



Examining the Impact of Social Media on Improving the Quality of Higher Education: A Case Study of Faryab University

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Abstract: This study examines the impact of social media use on the quality of learning at Faryab University. Given the growth in social media use in recent years, this research seeks to analyze the extent and types of social media used by lecturers and students in academic activities, as well as their roles in enhancing the quality of higher education. The research method is descriptive-analytical, and the data collection tool was a researcher-designed questionnaire distributed among 132 lecturers and 346 students. Data were analyzed using SPSS and statistical tests such as the one-sample *t*-test, ANOVA, and effect size (Cohen's *d*). The findings revealed that both lecturers and students held a significant positive attitude toward the use of social media to improve the quality of education. The *t*-test results indicated that the mean scores were significantly higher than the theoretical value of 3, and the effect sizes for most items were large and strong. Moreover, significant differences were observed in attitudes across academic disciplines regarding certain statements. Overall, the results suggest that social media can be used as a complementary tool in the teaching and learning process, effectively enhancing educational interaction, resource access, and collaborative learning.

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INTRODUCTION

Social media refers to Web 2.0-based applications that enable the creation and sharing of user-generated content (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2016). Social media platforms are online spaces that facilitate communication, connection, and collaboration among users (Zincir, 2017). They are also defined as online services that allow individuals to create public or private profiles and interact with others (Boyd & Ellison, 2007, p. 211). Social media, understood as "an open

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and non-hierarchical community," is built on the three Cs: Content, Construction, and Collaboration. These platforms are characterized by free content and global accessibility; they encourage interaction, communication, and learning, while providing a participatory environment for users. Within this context, students play an active role, moving beyond being mere recipients of information to becoming creators and disseminators of knowledge (Hamid et al., 2009).

Social media acts as a powerful force for educational change, capable of adapting to learning needs in more social and open contexts while reshaping the boundaries of traditional education (Krutka & Carpenter, 2016). The integration of social media into educational and academic activities involves both synchronous and asynchronous communication styles, as well as a wide range of activities aimed at enhancing learning environments for scholarly exchange and interaction (García, 2014). These tools promote new forms of learning and provide a digital environment for information and connectivity; therefore, learning how to integrate them into the teaching process is essential (Buxarrais, 2016). However, there remains a need to provide scientific evidence to analyze their use and educational impacts (Area, 2008).

Before the COVID-19 pandemic, the educational use of social media was very limited, and its full potential was not fully exploited (López -Carril et al., 2020). Yet, the pandemic forced higher education to adopt online learning, which established social media as a credible and effective tool for academic communication. This unexpected disruption revealed the innovative capacities of social media and their role in facilitating the teaching and learning process (Sam et al., 2021).

The use of social media in higher education has been studied mainly from the perspective of students, while its application by lecturers for academic purposes remains less clear (Chugh et al., 2021). Al Balushi et al. (2022) conducted a systematic review of social media as an effective tool during the pandemic. Their study identified the educational affordances of social media, including benefits such as resource and classroom storage, self-paced learning, enhanced communication, and peer support. However, barriers such as administrative challenges and the absence of clear regulations or policies that hindered the integration of these tools into higher education were also highlighted, thereby underscoring the existing digital divide.

Meanwhile, Acuyo (2021) reviewed the advantages and capacities of social media in addressing the challenges of professional development for higher education lecturers. In this regard, social media can function as a professional network, fostering connections among geographically dispersed colleagues who share common interests.

Teacher activities and student participation in university classes affect their learning and academic success. Interactive teaching and appropriate communication between Teachers and students play an important role in increasing student participation and academic achievement in higher education (Yasmin et al., 2026). Ultimately, informal social networks

lead to improved academic success for students and enhanced quality of higher education (Stadtfeld et al., 2019). For example, Haerizadeh et al. (2009) found that transfer students, when other variables were held constant, experienced lower academic success due to weaker informal relationships with faculty members. When a student feels that an instructor knows them personally, they develop a stronger sense of commitment to the instructor and their expectations. Students tend to feel more committed to those lecturers who recognize them. Through informal interactions, students experience greater empathy and provide more positive evaluations. Such relationships help students address their academic challenges more effectively. Having a connection outside the classroom and the possibility of communicating with lecturers beyond official hours enables students to benefit more from them. Often, the most valuable learning experiences occur in private or semi-private conversations with lecturers and in informal discussions outside the classroom (Lohr, 2004; Haerizadeh et al., 2009).

Social networks, especially in academic contexts, have multiple dimensions (Stadtfeld et al., 2019). Therefore, in addition to classifying networks as horizontal and vertical or formal and informal, researchers have also examined the characteristics of social networks, including structural properties (size, density, and composition), interactional properties (mode of contact, frequency of contact, intimacy, durability and persistence of relationships), and functional properties (types of support) (Israel, 1985; Bastani & Salehi-Hikouei, 2007). Network size, composition, density, and other structural and interactional properties influence both the extent and type of support received (Wellman, 1999). Studies on social networks and academic performance have focused on the characteristics of these networks. For example, Ghafari Rad (2006) showed in a study that the characteristics of social networks—including the frequency, quality, and strength of student–instructor interactions—have a significant impact on students' intellectual development. As argued in the theory of cooperative learning, interaction in educational processes and collaborative learning leads to higher performance, achievement, and productivity (Johnson & Johnson, 1984, 1989; Johnson & Holubec, 1993).

Positive social interactions between students and lecturers have a beneficial effect on students' academic performance. Interactions and relationships between students and lecturers are considered one of the most important domains within the social structure of science (Haerizadeh et al., 2009; Ghafari Rad, 2006). Moreover, these interactions are positively and significantly correlated with students' social capital both within and outside the academic sphere (Navaah et al., 2022, p. 26).

Studies by Kuh & Hu (2001), Endo & Harpel (1982), and Goddard (2003) demonstrated a significant positive relationship between students' communication networks and their academic achievement. Similarly, Núñez (2009), in examining the impact of social and cultural capital on academic achievement, found that social media exerts a positive and significant influence on academic success, both directly and indirectly. Komarraju et al. (2010), in an article titled *"The Role of Student–Faculty Interactions in Enhancing Self-Concept, Motivation,*

and Academic Achievement of Students", reported that students' interactions with faculty members can play a crucial role in developing academic concepts, as well as in enhancing motivation and academic success.

Faculties and universities that actively foster close, frequent interactions between students and faculty members are more likely to play a key role in promoting students' intellectual and professional growth. The findings further suggest that students who build connections with even a single faculty member are more likely to feel satisfied with their academic life. Although most interactions with faculty occur in formal classroom settings, students who experience informal interactions tend to be more motivated and engage more actively in the learning process. Informal faculty–student interactions are considered a central element of university culture and have a significant impact on students' attitudes, interests, and values (Komarraju, Musulkin, & Bhattacharya, 2010).

Research shows that in Afghanistan, social media is used by students for academic purposes. Social media gains foothold in academic discussion portals, revision templates, and for access to visual and audio education tools to improve students' knowledge on topics of interest. Social media is also used to reach teachers and improve communication. Facebook is the most widely used SMP in Afghanistan and most adjoining countries. SMPs are also used by the people for communication, political participation, social trust and civic engagement (Gaur & Gupta, 2021).

In this context, the present study, with a focus on Faryab University in Maimana, seeks to examine the effects of social media on the quality of higher education. This research aims to demonstrate how social media can enhance educational quality by providing access to scholarly resources, strengthening communication, and creating opportunities for collaborative learning.

The study uses a descriptive–analytical method and a survey approach to investigate the impact of social media use in higher education, identify the teaching methods developed by lecturers, examine their outcomes, and assess their influence on learning outcomes. The objective is to explore the role of social media affordances in higher education from a critical perspective, through an analysis of existing studies and a case study at Faryab University, addressing research questions about different teaching approaches, their consequences, and their effects on learning outcomes.

This study will specifically address the following research questions:

- Does the use of social media have a positive effect on improving the quality of higher education at Faryab University?
- Do lecturers at Faryab University hold a positive attitudes toward the impact of social media on the quality of higher education?

- Do students at Faryab University hold a positive attitudes toward the role of social media in enhancing learning and educational quality?

The central hypothesis of this study is that the use of social media has a positive, significant effect on the quality of higher education at Faryab University. This hypothesis is based on the notion that social media—by providing opportunities such as instant communication, access to academic resources, academic interaction between lecturers and students, and support for collaborative learning—can play an effective role in enhancing educational processes (Al-Rahmi et al., 2022)

To test this central hypothesis, two sub-hypotheses were formulated:

1. Lecturers at Faryab University hold a positive attitude toward the impact of social media on the quality of higher education.
2. Students at Faryab University also hold a positive attitude toward the role of social media in enhancing learning and education.

Theoretical Framework

Social media has been used for years as a means of communication, knowledge exchange, content production, and interaction. In addition to the aforementioned, these tools are also considered educational supplements that can be very effective in teaching and learning (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2016). The widespread use of these networks, like in other countries of the world, is very popular in Afghanistan, especially in Faryab province, among young people and students. This has led to the examination of the role and importance of these tools in higher education.

There are many theories regarding the impact of social networks on the quality of higher education that can serve as a framework for this research.

Bandura's social learning theory holds that learning occurs not only through direct experience but also through observation, interaction, and social modeling (Bandura, 2002). According to this theory, teachers and students can observe and model each other's behaviors and experiences through social networks, thereby expanding their knowledge. For example, when students participate in various Facebook or WhatsApp groups, they can see how others solve problems. They directly observe what learning strategies others use and how they share educational materials. With this trend, the aforementioned theory directly supports the research's central hypothesis: social networks can improve the quality of higher education.

Putnam (2000), in his social capital theory defines, social capital as a set of social norms, relationships, and trust that facilitate cooperation and communication in society. By increasing communication between lecturers and students, social networks increase academic interaction and strengthen mutual trust. Students' academic interactions on social networks help them receive support from their lecturers and peers. This view is directly

consistent with the sub-hypotheses of the research, which examines the positive attitudes of lecturers and students towards the impact of social networks on the quality of higher education.

In addition to the two theories above, Vygotsky's cooperative learning theory is also closely related to the title of this research. Vygotsky (1978) states that learning occurs through social interaction and cooperation, and that social and cultural tools play an important role in this process. Social media has created groups to facilitate conversation, discussion, and an interactive learning environment. This allows students to participate in academic groups and ask and answer questions. In this respect, social networks demonstrate the practical application of Vygotsky's theory and provide a clear answer to why students have positive attitudes towards the role of these tools in improving the quality of learning.

The research questionnaire clearly shows the relationship between these theories and the research variables. In this research, concepts such as interaction, access to scientific and educational resources, scientific social capital, and collaborative learning have been established as measurable variables. A 20-item questionnaire was designed, with each item representing a part of the theoretical framework. For example, items emphasizing the role of social networks in facilitating teacher-student communication are related to the concept of social capital, while items associated with the exchange of experiences among students are related to Vygotsky's theory of cooperative learning. Also, cases that involve observing and modeling the actions of others illustrate Bandura's social learning theory.

Therefore, the theoretical framework of the present research combines three main approaches, each explaining a different dimension of the impact of social networks on higher education. Bandura's theory emphasizes the role of individual observation and interaction, Putnam's theory emphasizes the importance of social capital and collective trust, and Vygotsky's theory emphasizes the value of group and collaborative learning. This theoretical synergy provides a solid foundation for testing the research's central hypothesis: that social networks have a positive, significant impact on the quality of higher education.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study is applied in terms of purpose and descriptive-analytical in nature and method, conducted using a survey approach, and employs a quantitative method with a questionnaire to examine and analyze the views of lecturers and students at Faryab University regarding the impact of social media on the quality of higher education.

Data collection procedure

The present study was conducted in 2025, and the data were collected between May 22 and June 10. Questionnaires for lectures were usually distributed in their respective departments, while student questionnaires were distributed in their classrooms. This approach helped increase the response rate and prevent the loss of questionnaires. To ensure the effective implementation of the study and proper time management, the researcher coordinated in

advance with each instructor in whose classes the questionnaires were to be distributed. Before distributing the questionnaires to lecturers and students, the researcher provided a brief oral explanation of the study, clarifying its purpose, scope, and ethical considerations. In addition, lecturers and students were assured that participation in the study was voluntary and that their responses would remain anonymous. The questionnaires were administered in person to both lecturers and students, and the completion time was estimated to be approximately 12 to 18 minutes. After completion, the questionnaires were immediately collected by the researcher and stored securely. Only the researcher had access to the raw data, which were entered into SPSS software for analysis. No identifying information, such as names or contact details, was collected, thereby ensuring the anonymity of the participants.

Population and Sampling

The statistical population of this study included lecturers (all faculty members of Faryab University in the academic year 2025) and students (undergraduate students from eight different faculties of the university). The sample consisted of 132 lecturers selected via convenience sampling and 346 students from various disciplines selected via simple random sampling.

Instrumentation

The main research instrument was a researcher-designed questionnaire comprising 20 items on a five-point Likert scale (ranging from strongly disagree to agree strongly). Separate questionnaires were prepared and administered to the two groups: lecturers and students. The questionnaires were reviewed by three faculty members of Faryab University. They assessed each question for clarity, relevance to the research topic, and suitability for the research objectives. Based on their feedback, minor modifications were made and the content validity of the instrument was confirmed. The reliability of the lecturers' questionnaire was assessed using Cronbach's alpha, yielding a value of 0.883. Similarly, the reliability of the students' questionnaire was confirmed with a Cronbach's alpha of 0.819. These values indicate outstanding instrument reliability for both groups.

Table 1: Reliability of lecturers' and students' questionnaires (Cronbach's α)

Questionnaire	Cronbach's α
Lecturers	0.883
Students	0.819

Cronbach's alpha values indicate excellent reliability for both lecturers' and students' questionnaires

Data Analysis

Data analysis was conducted in two parts. Descriptive analysis included calculating the mean, standard deviation, frequency distribution, and describing the demographic variables. Inferential analysis involved the use of a one-sample *t*-test to examine the significance of

attitudes relative to the theoretical value, ANOVA to compare differences between faculties, and calculation of effect size using Cohen's d . All analyses were performed using SPSS version 27. The significance level for all statistical tests was set at 0.05.

FINDINGS

This section presents the results derived from the data analysis. The findings are organized to systematically address the research questions and provide a comprehensive understanding of the current situation. The findings regarding faculty members' perspectives are examined separately to highlight better their role and attitude in improving the quality of higher education. This section helps to reveal the differences and similarities among various groups of respondents.

Descriptive Statistics of Questionnaire Items (Mean \pm SD)

The mean responses of lecturers for all questions were above the theoretical value of 3. The highest means were observed for items 5 and 11 (4.35) and item 18 (4.25), while the lowest means were for items 10 and 15 (3.59 and 3.58, respectively). These data indicate a positive attitude among lecturers toward the role of social media in higher education. The standard deviations were relatively low, suggesting a considerable agreement among respondents.

Table 2: Descriptive analysis of the questions (mean and standard deviation)

Item	Mean	Standard Deviation
I use social media (such as Facebook, WhatsApp, Telegram, etc.) for academic purposes.	4.20	0.563
Social media helps me easily access academic and educational resources.	4.05	0.894
Academic groups and channels on social media have helped improve my learning.	3.78	1.072
Through social media, I receive academic announcements and schedules more quickly.	4.17	0.531
Social media has become a suitable alternative to some traditional teaching methods.	4.35	0.618
Using social media has improved my grades and academic performance.	3.78	0.813
Social media increases my motivation to study and learn.	3.78	0.813
Using social media has familiarized me with new learning methods.	3.87	0.744
Social media helps me better understand difficult concepts.	4.02	0.552
Academic activities on social media encourage me to participate more in course discussions.	3.59	0.973
Excessive use of social media causes distraction while studying.	4.35	0.762
Misinformation on social media may lead to confusion in learning.	4.31	0.753
Sometimes using social media wastes my time.	4.04	0.776
Some lecturers and students do not use social media for academic purposes.	4.20	0.585
Lack of proper internet access prevents effective use of social media for learning.	3.58	0.763
I believe the university should support the educational use of social media.	3.77	0.932
Creating an official educational platform on social media can help improve the quality of higher education.	4.09	0.766
Training students to use social media properly is essential.	4.25	0.584
Lecturers should make greater use of social media for teaching and interaction.	4.21	0.642

Item	Mean	Standard Deviation
Social media can play a positive role in the future of higher education in Afghanistan.	4.11	0.723
Valid N (listwise)	—	—

This table presents descriptive statistics for the lecturers' responses, including the mean, and the standard deviation for each item.

Table 3: One-Sample t-Test of Social Media Use in Higher Education

Item	t-Statistic	df	Sig. (Two-Tailed)	Mean Difference	95% Confidence Interval for Mean Difference	
					Lower	Upper
I use social media (such as Facebook, WhatsApp, Telegram, etc.) for academic purposes.	24.595	131	0.000	1.205	1.11	1.3
Social media helps me easily access academic and educational resources.	13.537	131	0.000	1.053	0.90	1.21
Academic groups and channels on social media have helped improve my learning.	8.360	131	0.000	0.780	0.60	0.96
Through social media, I receive academic announcements and schedules more quickly.	25.388	131	0.000	1.174	1.08	1.27
Social media has become a suitable alternative to some traditional teaching methods.	25.085	131	0.000	1.348	1.24	1.45
Using social media has improved my grades and academic performance.	11.024	131	0.000	0.780	0.64	0.92
Social media increases my motivation to study and learn.	11.024	131	0.000	0.780	0.64	0.92
Using social media has familiarized me with new learning methods.	13.263	128	0.000	0.868	0.74	1
Social media helps me better understand difficult concepts.	21.115	131	0.000	1.015	0.92	1.11
Academic activities on social media encourage me	6.981	131	0.000	0.591	0.42	0.76

to participate more in course discussions.						
Excessive use of social media causes distraction while studying.	20.345	131	0.000	1.348	1.22	1.48
Misinformation on social media may lead to confusion in learning.	19.999	131	0.000	1.311	1.18	1.44
Sometimes using social media wastes my time.	15.374	131	0.000	1.038	0.90	1.17
Some lecturers and students do not use social media for academic purposes.	23.496	131	0.000	1.197	1.10	1.3
Lack of proper internet access prevents effective use of social media for learning.	8.671	131	0.000	0.576	0.44	0.71
I believe the university should support the educational use of social media.	9.435	131	0.000	0.765	0.60	0.93
Creating an official educational platform on social media can help improve the quality of higher education.	16.358	131	0.000	1.091	0.96	1.22
Training students to use social media properly is essential.	24.572	131	0.000	1.250	1.15	1.35
Lecturers should make greater use of social media for teaching and interaction.	21.678	131	0.000	1.212	1.10	1.32
Social media can play a positive role in the future of higher education in Afghanistan.	17.571	131	0.000	1.106	0.98	1.23

One-Sample t-tests were conducted to examine lecturers' perceptions of the impact of social media on the quality of education, using a test value of 3, which corresponded to the neutral midpoint of the scale. The results indicated that the mean scores for all questionnaire items were significantly higher than the test value ($p < .001$), demonstrating consistently positive perceptions among lecturers.

Notably, the largest effects were observed for Items 5, 11, and 18, which yielded the highest mean differences relative to the test value. Overall, these findings provide strong

evidence that lecturers hold significantly positive attitudes toward the role of social media in enhancing the quality of education.

ANOVA test

Table 4: ANOVA Results for Academic Use and Access by Faculty

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	319.860	7	45.694	5.468	.000
Within Groups	2774.540	332	8.357		
Total	3094.400	339			

The results of the one-way ANOVA indicated that there was a statistically significant difference among students from different faculties in the Academic Use and Access index of social media ($F = 5.468$, $\text{Sig.} < 0.001$). This finding suggests that the field of study or faculty can influence students' level of educational use of social media.

Table 5: ANOVA Results for Learning and Academic Performance by Faculty

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	792.133	7	113.162	8.575	.000
Within Groups	4460.607	338	13.197		
Total	5252.740	345			

The results of the one-way ANOVA also showed a statistically significant difference among students from different faculties regarding the Learning and Academic Performance index ($F = 8.575$, $\text{Sig.} < 0.001$). This result indicates that the field of study or faculty plays an influential role in the impact of social media on students' learning and academic performance.

Table 6: ANOVA Results for Negative Barriers and Consequences by Faculty

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	622.106	7	88.872	9.917	.000
Within Groups	3011.231	336	8.962		
Total	3633.337	343			

The results of the one-way ANOVA indicated a statistically significant difference among students from different faculties in the Negative Barriers and Consequences index of social media use ($F = 9.917$, $\text{Sig.} < 0.001$). This finding suggests that the type of faculty or field of study can affect students' perception of the negative barriers and consequences of using social media in education.

Table 7: ANOVA Results for Attitudes and Support toward Educational Use by Faculty

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	37.356	7	5.337	.724	.652
Within Groups	2477.470	336	7.373		
Total	2514.826	343			

The results of the one-way ANOVA showed that there was no statistically significant difference among students from different faculties regarding the *Attitudes and Support for Educational Use* index of social media ($F = 0.724$, $\text{Sig.} = 0.652$). This result indicates that students' attitudes toward and support for the educational use of social media are relatively similar, regardless of their faculty or field of study.

DISCUSSION

The results of this study make it clear that the use of social networks has a positive, significant impact on the quality of higher education. The central hypothesis of the study, stating that social networks help improve the quality of higher education, was confirmed by data collected from 132 teachers and 346 students. As the attitude of both groups towards the impact of social networks was positive, significant and relatively homogeneous, the effect sizes showed that this tool has a powerful influence on learning and improving the quality of education. Also, Sub-Hypothesis 1 and Sub-Hypothesis 2 were confirmed. The first examined teachers' positive attitudes towards the impact of social networks, and the second examined students' attitudes; both teachers and students positively assessed the role of social networks in improving teaching, learning, academic communication, and access to scholarly resources, with high self-confidence. Overall, this study's findings show that social networks not only facilitate interaction and quick access to scientific resources but also strengthen scientific relationships, increase learning motivation, and serve as an effective, targeted tool for improving the quality of higher education at Faryab University.

The findings of this study show that both lecturers and students of Faryab University have positive and meaningful attitudes towards the role of social media in improving the quality of higher education. These results are consistent with previous research that has emphasized the educational benefits of social media, including enhanced collaboration, improved communication, and access to scholarly resources (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2016; Hamid et al., 2009; Krutka & Carpenter, 2016; Al Balushi et al., 2022).

The present study argues that social media is more than a simple communication tool and is primarily used for knowledge production and academic participation. The findings of this study are also in line with previous studies such as Núñez (2009) and Komarraju et al. (2010). In their studies, they concluded that student-lecturer interactions through digital tools can positively affect motivation, self-esteem, and academic achievement. The focus on lecturers' and students' perspectives is one of the highlights of this research. Points that previous research, such as Chugh et al. (2021), which focuses on students, and Acuyo (2021), which focuses on lecturers, have not addressed; therefore, this research is more comprehensive and accurate than other similar studies.

This research also highlighted differences between lecturers and students in terms of priorities, as lecturers placed greater emphasis on using social media to enhance the quality of education, facilitate access to academic resources, and foster working relationships. These

findings are very close to those of Al Balushi et al. (2022). On the other hand, students focus more on immediate practical issues, such as facilitating communication, providing easy, immediate access to scientific resources, and supporting learning.

The difference in attitudes between academic disciplines was also very pronounced; for example, students and lecturers in the Computer Science Department had more positive and meaningful attitudes towards the use of social media, consistent with the findings of López-Carril et al. (2020). This case highlights that familiarity with digital tools leads to better participation and acceptance of technology and communication networks.

Compared with previous findings regarding social networks and academic performance, this study confirms the relationship between informal interactions and educational outcomes (Haerizadeh et al., 2009; Ghanai Rad, 2006; Kuh & Hu, 2001). So it can be said that social networks have increased informal communication between lecturers and students. In fact, by doing this, it simulates the structure and interactive features of social networks (Stadtfeld et al., 2019) and, on the other hand, increases meaningful scientific interactions.

Along with the study's positive findings, there were some limitations. One limitation is that this study was conducted at only one Afghan university, and the researcher was unable to include all Afghan universities for various reasons, which limits generalizability to other universities. Another limitation is that this research has focused more on the perceptions and attitudes of lecturers and students. However, the extent of the actual impact on academic performance has not been determined.

Overall, this research showed that the use of social media has a tremendous impact on the quality of higher education, primarily when used as an effective teaching aid alongside formal education. The findings of this research are consistent with past studies on the educational benefits of social media and can also provide new knowledge in a unique cultural and geographical context. The findings also provide practical implications for policymaking and implementation, including the need to promote digital literacy, provide appropriate infrastructure, and develop clear guidelines for the use of social media in the academic environment. Future research that uses mixed-methods designs and compares across universities could shed more light on the precise mechanisms underlying social media's impact on academic performance and intellectual growth.

CONCLUSION

The findings of the present study indicate that social networks play an effective role in improving the quality of higher education. The study population, consisting of lecturers and students at Faryab University, expressed highly valuable perspectives regarding the role of social networks in educational communication, teaching, and learning processes. The results of the statistical tests, which showed that the mean responses were higher than the theoretical value, along with the reported effect size, indicate that these differences are significant not only statistically but also academically. Based on these findings, social media

can be applied in teaching and learning processes and can serve as a complementary tool in education. This is particularly important in the Afghan educational system, which faces limitations, especially in terms of resources.

On the other hand, the results of the one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) in this study indicate that there are statistically significant differences among students from different academic disciplines in the indices of educational use and access, learning and academic performance, and barriers and negative consequences of social media use ($p < 0.001$). In fact, these findings suggest that the field of study or faculty can have a substantial impact on the extent of educational use of social networks, their effectiveness on learning, and students' perceptions of their negative consequences. In contrast, the results related to the index of attitudes toward and support for the educational use of social networks showed that students' overall attitudes toward the educational use of these tools are relatively similar and homogeneous across different disciplines.

Furthermore, the observed differences in attitudes across various academic disciplines highlight the necessity of adopting a discipline-specific approach, as the use of social networks varies among different fields. These differences are particularly influenced by familiarity with technology, which significantly affects the use of social networks.

The study's focus on a single university and the reliance on questionnaire-based data collection are among its limitations. To address these limitations, it is recommended that future research employ mixed methods, combining quantitative and qualitative approaches, and include multiple universities across the country to increase the generalizability of the findings. It is also recommended that lecturers and university administrators use social networks effectively and purposefully alongside formal education. This requires proper management, targeted training, and the provision of appropriate infrastructure to ensure beneficial and effective use in improving the quality of higher education. Therefore conscious and well-planned utilization of social networks can be considered one of the complementary strategies in Afghanistan's higher education system by policymakers and educational administrators.

Recommendations

Based on the results and limitations of this study, the following recommendations are proposed:

1. It is recommended that universities—particularly in Afghanistan—develop formal policies and guidelines for the educational use of social media. Establishing such policies would provide clear frameworks for academic interaction, sharing scholarly resources, and communication between lecturers and students.
2. It is recommended that regular training programs be organized for faculty members and students on time management, enhancing digital literacy, purposeful use of social media, and identifying credible information.

3. Universities should support lecturers who effectively use these tools in the teaching–learning process and introduce their successful experiences as instructional models.
4. To gain a deeper understanding of the role of social media in higher education, it is recommended that future studies employ mixed methods (quantitative and qualitative) so that, in addition to statistical analyses, the challenges, experiences, and expectations of faculty members and students are comprehensively examined.
5. Given that the present study focused on attitudes and perceptions, it is recommended that future research examine objective data such as levels of academic engagement, educational performance indicators, academic grades, and the actual impact of social media on learning outcomes.

AUTHORS CONTRIBUTIONS

The role of each author in preparing this manuscript is as follows:

- Zabihullah Bashardost designed the study, supervised the research, and contributed to writing the manuscript.
- Krimullah Noori collected, analyzed, and interpreted the data, composed, and edited the manuscript.
- Both authors reviewed and approved the final version of the manuscript.

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The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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