

# Running Head: Using Social Media In Nursing Education

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## Abstract:

Nursing education must adapt to changes in technology, especially changes expected to not only add value to nursing as a profession but enhance efficiency as well. Changes in the nature and form of nursing education are reflected by the fact many courses in the field are offered online. Modules that are essential in e-learning are mandatory as well as helpful in undergraduate and post-graduate nursing education. Social media has been integrated into nursing education through the instructor using the platform as a way to supplement material taught in the formal classroom environment, proving beneficial to nursing education given that social media is not only cheap but also convenient. However, many barriers exist regarding the use of social media to promote nursing education, and addressing these barriers is critical for enhancing its successful integration. The primary objective of this paper is to explore the use of social media in nursing education. The assessment is expected to provide insight into how social media can be better integrated into nursing education to achieve the target goals and objectives in teaching nursing. Nurse educators can also use the information on better integration of social media in nursing education to enhance their use and integration of social media in the teaching and learning process.

## Background

Various fields experience advances in technology, and social media has been the most significant element and example of advances in technology. Social media can be defined as platforms that constitute information networks and technologies that facilitate communication based on user-generated content and helps maintain relationships between people. Some of the most common social media platforms include Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram as a medium of communication and interaction at personal and professional level (Thalluri & Penman, 2015). In the United States and Canada alone, more than 80% of people have access to and subsequently use the internet, and a similar percentage of people in both nations seek information concerning health through the internet. Healthcare has been one of the greatest beneficiaries of technological developments, and social media use in nursing education is an aspect of technology with immense potential, especially to facilitate direct interaction among individuals, dissemination of information, or access to critical learning and teaching content. Between 2012 and 2013, the use of social media for educational purposes registered a 21% increase (Arrigoni, Alvaro, Vellone, & Vanzetta, 2016). As a platform, social media is fundamental in enhancing nursing students' understanding of skills as a function of the faculty. Information concerning health policy, ethics as well as the privacy of patients can be efficiently disseminated by the faculty to the students through social media (Ventola, 2014).

Social media is critical in the development of communication not only between nursing students but between the faculty and students as well. Group learning is one of the most significant effects of social media in the learning process. These platforms are also essential in that social skills are of great essence in nursing practice, and their development is facilitated through their use in nursing education (Thalluri & Penman, 2015).

Nursing educators can use social media in new and advanced ways through the creation of teaching methods alternative to the traditional mode of information dissemination. Three critical elements exist in the use of social media in nursing education: groups, content, and the internet. The content nursing educators disseminate through social media can take various forms including videos, text, and pictures. Nursing educators efficiently distribute this content through multiple groups while the internet facilitates its use. The

primary area of focus concerning the use of social media in nursing education is the faculty and educators given that they are at the center of the teaching and learning process (O'Connor, 2017).

## **Barriers**

A wide range of barriers exist on the path to adopting social media in nursing education. Some of these barriers are manageable and can be resolved while others are more complex. Resolving these challenges would create a pathway to enhance the use of social media in nursing education and ensure nursing students and educators reap its full potential and benefits. The following sections will discuss the barriers to the use of social media in nursing education.

### **Negative Attitudes**

One of the most significant obstacles towards the integration and use of social media in nursing education is a negative attitude, not only from the educators but among some students as well. As a concept, social media has not been in existence for long, and while it has been embraced by many globally, some have not accepted it wholeheartedly. Particularly, some nursing educators consider the use of social media to be informal as a medium of information dissemination—therefore, unacceptable. A negative attitude from nursing educators has also resulted in some not being part of the social media community. The case is similar for some nursing students who have yet to become members of social media sites. The negative attitudes have made it a huge challenge to integrate social media in nursing teaching since they tend to not be cooperative; however, these attitudes can be changed through education on the positive attributes and benefits of the use of social media. A change in attitude is the critical first step in enhancing confidence and trust in the use of social media for nursing education (D'Souza et al., 2017).

### **Lack of Social Networking Skills**

Social networking is a relatively new phenomenon not only among nursing educators but middle-aged people in society, creating a huge challenge for its integration in nurse education. Social media is often considered to be for the young people in society, which is reflected by the percentage of young people who use social media being far higher than the middle-aged and elderly users. Moreover, social media tends to change over time and keeping up with the changes is a challenge for many users. Effective use of social media in nursing education requires the faculty and educators to have quality social networking skills, which many lack. Proper training and refreshment of social media skills, mainly for nursing educators, is critical to ensure success is achieved in inculcating social networking skills and knowledge (Ross & Myers, 2017).

### **Privacy Concerns**

The use of social media and its integration in nursing education also faces the barrier of privacy concerns among nursing educators and students. Privacy issues are the primary reason many people have been reluctant to use social media; users of social media platforms must be assured of the security of their personal information, especially in group platforms which are fundamental in the case of nursing educators. Privacy issues are a barrier that can be addressed through a nursing educator putting proper guidelines, rules, and procedures in place regarding the manner in which personal information should be handled when using these platforms (Thalluri, & Penman, 2015).

### **Content Standardization**

Nursing educators use of social media must be performed in such a way that the content is standardized to be disseminated efficiently to students given the format, number of words allowed and the need for efficiency in social media use. The educators must ensure the content available on social media platforms is simplified and adequately phrased. Nursing educators face the challenge of creating proper content to provide students via social media platforms. In the process of standardization and summary, nursing educators are likely to not deliver critical information, leaving important content out, an aspect that negatively impacts the teaching and learning process. Efficient content management on social media platforms is a significant challenge, and proper planning and the use of experts by nursing educators should help in the elimination of the challenge of barrier to nursing educators using social media platforms successfully (O'Connor, 2017).

### **Lack of Appropriate Tools**

Social media platforms were not initially created with the objective of facilitating teaching and learning—rather, socialization was the objective instead. Subsequently, many tools that have been integrated into these platforms aim to enable and ensure the enhancement of the socialization process. No tools have been created to allow nursing educators to use social media as platforms to provide content and valuable information. This poses a huge barrier in the appropriateness and a coherent strategy and method in the use of social media, and educators must become creative and innovative in shaping social media as information dissemination platform for nursing students. The lack of proper tools has, therefore, been an enormous barrier to the adoption of social media in nursing education (Arrigoni, Alvaro, Vellone, & Vanzetta, 2016).

Even though social media is a cheap and extremely powerful form of modern technology, its adoption in nursing education has been slow. Significant barriers complicate and inhibit the adoption of social media by nursing educators. Addressing these barriers is a significant step to ensure social media platforms facilitate enhanced teaching and learning (Tuominen, Stolt, & Salminen, 2014).

### **Using Social Media Effectively in Nursing Education**

Social media can be efficiently used in nursing education. However, crucial factors and elements be observed and adhered to when using social media. The effective use of social media in nursing education would be done through the following ways;

The use of social media in nursing education should complement conventional teaching and instructional methods and procedures, and social media cannot be depended on as the sole teaching procedure in nursing education. Given that social media has not been fully integrated into mainstream teaching and learning, its use has not been made mandatory for many students. However, nursing students should be encouraged to use platforms where nursing educators can interact with them efficiently so students can benefit from social media use. Making social media a complementary medium of instruction by nursing educators enhances its effectiveness (Lahti et al., 2017).

The effective use of social media in nursing education requires methodical organization and planning. It begins with the nursing educator organizing the students and informing them in advance that a social media group will be created. The creation of the group should be the responsibility of a student chosen by their peers and must be created before a given period of study begins. The created group should be closed to the public, and group membership should be executed through individually inviting the students as well as other members of the faculty. The goals and objectives to be achieved through the closed group membership must be outlined as well, and engagement with content related to nursing as well as consultation between the students and the members of the faculty must be emphasized. The nurse educator should set clear expectations of the group, including when social media is to be used in the teaching and learning process. The nursing educator should also encourage the cooperation and participation of the nursing students by highlighting the benefits they would reap from social media use (Ventola, 2014).

The element of safety must be addressed to effectively use social media platforms, which is an activity the nursing educator is responsible for. The privacy of users on a social media platform used in nursing education should be respected, and nursing students should be instructed on how to set the proper privacy settings on the social media platform. Moreover, the nursing educator should put in place guidelines relating to privacy that must be followed by the nursing students during the period they are in a social media group. Assurance of student and faculty members confidentiality is critical in creating a safe platform and encouraging cooperation between social media group members (Arrigoni et al., 2016).

To effectively the social media platform, a space should be provided for the students to interact, collaborate, and communicate. The nursing educator should not inhibit the students from interacting freely with each other on the platform, especially for purposes related to nursing. Allowing student interaction is a way to enhance the effectiveness of using a social media platform. Interaction and communication through a social media platform ensures students do not feel detached from the initial purpose of the platform. The students should not be limited in terms of the normal interaction and use of social media essentially because it is being used for teaching. While responsibility and high levels of discipline should be encouraged during student interaction on social media platforms, their collaboration and free communication should not be

censored. It helps create a conducive and normal social media use environment as long as discipline is maintained (Ventola, 2014).

The role of the nursing educator and the interaction between the nursing students and educators are both exceptionally significant in ensuring the effectiveness of social media in nurse education. A primary role of the nursing educator is providing regular feedback concerning the student's activities and general progress. The educator should update students on the level or percentage of achievement regarding the set goals and objectives in the context of the social media platform. Additionally, the nurse educator should engage in discussions with the students on the social media platform, especially through answering questions and providing clarification as well as supplemental information on nursing-related topics explored within the platform. Enriching meaningful activities for the students that are critical to the achievement goals and objectives in nursing education through social media platforms is crucial to achieving the set objectives. Some of these include setting up questionnaires that are interactive and engaging (O'Connor, 2017).

Learning is the primary objective of using social media in nursing education, and success in learning requires active student engagement. The nursing educator should encourage active learning, which calls for providing a platform for the students in the social media space created for the purpose of making them to be actively engaged, through response and asking questions. Primarily, the educator should provide opportunities for nursing students to illustrate the learned material. The expression of the learned material promotes higher motivation and positive competition. It would not only facilitate effective use of social media but ensure the target goals and objectives are achieved as well in delivery of nursing education information and concepts (Ventola, 2014).

Ensuring a pleasant experience also promotes effective use of social media in nursing education. Social media users tend towards being disrespectful, and lousy behaviour is typical on most platforms. In a social media group with the purpose to promote and facilitate nursing education, such vices should not be condoned. Proper etiquette must be encouraged and demanded from the group members. The posts of the social media group members should be respectful and relate to the primary goals and objectives set in line with nursing education. The administrator of the group should be granted the power to delete inappropriate postings. Etiquette and ethical behaviour are essential elements that help create a pleasant experience and create a conducive environment for learning, which subsequently translates to the effective use of social media in fulfilling the target objectives in nursing education (Arrigoni et al., 2016).

The way students learn tends to vary due to differences in their abilities. The teaching approaches used in a social media platform should also have variety for the platform to be effective. The nursing educator should use different methods to ensure every nursing student is accommodated. In the integration of teaching methods and styles, a teacher should provide video-based instruction, important notes, and in the form of worded images. The nursing educator further enhances the effectiveness of using social media in nursing education by providing individualized attention through active response to student queries. Some concepts are likely to be confusing or too complicated to be easily understood, and the additional explanation is essential to ensure information is clarified (Paton, Bamidis, Eysenbach, Hansen, & Cabrer, 2011).

### **Benefits of Using Social Media in Nursing Education**

The use of social media in nursing education has a wide range of benefits. These benefits are mainly long-term and help nurture nurses that can deliver quality health services. The following section describes the outcomes of using social media in nursing education.

First, nursing students learn new skills in communication, a critical element in their practice. Better communication skills, especially the use of appropriate etiquette, are essential to ensuring proper interaction between nursing students and patients. The development of a good relationship between the nurse and the patient and understanding the healthcare needs of a patient is enhanced through better communication skills. The nurse is able to ask proper and direct questions concerning the best ways of improving and resolving the health issues of a patient. Better communication is one of the most important and long-term benefits of using social media in nursing education which often helps nursing students while in practice (Ross & Myers, 2017).

Restraint and discipline in using social media for nursing education lay a strong foundation for nursing students to be well behaved and act in an ethical and morally acceptable manner. Nurses must adhere to a professional code of ethics, and nursing students need to be taught the appropriate actions in their practice at an early stage. The interaction between students on a social media platform provides an opportunity for the



nursing educator to streamline the behaviour of the nursing students, which is reflected in the later life of the nursing students during their practice (Lahti et al., 2017).

The use of social media enhances the efficiency of a nursing educator to quickly, efficiently, and promptly disseminate relevant information to the students. New information concerning health policy as well as changes in nursing practice can be disseminated to the nursing students through social media groups. The dissemination of the information costs very little, and the efficiency cannot be compared with traditional modes of teaching given its higher level of efficiency and ability to reach a higher number of students. (Ventola, 2014).

In nursing education, students are likely to encounter daily problems and challenges, especially in lack of access to proper and quality educational materials which are integral in learning. Having these challenges addressed through the assistance of fellow students and nursing faculty is easy and highly convenient through social media groups. The groups provide a platform where an issue raised can be resolved through brainstorming. Better yet, this can be done at any time of the day, irrespective of the location of the nursing students, which is a huge benefit of social media in nursing education (Paton et al., 2011).

### **What's New in Using Social Media in This Field?**

The use of social media in nursing education has a wide range of relatively new aspects, one of which is its engagement of nurses in the development of health policy. Social media use in nursing education enables educators and policymakers to gain access to a pool of valuable information based on the views of nurses. The health policy can then be formulated based on issues nurses consider to be a priority. Social media as a phenomenon is currently being used for engaging nursing students as well as practising nurses in the development of policy that will help address the challenges and issues they encounter (Lahti et al., 2017).

Currently, nursing students engaged in practice use social media to facilitate regular contact and interaction with patients. Through social media, nursing students can keep track of their patients and quickly follow up on their progress. The interaction between the nursing students and patients further helps create a close relationship, trust and understanding. The trust helps establish a bond that makes the patient more open in terms of the health issues they encounter. This is key in ensuring satisfactory services and better health outcomes (Ventola, 2014).

Collaboration and sharing critical information are also new when using social media in nursing education. Students can work together on a project while many miles apart, which is facilitated through regular updates on social media, and problems and challenges can be resolved promptly. Research activities are also accomplished more conveniently through social media collaboration as the information gathered can be shared between the students to enrich their knowledge and understanding concerning a research topic (Lahti et al., 2017).

### **Conclusion**

Social media is extremely popular, and the trend in the use of these platforms is expected to grow in the near future. Nursing education has integrated social media, an aspect met by multiple barriers. One barrier is the negative attitude towards social media, which has been evident among students as well as nursing educators. The use of social media in nursing education will only be effective if several factors and elements such as content standardization and change of negative attitudes are changed. The use of social media has had a wide range of benefits as well. In using social media in nursing education, many aspects and elements are relatively new, such as its use in gathering information that helps in shaping health policy. Nursing students will become better communicators due to experiences in their use of social media. It is also likely to be much easier to follow up on progress of patients treated through social media in a cheap, easy and convenient manner (Ross & Myers, 2017).

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