

THE USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA IN CRISIS MANAGEMENT: A CASE STUDY OF THE MINISTRY OF HEALTH IN JORDAN

SAYEL MISBAH AL-NIZAMI

Mu'tah University. Email: sayelndami@yahoo.com

Abstract

Social media platforms are considered essential tools that have transformed communication methods in society, especially following the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2019. These platforms played a vital role in health crisis management, as the Ministry of Health in Jordan extensively used them to disseminate health information, raise public awareness about preventive measures, and engage directly with the community during the COVID-19 crisis. In this context, challenges faced by health authorities in managing information during the pandemic have emerged, as social media became the primary platform for information dissemination and community interaction. This raises questions about the effectiveness of these platforms in crisis management and ways to enhance their use in the future. The aim of this study is to analyze the role of social media in managing health crises through a case study of the Jordanian Ministry of Health during the COVID-19 pandemic. It also seeks to understand individuals' motivations for using these platforms and to measure the extent to which they benefited from the available health information. The study employed a descriptive and evaluative methodology to analyze the use of social media in spreading health information and promoting health awareness during the crisis, focusing on measuring their effectiveness in improving community response. A sample of 400 individuals from Jordanian society was selected for the study. The results showed a positive correlation between the use of social media and the effectiveness of health crisis management, demonstrating the platforms' active role in information dissemination and health awareness enhancement. It was also found that individuals' benefit from this information contributed to increased satisfaction with the role of social media in managing the crisis. The study recommends enhancing the use of social media for disseminating health information during future crises, emphasizing transparency and credibility in news delivery. It also suggests establishing official platforms to ensure the accuracy of information and reduce the spread of rumors.

Keywords: Social Media, Health Crisis Management, COVID-19 Pandemic, Jordanian Ministry of Health, Health Information Dissemination.

INTRODUCTION

Social media platforms are among the essential tools relied upon by modern society, especially in light of rapid technological advancements. Their role became particularly prominent after the emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2019, as these platforms turned into an urgent necessity for communication and information dissemination, contributing to transforming the world into a globally interconnected village (Khaled, 2021).

With the increasing reliance on social media, various economic, social, political, and cultural sectors witnessed unprecedented development, as many modern technologies replaced their traditional counterparts, leading to a radical change in communication and interaction patterns (Abusrea, 2017). Amid this transformation, social media emerged as a key tool in crisis management, particularly in the health sector.

The Ministry of Health in Jordan played a prominent role in utilizing these platforms during the COVID-19 crisis by relying on them to disseminate health information, raise awareness about preventive measures, and engage directly with citizens. This contributed to limiting rumors and enhancing individuals' and society's responsiveness to the crisis. These platforms also enabled the ministry to deliver information swiftly and effectively, and to coordinate efforts among various health entities to confront the challenges posed by the pandemic.

Accordingly, this study addresses the role of social media in managing health crises, with a focus on the case study of the Ministry of Health in Jordan, aiming to analyze their effectiveness in disseminating information, raising health awareness, and coordinating efforts to handle crises efficiently and effectively (Khalil, 2019).

Problem Statement and Questions

Since ancient times, humans have relied on various means of communication, starting from inscriptions on stone and leaves, to writing on walls, and then to printing and traditional journalism (Nidaa, 2021). With industrial and technological development, new communication media emerged, such as newspapers, radio, and television, culminating in the information technology revolution that brought a radical transformation in communication methods.

With the advent of the internet and social media platforms, individuals increasingly depend on these tools in their daily lives (Alabdallat, 2021). The importance of social media became especially prominent during the COVID-19 crisis (2020-2021), where it played a vital role in crisis management and disseminating health information, particularly amid imposed quarantine and social distancing measures (Al-Dhafiri, 2021).

These platforms became the primary means for conveying health information, raising awareness about preventive measures, and facilitating interaction between health authorities and the community, which helped reduce the spread of rumors and enhance public awareness. In this context, the current study examines the role of social media in crisis management, focusing on the case study of the Ministry of Health in Jordan.

The study aims to answer the following questions:

- What is the role of social media in managing the COVID-19 crisis?
- How did these platforms contribute to supporting the efforts of the Jordanian Ministry of Health in handling the crisis, enhancing health response strategies, and improving communication with citizens to ensure timely access to accurate and reliable information?

Study Objectives

The current study seeks to investigate the impact of using social media in crisis management through a case study of the Ministry of Health in Jordan by:

- Analyzing the role of social media in managing health crises, with a focus on the experience of the Ministry of Health in Jordan during the COVID-19 pandemic.

- Identifying individuals' motivations for using social media and examining their relationship with variables such as age, academic year, hours of usage, and manner of usage.
- Enriching academic research in the field of health crisis management by studying the effect of social media on information dissemination and the promotion of health awareness.

Research Hypotheses

- **Hypothesis 1:** There is a statistically significant relationship between the extent of social media usage and health crisis management, with a focus on the experience of the Ministry of Health in Jordan during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- **Hypothesis 2:** There is a statistically significant relationship between individuals' motivations for using social media and variables such as age, academic year, hours of usage, and manner of usage.
- **Hypothesis 3:** There is a statistically significant relationship between individuals' benefit from COVID-19-related health information on social media platforms and their level of satisfaction with the role of these platforms in enhancing health awareness and managing the crisis.

Significance of the Study

Theoretical Significance:

The theoretical significance of this study lies in the fact that social media platforms are among the most important modern technological tools that have facilitated research, communication, and interaction, and have assumed a pivotal role in crisis management. This study aims to shed light on the role of social media in supporting crisis management strategies, especially within the health sector.

Moreover, the study contributes to enriching scientific research related to crisis management through a case study of the Ministry of Health in Jordan, thereby opening the door for future studies on how these platforms can be employed to enhance responses to health crises and emergencies. Furthermore, the study is based on a range of communication theories, such as the Strong Effects Theory of communication media, to understand the mechanism through which social media influences crisis management and guides public opinion during critical periods.

Practical Significance:

Given the widespread use of social media networks across various societies, this study aims to analyze the role of these platforms in managing health crises, with a focus on the experience of the Jordanian Ministry of Health during the COVID-19 pandemic. It also seeks to assess the positive and negative impacts of using social media in this context and to provide recommendations for enhancing the effective use of these platforms in future crises. Through the anticipated results, communication strategies can be improved, negative effects minimized, and the capacity of health institutions to communicate with

the public and manage crises effectively can be strengthened. This contributes to reducing the temporal and spatial gaps between health authorities and citizens, enabling a swift and organized response during crises.

Theoretical Framework and Previous Studies

Previous Studies

Many studies have addressed the role of social media in managing health crises, particularly concerning the experience of the Ministry of Health in Jordan during the COVID-19 pandemic. A study by Engy Mohammed Abusrea (2017) confirmed that digital transformations have compelled institutions to adopt new strategies for crisis management. It showed that social media has become a fundamental tool for communication during crises. The study focused on analyzing research trends on this topic and concluded that combining traditional and modern media in crisis management strategies is necessary to enhance effectiveness and reliability in information dissemination.

On the other hand, a study by Asma Mustafa (2021) examined the efficiency of human resources in the Jordanian Ministry of Health in dealing with the COVID-19 crisis. The study used a descriptive-analytical approach to assess the ministry's success in managing the crisis. Results indicated that the ministry successfully implemented effective measures, but some administrative and logistical challenges required further improvements. The study recommended conducting a comprehensive evaluation of the health sector in Jordan and providing training programs to better handle future health crises. Another study focused on the interaction of the population with health information published by the Ministry of Health in Jordan via social media during the COVID-19 pandemic.

This study relied on content analysis of the ministry's Facebook page and found that interactive content and updated information enhanced public engagement and trust in the published health information. The study recommended adopting a communication strategy based on publishing more interactive and transparent content, which strengthens citizens' trust in government health measures.

In the context of crisis management strategies, another study reviewed the concept of crisis management through new media, emphasizing the importance of digital media in guiding public opinion during crises. The study highlighted that social media platform were able to disseminate information at record speed, which contributed to improving citizens' responsiveness to preventive measures. It recommended training emergency teams and government media personnel to use these platforms more effectively while ensuring the provision of accurate and reliable information during crises. As for the study by Al-Zabon (2024), it relied on analyzing previous research on the use of social media in crisis management.

The study reviewed various research trends in this field and showed that institutions increasingly depend on social media platforms, especially during health crises. This calls

for establishing clear policies to ensure the accuracy of published information and limit the spread of rumors. Based on these studies, it is evident that social media plays a crucial role in managing health crises, particularly regarding the experience of the Ministry of Health in Jordan during the COVID-19 pandemic. The results showed that the success of using these platforms largely depends on the level of public engagement and the credibility and transparency of the information shared. Therefore, adopting communication strategies based on interaction and clarity will contribute to strengthening trust between health authorities and the community, thereby enhancing the response to future health crises.

Critique of Previous Studies

Previous studies have demonstrated the importance of social media in managing health crises, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic, and highlighted the role of the Jordanian Ministry of Health in this context. These studies confirmed that social media platforms have become a primary tool for disseminating health information and raising community awareness. However, they did not sufficiently address the challenges related to the spread of misinformation and its impact on crisis management. Some studies focused on digital transformations and their role in improving communication strategies during crises but did not provide detailed insights into how to counter fake news and enhance the credibility of information.

Additionally, some research examined the efficiency of human resources in the Jordanian Ministry of Health, yet they did not explore the extent to which social media supports the efforts of healthcare workers. Moreover, certain studies analyzed public interaction with health content, emphasizing that transparency and credibility play key roles in increasing trust in official information. Nevertheless, they did not clarify how health institutions can control the flow of accurate information through these platforms. Overall, despite the consensus on the importance of social media in health crisis management, there remains a need for further research on how to enhance the credibility of health information, mechanisms to combat rumors, and the strategies employed by the Jordanian Ministry of Health to improve the use of these platforms during future crises.

METHODOLOGY AND PROCEDURES

Study Approach

This study adopted a descriptive and evaluative approach to describe the role of social media in crisis management, focusing on the case study of the Ministry of Health in Jordan, considering it a scientific phenomenon worthy of analysis and evaluation. Social media played a vital and effective role in raising awareness about the COVID-19 pandemic, especially within health institutions, by enhancing communication between official entities and the public, and by transmitting information quickly and transparently, which contributed to improving health response and managing the crisis efficiently.

The descriptive approach in this study involves analyzing how the Jordanian Ministry of Health employed these platforms in managing the health crisis and the developments

witnessed in its strategies between 2019 and 2022, aiming to interpret this phenomenon and understand the reasons behind its success or the challenges it faced. The evaluative approach is used to assess the effectiveness of social media in managing health crises, its impact on disseminating health information, reducing rumors, and improving interaction between the ministry and citizens.

This evaluation helps in drawing conclusions and recommendations that can be generalized to enhance the optimal use of these platforms in managing future crises within the health sector and other vital sectors.

Study Population and Sample

The researcher relied on the survey method using a sampling technique due to the difficulty of dealing with the entire study population. The study was conducted on a sample consisting of 400 individuals from the population. This sample aims to analyze the role of social media in managing health crises through the case study of the Ministry of Health in Jordan, in order to measure the extent of the impact of these platforms on disseminating health information, enhancing community awareness, and improving the response of individuals and health institutions during crises.

Characteristics of the Study Sample

Variable	Category	Males (%)	Number of Males	Females (%)	Number of Females	Total (%)
Gender	Male	50	200	50	200	100
Age	18 to less than 25 years	25	100	25	100	50
Age	25 to 35 years	25	100	25	100	50
Age	36 to 50 years	20	80	20	80	40
Age	50 years and above	30	120	30	120	60
Educational Level	Bachelor's degree	40	160	60	240	100
Educational Level	Postgraduate degree	60	240	40	160	100
Monthly Income	Less than 400 JOD	35	140	35	140	70
Monthly Income	400 to less than 800 JOD	40	160	40	160	80
Monthly Income	800 to 1000 JOD	15	60	15	60	30
Monthly Income	More than 1000 JOD	10	40	10	40	20

Source: Prepared by the researcher

The above table illustrates the demographic characteristics of the study sample, which can be summarized as follows:

The table presents the characteristics of the 400 individuals selected for the study, categorized based on key variables such as gender, age, educational level, and monthly income. This distribution reflects the demographic diversity of the sample, enabling researchers to analyze the impact of these characteristics on social media use in the context of health crisis management. Regarding gender, the sample was evenly split between males and females, each constituting 50% of the sample. This balanced distribution highlights the importance of examining the potential effects of social media on both genders during health crises, considering that usage patterns might differ between

males and females. Additionally, this balance enhances the accuracy of the analysis and ensures transparent representation of both genders in the study.

For age groups, the sample was divided into four main categories. The age groups from 25 to 50 years old represented the largest portion of the sample, accounting for 50% of the total. This proportion reflects the increased reliance on social media within these age groups, as they tend to be more engaged with technology. Older age groups, such as those aged 50 and above, accounted for 40% of the sample, indicating heightened awareness among individuals in these groups about the importance of social media for communication during health crises. Regarding educational level, the sample included diverse levels, with 60% holding postgraduate degrees.

This distribution reflects the influence of higher education on social media use, as individuals with higher education are expected to be more capable of utilizing these platforms to follow health crises, access accurate information, and make informed decisions. Meanwhile, 40% held a bachelor's degree, indicating diversity in educational attainment within the sample. Finally, monthly income was divided into four categories.

The income group earning between 400 and less than 800 Jordanian Dinars (JOD) represented 40% of the sample. This distribution suggests that individuals in the middle-income brackets are the most active users of social media and likely have better access to the internet and technological devices that allow them to follow events and interact with health information shared via these platforms.

On the other hand, both the lower-income group (less than 400 JOD) and the higher-income group (more than 1000 JOD) represented the smallest proportions of the sample. Based on these data, it is evident that the sample represents a diverse group socially and economically, which strengthens the study's ability to provide accurate insights into the use of social media in health crisis management across different segments of society.

Validity and Reliability Testing

The validity and reliability of the questionnaire used to collect data were tested to ensure the accuracy and trustworthiness of the research instrument employed in the study on the use of social media in crisis management — a case study of the Ministry of Health in Jordan.

Validity Test:

Face validity refers to the extent to which the measurement tool accurately measures the theoretical variables related to the research topic. To verify the validity of the research instrument, the questionnaire was presented to a group of specialists in research methodology, media, and statistics (16 experts) to review the clarity of the questions and the comprehensiveness of the study dimensions. The review showed consensus among the experts regarding the appropriateness and effectiveness of the instrument in measuring the targeted variables.

Reliability Test:

Reliability refers to the ability of the research instrument to produce consistent results when applied under the same conditions, reflecting its stability and suitability for data collection. To measure reliability, the researcher applied the test to a sample representing 10% of the total respondents after the questionnaire was validated, then reapplied the test to another sample representing 5% of the respondents two weeks after the first application. The reliability coefficient reached 94.6%, indicating a high level of consistency and trustworthiness, confirming the questionnaire's suitability for field application and the generalizability of the results to the study population.

Study Design

Statistical Analysis

The researcher utilized the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software to analyze the analytical and field data of the study.

The significance level adopted in this study for all hypothesis tests, correlation relationships, and regression coefficients is a confidence level of 95% or higher, meaning a significance level of 0.05 or less is used to accept the results obtained from the statistical tests.

Study Results and Discussion

Hypothesis One:

There is a statistically significant correlation between the extent of social media usage and health crisis management, with a focus on the experience of the Ministry of Health in Jordan during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Table 2: The Relationship between the Extent of Social Media Usage and Health Crisis Management, Focusing on the Experience of the Ministry of Health in Jordan during the COVID-19 Pandemic

Variable	Pearson Correlation Coefficient	Significance Level	Statistical Significance
Extent of social media use during the COVID-19 crisis	0.458	0.000	Statistically Significant

Source: Prepared by the researcher

As shown in the above table, there is a statistically significant correlation between individuals' use of social media and health crisis management, focusing on the Ministry of Health's experience in Jordan during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Pearson correlation coefficient was 0.458 at a significance level of 0.000, reflecting the effective role of social media in enhancing health crisis management.

The results indicate that the greater the individuals' use of these platforms during the pandemic, the more effective their management of health information became, which strengthened their trust in the guidance provided through digital platforms.

This finding aligns with studies on the impact of social media in disseminating health awareness, combating rumors, and improving communication between health authorities and the public, contributing to a more efficient and effective individual response to the health crisis.

Hypothesis Two:

There is a statistically significant correlation between individuals' motives for using social media and variables such as age, academic year, hours of use, and usage method.

Table 3: Relationship Between Individuals' Motives for Using Social Media and Variables Such as Age and Academic Year

Variable	Pearson Correlation Coefficient	Significance Level	Statistical Significance
Individuals' motives for using social media	0.180	0.000	Statistically Significant

Source: Prepared by the researcher

The table above shows a statistically significant correlation between individuals' motives for using social media and variables such as age, academic year, hours of use, and usage method. The Pearson correlation coefficient was 0.180 at a significance level of 0.000, reflecting the relationship between these factors and the extent of individuals' engagement with social media content.

This result supports the importance of social media as a means to enhance digital interaction, disseminate information, and guide users toward effectively benefiting from available content, thereby improving their digital experience and optimizing platform use according to different usage motives.

Hypothesis Three:

There is a statistically significant correlation between the extent to which individuals benefit from health information related to the COVID-19 pandemic on social media and their satisfaction with the role of these platforms in promoting health awareness and managing the crisis.

Table 32: Relationship Between Individuals' Benefit from Health Information Related to the COVID-19 Pandemic on Social Media and Their Satisfaction with the Role of These Platforms in Promoting Health Awareness and Crisis Management

Variable	Pearson Correlation Coefficient	Significance Level	Statistical Significance
Individuals' benefit from health information related to COVID-19	0.214	0.000	Statistically Significant

Source: Prepared by the researcher

The above table reveals a statistically significant correlation between individuals' benefit from health information related to the COVID-19 pandemic on social media and their

satisfaction with the role of these platforms in enhancing health awareness and managing the crisis. The Pearson correlation coefficient was 0.214 at a significance level of 0.000, indicating that as individuals' benefit from health information available on social media increases, their level of satisfaction with the role of these platforms in disseminating health awareness and managing the crisis also rises.

This result emphasizes the importance of social media as a key tool in handling health crises through its role in distributing accurate information, raising health awareness, and providing an effective communication channel between the Ministry of Health in Jordan and the public, thereby contributing to a more efficient and effective response from individuals and society to the crisis.

Recommendations and Suggestions

The communication transformations have compelled traditional media to reconsider their strategies and tools, as these changes have led to the fragmentation of media consumption from mass media to individualized media, thereby diminishing the distinctions between traditional and new media.

The study confirmed a significant increase in the use of social media platforms, especially among the youth, which necessitates the establishment of trusted national pages and platforms that audiences can rely on to obtain accurate information, aiming to reduce the spread of false or misleading news. The study also highlighted a strong relationship between the credibility of the media outlet and the extent to which the population depends on it for information, particularly during health crises.

Therefore, social media platforms must adhere to transparency and credibility when disseminating health information, ensuring the accuracy of circulating news—especially concerning the number of COVID-19 cases, whether officially recorded by the Jordanian Ministry of Health or unregistered—and rely solely on official sources. To curb the spread of rumors, the study recommends imposing strict monitoring on health-related news circulating on social media platforms, preventing anyone from publishing unverified information without prior confirmation. Additionally, official platforms affiliated with the Jordanian Ministry of Health should be established, where publishing is restricted to official entities and specialists, guaranteeing the accuracy of information and preventing panic among citizens.

Furthermore, health information should be conveyed by reputable figures in the medical field in a balanced manner, avoiding exaggeration or downplaying the severity of the crisis, while using various media approaches suitable for different social and cultural groups. An official page for medical professionals working in the country can also be created to raise health awareness and provide reliable reports to reassure the public.

Moreover, raising health awareness should be enhanced through awareness programs and launching educational campaigns across various state institutions to increase citizens' understanding of the risks posed by viruses and diseases, and to promote effective prevention methods and response strategies for such health crises.

References

- 1) Abu-Surai', E. M. (2017). The use of social media in crisis management. *Scientific Journal for Public Relations and Advertising Research*, (11), 305–358.
- 2) Khalil, E. (2019). The use of social media in crisis management: A study analyzing the second level. *Scientific Journal for Public Relations and Advertising Research*, (15), 220–250.
- 3) Al-Dhafiri, M. N. F., & Al-Shura, A. A. S. (2021). The impact of strategic synergy in project management: The mediating role of empowerment in Kuwait Oil Company (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). International Islamic University, Amman.
- 4) Al-Abdallat, D. S., & Al-Shura, M. S. K. (2021). Good governance and its impact on project management at Greater Amman Municipality. *Al-Mithqal Journal of Economic and Administrative Sciences*, 7(3), 49–82.
- 5) Othman, A. (2018). The role of public relations in crisis management in health institutions. *Middle East Public Relations Research Journal*, (17), 95–120.
- 6) Daraji, S., & Al-Huneiti, H. (2023). The role of social media in crisis management: An analytical study. *Rimah Journal for Research and Studies*, (77), 15–40.
- 7) Khaled Mansour, A., & Youssef Al-Shatti, H. (2021). A comparative study between Kuwait and Qatar: The clash between reality and aspirations in implementing education during the COVID-19 pandemic and the value repercussions arising from it. *Journal of Faculty of Education-Assiut University*, 37(11), 517–546.
- 8) Nidaa Raheel Al-Anzi, O. (2021). Educational leadership strategy amid the COVID-19 pandemic in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. *Journal of Faculty of Education-Assiut University*, 37(5), 375–396.
- 9) Deb Nemr Al Zabon, L. (2024). Changes in some health habits during the pandemic lockdown among ninth grade students (in government schools in Bethlehem Governorate). *Journal of Faculty of Education-Assiut University*, 40(3), 155–182.