Article

Social media's role in public administration

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Abstract: This paper examines social media's role in public administration. The purpose of this study is to find the extent of the role played by social media in public administration and then recommend and propose strategies to the public administrators. Social media enhances public administrators' role and ensures that the public administration is working for the people and meeting all the needs of the people. The most important findings of the article are that public administrators are using e-governance and other modern digital technologies for communication, which have helped in decreasing corruption and bringing people closer to the government because they can use the government tools directly and there are possibilities of two-way communication. Corruption is one of the major problems, and most of the studies have shown that corruption can be reduced with the help of social media tools used by the public administrators. We propose a theory that governance framework is impacted by social media tools, e-governance methods, and open communication methods.

Keywords: social media; public administration; public administrator; corruption; governance framework

1. Introduction

Public administration is all about serving people and bringing about a positive change in the lives of people and society. Social media also plays a responsible job of bringing people closer to the government and public administration programs. Social media creates awareness and acts as a bridge between the officials and the common people. Therefore, this study will research and analyze the role played by social media and its importance for public administrators and the public. Social media can also be called the "watch dog" that works on behalf of people and keeps the public administrators in check by compelling them to be honest and truthful (Birkland, 2019, p. 115). It is a system of checking on all the public officials and brings their good and even bad work in front of the public, and it also helps to bring forth the grievances and demands of the public to the public administration officials. The analytical method used in the research study will be literature review on research done on relevant topics to understand the different roles played by social media in public administration and the interdependence of social media and public administration.

1.1. Problem statement

Public administration is a responsible job, and requires honesty, trustfulness, and trustworthiness, so social media's role in public administration should be defined clearly. In case any public administrator violates the standard and not-so-standard rules, he or she is looked down upon by anyone and social media can keep a check on the public administrators so that they perform their work strictly and do not get over-influenced by any of the official or unofficial actors or even by the highest

authority in the government. Social media has an important role in the process of public administration because they work behind the screens, but they bring out reality for the people and assist and support the public administrators by helping them in their work, as an outsider, by providing them with the feel of the public through opinion polls, messages, tweets, and other such devices, so the precise role of social media is not clear. When it acts as a policy, it plays a positive role because it guides public administrators, but when it keeps playing the role of critique and spreading rumors without any positive feedback, it is playing a negative role.

1.2. Purpose of the study

The purpose of this research study is to find the extent of the role played by social media in public administration and then recommend and propose strategies to the public administrators and social media to enhance their role and ensure that the public administration is working for the people and meeting all the needs of the people. It will showcase truthful appeals and honest requests so the public administrator would be guilt-free and conscious of his actions. The role of social media will work not only at the national level but also at an international level.

1.3. Significance of the study

The significance of the study is multifold because many organizations and officers will benefit by holding the guiding and helping hand of social media. Public administration can utilize social media to convey their messages and issues to the public and get their views and opinions about the messages and issues. Social media will enhance communication and reduce risks and challenges. The relationship between social media and public administration will be highlighted clearly so that everyone would know how there is a mutual understanding between social media and public administration and the ways in which it is helping government, public servants, policy makers and researchers. The study will show that social media can optimize the work of public administrators, and even motivate them to move faster and in the right direction by following all the democratic principles.

2. Literature review

The role of social media has existed in the government system from time immemorial but now the role has enhanced because of the changes in the public administration platform. Public administrators have become more and more public oriented because they have realized the power of people and therefore, they need strong mediators who can convey their message to the public and bring forth the message from the public to them so that they can plan better policies, which will not be controversial and would be mutually beneficial. Social media can be defined as Internet-based applications that usually have content generated by consumers and encompass media impressions that are created by consumers. These applications are shared online or archived online so that they can be accessed by other consumers. There are two key dimensions of social media, and they are our social presence or media richness and self-presentation or self-disclosure. Social media can also be classified into two broad categories, and they are expressive social media and

collaborative social media. Expressive social media is where users express themselves by using and sharing pictures, video, text, music, and others. Collaborative social media is where users share content and knowledge and work together for a common purpose or goal.

With the help of social media there can be a bi-directional information exchange between the government and the citizens and therefore social media is a powerful tool that would help the public officials to enhance public engagement and fulfill their public administration duties in a better manner. Governments must fulfill the needs of digital citizens who are using social media more and more (Karakiza, 2015). Social media can help develop symbiotic and mutually strong relationships, and it helps in citizen participation in the policy-making and decision-making process. Social media helps to create a mutually symbiotic relationship between the citizens and the government. It enhances public participation in the process of decision-making, policy planning, and implementation. Social media is also beneficial to make the policies suitable for the people and less controversial. The communication and delivery of viewpoints and services would provide an engaging environment for the public administrators and for the people that will prove beneficial in the long run for the government and for the development of the country as a happy nation is built upon on the happiness and satisfaction of its citizens.

The main source of literature is Google scholar, and different journals that offer free online access. The key words used for the literature review were social media in public administration, importance of social media, theories related to social media in public administration, and some other words such as symbiotic relationship, technological impact. The main principles of literature screening were to manage whatever information possible relevant to the topic of research, loyalty of social media platforms, accountability, transparency and utilize reliable sites and journals. The usage of Wikipedia and blogs was strictly avoided to protect the authenticity of the research. The use of research would be mainly done to answer the research questions and provide the relationship between social media and public administration and the role played by social media on the lives of people in general and specifically on public administration.

2.1. Nine commandments of social media in public administration

Although the role of media in public administration is never connected to religion or religious commandments, some commandments that can be applied on social media in public administration have a strong connection to religion. Though the public has already become a reliable element of modern management, there should be some guidelines followed when using social media. Social media should be used only when there is a reason. The objective, mission and the goals of the agency or organization should match with the reason behind contacting social media. Government organizations should be transparent and accountable, which is essential in a democracy (Lee and Elser, 2010). Social media and public administration should be loyal to each other because if they are not loyal and committed to each other for the purposes of maintenance an operation it would be difficult to have a strong influential relationship. A few people from the social media and a few social media

sites are enough and one should be aware that if more sites are used or more social media personnel are used then it would create chaos and confusion therefore the problem of population explosion should be always kept in mind. Moreover, there are also possibilities of spreading fake information because news through social media spreads real fast and can cause huge damage (Figueira and Oliveira, 2017).

A special officer should be used with the same personnel working who can have regular contact with the public and social media to ensure proper feedback from both sides. Engaging with the public should be kept simple because more communication will lead to a complicated relationship between both the parties. Social media can be utilized for two-way communication and also for one way communication, but when communication is used only by the high-profile office holders, for example, if a President wants to utilize social media, he will use it for communication with the public but he will not use it as a two-way communication media to communicate with the public because of the time constraints and the multiple opinions that the public will provide.

Social media helps to reach the public easily and all government organizations and public administration organizations can use social media to reach the heart of the public and get precise information. A clear conscience is a must when utilizing social media for a non-profit organization. There should be no sidetracking because social media personnel will be scrutinizing each and everything, so it is always helpful to be clear about the usage of social media in a non-profit organization.

Social media can be a strong asset for public administrators because it consists of a set of online tools that give way to new and simple ways of communication with the public. The main goals of social media are communicating, networking, and sharing and public administrators can utilize all these three goals effectively. With the help of social media, public administrators can reach a vast variety of people and that too at a faster pace. Social media can help them to become more innovative and search for ideas and knowledge outside the public administrative department. This way they can have access to knowledge with more quantity, quality, and variety (Ghanadpour and Shokouhyar, 2021). Social media can provide public administrators with more freedom and flexibility for cooperation. With the help of social media, public administrators will not have to bear negative effects of traditional media, and they will not lose autonomy and be stuck in groupthink (Ghanadpour and Shokouhyar, 2021). Public administrators can expand the network with the help of social media as they can have clarity of social media and access of social media to communicate easily and to communicate vast variety of knowledge. The higher the technology used by public administrators, the more access they can gain to valuable technical information and with the knowledge gained they can reach the public and resolve their problems in an effective manner (Ghanadpour and Shokouhyar, 2021).

2.2. Important role of social media for governments and their functions

Advocates of social media still promote the role of social media in democracy because it helps to develop strong communication between the public and the government and there are no discrepancies, manipulation or misinformation and only

fair and genuine information is given to the public. However, there are other risks involved when using social media in public administration. These risks could be in the form of false propaganda, manipulation of public opinion and giving misinformation to the public, and therefore the public administrators should be fully aware of all the risks possible so that they can mitigate the risks and utilize maximum benefits from the social media tools available (Sarjito, 2023). There should be transparent policies related to the use of social media, and both the public administrators and the social media should be under oath to follow the principles and policies strictly. There should be no scandals or misinformation, or propaganda. During the period of President Trump, media had its feast because every now and then a new scandal, a new report, a new miscommunication used to be released. It may be slightly exaggerated, but overall, the behavior of social media was deviated during this period. Either they supported him for all his actions or took away their support for even a short phrase or sentence.

The developing democratic countries can utilize media to reduce illiteracy rate. Media can help democratic countries to inform the people about what is happening around the world. The citizens can also get a better idea about the working of the government system and the judiciary services. They can learn about the social, economic, and political stand of their government. Media plays an important role in society because it is responsible for delivering information and it must be sincere, honest, and transparent in distributing the information. Governments can communicate about crises, inform about true news, save costs, and engage directly with citizens by using social media effectively. Governments can strengthen their administrative functionality and public engagement by utilizing social media. PR practitioners can use social media to improve the participation and inclusion of citizens (Nugraha and Salamah, 2021). They can also utilize social media to involve all the stakeholders in the public decision-making process as it will ensure transparency and fair play. Innovation would be possible in the delivery of services and performance of government operations by utilizing social media effectively (Špaček, 2018).

Social technologies are being adopted by government agencies so that they can serve the mission in a better manner. The old model of public sector can be re-engineered with the help of the social technologies because these social technologies offer multiple opportunities to create new forms of citizens participation, enhance common transparency and trust, enhance organizational collaboration internally and intra-organizationally and engage in public issues (Karakiza, 2015). Social technologies are helping the public administration and the people because the relationship between citizens and government is changing. Most of the citizens and experts are using social tools and therefore they want to use the same social media to contact the government authorities. Citizens want a modern, open, and effective government sector. Government may not be able to utilize social media all the time and therefore they may look out for new forms of innovation. The government agencies are now utilizing new digital technology and web 2.0 applications. These applications reduce financial pressure and enhance the quality of public services (de León et al., 2023; Karazika, 2015).

Most of the times, people are not aware of what is going inside the "White

House" or the Congress buildings, but social media can bring about inclusion of citizens in the decision-making process and even the other important stakeholders would know what position would be most beneficial for them. Furthermore, Criado and Rojas-Martín (2016) emphasize the use of social media at the local level of government to improve the performance of the local government, improvement of communication with citizens and innovation in society.

Social media can also help in improvement of government services, and effective use of public resources. The government services would improve at all the levels, national, state, and local level (Mahajan-Cusack, 2016). Public service delivery can improve with the help of social media. This can be useful in normal situations as well as in emergency situations. Personalized and transparent services would also improve by using social media. For example, during Hurricane Katrina, people wanted to provide help, but they did not know whom to approach and how to help. Social media was their guide as the news reporters became the eyes and ears of the people and the government and helped in back and forth communication, and to provide timely help to the victims of the hurricane.

2.3. Social media and its role to end corruption

Social media can work along with e-government to end corruption. According to Lonescu (2016), e-government and social media can work together to fight against corruption. However, one should not get carried away while assigning tasks to the e-government. The Internet can enhance openness, and this openness can be utilized to speak about corruption. The younger generation should not get disillusioned, but they should know what steps to take to end corruption without falling prey to illusions and getting disoriented. So, strong leaders may also be necessary to carry on the tasks of bringing together the public and administrators (Lonescu, 2016). In another study by Shim and Eom (2008), the researchers have concluded from their study based on national level data that e-government can help in anti-corruption. Anti-corruption and e-government is being studied extensively by researchers, and many have shown a direct relationship between the two. Castro and Lopes (2022) have shown that e-government can help to combat the evil of corruption. It can enhance transparency as public will know what public administration is, improves governance and reduces possibilities of discretional power by providing power in a transparent manner, but it will take time to change (Castro and Lopes, 2022).

Jha and Sarangi (2017) studied the same topic of role of social media in reducing corruption and the researchers have shown that social media can help to reduce corruption. The countries that have free press also have lesser level of corruption. The traditional method of communication may not be applicable in the modern times because traditional media provides only one way communication and most of the times this traditional media is also under the control of authoritarian regime (Jha and Sarangi, 2017). Politicians tend to monopolize or regulate the traditional media. Digital media on the other hand cannot be controlled so easily because it provides multi-way communication of information (Brunetti and Weder, 2003).

There are many cases where social media has challenged the monopoly of the

governments and the information which was available for the public led to the change in the regime. Some of the countries censor any kind of human rights violations or corruption cases, but social media can still cross these kinds of censorships, and we have come to know about what kind of human right violations are going on in other countries. The study emphasizes that more the users of social media, the lesser would be the levels of corruption (Jha and Sarangi, 2017).

Researchers studied Facebook use by people and found that social media is the best means to provide and share information and reach a larger audience to organize public protest the corruption of government officials and politicians. The most important thing is that social media can fight for itself for the rights of freedom of press by enabling a free press and reaching out to many people by disseminating information (Jha and Sarangi, 2017).

Most of the times social media is used by friends and relatives and therefore there are more chances of credibility of the information. It is difficult to study the link between Internet and corruption because in most of the countries it is very difficult to obtain data on social media users and therefore penetrating Facebook was the method utilized by the researchers to investigate the relationship between corruption and Facebook usage. The research study found that there is a negative correlation between Facebook penetration and corruption (Jha and Sarangi, 2017). The countries that have low press freedom show the strongest connection between Facebook penetration and corruption.

The researchers conducted falsification exercise and found that there was no association between Facebook inflation and corruption before the launch of Facebook and the most significant association was in the year 2012, eight years after the launch of Facebook, so it took some time for the users of Facebook to understand its usage in the fight against corruption (Jha and Sarangi, 2017).

Corruption is a major challenge for all the countries and most of the governments must address corruption (Zhang and Sapiev, 2024). Using the internet or social media to reduce corruption can be effective but it is not substantial according to the studies conducted. Its government still can utilize it to fight corruption. Social media can be analyzed effectively to determine the control of corruption of a country. The reasons are the ICT indicators such as a government adoption level, several fixed broadband subscriptions and Internet penetration rate. Social media allows rapid diffusion of news, and it also allows the dissemination of information and interaction of individuals using technology with the speed, reach and flexibility that exceeds those of the mainstream media.

Social media content is regularly updated by all users in a democratic, collaborative and participative fashion (Tang et al., 2019). Therefore, social media can influence society more than any forms of ICT. In order to use social media, it is important to first understand what the determinants of corruption are and how it is reflected through many activities in society. After conducting the research study, the researchers concluded that although the previous research showed the positive effect of various ICT and government interactions with no corruption or local level of corruption in the country but still the results are not conclusive. The researchers have provided advantages of examining social media usage through their research work (Tang et al., 2019).

Many researchers and practitioners believe that social media can be used to strengthen democratization (Norris, 2006), improve quality of government (Färdigh, 2013) helps in economic development (Besley and Prat, 2006), and helps in anticorruption (Brunetti and Weder, 2003). Social media is a communication outlet that helps to deliver information to large audiences and media can be used as a key route to inform about administrative, government and business activities that our prevalent in the society and therefore the public will be fully aware of what is going on in the country. Media can help to expose corruption in society and inform and educate and even uncover information. However, media can also expose people who are corrupt and even society will be brought to light by using social media. Social media can be used effectively to fight corruption only when there is complete freedom to social media to express because government restraints on expression that social media may not be able to reach the public. There should be conditions that help to disseminate information to a larger audience (Schausil, 2019).

The role of social media is very important to keep the political system accountable and transparent. When there is corruption in administration and government management, in the overall political system and withdraw from their civic responsibilities however one cannot guarantee that there is always a direct correlation between media freedom and lower levels of corruption. For example, if Ukraine and Belarus are compared, despite the degree of press freedom the corruption remains the same in both countries (Schausil, 2019).

Media can play three important functions in relation to corruption. It can act as a watch dog of corruption. It can promote integrity. It can engage citizens in anticorruption efforts. The fourth pillar of democracy acts as a watchdog. It is like a monitoring system of checks and balances as it closely observes the public officials and their behavior in the different fields of judiciary, legislative and executive (Schausil, 2019). By using social media, there can be a keen eye on the working of the government system and the performance of government thereby pressurizing the decision makers to take the appropriate action and not to deviate from their duties. Media can name and shame public officials because of their work and thereby act as a continuous watchdog and by providing this kind of continuous oversight it may guide the individuals and institutions to follow the right path (Schausil, 2019).

Social media is helping to involve citizens in anticorruption efforts by participatory and civic journalism. Digital technology and the rapid growth of the internet have also helped to enhance the engagement of citizens in anticorruption efforts. There are long term and short-term goals of using media for anticorruption purposes. When corruption cases are uncovered, they yield immediate results in countering corruption, and this fulfills the short-term goals of using media for anticorruption (Schausil, 2019).

Social media brings investigative reporting to a vast audience, but it is important to understand that when the corruption cases are reported it is not about reaching the quantity of the audience, but it is about the deaths and accuracy of the information being provided so that organizations are prompted to act, and the government investigation become more active.

2.4. Use of social media by public administrators to gain and tackle risks

Public administrators utilize social media for enhancing public participation, transparency and improving communication. However, public administration also deals with overload of information privacy and security concerns and dissemination of misinformation which are the challenges related to social media use in public administration (Sarjito, 2023). With the increase in the usage and role of social media, public administrators also face the challenge of increasing risks and opportunities in their organizations. Risk management is one of the effective uses made by the public administrators and the public administrators who cannot create protocols and guidelines for social media usage are far more successful to eliminate risk of comments and inappropriate messaging.

To manage properly, public administrators can utilize guidelines for the pre-approval for any kind of comments and posts. They can set rules to respond to negative comments and rules to guide around appropriate content. The role of the internet is important, but researchers should know the pros and cons of usage of the Internet (Singh and Sahu, 2008). Public administrators can also create a social media policy that is in accordance with the overall organizational values and objectives, and it can help to utilize social media consistently and appropriately (Sarjito, 2023). Public administrators also try to use social media to engage with stakeholders and to find their exact requirements to establish trust and legitimacy. They may also use it to enhance intrinsic motivation because the use of social media can enhance need satisfaction of employees (Demircioglu and Chen, 2019). Decision making process becomes easier when the stakeholders are involved and engaged and there is positive communication between administrators and stakeholders (Sarjito, 2023). Social media provides a bridge between the administrators and stakeholders by facilitating communication and enhancing the usage of social media.

The United States federal government agencies and departments have already adopted social media technologies (Mergel, 2012). President Obama declared his drive of transparency and open government and following this declaration all the executive departments were mandated to start using new technologies. The increased use of social networking services among citizens also could be one of the reasons that the citizens expect to receive government information through their Twitter or Facebook accounts. In the public sector, the main source of social media technology is the blog. The public sector can utilize blogs to directly address the audience with the issues and to pass information. Twitter is one of the micro blogging services that informs journalists and professional groups and directs them to longer updates (Mergel, 2012). The fifth wave of information and communication technology that has taken the public sector astride is social media applications. The public administration sector is using minicomputers, central timeshare systems, LAN, and online e-services (Mergel, 2012). A new wave of information and communication technology has been brought in because of government efficiency and effectiveness and it has also brought challenges to follow some standard operating procedures.

Public administrators are utilizing social media to share information, for example, information in disaster management (Zhang et al., 2019), and to find the reaction of the public for the decisions made by the public administrators and the

impact of the information on public (Sarjito, 2023). This helps the public administrators to maintain engagement with citizens and develop positive public relations. Social media information and communication technology along with e-government can be utilized to become closer to the public by being transparent and honest about policies and work done (Bertot et al., 2010). One practical example of the use of social media by public administrators in a grievous situation is during Hurricane Matthew in Florida on 10 October 2016 (Shi and Medina, 2021). Social media was used extensively during this major disaster in Florida for all the measures of response, preparedness, mitigation, and recovery. Social media can be utilized in emergency communication to get effective results and to reach broad audiences using real-time communication. Audience participation is guaranteed because there are billions of Facebook users online and they can help the authorities to have two-way communication with the residents and even from each other (Shi and Medina, 2021). There are more positive aspects of using social media for communication during emergency, but there are certain drawbacks too that cannot be ignored, and they are related to the accuracy of information and utilizing citizen content on social media (Wukich and Mergel, 2016). The management of updates during emergencies and giving detailed accounts of the scenarios should also be clearly understood (Norris and Reddick, 2013).

Also, public administrators can utilize social media to enhance accountability, transparency, and responsiveness in public administration (Sarjito, 2023). However, if information is available to all and there is complete transparency, social media can misuse information and spread propaganda and false information, which can tarnish the image of public administrators and even the government. Therefore, there is a necessity of control measures to be implemented on social media despite its right to speech and expression so that social media becomes more responsible, alert, and understand the impact of their false news on people and public administrators.

Public administration can utilize social media platforms to enhance civic engagement. The process of civic engagement is individual and collective actions that are meant to identify and address public concerns (Riccucci and Van Ryzin, 2017). Some of the civic engagements include voting, protesting, volunteering, Townhall meetings and others, and governments can use social media platforms to have enhanced interaction and more inclusive civic engagement. More people will be involved with government ventures and the public administration ventures by using social media and the government can also align their actions and decisions along with the interest of the population (Riccucci and Van Ryzin, 2017). However, there are concerns that governments usually utilize online platforms just to push the information but not to engage with the public and online communication usually reduces the public space. There are certain challenges for governments when they use social media to increase civic engagement. These challenges are inclusion, democracy, and accountability (Riccucci and Van Ryzin, 2017). Government can use social media for inclusion, but everyone cannot afford the social media applications but only a few communities will be able to utilize the social media applications and therefore there is a possibility of structural bias. Accountability is difficult because of continuous misinformation that might flow using the social media, for example there is a case where Cambridge analytical had purchased personal information from

87 million Facebook users and then used this information to manipulate voter behaviour and this influence the election in 2016. Facebook was aware of this problem, but they did not notify the authorities on time (Persily, 2017). Government can use social media tools to advance democratic outcomes. Social media platforms are usually owned privately, and they are operated privately and therefore they tend to shape community behaviour. Social media developers also decide what content they can ban, restrict, or allow and how a particular platform and its data can be used. Governments do not own the social media platforms and do not have complete authority over the social media platforms and therefore there is a possibility of inability to identify the users or sometimes conduct events of communications and information. The challenges of inclusion, democracy and accountability are again a two-way problem, and they can be sorted out when the government uses an effective theoretical perspective. Public administration can utilize social or technical frameworks to understand contraction of people and technology in organizations and workplaces. If used diligently, social media and government and public administrators can promote democracy and all the other principles on which the country runs.

Farazmand had outlined four dimensions of the future of public administration that wanted attention, and they are legal and constitutional, organizational, and managerial, inter-governmental and global and political (Zavattaro, 2013). When utilizing social media, public administration organizations have some of the biggest legal concerns such as citizen privacy, security maintenance and records management. At the federal level, public administrators have the concerns of privacy and records management within social media policies. There are four challenges facing record managers and they are capacity, policy, technology, and governance. Technology is changing at a very rapid pace and public administrators also must move along at the same pace to be on par with the changes in technology.

2.5. Gap of literature on social media usage by public administrators

Whenever any sensational news is released on the social media sites, there is first the usual awe and wonder about such a sensational news. In some of the cases, there are debates and influential speakers who try to prove that the overall news is fake and there was some mistake or false propaganda. People tend to forget the news because the controversies do not provide a clear answer and depending on the power and position of the political leaders involved in the sensational news, there will be clout used, plots will be framed to cover up the evidence, and ultimately the person depicted as the culprit will walk out free of any charges.

The case is closed and forgotten and if records exist, they become useless because of lack of proper authority. So, no information will be delivered to the media and a whole game of lies begins where the information is not correct and there is a gap in the social media usage process. There exist gaps in literature on social media because most of the countries may not accept the freedom of speech and expression, and sometimes the political leaders and public administrators may influence social media to such an extent that researchers may not be able to conduct studies on usage of social media by the public administrators (Kapoor et al., 2018).

There are reviews on social media usage by public administration scholars but there is no comprehensive review by integrating the findings from the articles published in the different information systems journals. The researchers utilized keyword-based search and analysis to find the evolution of social media literature and then they conducted manual search across specific information system journals to understand the role of information systems on the topic of media (Kapoor et al., 2018).

The keywords were searched, and analysis was not thoroughly successful, but it helped to find the similarities in publications. Manual search helped to find existing literature on social media (Kapoor et al., 2018). The researchers utilized specific journals pertaining to information technology to find relevant articles on the usage of social media and then they could find many articles relevant to their research topic.

Public administrators must fill in the gap of literature by conducting research work and ensuring that the people are fully aware of how, where, when, and why they have used the benefits of social media. The researchers should fill in the gap of literature and present their articles in the most used educational sites, so that everyone is aware of what is going on in the healthcare system and how are the features being used by everyone to utilize social media for personal and professional growth (Kapoor et al., 2018).

According to Sarjito (2023), a lot of information is available about the significant impact of social media and public administration and the relationship between citizens and government because social media provides a platform to the citizens to express their opinions and concerns. More responsive government is possible when the citizens and the government interact with each other and engage with each other and even plan decisions by constant communication.

Public administrators can gather a lot of information using social media (Greenberg and Palenchar, 2012). Social media helps the public administrators to gain valuable insights about the attitudes and opinions of citizens. Citizens can utilize this information again about the different administrators. So, the public administrators can determine the different policy decisions and make improvements in the public services (Sarjito, 2023). It is possible that the public administrators do not find it difficult to find information using social media but the researchers working to find the role of social media in public administration may have some lag and gap of information.

All information is not available for public eye, and sometimes public administrators may make decisions with privacy and secrecy to withhold information about how social media is being used by the public administrators, and because of this common ban there are possibilities of gap in literature and unavailability of information. The sensitivity of certain issues that may cause havoc if revealed to the public may also compel the public administrators to block certain social media sites.

2.6. Limitations of contact with social media

Governments are using more and more social media to expand civic engagement. The force of the government and public administration are optimistic, but there is also a possibility of new challenges for accountability, democracy and

inclusion. When using social media, the public administrators should understand that social media platforms are not exactly neutral tools. The social media platforms can also be affected or biased politically and socially. There are limitations to the usage of social media platforms and therefore they should be used cautiously.

When working with social media, public administrators should evaluate and research the design and political nature of social media platforms. They should thoroughly research the social media platforms about their ownership, racism, autocratic nature, and sexism by design. The technical object should be clearly studied more than the social context (Feeney and Porumbescu, 2021). Moreover, news media is the "fourth" branch of government, and it acts as a checking system or a "watchdog" as it provides citizens with information about public policies and government rules so that people can challenge the public policies or government agendas and demand for changes (Birkland, 2019). The news about important issues and what is exactly being done by the public administrators and the government is provided to the public by social media; therefore, the public administrators should know when to draw a line and when to utilize social media to the maximum.

This fastest way of communication is possible with the help of social media as people can use social media easily and they have also started to believe in social media. They sometimes overcome their own personal fears in order to have some kind of entertainment by using the social media as it is easier to facilitate public control and government can use social media for an interactive and ongoing community engagement, impact of the overall conversation, broadening of the societies so that public health communication can be provided and ongoing community management and interactive communicative management can be done (Abrams and Greenhawt, 2020). Communication could be done with ease and without risks, specifically during the pandemic, and more and more people could be reached using the social media tools for communication. It was the safest and the fastest, and even the least risky way of communicating that helped the people and the government (Abrams and Greenhawt, 2020).

2.7. Major theories reviewed in the paper

2.7.1. Open communication theory

One of the theoretical implications of social media usage by the public administrators is open communication theory. The main traits of this theory could be a freeway communication between public and public administrators with guarantee of trust, transparency, and honesty, and a strong guarantee of end of corruption as there will be no fake news or fake information and if ever there is fake information it can be clarified immediately. The communication between government and citizen, government and business and government and government can take place smoothly with the concept of open communication (Bryer and Zavattaro, 2011).

2.7.2. Using e-governance theory

E-governance helps the government to be open with the people and communicate directly and ICT helps to provide tools for easy communication at a mass level (Shaher and Radwan, 2022). E-governance acted as a communication tool and built bridges between the government and the people using trust and

transparency (DePaula et al., 2018).

2.7.3. Habermas theory

One of the theories that can be utilized in connection to the topic of the research study is Habermas theory. This theory can help to understand the intricate details of communication and using social media for administrative practices (Knox, 2013).

2.7.4. Technological theory

This theory deduces that technology is one of the main sources of communication, and social media and technology go hand in hand. Twitter, Facebook, TikTok, and any other social media tools need technology for smoother and faster communication (Jha and Sarangi, 2017). Technological theory also states that communication can become a two-way process only with the modern means of communication as the information can be mutually shared and people can also trust the government agencies because they can see and understand the way they are doing for the public (Karakiza, 2015).

2.7.5. Social benefit theory

Social media is the best means of communication for public administrators because they can use it to provide social benefits to the public (Sarjito, 2023). Social media can benefit many in the society because it clarifies fake news and avoid miscommunication. Social media can help whistle blowers to blow their whistle without showing their face or revealing their identity and social media can enhance accountability and transparency of the work done by the public administrators.

3. Research design

The design framework to be used in this study is a comprehensive literature review method, which will be based on the analysis of about 50 journal articles from different sources and then analyze the articles.

3.1. Research questions

1) How does social media enhance transparency?
2) What is the role played by digital media in the improvement of public administration policies?
3) What are the benefits and challenges public administrators may face because of the continuous intervention of the media?

3.2. Research method

A comprehensive literature review approach was used in this study. The literature review was based on relevant resources from reliable sites and the latest and updated peer reviewed journals. The articles were based on roles of social media in public administration and the changes in public administration because of the increasing influence of social media. Some of the criteria used for selection of articles were based on the work being done by public administrators and the impact of public influence because of social media. Later, the collected material was analyzed and then the findings were synthesized based on the key themes of public engagement, policy improvement, anticorruption and transparency enhancement

based on the research questions. The literature review method was extensive. It was reliable and credible because of the use of peer reviewed journals and authentic educational sites, and analysis that was thorough to find the answers to the research questions.

4. Data collection, analysis, and findings

4.1. Data collection

Journal articles and other publications were used to collect data about the social media's role for public administrators in general and specifically in Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Most of the articles chosen were written by authors from Saudi Arabia who have conducted surveys to understand and support the role of social media for public administrators. Some of the articles were by authors from other parts of the world who have conducted research studies to show the role of social media for public administrators in their respective countries.

4.2. Data analysis

The analysis of journal articles was conducted using "thematic analysis" to understand the correlation between the role of social media and the public administrators by using theme analysis method. Most of the studies conducted showed that different kinds of social media being used are helpful for public administrators as they act as the direct means of communication between the public and the government. These communication devices help to build trust and also to convey important information to the public. During COVID-19 the social media apps were used extensively by the public administrators to convey information to the public. Most of the articles have highlighted the transparency of the modern technological tools of social communication, and the risks involved because of communication have also been shown in some of the articles.

4.3. Findings

The most important findings of the articles are that public administrators are using e-governance for communication and other modern digital technologies for communication, which has helped in ending corruption and bringing people closer to the government because they can use the government tools directly and there are possibilities of two-way communication. Corruption is one of major problems, and most of the studies have shown that corruption can be reduced with the help of social media tools usage by the public administrators because social media can act as a watchman and keep a close eye on the work being done by public administrators and if there are any defaults and mistakes they would be pointed immediately by the social media. This system of checks imposed by the social media can help to reduce corruption, for example, Lonescu (2016) has stated that strong leaders may also be necessary to carry on the tasks of bringing together public and administrators because strong leaders would know how to work under the close eye of the social media and avoid any kind of discrepancies. Shim and Eom (2008) have shown in their study that e-government can help in anti-corruption. They found that e-

government can reduce corrupt behaviors externally by engaging citizens and internally by more effectively controlling and monitoring employees' behaviors (Shim and Eom, 2008, p. 298). Anti-corruption and e-government is being studied extensively by researchers, and many have shown a direct relationship between the two (Zhang and Sapiev, 2024). Castro and Lopes (2022) have shown that e-government can help to combat the evil of corruption. Moreover, public administrators can gather a substantial amount of information using social media (Greenberg and Palenchar, 2012). Social media enables public administrators to gain valuable insights into the attitudes and opinions of citizens.

4.4. How the research findings answer each of our research questions

1) How does social media enhance transparency?

The literature review shows that social media enhances transparency by encouraging two-way communication between government and public, and the public administrators can reach and communicate with the public directly (Shi and Medina, 2021). There are lesser chances of fake news, and any news can be verified easily in case there are doubts (Bryer and Zavattaro, 2011).

2) What is the role played by digital media in the improvement of public administration policies?

Digital medium has helped in the improvement of public administration policies because the people can directly intervene if they find anything going wrong. Social media encourages two-way talks, and it also helps to keep the public administrators and their work or the lack of work in limelight (Shi and Medina, 2021). In case public administrators are doing their work properly, they would be praised, but the moment the public realize that the public administrators are not doing their work properly, then they would have to face the ire of the public.

3) What are the benefits and challenges public administrators may face because of the continuous intervention of the media?

As shown in **Table 1** below, the continuous intervention of the media may affect the privacy of people as people may not be able to control all the information they have learned and there are certain benefits and concerns of media intervention. Public administrators may be targeted for interfering in the work of the media, and they will be answerable to many other agencies for sneaking around without any justifying reasons.

Table 1. Impact of media intervention.

Media intervention	Benefits	Concerns
Privacy	Increases trust and communication	Loss of control over information
Targeting the PAs	Gaining more control	Loss of trust
Targeting the PAs	Using media	Interfering in the work of the media

5. Discussion

The research study mainly concentrates on the positive outcomes in public administration due to the policing job done by social media, and the beneficial role of social media for the public and public administrators to convey messages and

compel public administrators to be transparent and honest in their work and dealings. Communication trends must be improved, and social media can help in improving the communication trends in public administration (Lee and Elser, 2010).

Social media can work in many ways to enhance the positive relations between public and public administrators, although there are certain doubts and negative factors. However, public administrators can overcome all the challenges and utilize their bond with the social media to bring in a new world of balance, understanding and the strong reinforced definition of government of the people, for by the people and by the people. E-governance helps the government to be more straightforward with the people and communicate directly and information communication technology helps to provide tools for easy communication at a mass level (Shaher and Radwan, 2022). E-governance can also be used to build bridges between the government and the people using trust and transparency and making the government realize that it is of the people, for the people and by the people (DePaula et al., 2018).

Social media is like a sword in the hands of the public administrators and the public, so it can be used to eradicate corruption in both places. If public administrators are corrupt, they can be persecuted by the social media and if the public see signs of corruption, the administrators can be punished using the same sword of social media. There are multiple aspects of social media, and public administrators should have their knowledge up to date to take actions and decisions accordingly because everyone is on the watch.

6. Policy implications

The literature review reveals that the public administrators using social media will have no problem to reach the public with any alarming and sensitive issues in a calm and composed manner because there will be no chances of surveillance and 'blame-game' as everyone will get fair opportunities to play and act. These policies are heartfelt extension in certain cases, so they are true and sincere in their impact and help to grow a stronger bond between government agencies and public.

1) Codes and comprehensive policies: One of the inferences drawn from the above literature study is that there should be some codes and clear and comprehensive policies regarding the usage of social media, and public administrators should work in this direction to create codes and clear policies that can be understood by people easily (Sarjito, 2023).

2) Punishments for misinformation: This policy has already been initiated, but sometimes it is difficult to implement because the extent and impact of misinformation cannot be measured, and sometimes the real culprit behind the misinformation is not caught (Sarjito, 2023). News spreads faster than fire, and misinformation spreads even faster than the speed of light. Therefore, the policy for punishments for misinformation should be framed clearly and implemented strictly.

3) A policy of following democratic values: Democratic values are important, and public administrators should implement democratic values when using social media. The privacy of users is important, and public administrators should follow this policy strictly.

4) A policy of accountability and transparency: While using social media, it is important that the public administrators be transparent in their dealings and accountable for their posts and usage of social media tools.

7. Theoretical implications

7.1. Defining a theory and main traits of a theory

According to the Merriam-Webster (2019), theory can be defined as a policy or a belief that has been proposed or followed to take an action; a theory can be a hypothesis that is taken into consideration to conduct an investigation; it is an explanation offered to explain any phenomena; a theory can be a speculation; and a theory could be an ideal or probable set of circumstances, principles or facts (Merriam-Webster, 2019).

The main traits of a theory are:
1) It should be testable.
2) It should be coherent.
3) It should be generalizable.
4) It should be economical.
5) It should explain known findings (Higgins, 2004).

Other researchers have proposed some more characteristics of theory. The famous Stephen Hawking has mentioned in his book "A Brief History of Time" that a good theory should be consistent with past observations, a good theory should predict future observations accurately and a good theory should be testable (Hawking, 2016). A theory that has been tested repeatedly and is found to be in accordance with observations should be trusted more compared to a theory that does not agree with observations and can be disapproved (Whitworth, 2022).

7.2. Integrated theory—Social media governance framework

This integrated theory of social media governance framework is a combination of multiple tools and policies that helps the public administrators to communicate effectively with the people and the same way the design also allows public to present their ideas, concerns, and issues, and even demand answers. This integrated theory of social media governance framework emphasizes that modern social media tools can be used by public administrators to communicate with people effectively. This communication can be useful to end corruption because the public administrators can be open about the way they are working, the policies behind their work and the extent of work done for the public. The governance framework will be designed in such a way that the public will have access to it using social media tools. They can also intervene or object if the policies are not conducive for them. They can give their direct input in the working of public administrators. It is possible that the inputs will be too many, so the framework of governance can involve public mediators who can play the role of selecting the most desirable interventions. Social media is becoming more and more important, and public administrators can create their positive image using social media governance framework.

The Framework can be defined with the help of a formula, where the multiple

factors of social media tools, e-governance methods and open communication methods that promotes transparency and accountability can be *x*, *y*, *z*, and the framework design by public administrators using social media can be defined as a, so in a formula it can be written as:

$$a = f(x, y, z)$$

Governance framework using social media tools is directly related to the social media tools, e-governance methods, and open communication methods. Some social media tools may provide more benefits, and some may provide lesser benefits. For example, Facebook can be beneficial in certain ways, and it can also be harmful because there have been cases when Facebook was used to harass people and even to spread misinformation.
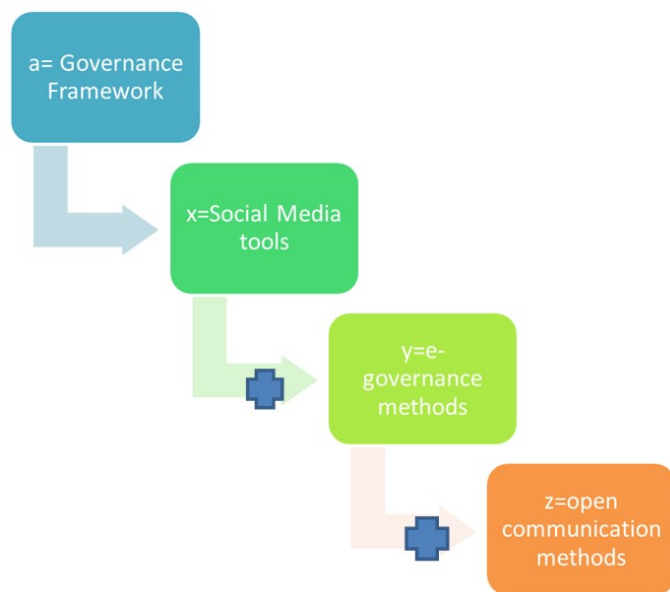

Figure 1. Social media governance framework.

Figure 1 shows that governance framework is impacted by social media tools, e-governance methods, and open communication methods, and directly correlated to these integrated factors. In case, the social media tools fail, the governance framework will also be affected, if the e-governance methods are corrupted or not appropriate, governance framework will be affected and even if public administrators do not utilize open-communication methods for some reasons, the governance framework would not stand strong.

The good thing is that social media tools can be controlled and if a perpetrator of misinformation or false propaganda is caught, his account can be blocked, and he can no longer communicate. In certain social media tools, accountability, transparency, and privacy is obligatory, for example, people who use linked in may be visible to all their prospective employees and their details would be directly seen and analyzed by people. So, they should provide correct details and protect their privacy using filters. In short, the social media governance framework explains the relationship between governance framework using social media tools, e-governance, accountability, e-governance and transparency, and this relationship is directly proportional because one affects the other.

8. Conclusions

8.1. Summary

The main purpose of the present study was to research and analyze the role of social media in public administration. Social media acts both ways as a watch dog, for the public administrators and the public. The public administrators are kept in check because of social media, and the public can question the public administrators using social media. The literature review showed that social media and the public administrators have an intimate connection because there is a strong influence of social media and digital media on the policies and work of public administrators and the government. It is possible to communicate directly with the public and the public administrators and government can show their transparent work. Digital transformation has further helped the public administrators to use social media effectively to spread correct information and to verify information. Public can utilize social media to maintain pressure on the public administrative agencies and demand answers to questions.

Although there are many benefits of utilizing social media by the public administrators, there are also risks of communication because sometimes privacy may be compromised, and due to continuous pressure on the public administrators and government there is a possibility of mistakes. There should be policies and codes and even certain strict protocols and guidelines with a clear mention of possible punishments regarding the usage of social media tools. It will be possible to reduce the cases of misinformation if the rules and policies and even the punishments for misinformation are clearly mentioned by the public administrators. Democratic values must be promoted by using social media and it becomes a huge responsibility of public administrators to be very comprehensive in their communication and stress on being transparent and accountable for all the information that is delivered through social media.

There are many challenges because of social media usage and the public administrators are always in the limelight and they can be approached immediately so whatever they say and whatever they do will be visible by many people at the same time they cannot hide themselves anymore and once they say something on any topic or any issue it can be directly delivered to the public and therefore these questions of trust, feedback, transparency, engagement and even legal and technological considerations become a special responsibility for all the public administrators. Social media's role in public administration is like a two-way sword because it has multiple benefits and can be utilized by public administrators efficiently and effectively for communication, but at the same time it can also question their words and actions because it allows people to keep a close watch on the work done by public administrators and even by the communication done by public and public administrators.

Social media opens multiple opportunities of heightened communication and greater possibility of using ethical and moral values so that the public administrators behave according to the code of conduct and are more responsive to the demands and commands of the public in a transparent, honest, and honorable manner.

8.2. Limitations of the research and the future research

There has been a lot of research conducted to understand social media's role in public administration, but still a lot must be done. The present research is limited to literature review. In the future, research can be conducted using the questionnaire or other empirical methodologies and public and public administration officials can be included in the research to find answers to the research questions and frame proper conclusions based on the experiences of the affected and involved parties.

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