Journal of Rural Advancement
[ISSN 2347-2561 (P); 2583-6102 (E)]
Vol. 12, Issue 02, October 2024

Review of Social Media's Influence on School Management: Urban vs Rural Perspectives

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Received on: August 1, 2024; Accepted on: August 28, 2024

Abstract

This paper provides a comprehensive review of the impact of social media on school management, particularly focusing on the distinct challenges and opportunities that urban and rural private junior high schools face. It highlights how urban schools, equipped with better technological infrastructure and resources, often adopt sophisticated, multi-platform social media strategies for communication, marketing, and crisis management. These schools utilize advanced analytics, engage diverse audiences, and implement complex content strategies across platforms like Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter. Conversely, rural schools, despite facing limitations such as slower internet speeds and fewer resources, effectively leverage their closer-knit communities. These schools often focus on a single platform, like Facebook, to build strong, personal connections with stakeholders, ensuring consistent and targeted messaging. The analysis underscores the necessity of context-specific strategies in social media use, with urban schools benefiting from scale and complexity, while rural schools excel through community-centered approaches. The paper also offers policy recommendations to enhance social media capabilities in rural schools and proposes guidelines for urban schools to manage the complexities of social media use. Additionally, it calls for future research to explore the long-term impacts of social media on educational outcomes and the potential role of emerging technologies in refining these strategies.

Keywords: Community Engagement, Crisis Management, Digital Literacy, Rural Schools, Social Media Strategies, Urban Schools.

Introduction

Social media has knowingly impacted many facets of school administration and has occurred as Social media has knowingly impacted many facets of school administration and has occurred as an essential instrument in today's educational environment. Social media offers probable and problems for private junior high schools, especially those in urban and rural settings, with regard to marketing, stakeholder engagement, and communication (Gulati, 2008). With the help of the platforms, schools may interact more dynamically with students and parents, reach a wider audience, and foster a feeling of community that knows no geographical boundaries. However, there are distinguished differences in the effectiveness of social media in school management across urban and rural environments, depending on

factors including resource availability, community structure, and technological access (Bandyopadhyay et al., 2021). This review study has been conducted to compare and contrast the ways in which social media has affected the management approaches employed by private junior high schools in these two different settings i.e. urban and rural. By being more conscious of the distinctions and similarities, school administrators can adapt their methods and practices to better suit the needs of their local communities.

Private junior high schools located in the cities frequently operate in ruthless markets where distinction through branding and communication is essential. Babu et al., (2019) reported that these educational institutions can use social media like WhatsApp and facebook etc. as a potent tool to highlight their successes, draw in new students, and interact with stakeholders instantly. The higher level of digital literacy in urban localities compared to rural and the general accessibility of high-speed internet, additionally enhance the impact of social media in urban environments. Social media platforms are being utilized by urban schools to engage their audiences in a variety of cutting-edge ways. Transparency and participation both have been replaced by efficient use of live streaming of various events, frequent updates on academic activity, and interactive meetings between school administration and parents.

On the other hand, low levels of digitally literate local population and limited access to technology frequently hinder the use of social media in school management in rural locations (Gulati, 2008). Due to weak internet signals, educational institutions in rural areas are not in position to fully explore social media sites like YouTube. The rural educational organizations can still use these platforms for sharing success stories of their students, building stronger community ties, and interacting more personally with parents and students. For illustration, social media—especially WhatsApp—has mostly been used by rural schools to highlight student accomplishments, interact with local leaders, and exclusively promote local culture. Additionally, this social media is employed to assure that parents participate more in the decision-making process of the school.

Theoretical Framework

The role of social media in management of the schools in rural communities is applied in several theoretical perspectives, like communication theories, network theories, and stakeholder engagement models (McPhail, 2010). These theories suggested that social media is capable to enhance communication competence, simplify broader outreach, and involve stakeholders in a more dynamic and interactive way. Communication theory, for an example, speculates that the involvement of social media may break down traditional barriers to information flow, enabling schools to disseminate information and communication quickly and widely (Kumar, 2020). This is mainly relevant in the context of urban compared to rural schools, where timely communication is critical for managing large and diverse students. The ability to rapidly inform a wide audience about either changes in school policy, upcoming events, or emergency situations demonstrates how social media supports efficient communication processes.

Theoretical Framework

Network theory further elucidates the capabilities of social media to create an interconnected network of stakeholders, including students, parents, teachers, administration and community members

(Henderson, 2015). In urban environments, these networks are very complex and expansive, allowing for the rapid spreading of information and fostering collaborative relationships. The schools in urban areas often have better access to advanced technological infrastructure which has the capacity to enable them for developing more complicated social media strategies, like content creation teams for producing high-quality multimedia data. These resources, ranging from promotional videos of student success stories, are disseminated quickly and broadly through interconnected networks.

Even if they operate on smaller, more localized networks, rural schools may use social media to strengthen their relationships and stand-in a feeling of community in order to their academic objectives (Moitra et al., 2015). In order to stay in touch with families of students who may live far from the school, rural schools are known to employ common social media platforms like WhatsApp. An access to social media allows the family of the students to stay updated regarding the school events and become a part of their ward's educational journey. Social media gives rural schools the opportunity to highlight their involvement in the local community and regional customs, which can make parents and students proud of them.

Stakeholder engagement models, such as Freeman's (1984) stakeholder theory, also highlight the importance of social media in managing relationships with key stakeholders. For urban schools, social media provides a platform for engaging a diverse array of stakeholders, including parents, alumni, and local businesses, in meaningful dialogue. In rural areas, where schools often play a central role in the community, social media can be used to engage stakeholders in a more personalized and direct manner, fostering a sense of shared responsibility for educational outcomes (Naidu, 2019).

Urban vs. Rural School Management

The literature highlights significant differences in the management challenges faced by urban and rural schools. Urban schools often have better access to technology, which enables more sophisticated use of social media. They can implement advanced digital marketing strategies, engage in real-time communication with a large and diverse audience, and utilize data analytics to tailor their messaging and outreach efforts. For example, urban schools can use social media platforms to conduct virtual tours, host live Q&A sessions, and share multimedia content that showcases their facilities, faculty, and student achievements.

In contrast, rural schools may struggle with technological limitations but often enjoy closer-knit communities that can be leveraged through more personalized social media strategies (Payyappilly Jose, 2020). The sense of community in rural areas often translates into stronger relationships between schools and families, which can be enhanced through social media by sharing local success stories, highlighting community events, and facilitating direct communication between parents and teachers (Gautam, 2014). Despite the challenges, rural schools can use social media to build and maintain these relationships, ensuring that all stakeholders remain informed and engaged in the educational process.

Moreover, the disparity in resources between urban and rural schools often leads to differences in how social media is integrated into school management. Urban schools, with greater access to financial and technological resources, are more likely to invest in professional social media management,

including dedicated staff or agencies that handle their online presence (Venkatraman, 2017). Rural schools, on the other hand, may rely on teachers or administrators to manage their social media accounts, which can lead to a more authentic but less polished online presence. This difference in resource allocation impacts the effectiveness of social media strategies and the extent to which schools can engage their stakeholders.

Another critical difference lies in the target audience of social media efforts. Urban schools often cater to a more diverse and transient population, which requires a broader and more flexible approach to communication (Rao, 2005). In contrast, rural schools typically serve a more stable and homogeneous population, allowing for more targeted and community-focused social media strategies. This distinction influences not only the content shared on social media but also the platforms chosen for engagement. For instance, urban schools may prioritize platforms like Instagram and Twitter, which appeal to younger, more tech-savvy audiences, while rural schools might focus on Facebook or local community networks that resonate more with their audience (Venkatraman, 2017).

Conclusion

The conclusion of this review underscores the critical role of social media in shaping the management strategies of private junior high schools, with significant differences observed between urban and rural settings. Urban schools, equipped with better technological infrastructure and resources, leverage social media to implement sophisticated, multi-platform strategies that cater to a diverse audience. These schools use social media for marketing, parent-teacher communication, crisis management, and more, often employing data-driven approaches to enhance engagement and effectiveness.

Conversely, rural schools, despite facing challenges such as limited technology access and lower social media penetration, effectively use these platforms to foster strong community ties and maintain direct, personal communication. Their simpler, more focused strategies often resonate deeply with their close-knit communities.

The review highlights the importance of context in developing social media strategies, emphasizing that urban and rural schools must tailor their approaches to their unique environments. The findings suggest that with the right support, including training and resource allocation, rural schools can enhance their social media presence. Additionally, the review calls for policies that promote equitable access to technology and encourage collaboration between urban and rural schools, ensuring that all schools can effectively utilize social media to achieve their educational and management goals.

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