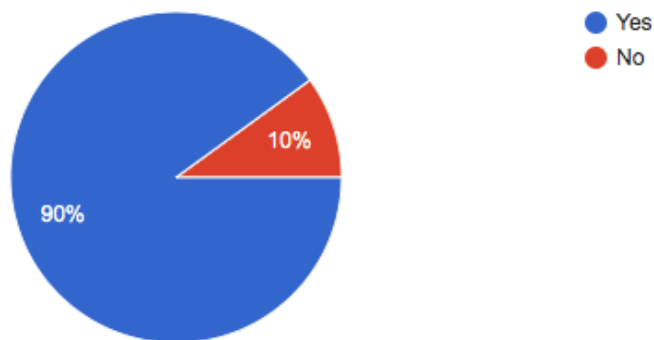


Chart 9 – social media distraction in online education

Q13: Is excessive social media usage affecting your academic performance?

The gathered answers show that half of the participants which is 50% said that the excessive social media use has affected their academic performance, and the other 40% reportedly said that their academic performance has been affected somehow and the 10% answered “No” to this question.

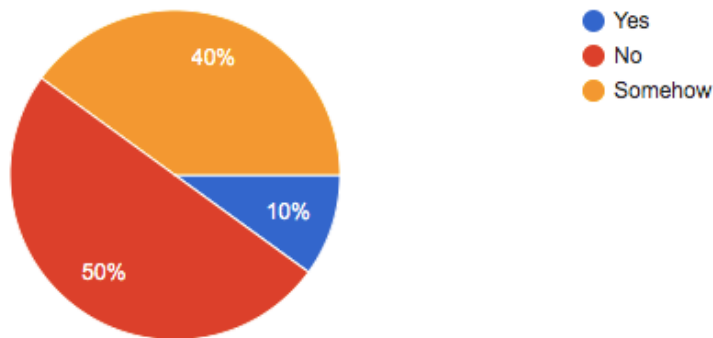


Chart 10 – social media and the students’ academic performance.

Q14: Students should turn off Social media's notifications while studying online

The chart below “Chart 11” reveal that 50% of the participants strongly agree that students should turn off social media notifications while studying online and 40% said that they agree with this statement and only 10% said that it is neutral, none of the participants have answered by disagree or strongly disagree.

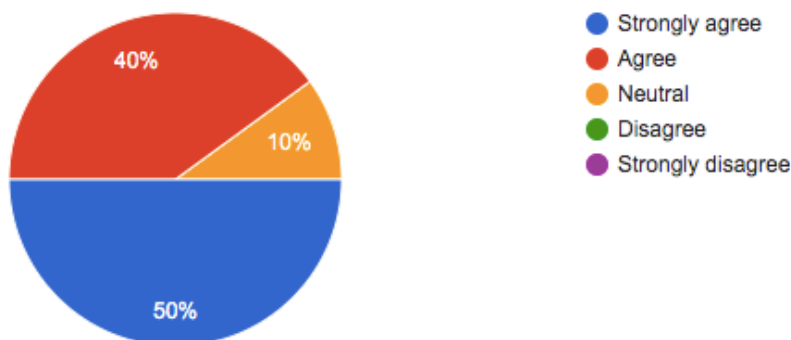


Chart 11 – Students’ thoughts about turning off notifications while studying online

Q15: How much time it takes you to lose focus while studying online ?

The collected data from the asked question show that only 20% of the participants were able to maintain focus for more than 30 minutes while having an online course, whereas about 40% said that they lose focus after 15 to 20 minutes, only 10% reportedly said that they lose focus in an online course in about 20 to 30 minutes and the 30% left said that it takes them from 5 to 15 minutes to lose focus while having an online session as “Chart 12” shows.

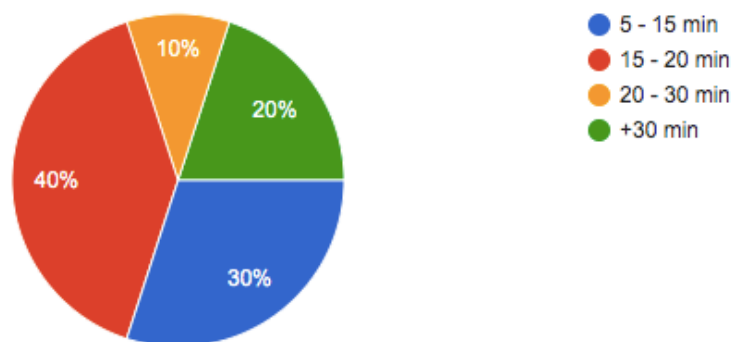


Chart 12 – the focus circle

Q 16 : Do you think that reducing the time spent on social media could help you maintain focus for a longer period of time ?

The chart below shows that 50% of students participating in this research said yes to the previously mentioned question, and 40% answered by maybe, whereas only 10% said "No".

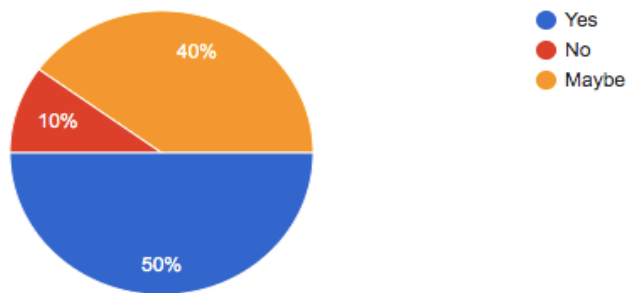


Chart 13

Q 17: In your point of view , how to limit the time you spend on social media ?

This question was asked to see how different students limit their time online. The answers to this open-ended question were different .Most of the participants agreed on common answers which are “ develop new good habits and seek help from those apps that can limit the screen time”. One female participant said that she could not control her time spent on social media.

Q 18: Are you familiar with the notion of "Digital minimalism" ?

The answer to this question revealed that 70% of participants were not familiar with the notion of digital minimalism and 30% were familiar with digital minimalism .

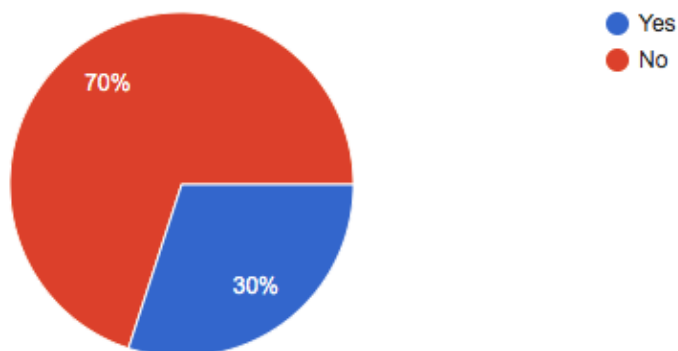


Chart 14

Part 5: Introducing digital minimalism

Q 18.1: If yes, define it in few simple words

This sub-question was asked to see if students know what digital minimalism is and only two students were able to cover some parts of it.

Q 19: Have you ever tried to log out from all of your social media accounts before studying online ?

The data revealed that 70% of the participants have not tried to log out from their social media accounts before studying online whereas 30% of them have tried as “Chart 15” shows.

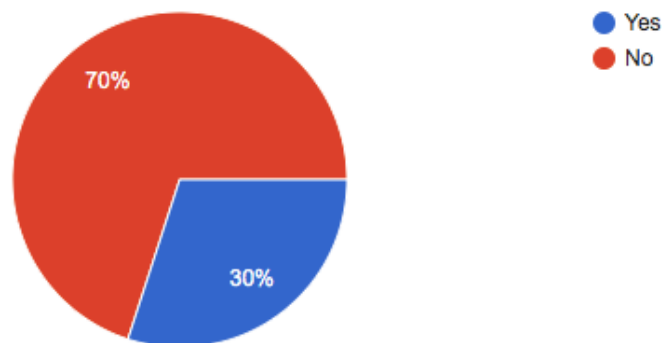


Chart 15

Q 19.1 : If yes , was it beneficial ?

30% Of students participating in this study said that it was highly beneficial and they did get more focused when they have tried to log out before studying online.

Q20: Have you ever disconnected from the virtual world for a long period?

The answer to this question revealed that 50% of participants have disconnected from the virtual world for a long period of time as “Chart 16” shows , however the other 50% did not, those 50% which represent 5 participants , they have already mentioned that they felt distracted by social media notifications why studying online.

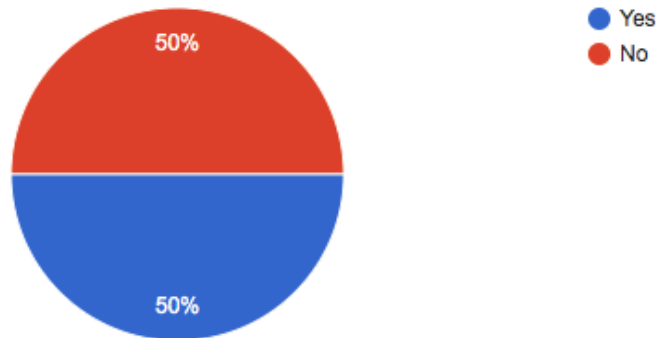


Chart 16

Q 21 : Do you think that applying Digital minimalism could reduce digital distraction in online education ?

The received answers showed that 90% of participants in this research think that applying digital minimalism could reduce social media destruction while studying online and only 10% have said no to this question.

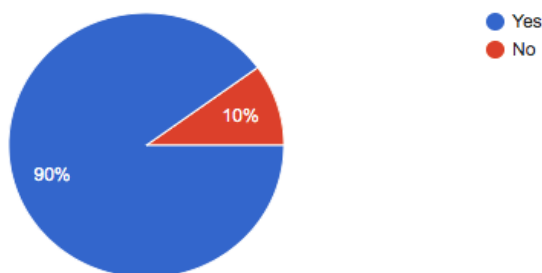


Chart 17

Part 6 : How students deal with social media distraction in online education

Q 22: Throughout your experience, suggest some solutions you have tried in order to stay focused in your academic life , away from digital distractions ?

This was the last question asked to the participants in order to see how students deal with digital distraction on their Academic and professional life, and the answers were helpful and most participant have mentioned that they maintain focus away from social media distraction by turning off notifications and getting rid of unnecessary apps . This was a common answer among most students.

4- Discussion of the results:

Numerous key issues have been explored throughout this investigation, and acquired through the questionnaire employed in this study.

The findings show that most of the students participating in this study have generally enjoyed the online learning experience, however, they have faced numerous hurdles that have negatively affected their online learning experience.

Since Facebook and Instagram are the most used platforms by most participants, they surely represent the major source of distraction for students.

Through the questionnaire we could obviously figure out that all students have used social media platforms for academic purposes ,but the great majority of the students consider social

media as a main source of distraction whenever they conduct an online course, and social media's notifications were disturbing for most students that is why 90% of the participants agreed on turning off social media's notification while studying online in order to avoid breaking the concentration chain and be distracted continuously.

Students are well aware of the idea that when reducing the time spent on social media platforms they will be able to maintain focus for longer periods of time.

It confirmed that it is beneficial to log out from social media platforms before studying online as the participants in this study reported.

Due to the extensive use of social media, students could not maintain focus for longer periods of time as the result shows in data analysis, which put forward the idea that there is a significant link between extensive social media use and poor concentration and lack of focus. At the end of the questionnaire where the notion of digital minimalism was introduced, most students were not familiar and did not know the meaning of digital minimalism and after being introduced to it, the great majority of the participants agreed that applying digital minimalism could reduce digital distraction in online education.

5- Findings :

The findings of the study showed that social media is widely used by university students, in average from 2 to +3 Hours on a daily basis, and most its users agree that it represents a main source of distraction to them whenever they study online ,yet, they find it quite hard to quit this virtual dilemma due to many reasons that were previously mentioned in this study. The students who said that they spent more than three hours using social media could not maintain focus for at least 30 minutes, that is why there is a significant link between extensive social media use and poor concentration. Many students have highlighted the idea that they

should turn off social media notifications whenever they want to study online and that helped them to be fully concentrated and not be distracted by notifications. The participants confirmed the idea that they should log off from all social media accounts that they feel distracted by before conducting an online course and they affirmed that practicing digital minimalism could reduce social media distraction in online education .

6- Recommendations:

- 1- Students should limit their screen time to avoid becoming addicts and social media dependent.
- 2- It is of paramount importance to use a different device to study online from the one used for social media browsing and self-entertainment.
- 3- Students should manage the time they spend using social media.
- 4- Students should turn off all kinds of social media notifications when trying to fully concentrate and complete a valuable task.
- 5- Teachers should guide students in online education and introduce the notion of digital minimalism to them in order to reduce digital distraction.
- 6- Students must eliminate unnecessary and useless apps and organize their personal devices.

7- Recommendations for future research :

It is preferable to conduct an experiment on a group of students by introducing digital minimalism to them and testing its effectiveness, and examining the concentration level of the student before and after applying digital minimalism.

8- Limitations :

Several hurdles were faced while conducting this research, especially in terms of reaching the desired sample population. Several questionnaires were distributed to license 3 and master one students via the Facebook group in order to take part in this study, but unfortunately, only six answers were received from both Proms combined. The researcher wanted to conduct interviews with students participating in the study but the desired sample could not be reached due to unknown reasons.

9- Conclusion :

Throughout this chapter, we could ratiocinate that social media platforms represent a source of distraction for students while studying online, and in the same boat, it has been deduced that applying digital minimalism could reduce digital distraction in online education.

General conclusion

Since online education has become the alternative to face-to-face education and the most dominant one it is of utmost importance to acknowledge and be aware of all the obstacles that every student will probably face during online education. The change that has occurred in the academic field was unexpected and this shift was not an easy transition. Most students preferred to use social media platforms in order to study online since they are more familiar with them, and these platforms are easier to use, however, they have faced a major obstacle when studying online which is "Social Media Distraction". Social media distraction is basically a type of digital distraction that is caused by certain social media applications, the reason why social media distraction is extremely dangerous for students when studying online, is because it breaks the concentration chain and turns the online learning experience into an unsuccessful experience, And because of the humans limited capacity to process information, social media distraction is extremely problematic. Thus, in order to have a fruitful online education and to fulfil specific tasks successfully, social media distraction should be minimized, that is why it is necessary to practice digital minimalism in reducing social media distraction in online education.

In this study, we investigate the necessity of applying digital minimalism in reducing social media distraction in online education among master 2 students specializing in language and communication at the department of English of Mostaganem's university. Our endeavour was to see if social media represents a source of distraction for students while studying online , and to confirm the necessity of applying digital minimalism in reducing social media distraction whenever students study online.

The first chapter represents an overview and a theoretical background of the topic and getting a closer look at online learning and its evolution journey, and then digging deeper into social media and exposing its danger to students that are mainly using it, by introducing it as a source of distraction for them whenever they study online. It also described and present the notion of digital minimalism as a philosophy and a practice to reduce social media distraction while studying online.

As for the methodology chapter, it included a detailed description of the procedures employed, the participants, and the context. To acquire the necessary data both qualitative and quantitative approaches were used by asking open-ended and close ended questions in the online questionnaire delivered to the participants.

The last chapter displayed the analysis of the information collected from the data collection instruments and accurately discussed the found results. As well as giving some tips to students to overcome the dilemma presented in this study.

Eventually, the revealed results support and validate the proposed hypotheses. Social media indeed represents the main source of distraction for students whenever they study online, and it is crucial to apply digital minimalism in order to reduce social media distractions faced by students in online education.

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APPENDICES

Appendix (1) : Student's questionnaire

This questionnaire is designed to investigate the necessity of students to practice digital minimalism in reducing social media distraction in online education among master 2 students at the department of English of Abdelhamid Ibn Badis University. Simple and honest answers will greatly contribute to the credibility and accuracy of the research. All responses will be kept confidential. Your collaboration is appreciated with great pleasure and sincere gratitude.

1-Gender

Male

Female

2-How would you describe your online learning experience ?

.....
.....

3-What device do you use to study online ?

Smartphone (personal)

Tablet

Laptop

4-Which one of these platforms you have been using for online learning ?

Zoom

Google Classroom

Google meet

Other

5-What do you prefer to use in order to study online ? *

- Moocs
- Social media platforms
- Other

5.1-Why ?

.....

6-What are the hurdles that you have faced when studying online ?

.....

7-How often do you use social media ?

- Everyday
- 3 times a week Weekend
- On Weekends

8-Please select the estimate time you spend on social media (per day)

- 0 - 1h
- 1 - 2h
- 2 - 3h
- +3h

9-classify these social media platforms/apps from most to less used

	most used	frequently used	from time to time	less / not used
Facebook				
Instagram				
YouTube				
Tiktok				

10- Have you used social media platforms for online learning ?

Yes

No

10.1 If yes, describe how was the experience ?

.....

10.2 If no, what do you expect from such experience ?

.....

.....

11- What is the main source of distraction in online education ?

.....

12- Do you feel distracted by social media's notifications while studying online?

Yes

No

13- Is excessive social media usage affecting your academic performance?

Yes

No

Somehow

14-Students should turn off Social media's notifications while studying online

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

15-How much time it takes you to lose focus while studying online ?

- 5 - 15 min
- 15 - 20 min
- 20 - 30 min
- +30 min

16-Do you think that reducing the time spent on social media could help you maintain focus for a longer period of time ?

- Yes
- No
- Maybe

17-In your point of view , how to limit the time you spend on social media ?

.....

.....

18-Are you familiar with the notion of "Digital minimalism"

- Yes
- No

18.1-If yes, define it in few simple words

.....
.....
.....

19-Have you ever tried to log out from all of your social media accounts before studying online ?

Yes

No

19.1- If yes , was it beneficial ?

.....

20-Have you ever disconnected from the virtual world for a long period?

Yes

No

21-Do you think that applying Digital minimalism could reduce digital distraction in online education ?

Yes

No

22-throughout your experience, Please suggest some solutions you have tried in order to stay focused in your academic life away from digital distractions ?

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