



Social Media's Influence on Public Administration

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Abstract

The purpose of this research is to examine two hypotheses: 1. Social media use has a positive significant relationship with knowledge on public administration (public policies); 2. Social media use has a positive significant relationship with public political participation. The research collected quantitative data through online survey questionnaires. 238 university students from three universities have responded to the survey. This study concludes that social media has improved the participation of the public in decision making. Also, social media is seen as a viable form of communication to disseminate information on public administration related issues and has improved the communication between officials and the public effectively. Respondents also believed social media has a role to play in improving public administration with time as it could inform, educate, receive feedback, and involve the public in decision making.

Keywords: social media; public administration; public policies; public political participation; decision making.

INTRODUCTION

With over 2.62 billion monthly active users globally in 2018, social media is one of the quickly developing digital mediums (Jackson et al., 2018). According to the global social media research summary, the number is estimated to be 4.3 billion in 2021. As of July 2023, there were 5.19 billion internet users worldwide (Petrosyan, 2023). This has been attributed to its many distinctive qualities and strengths, such as communication, openness, participation, and involvement (Tang et al., 2021). The ease with which people may utilize social media to voice their ideas, communicate with public authorities in real-time, and create deeper relationships with government can be associated to the optimism around social media's use in improving public administration (Hand & Ching, 2011). Social media is progressively gaining popularity and attracting the interest of administrations of developed countries that have already started to take advantage of social media's use in their governance. In contrast, in developing countries, social media use at the governmental level is still at a rudimentary stage as they mostly use the platforms of social media for information sharing (Mansoor, 2021).

Regarding the relationship between social media and public administration, first, it is contended that social media encourages "voice and accountability" as well as political stability and a lack of violence. This is mostly due to the possibility that social media could organize peaceful protests that call on established authorities to be more transparent and accountable to their constituents. A social media platform like Facebook might be used as a yardstick

to gauge how willing voters are to take part in an upcoming election. Additionally, it might be used to assess the freedom of organization and expression that citizens enjoy as compared to similar political environments (Asongu & Odhiambo, 2019).

Secondly, governments typically use social media to disseminate information, but they often find it difficult to use the platforms to interact with the public (Gunawong, 2015). There is evidence that governments employing social media have been successful in promoting citizen participation and changing perceptions. There is also evidence of government using social media to get the populace informed of their policies and how it benefits them and get access to these policies (Feeney & Porumbescu, 2021).

There are however some challenges that the use of social media in public administration faces in the modern era. A criticism that social media faces is that it being overpromising in principle but falling short. Social media platforms don't seem to improve public-government relations with the public; instead, they seem to strengthen existing power imbalances and degrade the effectiveness of government-citizen communication (Piccorelli & Stivers, 2019). Governments employs social media strategies in disseminating information using online channels and although it is a two-way channel of communication, they are not soliciting citizen feedback and where feedback are taken it is not clear whether citizen feedback is used in policy formulation (Evie Brown, 2015).

Making use of social media to increase inclusion is another challenge the medium faces. The ability to use social media

requires a device, Internet connectivity, digital literacy, and payment with personal information even if they can be downloaded for "free". Since social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram are made to connect and exchange kinds of information among specified communities with resources, these indirect costs widen the digital divide and make them exclusive to only a certain group of people who can afford or educated in this form technology. By making the government accountable only to this demographic group, the use of social media to increase civic involvement might result in major structural biases (Mansoor, 2021)

Across social media channels, there are significant demographic variations. For instance, Facebook is more widely used across all age categories than Twitter, with only 29 percent of Americans using Twitter and 70 percent of those users being under the age of 29 (Chen, 2020). This may very much limit participation and inclusion. Further, evidence suggests that a sizable portion of social media accounts are created by troll farms run by foreign players and business interest organizations with the aim of influencing political results and public policies in a particular geographic area. In the infamous case where Cambridge Analytica bought personal data from more than 87 million Facebook users and used it to sway voter behavior and affect the 2016 US election (Persily, 2017).

The factors outline show that social media has its benefits in improving public administration but has its key weakness in inclusion and mismanagement. This study therefore delves into the issue at hand, how social media influences public administration. This study would take a key look at social media users either benefiting or not gaining much from their use of this medium in terms of public administration.

The significance of the study sheds light on how social media is affecting the way government agencies operate and interact with citizens. According to a report by the Pew Research Center (2021), social media has become an important tool for public officials to communicate with the public and stay informed about citizens' concerns. The report also indicates that social media is changing the traditional hierarchy of communication in government, allowing for a more decentralized and participatory approach to public administration.

Moreover, the study highlights the potential benefits of social media for public administration, such as increased transparency, improved accountability, and better citizen engagement (Bimber et al., 2014). Social media also offers a new platform for collaboration and knowledge sharing between government agencies and stakeholders, leading to more efficient and effective decision-making (Naeem, 2020). The study of social media's influence on public administration is essential to understand the ways in which this tool is affecting government operations and to determine the best practices for leveraging its potential benefits.

SECTION II LITERATURE REVIEW

This section examines the literature on the subject matter. Theories guiding acceptance of technology as well as Media Richness Theory would also be discussed in this section.

2.1 Social Media in the Modern World

Social media is a real-time, on-demand platform for communication that is employed in service delivery, knowledge gathering, and professional networking. Social media provides the curating of content pertinent to a certain area or topic through the usage of hashtags or trends of the period (Kudchadkar & Carroll,

2020). According to Kaplan and Haenlein (2020), social media is "a category of Internet-based applications that expand on the theoretical and technical foundations of Web 2.0 and enable the creation and exchange of user-generated content." Social media has changed how individuals communicate with one another including how organizations and businesses go about their marketing (Misirlis et al., 2021). Facebook has been the significant place for most users, with other significant social media networks, like Instagram and twitter, where businesses and individuals communicate. Social media users operate as the actors in online discussions that are being studied, and the exchanges take the form of posts, responses, and comments (Christensen, 2001). According to prior studies, connections and interactions maintained online are just as real as those maintained offline (Gruzd & Haythornthwaite, 2011). Recent study by Pew Research Center survey of U.S. adults on usage of particular websites and applications in addition to the generic question about general social media use shows that seven in ten Americans claim to have ever used any type of social media site, a share that has remained largely stable over the past five years. Despite several controversies and the general public's generally unfavorable attitudes toward certain aspects of social media, Facebook and YouTube continue to rule the online sphere, with 81 percent and 69 percent of users, respectively, reporting ever used these platforms (Auxier & Anderson, 2021).

2.2 Social Media and Public Administration

Social media is increasingly being used by government agencies as a tool for enhancing transparency, accountability, and citizen engagement (Bimber et al., 2012). For example, studies have found that social media can provide citizens with greater access to information about government policies and programs and allow them to participate in decision-making processes (Eom et al., 2018). Social media can also provide government agencies with an opportunity to communicate more effectively with citizens and respond to their needs and concerns in a timely manner (Gibson & Agne, 2002). However, the literature also suggests that the use of social media by government agencies can also have negative effects. For example, social media can increase the demands for government responsiveness, which can be difficult for agencies to manage (Eom et al., 2018). In addition, social media can also be used as a platform for spreading false information and propaganda which can undermine trust in government and erode public confidence in the political system (Bimber et al., 2012).

2.3 Benefits of social media to Government

Users of social media have an incentive to discuss regional issues because they anticipate that the federal government will act once the government participates in social media platforms. This can be seen frequently with direct calls for central government action in the corruption posts. Although the posts about protests and strikes may aid in event planning, they also have the essential effect of making these activities known to the government to adequately act on them, triggering resolutions and legal boundaries to this strikes and protests (Qin et al., 2017). A key example of use of social media for protests and strikes may be in China where it is easy and affordable to utilize social media to predict these occurrences a day in advance (Qin et al., 2017, 2021). Local authorities might not want to employ the police and violence to repress them because this would elicit a stronger reaction on social media. Social media is a technique used by governments that could improve communication with the public by focusing on their demands and those of the digital public (Lovari & Parisi, 2015). Social media in this sense brings complex mechanisms that can improve

interactions and communication between the public sector and the general population. Social media also embodies the ideal of immediate and open communication in contemporary public government. Social media in this respect contributes to more transparent and open government (Eom et al., 2018). Social media assists in changing the citizen's position to one of co-creators of public policies. It can foster a climate where people may voice their thoughts, get more engaged in organizational management and performance evaluation, and simultaneously feel more accountable for a particular region (Todisco et al., 2021). In conclusion, social media should be seen as a tool that enables public administration to serve citizens more effectively, increase citizen involvement and participation, and assist public administration organizations in cutting costs (Mital, 2021).

2.4 Threats of social media to Governments

According to Alguliyev et al. (2018), the key issue is not simply the straightforward misuse and exploitation of data; it's also critical to address the secondary effects of these unfavorable tendencies, which lead to changes in people's behavior and decisions that are influenced by misinformation. Since social media is the primary platform for disinformation and hoaxes to proliferate, the relevance and accuracy of information posted there are also in doubt. For instance, The US Intelligence community stated that Russian propaganda activities in the 2016 US Presidential election campaign had relied on both overt and covert operations by Russian government agencies including paid social media users or trolls, as well as bots orchestrated from the Internet Research Agency, all based on social media platforms with the purpose to "weaken the US-led liberal democratic order... undermine public faith in the US democratic process, disparage Secretary Clinton, and impair her electability and prospective presidency." (Office of the Director of National Intelligence, 2017). Facebook admitted that posts from Russia's supporters reached 126 million Americans, and Twitter terminated 50,000 bogus accounts (Swaine, 2018).

Additionally, there are instances of algorithms of various platforms whose discriminating selection processes have been observed. These include programs created to assess applicants' creditworthiness, eligibility for driver's licenses or other licenses, employment eligibility, educational programs, advertising, or other services (Andrews, 2019). With this discrimination extended to public administration on social media implies minority groups would not contribute to policy discussions. Various examples of areas which have faced this discrimination include: women's voices have been proven to be extremely difficult for identification by Google's speech recognition system (Tatman, 2016), men more likely than women to see high-paying CEO jobs in Google advertising (Datta et al., 2015) and when searching for advertisements, advertisements with the word "arrest" appeared more frequently for black-identifying first names than for white-identifying first names (Sweeney, 2013). There is a certain form of prejudice frequently expressed on social media (Davidson & Farquhar, 2020). Prejudice, anger, and other bad feelings have been directed at Asian Americans, especially Chinese Americans, on social media during the Covid-19 outbreak in the U.S. (McGuire, 2020). Hence, social media with its potential to public administration can also be a threat to policy development as there are various factors as outlined above that can massively influence decisions against the agreed public need or decisions.

2.5 Technology Acceptance Theories

The Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) is regarded as the most significant and frequently applied theory for analyzing a person's

acceptance of information systems. It is predicated on the idea that perceived usefulness (PU) and perceived ease of use (PEU) are the two main factors that determine a person's adoption of information systems (PEOU) (Lee et al, 2003). Here, perceived usefulness is defined as "the extent to which a person believes that utilizing a certain technology would boost his or her job performance." This is inferred from the definition of the word "useful," which is "capable of being employed usefully." In a societal setting, individuals are typically rewarded for good work with increases, promotions, bonuses, and other benefits. A system with a high perceived usefulness is one for which the user thinks there is a good use-performance relationship. The model defines perceived ease of use as "the extent to which a person believes that using a given technology would be devoid of effort." From the definition of "easy," this is obvious. Based on 74 studies, Lee et al. (2013) found that there was a significant relationship between perceived use and behavior intention to use a technology, noting that users willingly use the system that has a critically useful functionality (Lee et al, 2013).

The TAM served as the foundation upon which the Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology (UTAUT) was created. Extending from the previous theory, Performance Expectancy (PE), Effort Expectancy (EE), Social Influence (SI), and Facilitating Conditions (FC) are the four core factors identified by the UTAUT as being the direct determinants of behavior intention (BI) and, ultimately, behavior (B). These constructs are moderated by gender, age, experience, and voluntariness of use, while attitude toward using technology, self-efficacy, and anxiety is theorized not to be direct determinants of intention but rather to be indirect (Venkatesh et al., 2003).

2.6 Media Richness Theory

According to the Media Richness Theory (MRT), the richness of the medium and the task's ambiguity affect the selected communication mediums (Ishii et al., 2019). The availability of immediate input, numerous cues, a range of languages, and individual focus are the foundations upon which MRT bases media richness. Later, assessments of media richness included social data and personal experiences as well (Ishii et al., 2019). Extending MRT to social media demonstrated that there is a valance variation in the capacity of social media to convey particular types of messages. For instance, the perceived media richness of Instagram was found to be more related to young adults' self-presentation via photos and videos, while Facebook and Twitter more heavily rely on openness in writing (longer or shorter) texts (Lee & Borah, 2020). Thus, discussions on public policies should be done using the right richness in communication so as the discussions or sending of information can be as effective as possible.

Asongu et al. (2019) studied on relationships between social media and government dynamics in 49 African nations. Using Ordinary least squares and quantile regressions as the foundation for the empirical data and taking Facebook penetration as a gauge of social media usage, the results demonstrate that Facebook penetration is positively correlated with governance dynamics, and these positive nexuses vary in the conditional distribution of the governance dynamics in terms of significance and magnitude of significance. In summary it showed the principle of "poor governance equates to low penetration levels in social media". Based on the findings of the study, policymakers must consider how "social media"-driven governance may affect their development outcomes while keeping in mind the national development paradigm. Hence, a better social media conversation space should drive growth in mostly developing countries.

In a sample of more than 125 nations, Jha and Kodila-Tedika (2020) investigate the connection between social media and democracy. They discovered evidence of a significant, favorable relationship between democracy and Facebook penetration (a stand-in for social media). The study demonstrated that low-income countries have a larger association between social media and democracy than high-income nations. Their lowest point estimates show that a one standard deviation (about 18 percentage point) rise in Facebook penetration is related with an improvement of over 11 points for low-income countries and a gain of nearly 8 points (on a scale of 0-100) for the global sample. Although the study shows social media penetration bringing more democracy to low-income country, the study however justifies the use of social media as a tool for improving democracy in both high income and low-income nations, reporting a significant change in the global levels. This goes to show how media can be useful in public administration as democratic rights of citizens are acknowledged through this medium.

Olanrewaju et al. (2020) in their study on social media and entrepreneurial research comprehensively reviewed 160 publications written between 2002 and 2018. A methodology for identifying links between the revealed constructs was constructed based on the extent review. While most studies focused on the factors that influence social media adoption and use by business owners, it was discovered that social media use by business owners has gone beyond marketing and is now utilized for business networking, information search, and crowdfunding. The key results of this have been improved company performance and enhanced innovation, which have had a considerable influence. Similar to what businesses are adopting, government and states can use these successful techniques in the business world in improving governance and public participation as they also rely on public innovation for tough decisions.

Feeney and Porumbescu (2021) agreed that social media has become a more important tool for governments around the world to increase civic involvement. This is drawn on the hope by government using social media platforms to enable the mobilization of a wider range of citizens, to solve the growing worry of power imbalances and inclusion, accountability, and democracy. Their study looked to delve deeper into incorporating science and technology studies literature into social media research in public administration to comprehend the potential of social media in increasing civic involvement and the role of the researcher in this venture. Their study showed that the solution is for governments to see social media as a constrained instrument within a larger toolbox of tactics used to interact with the public. The findings also confirmed that the governments should exercise caution while using social media platforms because of its limits. This assertion is due to the inherent and perceived social and political bias of social media platforms and therefore these platforms should be used for narrow purposes and with caution, such as pushing out information. They however believed public administration researchers can more accurately assess the political and social disparities built into social media technologies and better teach practitioners such as government about how to use social media to engage the public better.

Mital (2021) studies objective on how Slovakian cities use their official Facebook accounts, specifically the fundamental elements related to the legitimacy and openness of those pages and also standardize social media utilization tactics used by government agencies, using 124 official Slovak city Facebook pages in all is discussed next. The study acknowledges how states are attempting to come up with the best solutions possible to address how social

media is affecting how public administration is carried out to improve the quality of public governance. The major conclusion is supported by the assertion that the public administration must ensure the legitimacy and openness of their official social media sites, particularly regarding multichannel features and completely accurate information about the official page. It is understandable that the employment of social media in the field of public administration is a logical reflection of their present significance and widespread appeal among people in modern society. Social media provides a platform for increased citizen participation in government and policymaking, even though states are constantly working to develop new communication channels. In its conclusion the study emphasizes on the use of official social media pages represents a relatively new and easy mechanism, which can aid public administration in providing citizens with accurate and pertinent information. However, social media does not represent the ultimate solution for more effective citizen participation and engagement in public governance and policymaking. Implying other channels must also be successfully explored in improving the public administration settings.

An empirical study conducted by Kwon and Lee (2015) found that social media has a positive effect on citizen engagement in public administration. The authors surveyed citizens in South Korea and found that those who used social media were more likely to participate in online discussions and public meetings, and to contact public officials with their opinions and concerns. Similarly, a few studies (Cho et al., 2013; Kang et al., 2018; Chon & Kim, 2022) investigated the use of social media by government agencies for crisis communication. The authors found that government agencies used social media to quickly disseminate information and respond to citizens' concerns during a crisis. They also noted that the use of social media improved the speed and efficiency of emergency response and reduced confusion and misinformation.

Idris (2018) states that Indonesia is Southeast Asia's largest social media market with almost 79 million active users. Governmental organizations have been actively embracing social media as one of their platforms for communication since 2015. This study examines whether the emergence of social media communication technology has prompted the Indonesian government to engage in sustained two-way engagement with its citizenry. Four different forms of discussions between the government and its constituents on social media were examined using the social network analysis (SNA) method: daily communication, campaign communication, crisis communication, and emergency communication. The national social media profiles of two Indonesian government organizations were chosen as samples. One was a service-based government organization, whereas the other was a policy-based one. This study indicated that just a small amount of two-way communication took place, primarily in daily discussion. The policy-based organization had few encounters because they mostly used social media to communicate information. Although the organization's Facebook page enables comments from all followers, there was no communication between the agency and the public. It appears that the agency used Twitter more frequently to respond to messages. The conclusion that the agency's primary motivation for using Twitter was information dissemination is supported by the large number of phony followers and political activity on the platform. A lack of interaction occurred in the campaign's communication as well as in urgent and crucial crisis and emergency communication.

Saurwein and Spencer-Smith (2020)'s paper contributes to the examination of misinformation prevention measures. The study

uses a governance perspective to provide a descriptive study of the evolving mix of governance solutions in the European system of multilevel governance. The analysis's findings demonstrate that a combination of socio-technical elements, including platform design, algorithms, human dynamics, and commercial and political motivations, has led to the spread of misinformation on social media. To counteract misinformation, the European Commission has stepped up its efforts and increased pressure on social media platforms to act and exhibit some degree of openness. However, conflicting evidence and obstacles to accessing platforms and pertinent data for research make it difficult to determine the precise consequences of these initiatives. This study shows that with enough action taken against misinformation the issue of fake news and misinformation can be reduced on social media, thus making the space a good avenue for trusting public information shared on the platform.

Concluding the section, a systematic review of the topic of social media's influence on public administration highlights the extent to which this tool is being used and its impact on the functioning of government. A study conducted by Marino & Lo Presti (2018) found that social media is widely used by public officials to communicate with citizens, share information, and solicit feedback. The authors also noted that social media has the potential to enhance transparency and accountability in public administration by providing a direct channel for citizens to access information and hold officials accountable. Another systematic review by Simonofski et al. (2021) found that social media is being used to improve citizen engagement in public administration, particularly in the areas of policy formulation and decision-making. The authors also highlighted the importance of social media for emergency management, as it provides real-time updates and enables communication between government agencies and citizens. The systematic reviews of social media's influence on public administration demonstrate that this tool is widely used by public officials and has the potential to enhance transparency, accountability, and citizen engagement. It is also important for emergency management and communication.

SECTION III RESEARCH DESIGN

3.1 Research Questions

This study intends to achieve two main objectives.

1. To determine if social media use increases knowledge on public administration
2. To assess the effect of social media on public political participation.

The research questions are:

1. Does social media increase knowledge on public administration?
2. How does social media affect public political participation?

3.2 Hypotheses of Study

The study gives a clear understanding on the role of social media in public administration, if it should be encouraged more as a means of improving information dissemination and governance or a dangerous tool that can turnout information not as they are (fake news). Based on the purpose it looks to fulfil, the following hypotheses would be tested:

Hypotheses 1: Social media use has a positive significant relationship with knowledge on public administration (public policies).

Jha and Kodila-Tedika (2020) found a favorable relationship between social media (Facebook) and democracy whilst Feeny and Porumbescu (2021) found a relationship between social media and civic involvement. The first hypothesis therefore in line with these studies determines whether social media use improves knowledge of users pertaining to public administration.

Hypothesis 2: Social media use has a positive significant relationship with public political participation.

A few studies discovered that social media had a beneficial impact on citizen participation and that users were more inclined to join in online discussions and public meetings as well as communicate their ideas and concerns to public officials (Choi & Kwon, 2019; Kwon et al., 2021; Nah et al., 2021; Choi et al., 2021). The second hypothesis further explores this relationship with relation to more political participation.

3.3 Research Design and Instrument

Based on the purpose and the objectives, the study would adopt a quantitative approach using a survey questionnaire.

The survey questionnaire has four sections. The first two sections are the demographics data and social media use. The demographics of the respondents is collected along with the level of usage of social media of participants to establish whether the participants are the true definition of social media users the study is referring to. The questionnaire has two main variables namely Knowledge through social media (KSM) and Political Participation through social media (PPSM). KSM is determined by six items while PPSM is determined by five items. The two variables would be measured using a 5-point Likert scale ranging from Strongly Disagree measured as "1" to Strongly Agree measured as "5" as shown in the questionnaire attached.

The variable KSM looks at the level of knowledge acquired by social media users from their various platforms. The items look at the level and type of information received from users and the accuracy and reliability of this information received. PPSM similarly records the public's political activity on social media. It also determines the level of participation on social media in decision making by participants of the survey.

Below is the table showing questions that address the research questions:

Table1: Research Questions and Survey Questions

Research Question	Indicator Survey Questions
Question 1 Does social media increase knowledge on public administration?	1. I have learned about public administration topics or issues through social media
	2. Most of the public administration topics or issues I have learned about was through social media
	3. Social media has influenced my understanding of public administration topics or issues

	4. I have engaged in discussions on public administration topics or issues through social media
	5. I have shared public administration-related content on social media
	6. I am confident in the accuracy and reliability of the public administration-related content I see on social media
Question 2 How does social media affect public political participation?	1. Social media has increased the transparency of government actions
	2. Social media has increased public participation in government decision-making
	3. Social media has made it easier for government officials to communicate with the public
	4. Social media has increased the speed at which political information is disseminated to the public
	5. Social media can further be used to improve public administration

3.4 Population and Sample Size

The population of the study is all social media users, but the sample of the survey would be conducted using students at several universities as a case study. Since most students are at least users of one social media platform, the study would employ these participants delivering electronically designed questionnaires via social media and emails. A total sample of 300 people would be employed for the study. To get this number and collect it easily due to the time constraints, the data would be collected via online distribution.

To analyze the collected data and answer the posed research questions, descriptive statistics such as the mean, median and standard deviation would be used to analyze the results. The student t test would also be used to determine the significance of the analysis. The variables mean and median determine how well respondents agreed with the items and hence would represent the view of the general population of social media users. The reliability tests conducted should verify the validity of the study allowing for generalization to the population of study the results obtained.

SECTION IV DATA COLLECTION AND DATA ANALYSIS

This section is divided into two parts. The first part looks at how data was collected using the selected instrument and the second part presents the analysis conducted on the data after the collection process has been completed to make meaning of the data.

4.1 Data Collection

Data collection is a key component of the study and without this process the study cannot be completed. Also, when not done properly it can lead to huge errors in the analysis process. For this study, data was first collected from students at Gannon University, Penn State Behrend and Mercyhurst University. The link was sent to mainly university students at these three universities who use any form of social media. Based on the earlier assertion on the medium of collecting the data, being the use of a questionnaire and the contacting of friends and colleagues who were ready to complete the survey the form link attached was used to collect all data for this study.

The survey officially began on February 24th, 2023, when the first batch of digital forms was sent. They were sent through emails and social media platforms, with data trickling in from that day. By the third week, on 15th March 2023, a total of two hundred and forty-four (244) respondents had been collected. Due to the moderate number of questions on the survey and the explanatory nature of the questions there were no comments from respondents

on the explanations of some items. Also, there was a well written explanation for the need for the data hence most respondents were readily available to help. Six entries were found to be incomplete hence they were taken out during the cleaning process as incomplete data would not help with the analysis process. Thus, we used 238 as the number of respondents (n).

4.2 Data Analysis

The demographic of the respondents who completed the questionnaire are presented below:

Table 1: Demographics of Respondents

Row Labels	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Gender		
Female	117	49%
Male	121	51%
Age		
18 – 24 years	155	65%
25-31 years	59	25%
32-38 years	15	6%
39 – 45 years	9	4%
Marital Status		
Married	32	13%
Unmarried	206	87%
Highest Level of Education		
Bachelors	132	55%
High School Diploma	60	25%
Post-Graduate	46	20%
Total	238	100%

Based on Table 1, the gender distribution of the respondents is distributed and not biased to a specific gender as 51 percent were males and 49 percent being females. The age distribution was rather more towards the younger respondents as over 65 percent were between the ages of 18 and 24 years, followed by 25-31 years had 25 percent involvement in the survey while 32 to 38 years and 39 to 45 years had 6 and 4 percent respectively. This can be attributed to the much youthful age of students hence a majority would be in the early twenties. Similarly, 87 percent of respondents were unmarried while 13 percent were married. Lastly, the educational level of participants saw respondents with minimum educational level of a high School Diplomas, being represented by 25 percent, Bachelors contributing much more with 55 percent

while those with Post graduate experience having 20 percent of the respondents.

experience in the public sector representing 67 percent (n=152) whilst 33 percent (n=76) had worked in the public sector before.

From the 76 people who had some form of experience in the public sector working environment 23 respondents worked for a less than a year, 20 for over a year of work, 18 worked for 4 years and above, 9 did work for 2 years whiled 6 worked for 3 years in the public sector. Based on the data gathered, work in the public sector is mainly for either a quite short period (1 year or less) or for a very long period (4 years and more). Also, there is a good representation of those who have been exposed to the public sector environment and those who haven't thus the study would not be biased to one side.

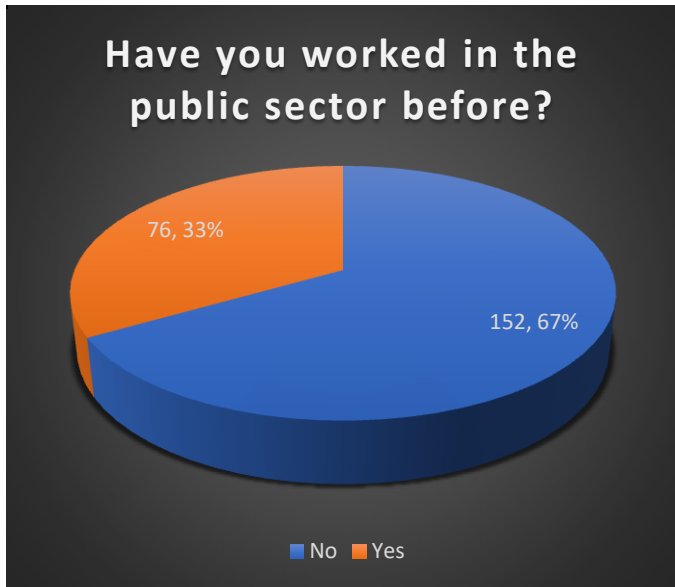


Figure 1: Work in the Public Sector

From figure 1, the study sought the number of respondents that had experience in the public sector. A vast majority had no working

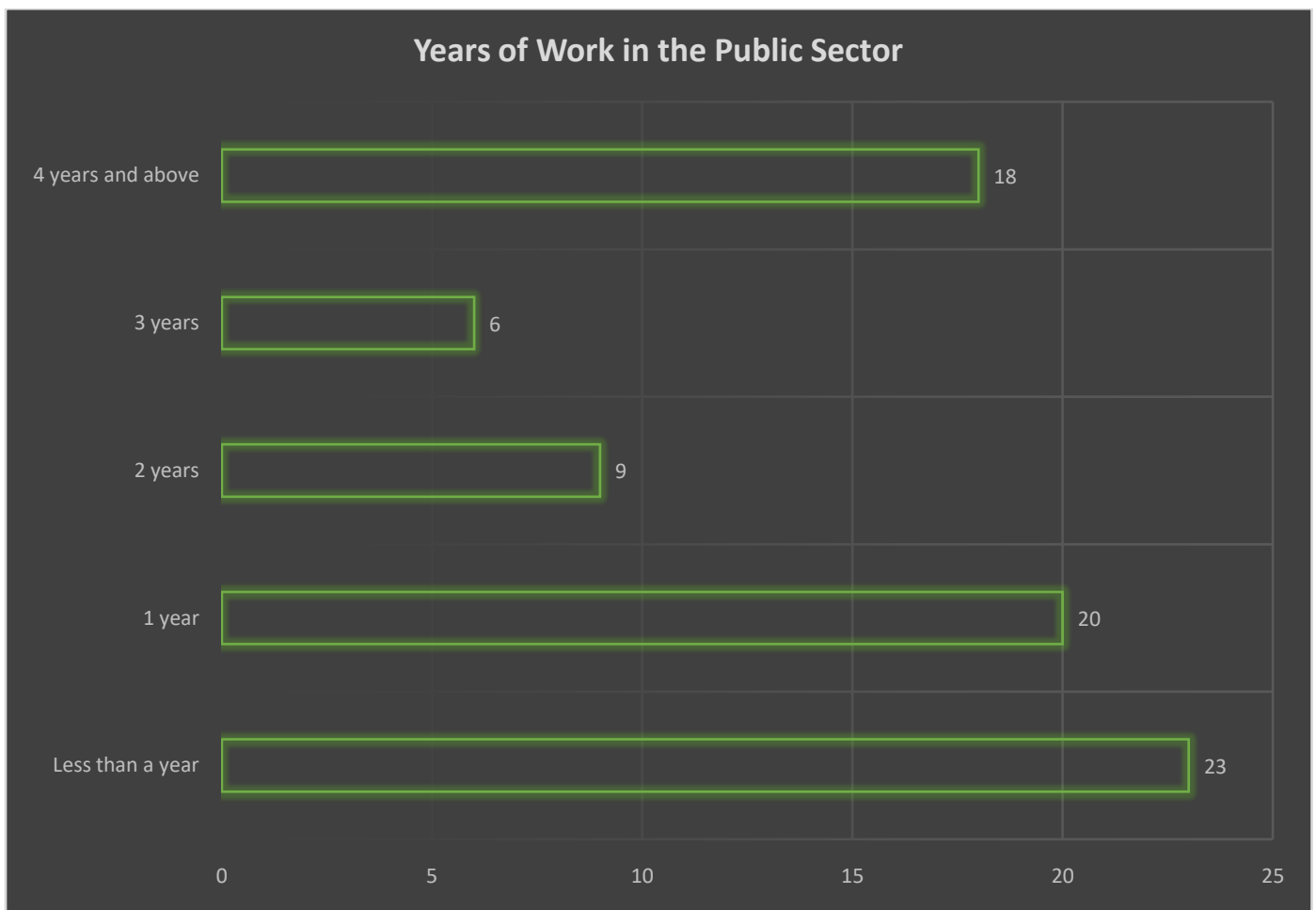


Figure 1: Years of Work in the Public Sector

Next, the researcher determined how well respondents knew of the presence of local and federal government social media pages. Surprisingly, over 72.7 percent of the respondents mentioned they were not aware of the local and federal government social media

pages while 27.3 percent was aware of the presence of such portals implying only a fraction of the sample were receiving information on social media from the government as shown in figure 3 below.

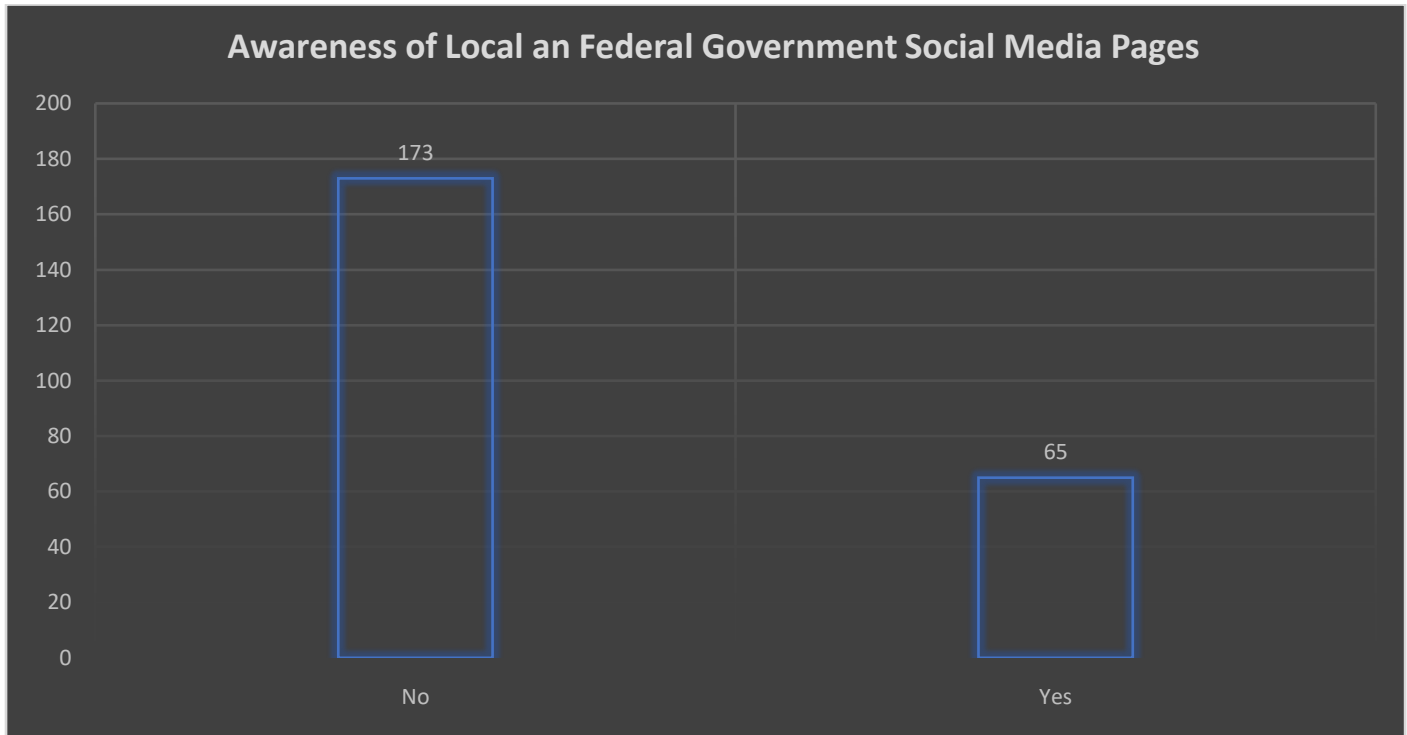


Figure 3: Awareness of public Administration social media pages

The social media platforms used by the respondents showed Instagram users being the most with 135 users, followed by YouTube and TikTok with 114 and 112 respectively. Facebook also had a significant number of users recording a 107 with Twitter having 71 users from the respondents. Pinterest, LinkedIn and Snapchat did not have so many users from the respondents

gathered as they had 30, 28 and 17 users respectively as shown in figure 4 outlined below. A look at the social media pages used show most of them use platforms with picture and video sharing. Hence targeted information should be video, or picture based rather than text based and should be more interactive, for example using memes or stories.

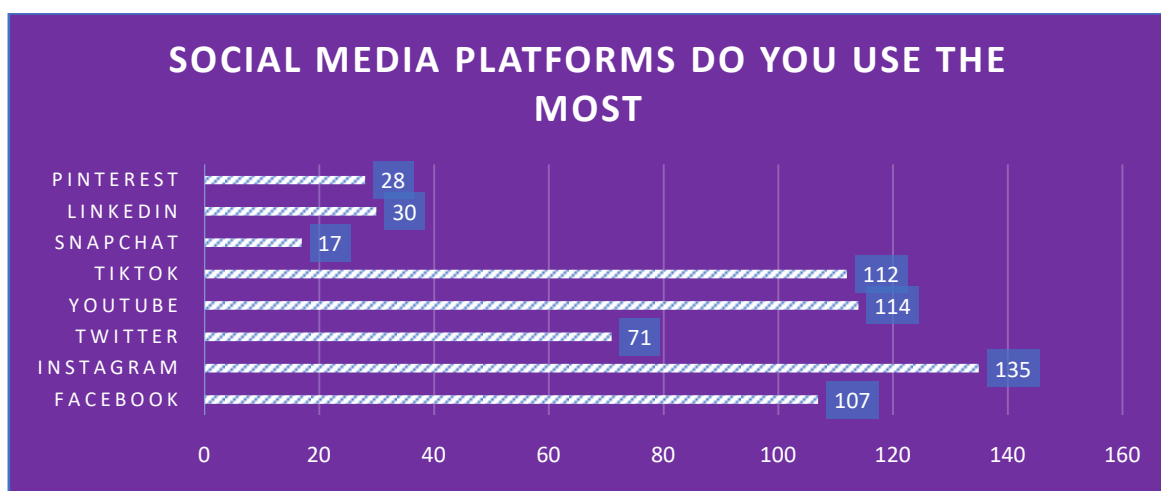


Figure 4: Respondents Use of Social Media Platforms

The hours spent each day on social media shows 41.6 percent of the respondents spend five hours and above on social media, while

19.8 percent of the respondents spent less than an hour on social media. In all, 80.2 percent of the respondents use social media at

least one hour or more a day. This is displayed in figure 5. The presence on social media is high and these can well be taken

advantage of with the right target initiatives to improve public administration.

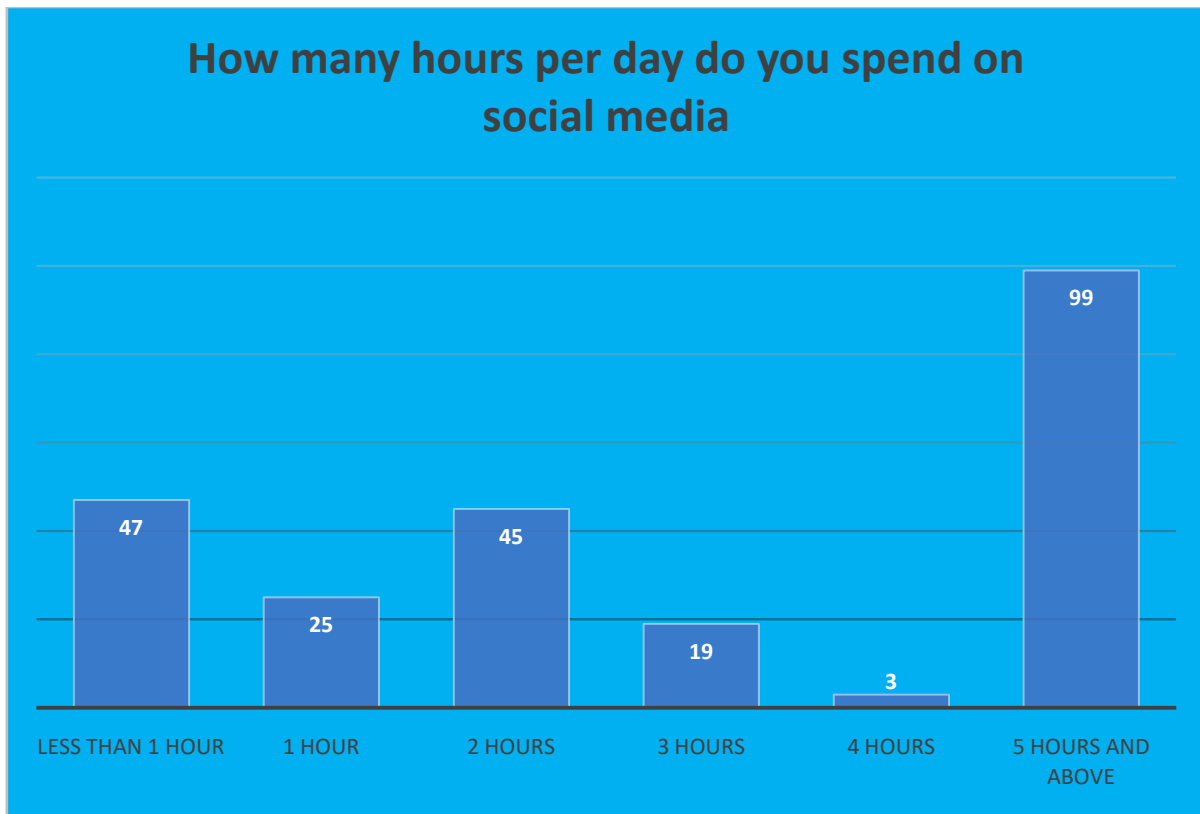


Figure 5: Hours spent on social media each day

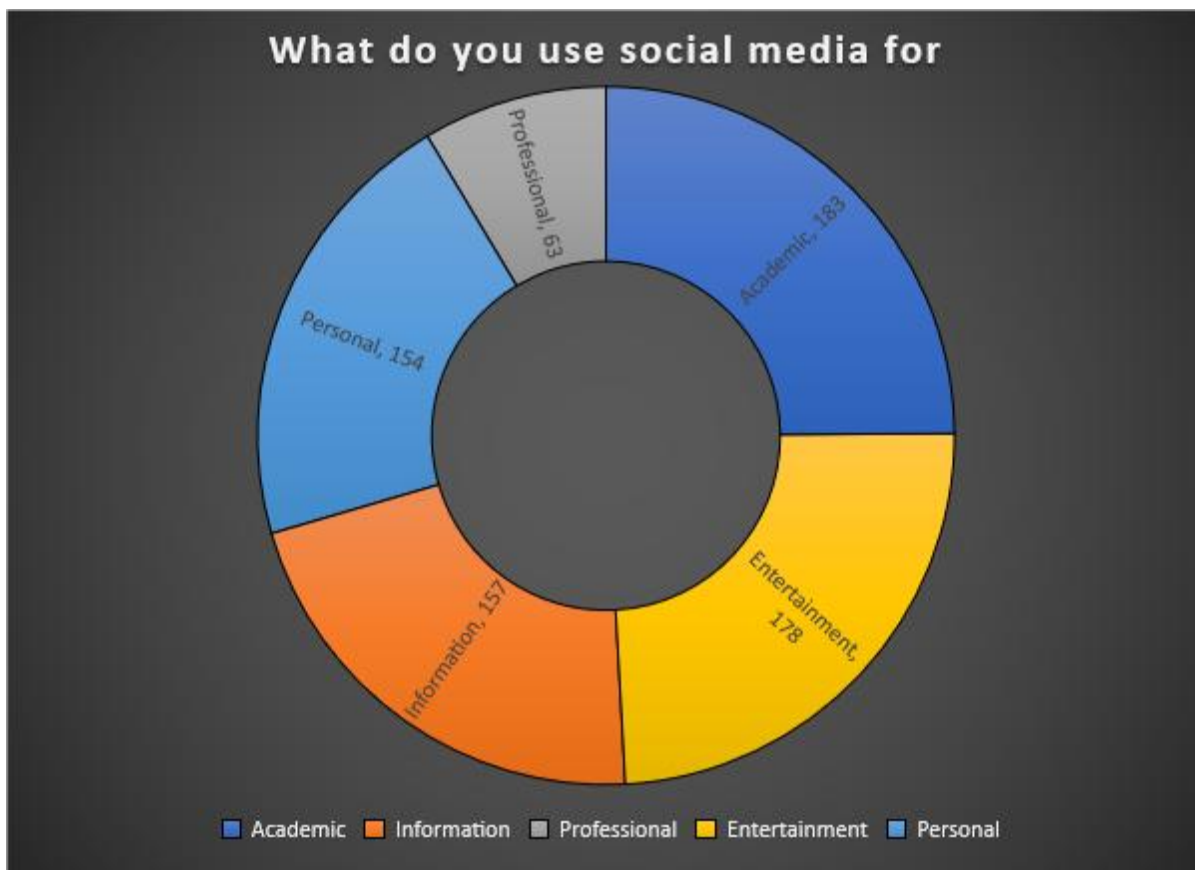


Figure 6: What Do You Use social media for?

From figure 6, there is a balanced use of social media by respondents for information (n=157), entertainment (n=178), personal (n=154) and academic (n=183). Professional use of social media was the only exception as only 63 people use social media for that purpose. Information and academic purposes being one of the major uses of social media makes the sample a right fit for the study as they are most likely seeking information on public policies from the social media.

4.3 Presentation of Findings

The descriptive statistics of the variable knowledge of social media (KSM) and Political Participation Through social media (PSM) are presented below in table 2.

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics of Variables

Descriptive Statistics						
	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation	Variance
KSM1	238	1	5	2.84	1.126	1.268
KSM2	238	1	5	2.84	1.151	1.325
KSM3	238	1	5	2.86	1.123	1.262
KSM4	238	1	5	2.63	1.014	1.028
KSM5	238	1	5	2.54	1.062	1.127
KSM6	238	1	5	2.71	1.013	1.027
PSM1	238	1	5	2.93	1.252	1.569
PSM2	238	1	5	3.16	1.284	1.648
PSM3	238	1	5	3.26	1.319	1.740
PSM4	238	1	5	3.44	1.264	1.598
PSM5	238	1	5	3.44	1.254	1.572
Valid N (listwise)	238					

The descriptives analysis showed evenly distributed variable items as the standard deviation remained between 1.013 and 1.319 showing well distributed deviation from the mean for all items. The main identifiable statistics was the variation in results in the mean values for the two variables. All KSM values showed disagreement with the acquisition of public administration knowledge from social media. The mean values ranged from 2.53

to 2.86, which are all less than the agreement index of greater than 3.0. This is explained further in figure 7. For PSM, aside PSM1 which had a mean less than the 3.0 point (that is, 2.98), hence showing disagreement, all other PSM items showed agreement with mean variables ranging from 3.16 to 3.44 which are greater than 3.0. Figure 8 gives a detailed report of the mean values.

Reliability and Significance Test

Table 3: one Sample T-test

One-Sample Test						
	Test Value = 0					
	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
					Lower	Upper
KSM1	38.850	237	.000	2.836	2.69	2.98
KSM2	38.073	237	.000	2.840	2.69	2.99
KSM3	39.233	237	.000	2.857	2.71	3.00
KSM4	39.950	237	.000	2.626	2.50	2.76
KSM5	36.942	237	.000	2.542	2.41	2.68
KSM6	41.191	237	.000	2.706	2.58	2.84

PSM1	36.072	237	.000	2.929	2.77	3.09
PSM2	38.020	237	.000	3.164	3.00	3.33
PSM3	38.185	237	.000	3.265	3.10	3.43
PSM4	41.999	237	.000	3.441	3.28	3.60
PSM5	42.335	237	.000	3.441	3.28	3.60

To ensure the reliability of the variable items results, the t-test was conducted to show the significance of each question’s response. The significance implies that the responses given by participants are a true reflection and influences the results of the analysis conducted. Based on the test (at 0.5 significance level) conducted,

for significance the p-value should be less than 0.5 ($p < 0.05$). Looking at the p values form table 3, all p-values are less than 0.05 (0.000) hence we conclude that the variable items are significant and can be used to explain the effect established in the study.

Knowledge Through Social Media

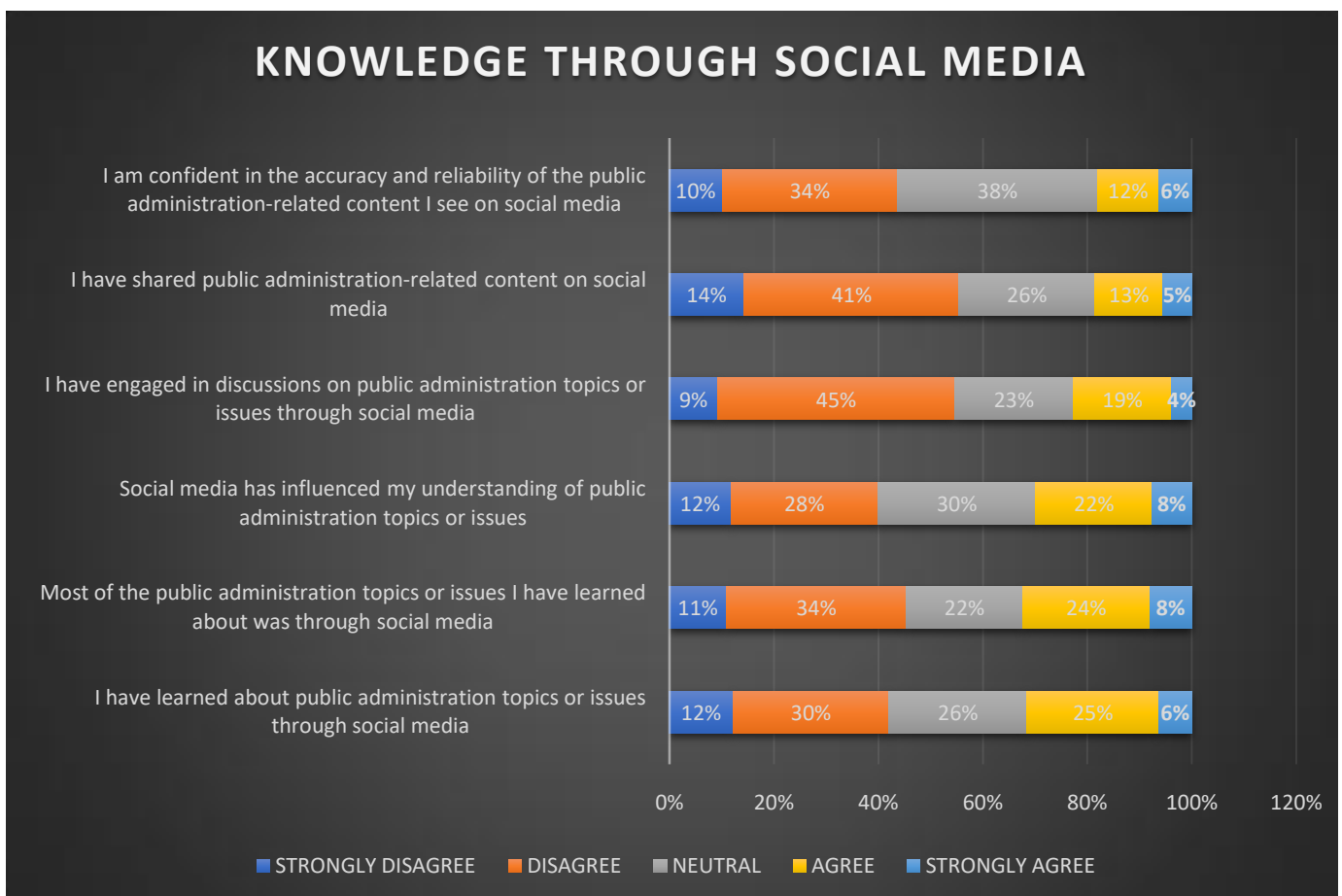


Figure 7: Knowledge Through social media

The sharing of knowledge through social media was measured using six question items. The study sought to determine how knowledge of public administration issues and policies can be shared using various social media platforms. On the question “I have learned about public administration topics or issues through social media”, the majority disagreed with this with 42 percent while 31.5 percent agreed to this. Hence, social media has not been a good learning point for public administration topics, policies, and issues. Similarly, respondents mentioned that they have not learned most public administration topics through social media. A total of 45.4 percent were of this view while 32.4 percent mentioned they had learned most public administration topics from social media.

Next, 95 respondents representing 40 percent disagreed that they had been influenced by public administration topics on social media while 71 respondents representing 29.8 percent agreed with that notion. Surprisingly, 72 respondents denoting over 30 percent preferred to be neutral which was more than the respondents who agreed to it. On the engagement of discussions on social media, a vast majority 54.6 percent ($n=130$) noted that they do not engage on public administration discussions on social media, while 54 respondents (22.7 percent) also equal to the neutral respondents mentioned they have engaged in some social media discussions on public administration. On content sharing of public policies and its related issues, social media was not the place where most

respondent shared these contents. A much bigger majority of 55.5% (n=132) did not share these contents as against 18.5% (n=44) which shared on social media. This shows further lower participation of respondents on public administration on social media. Lastly, respondents were asked about their reliability and the accuracy of public administration content on social media. A

much larger proportion of the respondents (n=91, 38%) chose to be neutral to the question as they may be indifferent on the public administration content they receive, however, 104 respondents representing 43.7% rejected the accuracy and reliability of public administration content they receive on social media as against the 18.4 percent who take the posted contents as reliable and accurate.

Political Participation Through Social Media

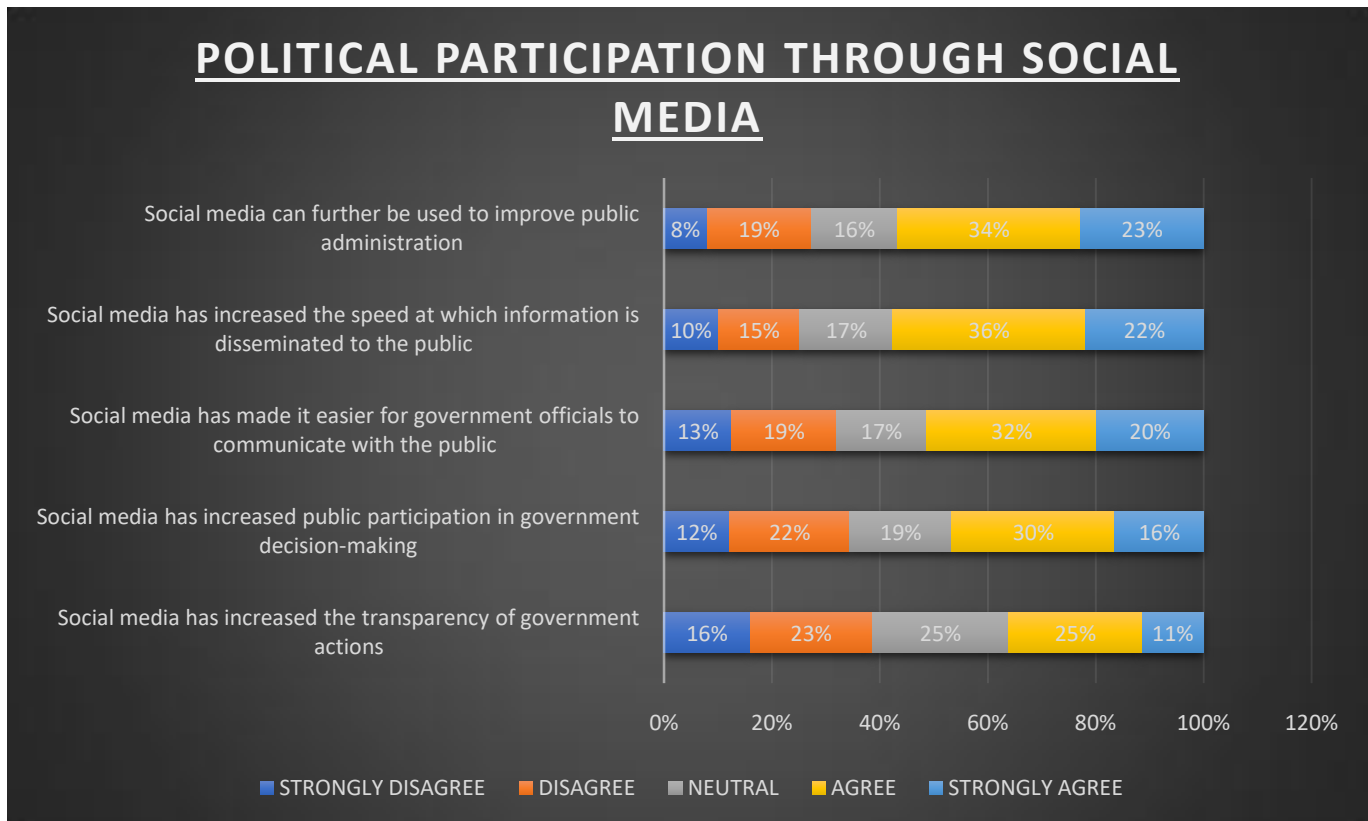


Figure 8: Political Participation through social media

Looking now at the Political Participation through social media of respondents, respondents could not totally conclude on if social media has increased transparency on government actions but there was a bit of a push towards disagreement as 39 percent disagreed as with 36 percent who agreed to this, there was also a large neutral response group as compared to the other questions of 25 percent. On the question of social media increasing public participation in government decision making, a majority 46 percent agreed to this against 34 percent who disagreed to this assertion. Implying people now have a voice in decision making due to social media. On easier communication between government officials and the public, a wide majority of 51.3 percent agreed to these as social media platforms create good communication point, but 31.9 percent did not believe social media has improved communication. Next, an overwhelming majority responded to the affirmative that social media has allowed for the easier dissemination of information, 137 respondents representing 57.6 percent gave this response, also 60 respondents representing 25.2 percent disagreed with this stance. Lastly, on the possibility of social media being used to improve public administration, participants again supported this idea with 135 responses agreeing to this (56.7 percent) and a smaller group 65 respondents not sharing this idea (27.3 percent).

Discussion of Findings

From the mean values in table 2, respondents do not support the acquisition of knowledge on public administration from social media. Further investigations show that all questions on learning public administration related issues received high disagreement showing that respondents do not believe in social media as the learning place for public administration related issues. The highest disagreement was received from questions which asked of respondents' engagement on public administration discussions and content sharing of public administration related contents. The implications being that they do not consider such platforms a place to discuss public policies or administration relations, hence they would not discuss nor share. This situation creates a platform where this information is not shared hence other users do not get this content available to them to learn a thing or two about their local or federal government policies or work. Further, most of the respondents noted they are not aware of the social media platforms for their local and federal governments hence getting knowledge on such issues would be difficult.

On the political participation through social media, there are a lot of positives that can be promoted from there. Aside from respondents not believing social media promotes transparency of governments, social media has improved the participation of the public in decision making. Also, social media is seen as a viable form of communication to disseminate information on public

administration related issues and has improved the communication between officials and the public effectively. Respondents also believed social media has a role to play in improving public administration with time as it could inform, educate, receive feedback and involve the public in decision making.

Linking the two variables' findings, social media does not provide sufficient knowledge to the public-on-public administration but gives an avenue for public participation. The challenge would now be to make social media platforms more knowledge providing using various innovative and interactive ways by promoting discussions of public administration and sharing of contents. Local and federal government should become more visible on social media so users can learn policies and like from them.

SECTION V POLICY RECOMMENDATION

Based on the findings of the research, the following recommendations are suggested for use in enhancing the work of public administration:

1. It is recommended that public managers come up with strategies to maximize the benefits of social media while also minimizing any potential negatives of using these platforms such as being targets of hate groups or racist propaganda. More negatives can include being the target hacking by people who have selfish agendas and would want such platforms for their benefits. This can be accomplished by participating in training programs that teach people how to communicate more effectively using social media. Teaching people how best to manage social media platforms can encourage discussions and get more from the platform. Also, better security to prevent hacking activities.
2. In addition, government agencies need to have their own social media handles, which should be prominently promoted. Each unit should have social media pages on all major platforms so they can be accessed by the entire population. Acting on this information, a well-developed strategy should be implemented to include social media in the information distribution and decision-making processes of government agencies so as they would be encouraged to improve social media presence.
3. Finally, communication is a two-way affair where there is giving information and receiving feedback from your audience. To prevent communication from turning into a unidirectional process, the offices of public administration need to hire specialists to manage and respond to messages and conversations on social media platforms. This will ensure that the platforms are used not just for disseminating information but also for receiving high-quality feedback and hence get more social media users an interest in public administration issues.

SECTION VI CONCLUSION

Although there were limitations such as the research period not being sufficient, different sources of data collection had to be adopted and the researchers not having sufficient finances to adopt some items in the study. The study was able to make use of the available resources and time and concludes on sound and unbiased

assertions and recommendations that can improve public administration.

The study found that social media was great in getting users to participate in political discussions, but it could be seen that respondents do not support the acquisition of knowledge on public administration from social media. In line with studies such as Criado & Rojas-Martín (2016) and Feeney and Porumbescu (2018) which found a significant increase in social media use among public administrators in recent years, it supported that social media has become an important tool for communication with the public due to its ability to enhance transparency and accountability in public administration and its use in engaging citizens to participate in government decision-making processes. Social media has led to a more democratic and inclusive governance. Social media, however, also poses difficulties for public administration. There are also worries about security, privacy, and the potential for social media to reinforce prejudices and false information (Dhiman, 2023; Jing & Murugesan, 2021).

Future studies should look at valuing the benefit of social media to public administration directly and indirectly to enhance the debate on improving its use.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest that relate to the research, authorship, or publication of this article.

Data Availability

The data underlying this article will be shared on reasonable request to the corresponding author.

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