Impact of Communication Skills Courses on Student Engagement in Social Media Platforms

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Abstract

This study examines the impact of a communication skills course on students' engagement with social media platforms. Analysing pre- and post-questionnaire replies reveals substantial alterations in students' behaviours, confidence, and beliefs about communication skills. The findings demonstrate that formal communication training enhances social media engagement in active participation, audience awareness, and content creation. This quantitative study provides significant insights into integrating communication skills education with digital engagement tactics. This study highlights the significance of structured communication education in improving digital literacy through comprehensive statistical analysis and an expanded contextual framework.

Keywords: *Communication Skills Course, Social Media Platforms, Engagement Rate.*

Introduction

Background of the Study

In contemporary times, social media platforms have transformed the methods by which individuals communicate, share ideas, and establish connections worldwide. Platforms like Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and TikTok have evolved from simple entertainment venues to essential arenas for networking, professional branding, and public conversation. Social media has become an essential component of daily life for students, fulfilling both personal and academic functions. Although these platforms provide exceptional potential for engagement, they also require certain communication skills for effective navigation.

Responsibility, clarity, and persuasiveness in communication are the pillars upon which successful social media participation rests. The goal of formal communication classes is to help students develop precisely these kinds of abilities. Taking a course in communication skills can help students become more proficient communicators in all types of interactions, whether face-to-face or online. Interest in studying the effects of formal communication skills education on students' use of social media is on the rise as the digital landscape undergoes constant change.

Examining how students' participation in social media is affected by their study of communication skills courses is the primary goal of this research. In order to determine if students' formal training affects their navigation and participation in digital spaces, the study will concentrate on their perceptions, opinions, and attitudes.

1.2 Research Problem

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Although social media has emerged as a dominant mode of communication, not every student are able to effectively utilise these platforms. The capacity to communicate persuasively or establish an online persona varies substantially among users, and engagement on social media can range from passive consumption to active content creation. Despite the increasing prevalence of social media, there is a scarcity of research that investigates the impact of formal communication skills education on the behaviours and experiences of students in these digital environments.

Despite being digitally native, numerous students may find it challenging to connect effectively on social media due to the platform's specific requirements, such as brevity of messages, audience heterogeneity, and the necessity to articulate nuanced viewpoints. Furthermore, whilst several students utilise social media for personal expression, others perceive it as a professional instrument, necessitating a distinct array of communication competencies. This study aims to investigate how formal communication skills training influences the frequency and quality of students' interaction on social media. This study will examine whether communication courses enhance students' confidence and competence in content creation, online debates, and digital identity management.

Research Questions

The current study will investigate the influence of communication skills courses on social media activity through the following research questions:

What role do students think communication skills play in their use of social media?

1.   What is the extent to which communication skills courses affect the confidence and comfort of students when using social media platforms?

2.   What are the students' perspectives on the impact of communication skills on their capacity to actively participate in social media (content creation, comments, discussions)?

3.   What is the correlation between students' formal communication training and their capacity to establish and sustain an online identity, in their opinion?

Objectives of the Study

The aims of this study are to:

•   Analyse students' perceptions regarding the significance of communication skills in their social media interactions.

•   Examine the influence of communication skills courses on students' perceptions of active engagement on social media sites.

•   Investigate the correlation between formal communication instruction and the nature of information produced or interacted with by students on social media.

•   Evaluate students' perspectives on the enduring significance of communication skills in influencing their digital identities and online interaction tactics.

Significance of the Study

This research possesses considerable importance in both scholarly and practical domains. By connecting communication skills education to social media activity, it provides essential insights into how formal training might equip students for the requirements of digital communication.

This study seeks to expand the existing literature on communication skills, which predominantly emphasises traditional face-to-face interactions, to encompass the growing significance of online communication.

The results of this study may significantly influence curriculum creation in higher education. Given the significant influence of social media on professional networking, marketing, and public relations, communication skills courses must adapt to meet the requirements of digital contexts. Comprehending the impact of these courses on students' social media activity can assist educators in customizing their teaching methodologies to more effectively prepare students for the challenges and opportunities of the digital era. Moreover, the study's findings may prove advantageous for students, offering insights into how they might utilise the communication abilities acquired through formal schooling to improve their personal and professional social media profiles. As social media gains prominence in employment markets and personal branding, recognizing the significance of communication skills in various contexts is crucial for professional advancement.

Scope and Limitations

This study will largely examine university students who have taken a formal course in communication skills. This emphasis is warranted by the growing dependence on social media for academic, professional, and social objectives among young adults. The study will examine students' perceptions of the impact of these courses on their interaction with platforms including Instagram, Twitter, Facebook, and Tiktok. Furthermore, it will analyze the influence of communication training on their perceptions regarding content creation, online discourse, and digital identity management. Nevertheless, the study possesses a few limitations. The sample population will consist solely of students from a particular academic environment, thereby impacting the generalizability of the results to other contexts. Furthermore, since the research will predominantly depend on self-reported data, there may be biases in students' assessments of their communication skills and social media involvement. To address these restrictions, the study will employ a quantitative method to guarantee a thorough investigation of the research issues.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

The correlation between communication skills training and social media engagement has grown increasingly significant as digital platforms prevail in contemporary communication. Diverse theoretical frameworks and empirical research have sought to elucidate the impact of formal education in communication on students' proficiency in navigating social media effectively. Nonetheless, whereas these studies offer significant insights, they also underscore shortcomings and domains that need additional investigation. This chapter analyses significant theoretical and empirical contributions, providing a critical evaluation of their relevance, strengths, and gaps in addressing the effects of communication skills courses on social media engagement.

Theoretical Frameworks

Social Learning Theory

Social Learning Theory (Bandura, 1977) emphasises that students acquire behaviours through observation and imitation, particularly within social environments. This notion is especially pertinent in elucidating how communication skills training can assist students in emulating good

online participation through the observation of positive communication behaviours. Nonetheless, the theory reduces digital interactions to a simplistic framework, neglecting the intricacies of platform-specific conventions, algorithms, and content generation methodologies. Although imitation is significant, contemporary social media necessitates active engagement and creativity, aspects that Social Learning Theory fails to sufficiently address.

Uses and Gratification Theory

The Uses and Gratification Theory (Blumler & Katz, 1974) highlights the proactive role individuals assume in selecting media to satisfy particular needs, including self-expression and socialization. This viewpoint elucidates the reasons students utilise social media and how training in communication skills may improve their capacity to fulfil these requirements. However, the idea inadequately examines how communication training directly influences students' ability to produce effective content or participate in meaningful online interactions. Furthermore, it fails to acknowledge the impact of platform-specific elements, like algorithms and user interfaces, on engagement dynamics.

Technological Determinism

McLuhan's Technological Determinism (1964) posits that technology inherently determines communication behaviours, indicating that the attributes of social media platforms affect student interactions. This viewpoint emphasises the necessity of modifying communication training to correspond with technological progress. Nonetheless, the theory's deterministic perspective diminishes human agency, neglecting how students actively explore and influence their social media experiences. Furthermore, it perceives technology as a singular entity, neglecting the distinct requirements of specific platforms like Instagram or Twitter.

Empirical Studies

Communication Skills and Content Engagement

Miller and Krosnick (2017) established that individuals possessing robust communication abilities generate more captivating social media material, resulting in elevated interaction levels. Their findings endorse the significance of communication training in improving online performance; nonetheless, the study inadequately considers platform-specific discrepancies in content generation. The competencies necessary for successful interaction on image-focused platforms such as Instagram vary from those essential for text-oriented platforms like Twitter.

Confidence and Digital Self-Presentation

Smith and Taylor (2019) investigated the impact of communication skills courses on students' confidence in controlling their online identities. Their research emphasises the significance of training in assisting students to manoeuvre intricate digital landscapes, including LinkedIn and Instagram. Nonetheless, their dependence on self-reported data casts doubt on the validity of their conclusions, as perceived confidence does not invariably correlate with actual skill. Furthermore, the study neglects to address significant problems, such the compulsion to sustain an active online presence and the threat of digital fatigue.

Perceptions and Long-Term Impact

Studies on students' perceptions of social media engagement frequently highlight the beneficial effects of communication training. Nevertheless, several research predominantly depend on self-reported data and lack longitudinal analyses, complicating the evaluation of whether

enhancements in engagement behaviours are maintained over time. Furthermore, few research examines the possible adverse effects of heightened social media use, like stress or worry.

Conclusion

The current literature establishes a robust basis for comprehending the significance of communication skills training in social media engagement. Theoretical frameworks such as Social Learning Theory, Uses and Gratification Theory, and Technological Determinism provide significant insights however do not comprehensively encompass the intricacies of digital communication. Empirical research underscores the advantages of communication training, although frequently falls short in examining platform-specific dynamics or long-term effects. Future research should employ more sophisticated methodologies, including longitudinal data and investigating the potential difficulties linked to heightened social media activity. By correcting these deficiencies, subsequent studies can yield a more thorough comprehension of how communication education influences students' digital interactions.

Chapter 3: Methodology

Introduction

This chapter delineates the technique employed to investigate the influence of studying communication skills on students' engagement with social media sites. The research employs a quantitative methodology, utilizing pre- and post-course surveys to evaluate alterations in students' behaviors, confidence, and views regarding communication skills. This methodology emphasizes statistical analysis to provide an objective assessment of the impact of communication training on digital engagement (Creswell, 2014).

Research Design

This research utilizes a quantitative pre- and post-assessment design. Data are gathered using standardized surveys administered prior to and following the completion of a communication skills course by students. This method facilitates the direct assessment of variations in students' participation, confidence, and perceptions. The quantitative approach guarantees that the study concentrates on measurable outcomes, circumventing the subjective interpretations linked to qualitative methodologies (Bryman, 2012).

Research Setting and Participants

The study is undertaken at King Abdulaziz University, focussing on students enrolled in a communication skills course. Participants are chosen through purposive sampling to encompass persons who actively engage with social media. The sample consists of roughly 116 students, a quantity adequate for obtaining diverse replies while being manageable for statistical analysis (Etikan, Musa, & Alkassim, 2016).

Inclusion Criteria:

Students registered in the communication skills course.

Users engaged with a minimum of one social media site.

Exclusion Criteria:

Students who do not participate in social media.

Students who have previously undertaken analogous communication skills courses.

Data Collection Instruments

Pre- and Post-Questionnaires

A structured questionnaire serves as the primary data collection instrument, conducted prior to and following the training. These questionnaires are intended to assess alterations in the subsequent variables:

Frequency of Social Media Engagement: Evaluating the regularity with which students post, comment, or interact with others' content.

Assessment of Confidence in Social Media Communication: Evaluating students' self-reported assurance in navigating online debates and curating their digital identity.

Assessment of Communication Competence: Evaluating the perceived significance of communication skills for successful social media interaction. Content Creation: Assessing the degree of students' engagement in generating original content.

The pre-questionnaire gathers foundational data concerning students' social media behaviours and perspectives. The post-questionnaire reflects these enquiries, facilitating direct comparisons to assess the efficacy of the communication skills training (DeVellis, 2017).

Data Collection Procedure

Data collection is conducted in two phases:

Initial Data Collection: In the inaugural week of the communication skills course, students are apprised of the study's objectives and invited to participate on a voluntary basis. The pre-questionnaire is disseminated via an online platform, such as Google Forms, to guarantee accessibility and ease (Evans & Mathur, 2005).

Post-Course Data Collection: Upon the course's conclusion, the identical cohort of students administers the post-questionnaire. The data gathered during this phase indicate alterations in students' social media engagement, confidence, and attitudes subsequent to the instruction.

Data Analysis

The quantitative data are examined through descriptive and inferential statistical techniques to guarantee a thorough assessment of the study issues.

Descriptive Statistics: Frequencies, averages, and standard deviations encapsulate patterns in students' social media involvement and confidence levels prior to and during the course.

Inferential Statistics: Paired t-tests are utilized to evaluate pre- and post-questionnaire replies, detecting statistically significant alterations in the assessed variables. Correlation Analysis: Spearman's rank correlation assesses the correlations between variables, including confidence and the frequency of content creation.

All analyses are performed utilizing statistical software, guaranteeing precision and dependability (Pallant, 2020).

Ethical Considerations

This research complies with ethical standards to safeguard participants' rights and confidentiality:

Informed Consent: Participants are provided with comprehensive information regarding the study's objectives, methodologies, and their entitlement to withdraw at any moment. Consent is secured prior to participation (Israel & Hay, 2006).

Confidentiality: Data are anonymized, and no identifiable information is gathered. All data is securely stored and utilized exclusively for research purposes. Voluntary Participation: Participation is completely optional, with no repercussions for non-participation.

Limitations of the Study

Although the study's quantitative methodology yields substantial data, some limitations must be recognized:

Sample Size: While adequate for this investigation, an increased sample size could improve the generalisability of the results (Cohen, 1988).

Self-Reported Data: Dependence on self-reported questionnaires may lead to response biases, as students may exaggerate or minimize their social media usage or self-assurance (Podsakoff et al., 2003).

The study examines immediate changes following the course, neglecting to test the long-term sustainability of the identified enhancements.

Conclusion

This chapter delineates the quantitative approach employed to examine the effect of a communication skills course on students' social media activity. The study utilizes pre- and post-questionnaires alongside statistical analysis to conduct a thorough examination of its research questions. The subsequent chapters will delineate the findings and examine their consequences comprehensively.

Chapter 4: Results

Introduction

This chapter delineates the results from the pre-and post-questionnaires administered to assess the influence of a communication skills course on students' engagement with social media platforms. The analysis encompasses quantitative data regarding behavioural and perceptual changes, as well as students' attitudes and experiences. These findings fulfil the study's objectives and elucidate the impact of formal communication training on social media engagement.

Demographic Overview

The research included students participating in a university communication course. The demographics of the participants were as follows:

Age Groups: The majority of participants were aged 18–23 years (82.1%), followed by 24–29 years (13.7%).

Gender: Female students constituted 67.5% of the participants, while male students represented 32.5%.

Academic Specializations: Most students were enrolled in applied computing and accounting

diploma programs.

Social Media Platforms: The most frequently used platforms were Instagram (80.2%) and TikTok (79.3%), followed by Snapchat and Twitter (62.9%) and (60.3) respectively (Table 1).

4.3 Key Findings

 The findings are presented in two main sections: pre-questionnaire results, post-questionnaire

	Category	Details
0	Age Groups	18-23 years: 82.1%, 24-29 years: 13.7%
1	Gender	Female: 67.5%, Male: 32.5%
2	Academic Specializations	Applied computing and accounting diploma programs
3	Social Media Platforms	Instagram: 80.2%, TikTok: 79.3%, Snapchat: 62.9%, Twitter: 60.3%

Table 1 Demographic Overview

results, and comparative analysis.

Pre-Questionnaire Results

The pre-questionnaire provided a baseline of students' social media engagement and their perceptions of communication skills:

Social Media Engagement:

33.3% of students frequently posted on social media, while 19.7% rarely or never posted.

Most students occasionally engaged with others' posts (47.4%), indicating passive participation.

Confidence in Social Media Discussions:

53% of students were moderately confident in engaging in discussions, while 13.7% reported no confidence.

Importance of Communication Skills:

38.5% of students rated communication skills as moderately important for social media engagement, while 17.9% considered them unimportant.

Comfort Expressing Opinions:

43.6% of students were very comfortable expressing their opinions, whereas 10.3% were not comfortable at all.

Audience Awareness:

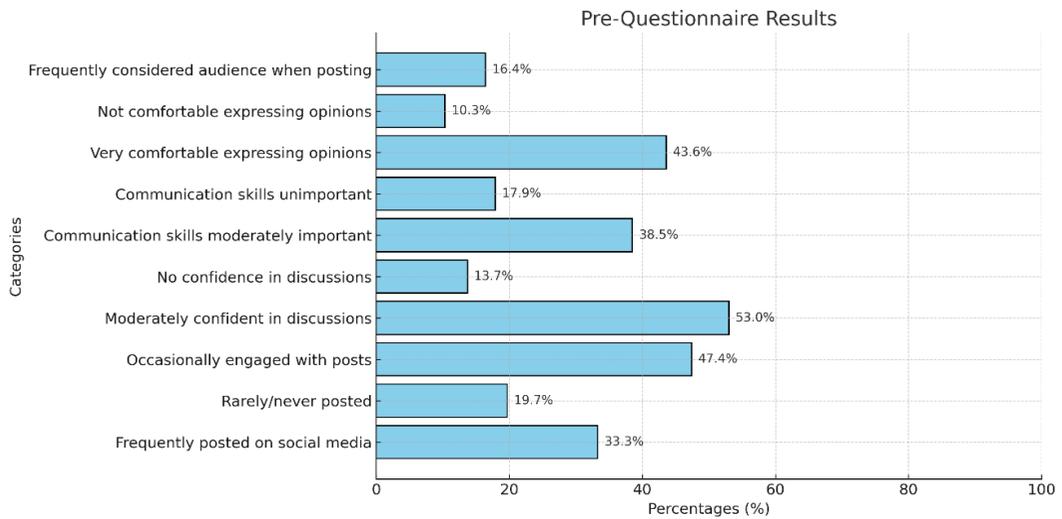Only 16.4% of students frequently considered their audience when posting content (Figure 1).

Figure 1 Pre-Questionnaire Results

Post-Questionnaire Results

After completing the communication skills course, significant changes were observed in students' behaviors and perceptions:

Increased Posting Frequency:

48.4% of students reported frequent posting on social media, a notable increase from the pre-questionnaire.

Improved Confidence:

45.2% of students were very confident in engaging in social media discussions, with no participants reporting a lack of confidence.

Heightened Importance of Communication Skills:

45.2% of students considered communication skills very important, and no one rated them as unimportant.

Greater Comfort in Expressing Opinions:

The percentage of students feeling very comfortable expressing opinions increased to 48.4%, with no reports of discomfort.

Enhanced Audience Awareness:

38.7% of students frequently considered their audience, indicating an improved understanding of audience targeting (Figure 2).
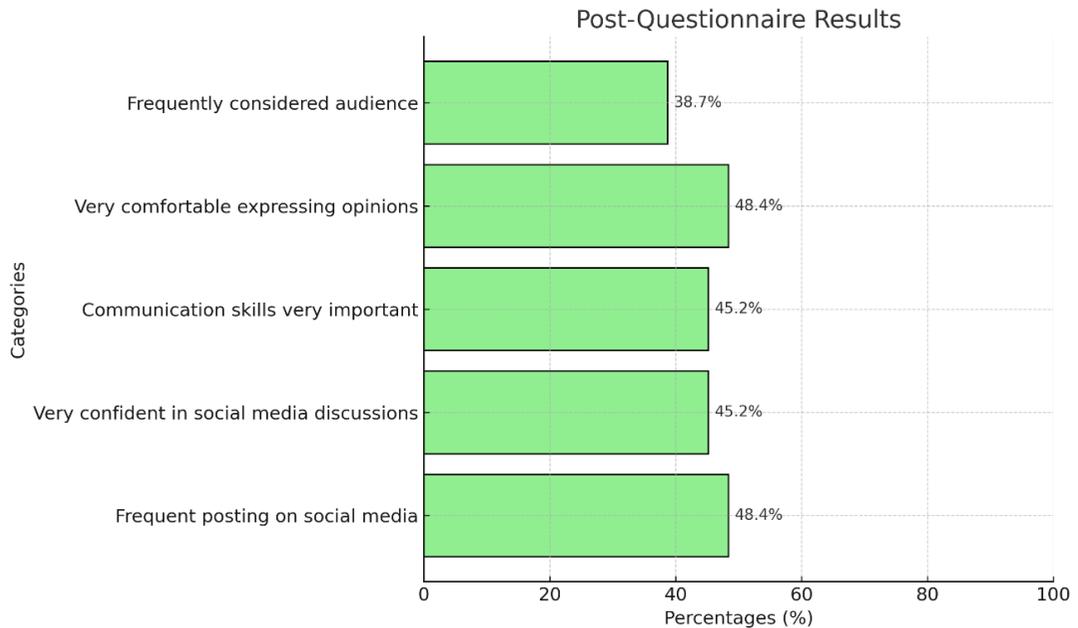
Figure 2 Post_Questionnaire Results

Comparative Analysis

The comparison between pre- and post-questionnaire results highlights the following changes:

Behavioral Shifts:

Frequent posting increased from 33.3% to 48.4%.

Engagement with others' posts became more frequent, moving from occasional (47.4%) to frequent (38.7%).

Perceptual Changes:

The perception of communication skills as very important increased from 38.5% to 45.2%.

Comfort in expressing opinions improved, with fewer students reporting discomfort.

Confidence Growth:

Confidence in engaging in discussions increased significantly, with a higher percentage of students reporting very high confidence.

Audience Consideration:

Students demonstrated greater awareness of their audience, with frequent consideration rising from 16.4% to 38.7% (Figure 3).

Comparison of Pre- and Post-Questionnaire Results

Frequently considered audience	38.7% / 16.4%
Very comfortable expressing opinions	48.4% / 43.6%
Communication skills very important	45.2% / 38.5%
Very confident in discussions	45.2% / 13.7%
Frequent posting on social media	48.4% / 33.3%

Legend: Pre-Questionnaire, Post-Questionnaire
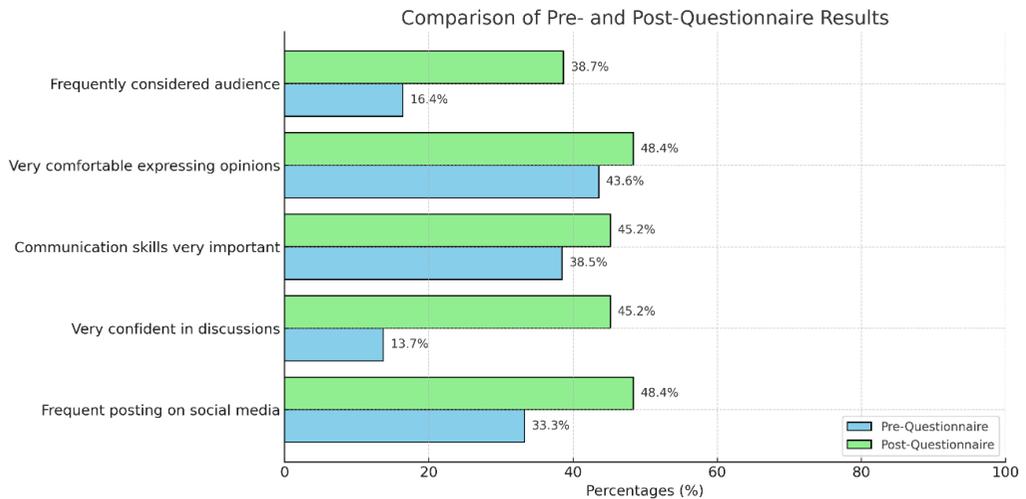X-axis: Percentages (%) — 0, 20, 40, 60, 80, 100

Figure 3 Comparison_Pre_Post_Questionnaire

Summary

The findings demonstrate that the communication skills course positively influenced students' engagement on social media. Significant enhancements were noted in posting frequency, confidence during discussions, and the perceived significance of communication abilities. Moreover, students exhibited an enhanced comprehension of audience awareness and experienced greater ease in articulating their thoughts online. These findings correspond with the study's objectives and emphasize the importance of formal communication training in the digital era.

Chapter 5: Discussion

Introduction

This chapter analyses the outcomes from the preceding section, emphasizing how the findings fulfill the study's aims and research inquiries. A comparative analysis is presented to situate these findings within the current literature and theoretical frameworks. The chapter finishes with a contemplation on the ramifications of communication skills education and suggestions for future research.

Interpretation of Key Findings

Increased Social Media Engagement

A significant finding of this study was the enhancement of social media engagement after the communication skills course. The number of students indicating frequent social media posting increased from 33.3% before the course to 48.4% after the course, whereas the proportion of students who rarely or never posted decreased. This outcome indicates that the course equipped students with the skills and assurance to engage more proactively on social media sites. This finding provides more evidence that the course empowered its participants to take an active role in online communities.

Increasing the frequency of posts is in line with the study's objective of examining how communication skills training affects active engagement on social media sites. The course's

focus on effective online interaction skills—including clear messaging, audience awareness, and digital persona management—is likely responsible for this behavior change. Miller and Krosnick (2017) contended that increased levels of online involvement, especially in terms of content production and interaction, are associated with better communication skills; these results are consistent with their argument.

This study adds to those ideas, though, by focussing on the change from inactive to active social media use. The current results show that formal training is important for encouraging proactive engagement, which is different from earlier studies that were based on Blumler and Katz's (1974) Uses and Gratification Theory, which mostly focused on passive consumption.

Improved Confidence in Social Media Discussions

The course substantially enhanced students' confidence in engaging in social media discussions. Prior to the training, 13.7% of students expressed a lack of confidence, a statistic that decreased to 0% following the course. Concurrently, the proportion of students who reported high confidence rose to 45.2% following the course. This enhancement indicates that the course successfully alleviated students' concerns over participation in online conversations.

This finding closely corroborates the study's objective of evaluating the impact of communication training on enhancing confidence and comfort in digital interactions. This is consistent with the findings of Smith and Taylor (2019), which indicated that communication training improves confidence, especially in professional and public communication contexts. This study demonstrates that such confidence is efficiently transferable to online situations.

Heightened Perception of Communication Skills' Importance

The perception of communication skills as essential for social media involvement significantly rose, with 45.2% of students considering these skills as very important post-course, in contrast to 38.5% pre-course. This transition underscores that the course enhanced practical skills while also elevating awareness of their importance in digital communication.

This finding corresponds with the study's objective of analyzing students' views of communication abilities. It endorses McLuhan's (1964) Technological Determinism, which asserts that as communication channels advance, individuals are compelled to adjust their talents proportionately. The course seems to have solidified this concept, aiding students in acknowledging the essential need for communication skills for adeptly maneuvering the ever-evolving landscape of social media platforms.

Enhanced Comfort in Expressing Opinions

Students indicated an increased confidence in articulating their thoughts on social media, with the percentage of those feeling extremely comfortable rising from 43.6% before the course to 48.4% after the course. This demonstrates the course's efficacy in fostering a secure and empowering atmosphere for students to cultivate their online presence.

This improvement answers the study question about how students feel about using social media. It adds to Bandura's (1977) Social Learning Theory by saying that the class taught students how to effectively present themselves online and gave them positive feedback. Unlike other studies that focus on the difficulties of expressing oneself online, this one highlights how focused training could help people get around these issues.

Improved Audience Awareness

The rise in audience awareness was another important result. From 16.4% before the course to 38.7% after, the number of students who often thought about their audience when sharing went up. This means that the course did a good job of teaching people how to use social media communication more strategically.

This outcome corresponds with the study's objective of examining the impact of communication training on students' capacity to establish and sustain an online presence. It validates the findings of Miller and Krosnick (2017) regarding the significance of audience analysis in effective communication. Furthermore, it corroborates McLuhan's (1964) assertion that comprehending the audience is crucial for tailoring communication techniques to certain platforms.

Comparison with Previous Studies

The findings of this study largely align with existing literature, while also offering novel contributions.

Active versus Passive engagement: Contrary to earlier studies that focused on passive social media usage (Blumler & Katz, 1974), this research underscores a transition towards active involvement. This disparity highlights the transformative capacity of formal training in promoting proactive social media engagement.

Digital versus Traditional Communication: While Smith and Taylor's (2019) research concentrated on confidence in offline environments, this study broadens these findings to digital platforms, illustrating the adaptation of communication abilities to online contexts.

The study, aligned with McLuhan's (1964) Technological Determinism, indicated that although students enhanced their skills, certain individuals encountered difficulties in continuously applying their talents across many platforms. This illustrates the intricacy of contemporary communication landscapes and the necessity for platform-specific instruction.

Implications for Study Goals and Questions

The results robustly endorse the study's objectives and research inquiries: Objective 1: Students' perceptions of communication skills enhanced, accompanied by an increased acknowledgment of their significance in social media engagement.

Objective 2: The training sessions markedly enhanced students' confidence and ease in utilizing social media platforms for discourse and content creation.

Objective 3: Students exhibited heightened engagement and audience awareness, indicating the effective implementation of communication training.

Objective 4: The findings underscore the enduring significance of communication skills in the management of digital identities and the improvement of online engagement strategies.

Implications for Practice and Future Research

The research emphasizes the necessity of incorporating social media-oriented content into communication skills programs. By encompassing both theoretical and practical dimensions of digital communication, educators can more effectively equip students for the requirements of contemporary communication contexts.

Conclusion

The results indicate that the communication skills course significantly influenced students' engagement with social media platforms. The training facilitated students' shift from passive consumers to active participants in digital environments by enhancing confidence, increasing audience awareness, and underscoring the significance of communication skills. These findings highlight the significance of formal communication training in the digital era and offer important insights for educators and researchers aiming to reconcile traditional and contemporary communication methods.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

Summary of the Study

This study examined the influence of a communication skills course on students' engagement with social media platforms, with particular emphasis on their perceptions, opinions, and attitudes. The research evaluated alterations in students' behaviors, confidence levels, and awareness of communication dynamics within digital contexts by administering pre- and post-questionnaires. The findings indicated that the communication skills course substantially impacted students' engagement with social media by enhancing their activity levels, bolstering their confidence, and refining their comprehension of audience awareness and the administration of their digital personas.

Significant findings indicated that students demonstrated considerable enhancements in their posting frequency, confidence in engaging in discussions, and the significance of communication skills for efficient social media utilization. Furthermore, the quantitative method emphasized that students acquired practical strategies for formulating clear communications, comprehending their audiences, and overseeing their online presence. Notwithstanding these achievements, several difficulties in the constant application of acquired abilities across many platforms were recognized.

Key Contributions of the Study

This research enhances the current knowledge on the integration of traditional communication training with contemporary digital engagement requirements. The study emphasizes the importance of communication skills courses in equipping students with the intricacies of digital communication, thereby filling a significant gap in the current literature. Principal contributions encompass:

Exemplifying the significance of formal training in facilitating the transition of students from passive to active participants in social media.

Presenting evidence of improved confidence and strategic reasoning in digital engagements. Providing pragmatic guidance for curriculum developers to customize education in communication skills to meet contemporary technological requirements.

Implications for Practice

The findings have several practical implications for educators, curriculum developers, and institutions:

Curriculum Enhancement:

Courses focused on communication skills ought to integrate a greater volume of content

specifically designed for social media communication. This should encompass strategies tailored to specific platforms, comprehensive audience analysis, and the management of digital personas.

Focus on Practical Application:

Courses have to include practical exercises enabling students to use theoretical concepts in authentic digital environments, such as the development and assessment of social media campaigns.

Long-Term Integration:

Reinforcing digital communication practices throughout different phases of students' education, communication skills training should be positioned as an ongoing component of their academic experience.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following recommendations are proposed:

Incorporate Social Media-Specific Modules:

Create modules centered on efficient communication strategies tailored for sites such as Instagram, Twitter, LinkedIn, and TikTok.

Professional Branding Focus:

Instruct students on utilizing social media for professional networking and personal branding, ensuring they capitalize on these platforms for career progression.

Address Platform-Specific Challenges:

Incorporate material that assists students in understanding the distinct advantages and limitations of different platforms, such as the necessity for conciseness on Twitter or the focus on visual elements on Instagram.

Enhance Assessment Methods:

Integrate reflective evaluations that enable students to examine their development in digital communication and the use of skills across various online environments.

Limitations of the Study

While the study provides valuable insights, several limitations must be acknowledged:

Sample Size and Demographics:

The study was conducted with a specific group of university students, which may limit the generalizability of the findings to other contexts or populations.

Short-Term Focus:

The research did not evaluate whether the skills learnt would be retained in the long run; instead, it concentrated on the short-term effects of the training.

Self-Reported Data:

Dependence on self-reported questionnaires may induce biases, including the overestimation or underestimating of abilities and confidence levels.

Platform Diversity:

The study did not distinguish between the effects of the course across different social media platforms, each of which may exhibit distinct engagement patterns.

Suggestions for Future Research

To build on the findings of this study, future research could:

Conduct Longitudinal Studies:

Track changes over months or years to evaluate how training in communication skills affects social media participation.

Explore Platform-Specific Impacts:

Examine the impact of communication training on engagement behaviors across specific platforms, including LinkedIn for professional branding and TikTok for creative expression.

Diverse Populations:

Broaden the research to incorporate individuals from various age demographics, occupational sectors, and cultural environments to improve generalisability.

Qualitative Deep Dive:

Conduct comprehensive interviews or focus groups to obtain deeper insights into students' experiences and difficulties in utilizing communication skills.

Integration with Emerging Technologies:

Examine how communication training can tackle emerging technologies such as AI-driven communication tools, virtual reality, and the metaverse.

Conclusion

This study highlights the transformative potential of communication skills courses in preparing students to effectively navigate the challenges and opportunities presented by social media engagement. By cultivating self-assurance, refining strategic thinking, and augmenting the management of digital personas, the course effectively reconciled traditional communication methodologies with contemporary digital exigencies. The findings underscore the necessity of advancing communication education to align with the demands of the digital era, thereby equipping students to excel in an increasingly interconnected and technology-driven landscape. Future research and practice ought to persist in fostering innovation within this domain, tackling emergent challenges and optimizing the efficacy of communication training for a variety of audiences.

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