

Infusion and Diffusion of Social Media usage in University Administration During COVID-19 Pandemic

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ABSTRACT

The pandemic outbreak of the covid19 further exposes how significant social media is in information dissemination and the conduct of human activities. Perceived usefulness of social media made several tertiary institutions to invest heavily in information technology. However, during the pandemic outbreak of covid19, several institutions, including universities, were on complete lockdown. While other organisations leveraged on the advantages of social media in carrying out their business operations, tertiary institutions, on the other hand, were still on complete lockdown and academic activities as a whole suspended despite the different social media platforms that can be utilised for academic purposes and the increased utilisation of social media platforms by the younger generation. In this study, the challenges of carrying out and how the integration of social media assisted in the conduct of academic and administrative operations of universities during the covid19 pandemic were investigated. Roger's diffusion of innovation theory was adopted in explaining the possible factors that can influence the adoption of social media usage. Close ended questionnaire was used to obtain data by purposive sampling technique. The findings from this study yielded informed decisions of utilising social media in the daily operations during global lockdown like that of covid19, because social media has proven to be a reliable channel for sharing information and conduct of business activities.

Keywords: Infusion, Diffusion, Social Media , Usage, University Administration, COVID-19 Pandemic

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1. INTRODUCTION

Social media has become a pervasive tech force in the past decade, affecting the performance of public and private institutions. Edosomwan et al. (2011) defined social media as a modern two-way communication channel where people connect and share ideas, experiences, photos, messages, and information of common interest. According to Park & Lim (2014), social media has become popular because it allows people to interact using the World Wide Web (WWW) to create groups, platforms, and communities to exchange ideas and information without geographic barriers. Recent studies have shown that Internet use is more prevalent among younger age groups who use the Internet more than the rest of the population.

This massive use of social media networks among young people has opened new opportunities for interaction and collaboration to share pedagogical sequences between teachers and learners. Therefore, many social media networks have been integrated into university administration for teaching and communication for the university's students and staff. Social media is accepted and used in more and more areas. The most common social media technologies (SMT) that have reached significant penetration include Twitter, WhatsApp, Facebook, YouTube, and LinkedIn, but many more are emerging.

Anyone can use SMT through any device connected to the Internet, such as smartphones, computers, or laptops. According to Deil-Amen et al. (2012), the strength of SMTs is their urgency to share information with other users, making it attractive for generating and retaining engagement. The COVID-19 pandemic has forced policymakers, university leaders, and institutional deans to pursue higher education as they seek alternatives to traditionally based physical classroom teaching. Sobaih et al. (2020) noted that various Egyptian universities encourage their faculties to use free communication platforms such as Google Classroom and Zoom. The university organisation is officially using social networking platforms like Facebook, WhatsApp and YouTube to engage with students. It encourages student communication on social networking websites like Facebook and WhatsApp through official pages and official groups. This is the first time, as a result of Covid-19, university administrators and students in many developing countries have had to communicate online for educational purposes formally. Because there is a lack of an LMS, social media can give these institutions a fantastic opportunity to promote online learning with students and be exploited for administrative purposes in the university community (Sobai et al., 2020).

Some researchers have suggested that effective adoption, dissemination, and utilisation of social media is important for activities including education, learning, research, communication, and management for universities (Sobiah et al., 2016; Marachi & Quill, 2020). The study of barriers to the adoption, dissemination and access of social media in education, education and management in the higher education sector has become an area of interest for researchers (Watty et al., 2016). As a result, university administrators continue to invest in ICT to address education, administration, research, and academic needs despite limited resources.

Therefore, this study examine the infusion and diffusion of social media usage in the university administration during covid19. Specifically, the study aimed at achieving these objectives:

- i) Investigate the challenges of carrying out academic and administrative operations of universities during the covid19 pandemic.
- ii) Determine how social media integration assisted in the conduct of academic and administrative operations of universities during the covid19 pandemic.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

According to Obar & Wildman (2015), social media is a web-based tool or stage that permits cooperation on content, knowledge and experience, and links for pleasure or business. Social media is a collection of web-based applications built on the philosophical and technological basis of web 2.0, which permits the generation and exchange of user-generated content (Carr & Hayes, 2015). The authors further described social media as creating, feeding, and sharing information through social interaction and online-based platforms. According to Korenich et al. (2014), social media is a comprehensive concept that includes well-known tools that help users engage in social activities such as photo sharing, video, social networking, and blogging. Social media is a collection of technological innovations that help web users create low-cost content. Social media platforms are "a set of communication programs that facilitate communication between companies. Create, share, and disseminate information between stakeholders and their networking communities, companies, and network groups (Kapoor et al., 2018).

2.1 Social Media and Higher Education Institution

Educational institutions are now depending on the mechanism of group resources to adapt and improve students' academic life. The usage of social media for educational purposes assists teachers, students, and parents to link up with more beneficial educational platforms. Social networking tools provide many opportunities for students and institutions to improve their academic and administrative operations (Taylor, 2020). Universities can add plug-ins in social media that enable networks to share and connect. Students can use online tutorials through YouTube, international universities' online courses via Skype, and other shared resources.

Taylor (2020) emphasised that important knowledge, such as analyses and insights into different subjects or concerns, can be gathered for research purposes via social media. The educational institution must be involved on every social platform to enable students to build educational methods and shape students' culture (Sobiah et al., 2016). Videos are also an important tool in effective social media trends and can share useful videos that inspire students and help in curriculum topics. Engagement between students and institutions can be maintained through social media such as YouTube, Facebook or Instagram live videos. However, (Shane et al., 2018) pointed out that teacher-student relationships must not be disrupted by the benefits of social media throughout education. Sobiah et al. (2020) noted that social media could broaden students' perspectives on various topics and provide new, published, and instant content.

A learning management system is networking software that provides educational programs and other management activities to institutions. The LMS may include instant chat features, videos, information-sharing forums, and other classroom resources to help students learn on social media (Greenhow & Lewin, 2016). The LMS system promotes the involvement of students and simplifies teamwork. The system exists to solve problems related to students and educators to improve the educational system. Institutions of higher learning are encouraged to integrate popular social media platforms with learning management systems to achieve optimal impact through the systems (Greenhow & Lewin, 2016). Other social media benefits include a live conferencing system, webinar capabilities, sharing group reviews, and blogs.

Studies on utilising educational technologies such as software, hardware and conceptual content resources have shown that some students gain information in their spare time by reading suggestions or articles before using the technology (Marachi & Quill, 2020). This reveals that students in this digital age interpret learning behaviour primarily through their social experiences (knowledge sharing) and personal experiences. That is, it shows that education should be conducted not only through the science curriculum (content-based) but also through the horizontal (social-led) and practical (student-led) science curriculum. LMS is also seen as a communicator of the curriculum (education planning/planning) because it provides a space for students to experience knowledge for material dissemination (Hopkins, 2015).

On the other hand, social media, smartphones, tablets, and other portable technology resources offer new means to communicate knowledge in education, particularly in science course instruction, just as they offer new ways to absorb scientific subjects in the computer age. Communication on social media is fast, and learning is done at a relatively low cost through the utilisation of video and voice calls, and social media is compatible with computers and mobile devices, making it easy to access, making life bearable for students (Mpungose, 2020). This is in line with Friedman & Friedman (2013) view of students studying well when interacting with one another in their preferred and convenient environment. This demonstrates that social media enables students to reflect on their own social and personal experiences as they construct science courses.

A study conducted at Bogazici University in Turkey by (Akar & Mardikyan, 201) shows a high demand for social media for education in higher education institutions; the high demand for social media shows the usefulness of social media for learning. However, Chawinga (2017) argues that not all students have access to social networks and that the digital divide (the difference between computer/cell phone and internet with and without access) is one of the biggest limitations of universities using social media.

3. METHODOLOGY

Case based and descriptive research design was adopted to enable an in-depth exploration of the extent of utilising social media in university administration. The study combines the quantitative and qualitative methods to get an in-depth understanding of social media usage in universities. Close ended questionnaire was used to obtain data by purposive sampling technique. Respondents were purposefully selected, and the data analysis was done in tandem with established objectives of the study. The qualitative and quantitative data were interpreted using thematic analysis to corroborate the deduced inference.

4. CONCLUSION

In the outbreak of the Covid 19 pandemic, many human activities have been halted due to the measures taken to contain the spread of the virus. As a result, educational institutions have adopted many internet-based platforms such as social media to manage this. Therefore, educational activities were in a social place. The availability of social platforms such as Facebook, WhatsApp, Twitter, YouTube and the likes have proven to be useful during the pandemic. However, despite the availability of these social media platforms, educational activity was still slow during the covid19, and university administrators complained about the destruction of educational activity due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Due to recent circumstances, very little research has been done on applying social media in the administration of higher institutions during the COVID-19 period.

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