

A RESEARCH ON THE IMPACT OF SOCIAL NETWORKS ON ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE AND ON UNIVERSITY DROPOUT

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Abstract

In a preliminary research carried out at the Faculty of Commerce and Tourism of Complutense University of Madrid (UCM) in 2020-2021 (Gago de Santos et al., 2022) one of our findings indicated that the student's perception of the impact of the use of a social network for a university task was very satisfactory in terms of consolidation of competencies, increased interest in the course and the desire to carry out more training activities via social networks. These findings motivated us to go further and build our own questionnaire based on our first experiment and taken into account the experience of the teachers and more recent scientific literature published in the past two years.

Hence, the purpose of this communication is to present the design of a questionnaire to assess the impact of social networks on academic performance and on university dropout. Such a questionnaire has been designed ad hoc by a group of teachers and researchers of the Faculty of Economics and Business and the Faculty of Commerce and Tourism of the Complutense University of Madrid, Spain. This research has been carried out within the framework of a National Project on "Determinants of academic performance and dropout in higher education: analysis of the impact of the use of educational platforms and social networks" (2021-2024). The original questionnaire constructed by the research team has been developed based on previous research (Limas & Vargas, 2020); (Nurudeen et al., 2022). In this particular case, It is important to highlight that we are not interested in getting to know the social networks mostly used by students or the motivation for their use as much as to understand and to measure properly the predisposition of students to their use in the university learning environment and their potential impact on performance and/or college dropout.

On the one hand, the questionnaire has passed the review of an expert on biases in questionnaire design (García-Abajo, 2015) and of two experts on questionnaire design and academic drop out. On the other, it has been read by a total of 3 undergraduate students to control the degree of understanding, which was maxime in more than 95% of the items. The questionnaire is ready to be launched in early September 2023 among students of different Faculties of the Complutense University of Madrid (mostly among undergraduate students of the Faculty of Commerce and Tourism in all its four courses). Firstly, we shall inform the student that the questionnaire answers will be considered anonymous and we ask their permission to treat them only for research purposes within the National Project scope on understanding academic performance and university dropout. On average the questionnaire may be read and answered in 5-6 minutes. The questionnaire has been broken down into three sets of questions:

- i) the first set refers to general and academic data of the respondent (nine questions);
- ii) the second set refers to the respondent's level of knowledge of social networks and the respondent's level of use of social networks (eight questions). Finally,
- iii) the third set refers exclusively to the use of social networks in the university environment. Our findings will help us draw some conclusions and propose specific policies to enhance the student's academic performance and to a lesser extent to see if there is some room of maneuver for using social networking as a means to decrease the high level of drop out rates at the University.

Keywords: Innovation in University Education, Social networks, academic performance, ITC in Higher Education, University dropout.