

## Experiences of students and faculty members about using virtual social networks in education: A qualitative content analysis

### Authors

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### Abstract

**Introduction:** Virtual social networks are increasingly being used by academics and students in health sciences. It is necessary to examine opportunities and challenges of these networks based on the views of faculty and students to describe the existing situation and planning for proper use. The purpose of this study was to explore the experiences of students and faculty members about opportunities and challenges of using virtual social networks in education. **Methods:** In this qualitative content analysis study, twenty-two semi-structured interviews were conducted with 8 faculty members and 14 students at Jahrom Universities of Medical Sciences. Participants were selected by purposive sampling. To analyze the data, an inductive content analysis method was used. The rigor of qualitative data was checked, using Guba and Lincoln's criteria. **Results:** Five main categories were extracted from the data as opportunities for using virtual networks in education including improving communication skills; promoting learning; strengthening and facilitating learning of clinical procedures; creating research questions; and educating patients. Four main categories were also derived as challenges of using virtual networks in education including accuracy and validity of information; security and privacy; proper contextualization and culture-building; and control and monitor on virtual networks. **Conclusion:** According to the results, unique opportunities and challenges were explored regarding using virtual networks in education. These opportunities and challenges and finding ways to obviate challenges and converting it to the opportunities can lead to effective virtual learning, particularly in students who mainly use this method of education, and consequently increase the quality of learning. **Keywords:** Social network, Education, Students, Faculty, Qualitative research