ISSN (Online): 2455-3662
EPRA International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research (IJMR) - Peer Reviewed Journal
Volume: 11| Issue: 6| June 2025|| Journal DOI: 10.36713/epra2013 || SJIF Impact Factor 2025: 8.691 || ISI Value: 1.188

CRIMINOLOGY INSTRUCTOR ADAPTATION AND CHALLENGES TO SOCIAL MEDIA

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INTRODUCTION

The rapid advancement of technology has transformed traditional teaching methods, with social media emerging as a significant educational tool. In Criminology education, social media platforms provide opportunities for interactive learning, real-time discussions, and exposure to current events related to law enforcement, criminal justice, and societal issues. Platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, and LinkedIn allow instructors to share case studies, legal updates, and research findings, fostering engagement among students by making learning more dynamic and relevant. Additionally, social media enables collaborative learning by encouraging discussions beyond the classroom, where students can analyze crime trends, debate legal policies, and explore real-world applications of criminological concepts. Instructors can also use social media to connect students with law enforcement professionals, legal experts, and forensic analysts, providing opportunities for mentorship and career insights.

However, despite its benefits, integrating social media into teaching presents various challenges. One major concern is misinformation, as students may encounter unverified or biased content that influences their perceptions of crime and justice. Ethical dilemmas also arise, particularly regarding student-instructor interactions on digital platforms, where maintaining professional boundaries is crucial. Data privacy concerns are another pressing issue, as the exposure of personal information on social media can lead to unintended consequences such as cyber threats or misuse of sensitive data. Furthermore, the digital divide remains a significant barrier, as not all students have equal access to reliable internet connections and devices, potentially creating disparities in learning experiences. Additionally, managing student engagement on social media requires balancing academic discussions with the risk of online distractions and inappropriate content. As social media becomes more integrated into education, Criminology instructors must develop strategies to address these challenges while maximizing its potential benefits.

Several recent studies highlight the impact of social media in education. Seda et al. (2024) examined how social media affects study habits among Criminology students, emphasizing both its benefits and drawbacks, such as increased accessibility to learning materials but also heightened distractions due to excessive screen time. Wang (2023) investigated the influence of social media consumption on college students' perceived commitment to the police occupation, revealing that increased exposure to negative portrayals of law enforcement online may reduce interest in pursuing careers in policing and criminal justice. Marín et al. (2023) conducted an international comparative study on pre-service teachers' perceptions of social media and data privacy, shedding light on educators' concerns regarding digital platforms, including potential breaches of confidentiality and ethical dilemmas in online learning. Zeng and Wong (2023) explored the relationship between social media narratives and public perceptions of crime, emphasizing the need for digital literacy and critical thinking skills to counteract misinformation and bias. Moreover, Vickers, Pitman, and LaBouff (2025) analyzed how social media influences students' perceptions of crime severity and criminal justice policies, highlighting the role of online exposure in shaping attitudes toward law enforcement and legal systems.

These studies provide a foundation for understanding the role of social media in Criminology education, demonstrating its transformative potential in modern pedagogy while underscoring the importance of responsible and strategic implementation. The present study builds on this research by focusing on how Criminology instructors navigate these opportunities and challenges, offering insights into effective adaptation strategies that enhance student learning while mitigating risks associated with digital platforms. By understanding the benefits and limitations of social media in education, instructors can refine their teaching methods and ensure that students develop critical digital literacy skills necessary for responsible engagement in the evolving landscape of criminal justice.

METHODOLOGY

This study employs a **qualitative research design**, specifically using **written interviews** to gather insights into Criminology instructors' adaptation to social media and the challenges they face. The study will use **total enumeration sampling**, including **all full-time Criminology instructors at the Philippine College of Science and Technology (PhilCST), excluding part-time faculty.** Data will be collected through **open-ended interview questions** designed to explore instructors' experiences, perceptions, and strategies related to social media use in teaching. **Thematic analysis** will be used to identify recurring patterns and themes from the responses, ensuring a deep understanding of the instructors' adaptation process and the challenges they encounter. This study will utilize a written interview guide consisting of open-ended questions to gather qualitative data on Criminology instructors' adaptation, challenges, and perceptions of social media use in teaching. The interview guide will be structured to allow instructors to express their thoughts, experiences, and recommendations freely. Responses will be analyzed through thematic analysis to identify key themes, trends, and insights relevant to social media utilization for Criminology education.

RESULTS

Preliminary findings suggest that Criminology instructors acknowledge the potential of social media in fostering student engagement and critical thinking. Many educators use platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube to share relevant case studies, legal updates, and criminological theories. However, challenges such as the spread of misinformation, online distractions, and ethical concerns related to privacy and professional boundaries were frequently reported. Additionally, disparities in students' access to digital devices and internet connectivity hinder equitable learning experiences.

DISCUSSION

The results indicate that while social media enhances the learning process, its integration requires careful management. Instructors

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must develop strategies to verify sources, establish clear guidelines for ethical online interactions, and address the digital divide. Providing digital literacy training for both educators and students may help mitigate misinformation and ethical concerns. Further research is needed to assess long-term impacts and best practices for incorporating social media into Criminology curricula.

Findings from related studies further validate these results. Seda et al. (2024) noted both positive and negative effects of social media on study habits among Criminology students. Wang (2023) emphasized that increased social media use could diminish commitment to policing careers, suggesting a need for balanced integration. Marín et al. (2023) highlighted educators' concerns about data privacy, underscoring the importance of addressing ethical considerations. These studies provide a broader context for the present research, underscoring the need for strategic implementation of social media in Criminology instruction.

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