



Virtual Identity and Social Relationships: Dimensions and Implications – Facebook as a Model (A Field Study on a Sample of Students from Bouira University)

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Abstract:

This study aimed to reveal the impact of Facebook on university students' social relationships by discussing the concept of virtual identity, uncovering the social motives underlying students' use of virtual identities on Facebook, and examining the implications of this use for the social relationships among members of the sample within the community. To achieve these objectives, a descriptive method was employed, with a questionnaire used as the primary research tool. The instrument was administered to a purposive sample of 120 students from Bouira University (68 male students and 52 female students).

Keywords: *virtual identity, virtual community, university student, social relationships, Facebook.*

Identité virtuelle et relations sociales : dimensions et implications – Facebook comme modèle (étude de terrain menée auprès d'un échantillon d'étudiants de l'université de Bouira)

Résumé :

Cette étude visait à mettre en évidence l'impact de Facebook sur les relations sociales des étudiants universitaires en abordant le concept d'identité virtuelle, en dévoilant les motivations sociales qui sous-tendent l'utilisation des identités virtuelles sur Facebook par les étudiants et en examinant les implications de cette utilisation sur les relations sociales entre les membres de l'échantillon au sein de la communauté. Pour atteindre ces objectifs, une méthode descriptive a été employée, avec un questionnaire comme principal outil de recherche. L'instrument a été administré à un échantillon raisonné de 120 étudiants de l'université de Bouira (68 étudiants et 52 étudiantes).

Mots clés : *identité virtuelle, communauté virtuelle, étudiant universitaire, relations sociales, Facebook.*



Introduction:

The internet represents the most recent type of communication technology that has emerged over the past two decades. With its distinctive communicative and technical features, the network has succeeded in overturning traditional spatial and temporal concepts of media production and applications worldwide, enabling its users to choose freely from among various communicative services that suit their needs and fulfil their gratifications.

This development has allowed different segments of society, particularly university students, to gain greater epistemic openness through the use of this technological revolution, especially by engaging with diverse virtual platforms. These platforms have attracted significant attention since their inception on the internet, with steadily increasing numbers of users due to the services they provide. This growing popularity has led numerous scholars and researchers to express concern about the potential consequences of their use and spread, particularly with respect to individual identity.

The notion of identity has thus become a widely discussed subject. Traditionally, identity was understood as profound, encompassing all that grants the individual and the community a distinctive and self-standing character. Although the internet is an advanced tool that provides services to all social groups, particularly university students, it has triggered a fundamental transformation in psychological and social concepts and practices among students. This is due to the internet's simplicity, accessibility, and provision of services that facilitate the

creation of social relationships and the exchange of opinions through various virtual platforms. Among these, Facebook stands out as one of the most widespread, being regarded as a modern means of communication that enables people to connect with others regardless of their location, profession, or circumstances. Its unprecedented success has attracted vast numbers of people of different ages, nationalities, cultures, and beliefs, thereby giving rise to a new form of social interaction.

By merely entering one's name, date of birth, and e-mail address, an individual may establish a persona through which they communicate with others within a networked society, enabling the formation of friendships and information exchange. In light of the influence that such virtual platforms have had on the identity of young people, this study therefore seeks to examine the notion of virtual identity as manifested through Facebook.

1. Research Problem

New technologies have imposed a new lifestyle while simultaneously altering the elements of identity for both the individual and society, particularly in this historical era, compared with the identity structures that characterised the predigital and precommunication revolution period. With the emergence of the internet and its widespread use across the globe, a new type of human collectivity has arisen, commonly referred to as *virtual* or *digital communities*. These communities resemble actual societies in the existence of individuals, their interactions, and their sharing of ties, emotions, and time. However, in virtual communities, the element of place is absent. Place has lost its significance; communication technologies have absorbed real physical



spaces, shrinking the world into a single intersection point – in real time. This aligns with McLuhan’s notion of the “global village,” born out of the disappearance of space and the compression of time.ⁱ

Other researchers argue that virtual communities provide the individual with an opportunity for exploration and experimentation with identity. In such spaces, one may present oneself in any way one chooses, a behaviour often not easily achievable in real society. Some scholars have even described virtual worlds as *identity workshops*, where individuals may discover new dimensions of their capabilities and possibilities.ⁱⁱ

From this perspective, the present study seeks to address a complex topic of multiple dimensions that the social sciences have yet to fully delineate, namely, *the virtual community and virtual identity*. This phenomenon has begun to constitute a reality that exists only in the fabric woven by digital culture and its technologies, where traditional social relationships have grown increasingly complex, giving rise to new virtual bonds bounded by the screen and the image. This is particularly evident on Facebook, which currently has more than 2.4 billion active monthly users worldwide. According to *ANDROID-DZ*, the number of monthly Facebook users in Algeria ranges between 15 and 20 million active users, with statistics indicating that 19 million Algerians were registered on Facebook as of December 2018.ⁱⁱⁱ

Accordingly, this study poses the following central research question: *What is the nature of the virtual identity adopted by students in their use of Facebook?*

Research Questions

From the foregoing problem statement, the following research questions emerge:

- What are the features of identity expressed by students in their use of Facebook?
- Does the virtual identity of the surveyed students reflect their real identity?
- Can social networks on Facebook foster new forms of relationships with others that differ from those found in the frameworks of family, school, and street life?
- To what extent can these new virtual relationships meet students' needs, particularly given their desire, for various reasons, to escape traditional forms of restriction and authority?

Significance of the Study

The present study, entitled *Virtual Identity and Social Relationships: Dimensions and Implications*, holds significant value, as it seeks to uncover the various factors underlying students' adoption of virtual identities distinct from their authentic selves when using Facebook. Its importance lies in addressing the phenomenon of virtual identity within the context of widespread Facebook usage. Furthermore, the study gains relevance from the nature and role of the student cohort within society. Students represent a crucial and influential segment of human potential within the social fabric. Additionally, the importance of this investigation is derived from the broader significance of identity itself, the necessity of reconsidering its components, and the need to examine its varying dimensions, particularly in our current era marked by globalisation and digitalisation.



Objectives of the Study

The present study seeks to do the following:

- The results demonstrate how university students use virtual identity on Facebook.
- Identifying the purposes motivating students' use of virtual identity.
- Certain features of virtual identity and dimensions of digital interaction are examined.
- The concepts of the virtual community and virtual identity are introduced and defined.

Hypotheses of the Study

- The features and attributes of virtual identity among students on Facebook are multiple and varied.
- Facebook social networks influence students' relationships with members of society in ways that differ from the social dynamics found within family, school, and street contexts.

5. Study Terminology

1.1.. Identity

Miler defines identity as a pattern of attributes that can be observed or inferred, which reveal, define, and distinguish a person both to oneself and to others. He divides identity into two types: self-identity, which refers to the individual as perceived by themselves, and general objective identity, which refers to the individual as seen by others.^{iv}

Ibn Rushd defines identity as follows: "Identity is said synonymously with the meaning applied to the term *existent*, and it is derived from *being* in the same way that *humanity* is derived from *man*."

Alex Mucchielli defines identity as “an integrated system comprising psychological, material, moral, and social givens, which encompass informational patterns, cognitive processes, or cognitive integration. Its unity is embodied in an inner spirit that carries with it an awareness and sense of identity. It is, thus, a unity of inner feelings manifest in the integrated psychological and material elements that distinguish an individual from others and create a sense of self-unity.”^v

Operationally, identity is defined as everything shared among members of a defined group or social stratum that contributes to constructing a particular environment, with those individuals being treated in accordance with their specific identity.

1.2 Virtual Identity

Virtual identity is the identity that manifests itself in internet forums and chat rooms. Through this approach, individuals often seek to manipulate their identity to encourage interlocutors and interactants to respond to the imagined persona as although it were their actual identity. Virtual identity frequently aims to realise desires and aspirations that real life has obstructed or rendered unattainable.^{vi}

Virtual identity is also defined as the set of attributes, symbols, and data that individuals use to present themselves to others in virtual communities and through which they interact with them.^{vii}

Operationally, virtual identity is the identity that an individual adopts in the virtual world, behind which they conceal themselves, depending on a variety of factors and causes that differ according to the personality of each user.



1.3 Facebook

The platform takes its name from the so-called “face books” that were traditionally printed and distributed to students to provide them with opportunities for acquaintance and interaction, particularly after completing their studies and graduating, when they would disperse in different directions.^{viii}

Facebook is one of the most prominent and widely used social networking platforms among students. It allows most of them to form relationships and friendships as well as to exchange information. On Facebook, students construct a virtual community that they find more convenient and comfortable than real-life communities since they can choose friends with whom they wish to interact. They also provide a personal profile that serves as their identity, often using either real or pseudonymous names.

1.4 Virtual Community

Serge Rouquette defines a virtual community as “a set of individuals who make use of chat forums, discussion circles, or dialogue groups, and among whom a sense of belonging to a single community emerges, with members sharing the same tastes, values, and interests, and working towards common goals.”^{ix}

Rheingold, meanwhile, defines virtual communities as “social aggregations that emerge from the internet when enough people carry on public discussions long enough, with sufficient human feeling, to form webs of personal relationships in cyberspace.”^x

Operationally, a virtual community is understood as collectives that come into being through the internet as a product of the modern communication revolution. They bring together individuals with shared interests who interact with one another and feel as if they are part of a real community.

1.5 University Student

A university student is an individual whose academic level allows the transition from secondary school to higher education in a specific field of study, qualifying them for a degree. The student has the right to choose the specialisation most in line with their preferences and inclinations.^{xi}

A university student is also defined as an individual affiliated with an educational institution such as a university, institute, or centre for the purpose of acquiring knowledge and obtaining a recognised degree that will enable them to pursue professional life thereafter, in accordance with the qualification obtained.

Operationally, in this study, a university student is defined as an individual whose academic competency has permitted the transition from secondary school to higher education, who is enrolled explicitly at Bouira University, and who possesses a Facebook account on social networking platforms. Numerically, university students constitute the most significant proportion of higher education institutions.

1.6 Social Relationships

Social relationships are defined as any connection between two or more individuals or groups or between an individual and a group. These connections may be founded



on cooperation or lack thereof; they may be direct or indirect and either immediate or deferred.^{xii}

They may also be understood as recurring and predictable behaviours occurring between two or more persons, wherein each influences and is influenced by the other.^{xiii}

Operationally, in this study, social relationships are defined as the ties, bonds, and interactions formed among students on the basis of social interaction through their Facebook accounts.

2. Methodological Framework of the Study

2.1 Research Method

A research method is a set of rules, procedures, and techniques that enable the mind to arrive at the truth of phenomena without expending unproductive effort. Individuals may construct or innovate prior to reflecting on the principles and methods upon which that construction or innovation is based. Once their attempts prove successful, some begin to observe and identify the principles that led to such success. These principles are then employed to design and construct improved endeavors in the future.^{xiv}

In this study, we employed the descriptive-analytical method, which seeks to collect facts, data, and the underlying motives that lead students to adopt virtual identities on Facebook and to examine the effects of such practices on social relationships while simultaneously attempting to interpret these findings scientifically. Once the maximum amount of information has been gathered, the subsequent stage involves analysis and interpretation to arrive at meaningful conclusions. Through the descriptive-

analytical method, we are thus able both to describe and analyse the phenomenon under investigation. Thus, this research endeavors to characterise the dimensions of virtual identity and its repercussions for social relationships while also striving to provide scientifically grounded explanations.

2.2 Data collection tool

After selecting the research method, namely, the descriptive-analytical method, we turn to the subsequent step: the tools and techniques employed for data collection within this approach. These instruments enable the researcher to gather information and test hypotheses. In the present study, the primary tool used was the questionnaire.

The questionnaire, in its general sense, is a list comprising a set of carefully designed questions that are sent to a large number of individuals from the community constituting the study sample. It is sometimes defined as a document containing questions that the researcher deems sufficient to elicit the data required for addressing the research topic. Questionnaires may be distributed by mail to individuals chosen on scientific and statistical grounds, who then return their completed responses.

The questionnaire is considered one of the most important and precise instruments for conducting research and gathering data in descriptive studies. It serves as the means employed to obtain answers to specific questions by presenting respondents with a form to be completed independently. In its simplest form, the questionnaire consists of a series of structured questions presented to a sample of individuals, who are requested to provide written responses. This method requires neither direct oral explanation nor interpretation from the researcher. The



questions are typically written or printed on a document known as the questionnaire form.^{xv}

Operational Definition of the Questionnaire

The questionnaire is a set of questions posed by the researcher to participants and is designed in line with the researcher's expectations about the subject under investigation. The questions are directly linked to the hypotheses formulated in the study and serve the aims of the research.

In this study, the questionnaire was divided into three sections:

- The first section concerns personal data.
- The second section relates to the first hypothesis: *the features and attributes of virtual identity among students on Facebook are multiple and varied.*
- The third section concerns the second hypothesis: *Facebook social networks influence students' relationships with members of society in ways that differ from those found within family, school, and street contexts.*

Four professors from Bouira University validated the questionnaire.

2.3 Research Population and Study Sample

Research population

The population of this study consists of all male and female students enrolled at Bouira University across various specialisations.

Study Sample and Sampling Method

Selecting the research sample and the method of its selection constitute one of the most critical stages of applied field research, especially when the research population is significant, as is the case in the present study. Since the research population comprises all the students at Bouira University, this study aimed to explore the intricacies and dimensions of students' use of virtual identity and its repercussions for social relationships.

Given the difficulty of encompassing all members of the research population, a purposive sample was selected. The purposive sampling method entails the researcher intentionally selecting sample units according to predetermined criteria. Thus, the study sample was a purposive group composed of students from Bouira University who were personally selected by the researcher to ensure adequate representation of the research population. This type of sampling differs from others in that it does not statistically represent the original population of the study.

Accordingly, a purposive sample consisting of 120 students (male and female), each of whom possessed a Facebook account, was chosen. This type of sample was selected owing to its possession of the specific characteristics necessary for the objectives of the study.

2.4 Study limitations

- **Spatial Scope:** This study was conducted at Bouira University.
- **Human Scope:** The study sample consisted of students from Bouira University.
- **Temporal Scope:** The fieldwork lasted three months, from October to December 2024.



3. Fieldwork

3.1 Study Results

Axis One: Personal Data

Table 1 : *Characteristics of the sample*

Characteristics	Frequency	Percentage	Total
Gender			
Male	68	56.70%	120
Female	52	43.30%	
Age Groups			
18–22	22	18.33%	120
22–26	65	54.17%	
Over 26	33	27.50%	
Fields of Study			
Humanities and Social Sciences	49	40.83%	120
Economics	31	25.83%	
Literature and Languages	23	19.17%	
Law and Political Science	17	14.17%	

The above table shows the distribution of the study sample according to sex, age, and specialisation. Male students constituted 56.70% (68 students), whereas female students represented 43.30% (52 students). The most represented age category was 22–26 years, accounting for 54.17% (65 students) of the sample. The sample included students from different faculties at Bouira University, thereby allowing for diverse and varied responses according to gender, age, and academic specialisation.

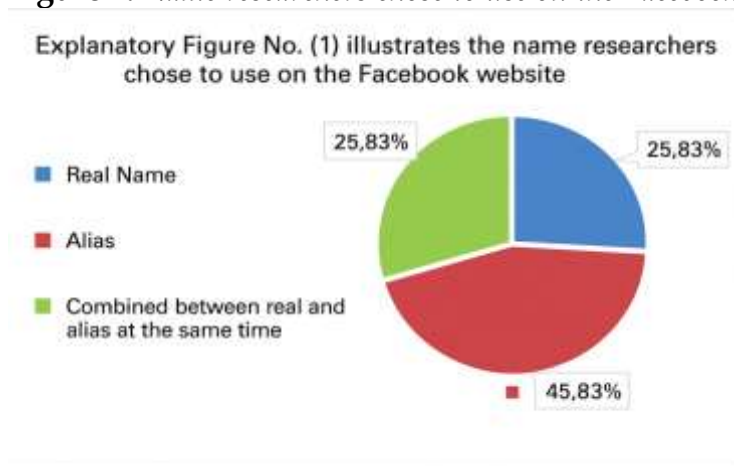
Axis Two: Features and Attributes of Virtual Identity on Facebook

Table 2: *Types of Names Chosen by Respondents on Facebook*

Type of Name	Frequency	Percentage	Total
Real Name	31	25.83%	120
Pseudonym	55	45.84%	
Combination (Real + Pseudonym)	34	28.33%	
Total	120	100%	120

The table indicates that 25.83% of the students used their real names, whereas 45.84% opted for pseudonyms. Moreover, 28.33% employed a combination of real and pseudonymous names. This distribution highlights the varying approaches that students take in constructing and managing their virtual identities on Facebook.

Figure 1: *Name researchers chose to use on the Facebook website*





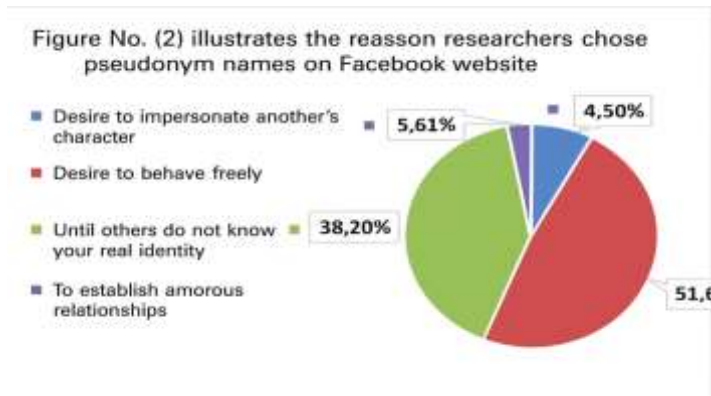
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Table 2 shows that the highest proportion of respondents, 45.84%, chose to use pseudonyms on Facebook. Moreover, 28.33% of the students accessed the platform via a combination of real and pseudonymous names, whereas 25.83% used their real names.

Table 3: *Reasons for Students' Choice of Pseudonyms on Facebook*

Reason	Frequency	Percentage	Total
Desire to assume another persona	5	5.61%	89
Desire to act with complete freedom	46	51.69%	
To conceal one's real identity from others	34	38.20%	
To establish romantic relationships	4	4.50%	
Total	89	100%	89

Figure 2: *The reasons why students chose pseudonyms on the Facebook website*



From the above table, it becomes clear that the primary reason respondents chose pseudonyms on Facebook was their desire to act with complete freedom (51.69%). This was followed by 38.20% who used pseudonyms to ensure that others would not know their real identity. A smaller proportion, 5.61%, adopted pseudonyms to assume another persona, whereas 4.5% used them for the purpose of establishing romantic relationships with the opposite sex.

Table 4: *Respondents' Comfort in the Virtual Community on Facebook Compared with the Comfort in the Real Community*

Response	Frequency	Percentage	Total
Yes	104	86.67%	120
No	16	13.33%	
Total	120	100%	120

The table shows that the overwhelming majority of the respondents (86.67%) felt more comfortable in the virtual community of Facebook than in the real community. In contrast, only 13.33% indicated that they did not experience greater comfort in the virtual space. From the above, it is evident that the majority of respondents selected pseudonyms on Facebook primarily to achieve greater freedom of expression (51.69%), followed by concealing their true identity (38.20%). A smaller proportion used pseudonyms to assume another persona (5.61%), whereas a minority pursued them to form romantic relationships (4.5%).



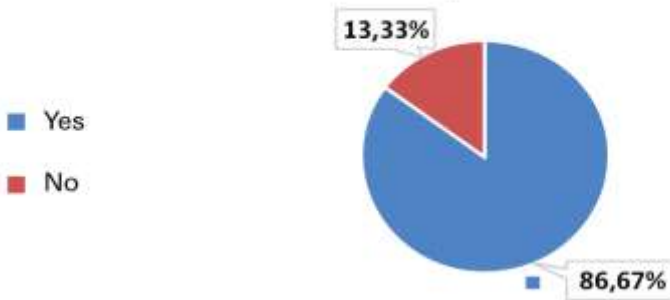
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Table 4: Respondents' Comfort in the Virtual Community on Facebook Compared with the Comfort in the Real Community

Response	Frequency	Percentage	Total
Yes	104	86.67%	120
No	16	13.33%	
Total	120	100%	120

Figure 3: Respondents' comfort in the virtual Facebook community compared with that in the real community

Figure No. (3) shows whether the respondents feel more comfortable in the virtual community on Facebook than in the real community

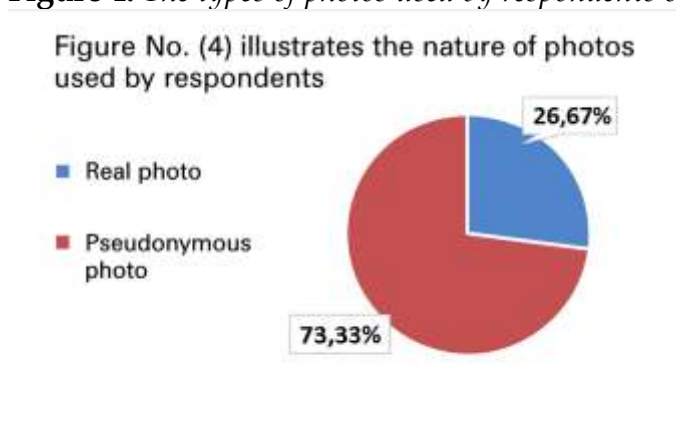


The table clearly shows that the majority of the students in the sample feel more comfortable in the virtual community of Facebook than in the real community, with 86.67%, whereas only 13.33% of the respondents reported greater comfort in the real community.

Table 5: *Types of Profile Pictures Used by Respondents on Facebook*

Type of Picture	Frequency	Percentage	Total
Real Picture	32	26.67%	120
Pseudonymous Picture	88	73.33%	
Total	120	100%	120

Figure 4: *The types of photos used by respondents on Facebook*



The data in the table indicate that the majority of the surveyed students (73.33%) use pseudonymous pictures on Facebook, whereas 26.67% display their real pictures on their profiles.

Axis Three: The Influence of Facebook Social Networks on Relationships with Members of Society, Differing from Relationships Found in the Family, School, and Street Contexts



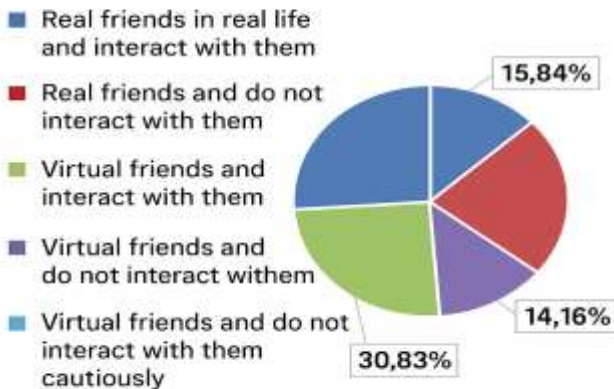
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Table 6: *Types of Friends in the Virtual Community*

Type of Friends	Frequency	Percentage	Total
Real friends in reality with interaction	19	15.84%	120
Real friends in reality, without interaction	15	12.50%	
Virtual friends with interaction	37	30.83%	
Virtual friends without interaction	17	14.16%	
Virtual friends with cautious interaction	32	26.67%	
Total	120	100%	120

Figure 5: *The types of friends in the virtual community*

Figure No. (5) illustrates the types of friends in the virtual community

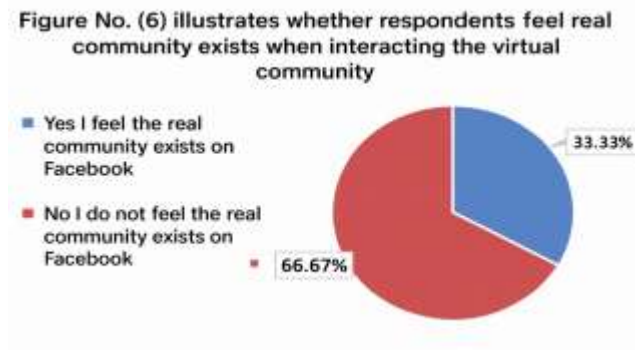


The respondents' answers reveal that the majority of friends with whom they interact are virtual friends met through Facebook, accounting for 30.83%. Similarly, 26.67% interact cautiously with virtual friends, whereas 15.84% actively engage with real-life friends.

Table 7: Respondents' Perception of the Presence of the Real Community During Interaction in the Virtual Community

Presence of Real Community Perception	Frequency	Percentage	Total
Yes, I feel the presence of the real community on Facebook	40	33.33%	120
No, I do not feel the presence of the real community on Facebook	80	66.67%	
Total	120	100%	120

Figure 6: Respondents' perceptions of the presence of a real community on Facebook while interacting within the virtual community





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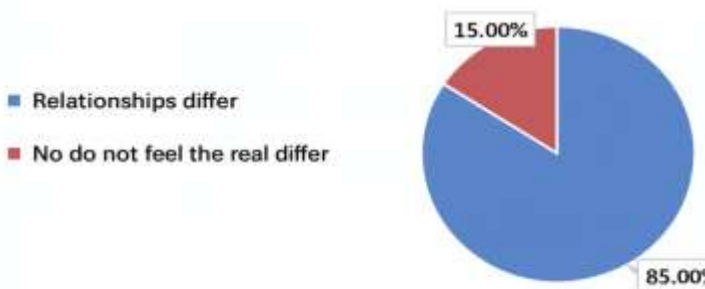
The responses indicate that the majority of respondents, 66.67%, do not feel the presence of the real community while interacting within the Facebook virtual community. Conversely, 33.33% reported feeling a sense of real community during their virtual interactions on Facebook.

Table 8: *Perceived differences between relationships on Facebook and traditional socialising institutions (family, school, etc.)*

Perception of Difference	Frequency	Percentage	Total
Relationships differ	102	85%	120
Relationships do not differ	18	15%	
Total	120	100%	120

Figure 7: *Differences between relationships on Facebook and those in traditional socialisation institutions (family, school, etc.)*

Figure No. (7): Differences in social relationships on Facebook



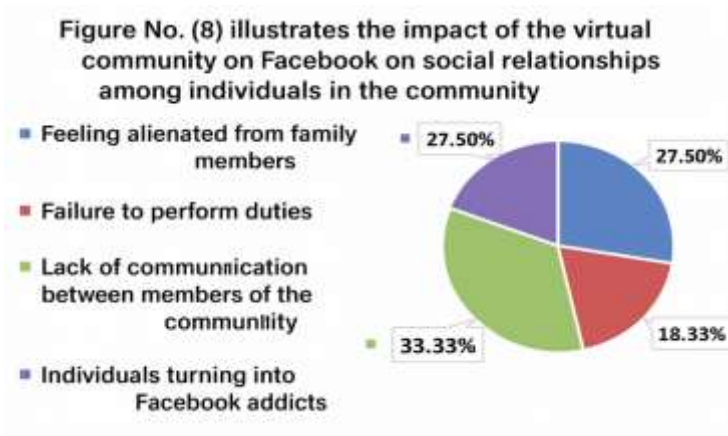
The respondents' answers reveal that 102 out of 120, or 85%, believe that relationships on Facebook differ from those present in traditional socialisation institutions such as

families and schools. In contrast, only 18 respondents, representing 15% of the sample, considered that there was no difference.

Table 9: *The Impact of the Virtual Community on Facebook on Social Relationships in Society*

Impact on Relationships	Frequency	Percentage	Total
Feeling estranged from family members	33	27.50%	120
Neglect of responsibilities	22	18.33%	
Reduced communication among community members	40	33.34%	
Social aversion towards Facebook addicts	25	20.83%	
Total	120	100%	120

Figure 8: *The impact of the virtual community on Facebook on social relationships among individuals in society*





The respondents' answers indicate that the impact of the virtual community on Facebook social relationships is reflected primarily in a reduction in communication among community members (33.34%), followed by a feeling of estrangement from family members (27.5%). The impact also manifests as social aversion toward Facebook addicts, representing 20.83%, whereas 18.33% of respondents perceive the effect as manifesting through their neglect of duties.

3.2 Discussion of Results with Hypotheses and Sociological Analysis

3.2.1. Results Related to the First Hypothesis—The Multiple Features and Attributes of Virtual Identity Among Students on Facebook

1. The results revealed that 45.84% of the surveyed students used virtual identities and pseudonyms on Facebook.
2. A total of 51.69% of the respondents stated that the main reason for choosing pseudonyms on Facebook was their desire to act with complete freedom, followed by 38.20% who use virtual identities to conceal their real identity from others.
3. The findings also revealed that 86.67% of the respondents felt more comfortable in the virtual community on Facebook than in the real physical community.
4. The results confirmed that a majority of the students (73.33%) use pseudonymous pictures on their Facebook profiles.

These findings suggest that students' engagement in virtual relationships on Facebook, characterised by the concealment of their real names and adoption of fictitious or pseudonymous identities, along with their physical absence and geographic distance, are factors that encourage individuals to reveal suppressed aspects of their personalities while enjoying freedom. This allows them to choose a name they find appropriate. This phenomenon corresponds to what Ali Muhammad Rahouma terms the "virtual mask," through which the user creates a virtual electronic persona embodying the concept of a digital self via a pseudonym.^{xvi}

Accordingly, the virtual identity created by the student on Facebook aims to convince others of a fabricated identity and manipulate it to encourage interactants to engage with them on the basis of this constructed persona, thereby fulfilling their psychological and social desires and needs that they cannot achieve in real life. The formation of friendships is virtually perceived as offering greater freedom and less restriction, which is attributable to the nature of the platform itself and its characteristics of flexibility and ease of use.

Second: Results Related to the Second Hypothesis – Social Networks on Facebook Influence Students' Relationships with Society Members in Ways That Differ from those Found in the Family, School, and Street Contexts

1. The survey results revealed that the majority of friends with whom the respondents interact were virtual friends they met through Facebook, accounting for 30.83% of the sample.



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2. A total of 66.67% of the surveyed students reported not feeling the presence of the real community while interacting within the Facebook virtual community.
3. The results also indicated that respondents believe that relationships on Facebook differ from those found in traditional socialisation institutions, such as family and school, with 85% affirming this difference.
4. The findings revealed that the impact of the virtual community on Facebook social relationships is manifested primarily in a reduction in communication among members of society (33.34%), followed by 27.5% who experience a feeling of estrangement from family members and 20.83% who perceive social alienation from others as an effect of their Facebook use.

On the basis of the results obtained from the questionnaire, the use of the social networking site Facebook evidently impacts the social relationships of the sample individuals within the community. This impact stems from Facebook serving as a means of escaping reality and reducing the individual's interaction with their family in the real world. Consequently, it undermines family relationships, causes social isolation, and may lead to deviation from religious norms. Excessive use of Facebook is also regarded as a waste of time; once the user enters the site, they tend to navigate from one page or chat to another without realising the hours lost without gaining any benefit.

This leads students to become isolated from their family reality and less involved in community participation and direct interpersonal communication. This finding is supported by a study that demonstrated that direct

communication with individuals, rather than via the internet, contributes to the development of skills that aid human communication, including fostering a sense of responsibility towards others and enhancing quick-wittedness, allowing individuals to handle situations with wisdom and tact.^{xvii}

Facebook lacks these benefits and instead causes numerous social problems, such as involvement in quarrels and disputes through comments, the formation of virtual relationships with the opposite sex, and the exposure of individuals to defamation, blackmail, and the spread of rumours.

4. Study recommendations

On the basis of the findings of this study and the importance of the subject, the following recommendations are proposed to address the issue of virtual identity among university students and its repercussions on social relationships within society:

1. Greater emphasis should be placed on students, who consider them important and active parts of society.
2. Provide opportunities for students to establish social relationships by activating scientific activities and seminars.
3. Organise awareness campaigns and sensitisation programmes within university environments to educate about the risks of virtual identities and their impact on individuals and society.
4. Encourage the use of virtual identities for purposes that benefit both individuals and society, such as e-marketing.



5. Further studies should be conducted to identify the actual motives behind the use of virtual identities to guide students in how to maximise benefits from social networking sites, especially Facebook.

Conclusion

In conclusion, on the basis of our study entitled *Virtual Identity and Social Relationships: Dimensions and Implications—Facebook as a Model—* discussing students' relationships with the virtual space and social networking sites, particularly Facebook, has led to the emergence of numerous concepts requiring examination for a better understanding and analysis of the phenomenon. This is due to the changes it has brought to patterns of social relationships among individuals within society. The virtual space represented by Facebook has introduced new variables into social life, enabling students to integrate into this virtual community, recognise its characteristics, and adopt virtual identities through which they experience it. This has facilitated the formation of virtual social relationships, which serve as a distinguished alternative to real-life relationships in all their dimensions.

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