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IGNITING CURRENT TRENDS IN TEACHING THROUGH THE INTEGRATION OF SOCIAL MEDIA IN ECONOMICS EDUCATION

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ABSTRACT

Social media (SM) has become an omnipresent force in the lives of learners, teachers, and academic institutions worldwide. As digital platforms like Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, LinkedIn, and TikTok continue to evolve, they are increasingly being integrated into the educational sphere. This paper explores the potential of SM in economics education, reviewing the existing literature on its effectiveness in enhancing learner engagement, understanding, and learning outcomes. The researcher identifies best practices for integrating SM into economics curricula and discusses the challenges and limitations associated with its use. The data collection process involved searching for relevant scholarly articles using Scopus, ResearchGate, and Google Scholar from 2020 to 2024. A systematic review of literature on the role of social media (SM) in education was conducted using the PRISMA 2020 framework. The study included 45 peer-reviewed articles selected for comprehensive analysis. These articles encompassed a diverse range of contexts, including urban, rural, and international education systems. The systematic literature review for this study used thematic content analysis to examine a range of pertinent literature sources. Emerging from the analysis were the following themes, namely enhanced student engagement, improved understanding, real-time data analysis, collaborative learning, information overload, distractions, the digital divide, and intellectual property concerns. The study found that some teachers ban the use of mobile devices because they distract learners from learning, while learners believe that mobile SM enhances communication with peers and instructors. The study recommends that an ICT policy must be in place to manage and control SM for effective adoption.

KEYWORDS

Social Media, Mobile Devices, Economics Education, Technology, Integration

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1. Introduction

Social Media (SM) has become an indispensable tool in modern education, offering unparalleled opportunities for information sharing, collaboration, and interaction (Tumasjan, 2024; Ausat, 2023; Yang, Zhou & Chiu, 2022). Economics education, in particular, can benefit from SM's ability to provide real-time data, current event analysis, and interactive learning experiences (Tumasjan, 2024). recognizing the potential of SM platforms and interactive tools to enhance their teaching strategies (Dong et al., 2021; Lei et al., 2021). SM platforms, such as X (formerly Twitter) (Middleditch et al., 2022), Facebook (Maitri et al., 2023), LinkedIn (Brown & Pederson, 2020), and TikTok (Ding, Xu & Lewis, 2023), have become a popular way for teachers to share ideas, resources, and teaching strategies. The field of economics education has been conscious that teaching impacts at earlier levels in learners' development influence major choices and career selection (Maitri et al., 2023). This understanding has driven economics teachers to consider how to diversify teaching strategies beyond chalk-and-talk (Ausat, 2023). Lam et al. (2022) created an economics toolbox to encourage the exploration of teaching that grows beyond the traditional classroom lecture. This paper examines the role of SM in economics education, synthesizing the existing literature and highlighting effective strategies for its integration.

Many studies today have resorted to illustrating how new technologies could play a role in the teaching and learning of higher education (Ausat, 2023; Yang, Zhou & Chiu, 2022). Researchers in education have advanced their research by coming up with different and more profound concepts of innovation and adoption,

including the use of SM (Yu, Tsoi, et al., 2022; Lam et al., 2022). SM is one of these recent technological innovations that enhance communication and collaboration worldwide (Sivakumar et al., 2023), which is essential for economics learners to face the globalized knowledge economy (Yu, Tsoi, et al., 2022). SM allows for anytime and anywhere learning, changing the way education is offered and making it more accessible (Ripki, Wulandari & Arifannisa, 2024). This flexibility not only allows learners to learn at their own pace and convenience but also enables teachers to engage with learners in a more energetic manner (Alalwan, 2022). SM, like YouTube, Facebook, Twitter, and blogs, allows universities to engage in discussion with learners, faculty, members of the staff, parents, colleagues, alumni, and friends about what is essential (Maitri et al., 2023). Facebook is the most dominant social network that positively contributes to learners' communication and cooperation for educational purposes (Khaola, Musiiwa & Rambe, 2022). Most researchers accept online SM networks as valuable educational aids, especially in facilitating the formation of communities of practice that support successful educational action like cooperation, communication, and academic culture (Dong et al., 2021; Lei et al., 2021; Yang et al., 2022). Other studies reveal learners' improvement in self-esteem and social acceptance, plus better memory management and results in language skills tests (Leung et al., 2022).

According to the literature, SM encourages cooperation and active engagement, fosters critical thinking abilities, and provides a more interesting learning experience for learners (Purnama & Asdlori, 2023; Zulfiqar, Gull & Bashir, 2022). This suggests that a wide range of resources are accessible from mobile devices, enabling a more tailored and flexible approach to education (Khaola, Musiiwa & Rambe, 2022). This approach, therefore, better accommodates each learner's requirements and needs while also making the teaching and learning process more possible (Maitri et al., 2023). SM can break down traditional barriers to participation, especially for learners who may be introverted or hesitant to speak up in class (Sivakumar, Jayasingh & Shaik, 2023). For these learners, the asynchronous nature of SM discussions provides a more comfortable platform to share their thoughts and ideas, contributing to a more inclusive learning environment (Chen & Xiao, 2022). In economics education, SM has proven particularly valuable, given the complexity of economic concepts and the challenges teachers face in teaching them effectively (Tumasjan, 2024). By leveraging SM platforms and interactive tools, teachers can create more engaging and effective learning experiences for learners (Khaola, Musiiwa & Rambe, 2022), helping them better understand complex economic concepts and develop a strong foundational understanding of economics (Hamadi et al., 2021).

The study evaluated the use of SM in economics education and the implications that SM has on both teachers and learners. Hence, the study responded to the following research questions:

- What factors influence the use of SM as an alternative instructional strategy in economics education?
- What are the implications of these factors in the teaching of economics education?

2. Social Media Learning

The incorporation of SM into economics education is a transformative journey characterized by innovation, the resolution of obstacles, and the creation of promising opportunities (Ripki, Wulandari & Arifannisa, 2024). It emphasizes SM's power in engaging learners, making economics concepts accessible, and promoting critical thinking. According to Khaola, Musiiwa & Rambe (2022), SM refers to the means of interaction among people in which they create, share, exchange, and comment among themselves in different networks. Many are of the belief that the term SM does not have a clear definition. Maitri et al. (2023) suggested SM means employing mobile and web-based technology to create highly interactive platforms through which learners and teachers share, co-create, discuss, and modify user-generated content (Zulfiqar et al., 2022). It is a website that does not just give you information but interacts with you while giving you information. In research by Amiruzzaman and Amiruzzaman (2022), they asserted that SM is the tool used to communicate with the mass audience, while social networking is "the act of engagement" (Hamadi et al., 2021). Additionally, SM serves as a crucial tool for conveying information, promoting products or services, and building social networks (Khaola, Musiiwa & Rambe, 2022). Through features like comments, likes, and shares, SM users can interact, provide responses, and create viral content (Ausat, 2023; Subagja et al., 2022). Despite providing benefits in terms of global connectivity, SM also poses challenges related to privacy, security, and social impact that need to be seriously considered (Azzaakiyyah, 2023). SM makes learners interact and receive feedback from one another, motivating them to learn from their peers online (Ding, Xu & Lewis, 2023). With the proliferation of mobile devices, many SM platforms run on them to boost easy communication (Sivakumar et al., 2023). SM platforms like Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram were initially designed for social networking, allowing users to share personal updates, photos, and experiences (Middleditch, Moindrot & Rudkin, 2022). However, the educational potential of these platforms became apparent as teachers and institutions began to explore their utility in disseminating knowledge, facilitating discussions, and creating online communities (Subagja et al., 2022).

Studies demonstrate that learners' dependence on social networking platforms is indisputable (Khaola, Musiiwa & Rambe, 2022). They are perpetually engaged in SM, disseminating knowledge to peers, relatives, and other connections (Khaola, Musiiwa & Rambe, 2022). Teachers must acknowledge learners' dependence on these resources and design classes that accommodate their learning preferences. Ripki, Wulandari, and Arifannisa (2024) discovered that learners valued and appreciated the social learning opportunities afforded by social networking platforms, which facilitated mutual assistance and enriched both their own experiences and those of their peers. According to Maitri et al. (2023), utilizing SM facilitates the integration of technology in education for instructors. Teachers can establish a collaborative learning environment and disseminate educational activities that promote the exchange of knowledge and skills among learners (Ausubel, 2023). Maitri et al. (2023) show that incorporating SM into education effectively facilitates interaction with learners and parents regardless of their location. Furthermore, SM can enhance learners' comprehension of the interrelated dynamics of the 21st-century world. Khaola, Musiiwa & Rambe (2022) expressed analogous sentiments. They suggested that teachers may utilize social networking to create deeper connections and collaboration among their learners. These networks offer reticent learners a conducive environment to engage with their peers (Khaola et al., 2022). If teachers do not employ social networking platforms for instruction, who will? It is worthwhile to attempt, as 21st-century learners are autodidacts in the operation of modern gadgets (Hamadi et al., 2021). When utilized effectively by teachers, social networking applications can create innovative avenues for learning and enhance learners' career trajectories.

Table 1 below demonstrates the interaction between learners and teachers through the exchange of information beyond the classroom, as well as the chances afforded to learners for independent study. They serve as exceptional platforms for disseminating knowledge and resources. All these technologies share a common feature: they are intended for collaboration and discourse (Khaola, Musiiwa & Rambe, 2022). Learners typically utilize SM platforms for personal purposes (Hamadi et al., 2021); nevertheless, it is the teacher's duty to alter their perspective and demonstrate that these technologies can enhance their educational experience (Ripki, Wulandari & Arifannisa, 2024). Therefore, teachers should acknowledge that these technologies are appropriate for instruction and education. Middleditch et al. (2022) observed that both teachers and learners utilize SM for personal interactions rather than for educational objectives. Teachers can generate and disseminate information regarding study resources, assessments, and other academic details to learners (Zulfiqar et al., 2022). They can disseminate an abundance of academic information that was inaccessible in the 20th century (Sivakumar et al., 2023). It is optimal for a teacher to initiate cooperation by posting a threaded conversation on a platform, fostering an interactive learning environment (Subagja et al., 2023).

Table 1. Usage of Social Media tools in economics education

Tools	Description	Teaching Applications
Blogging (WordPress, Medium)	Online journaling platform	Student reflections, case studies, economic news analysis, and collaborative research
Professional Networking (LinkedIn)	Professional networking site	Guest lectures, alumni connections, job market insights, group discussions
Audio Content (Podcasts)	Audio content platform	Lecture supplements, expert interviews, case studies, student-created content
Video Sharing (YouTube)	Video-sharing platform	Video lectures, Khan Academy-style videos, current event analysis, student video projects
SM (Facebook)	Social networking site	Discussion groups, live streaming, news sharing, and event promotion
Microblogging (Twitter)	Short-form blogging platform	Live tweeting, hashtag discussions, news sharing, Q&A sessions
Visual Sharing (Instagram)	Visual content platform	Infographics, economic concept illustrations, photo essays, and visual case studies
Messaging (WhatsApp)	Messaging app	Group discussions, Q&A sessions, resource sharing, and reminders
Email	Electronic mail	Newsletters, assignment distribution, guest lectures, and feedback

SM platforms offer numerous opportunities for teachers to facilitate collaboration, knowledge exchange, and learner engagement. Various studies have highlighted the effectiveness of these platforms in enhancing teaching and learning. Blogs, for instance, facilitate collaboration and knowledge exchange among learners (Ausat, 2023). Peer interaction through blogging enables learners to explore the interconnection of their thoughts and ideas (Knight & Rochon, 2012). Professional networking platforms like LinkedIn enable teachers to engage in professional growth by sharing comprehensive information, providing commentary, and offering mutual guidance (Brown & Pederson, 2020). Podcasts provide an effective medium for distributing audio content, allowing learners to access information at their convenience, irrespective of location (Maitri et al., 2023). Teachers can utilize podcasts to clarify fundamental subjects and make them available for download on mobile devices. Video-sharing platforms like YouTube enable learners to present their findings during project submissions (Fong et al., 2020). Facebook facilitates collaborative learning and content dissemination, allowing learners to modify or contribute to topics (Sivakumar et al., 2023). Microblogging platforms like Twitter promote learner engagement through hashtag-driven discussions, enabling teachers to facilitate collaboration on real-time data collection, class excursions, and academic assignments (Middleditch et al., 2022). Visual-centric platforms like Instagram enable learners to demonstrate their creativity through artwork (Subagja et al., 2022), while messaging apps like WhatsApp facilitate collaborative learning and content dissemination (Mutambara & Tsakeni, 2022). Email enables learners to communicate with topic experts for clarification on specific concepts, promoting cooperation and knowledge sharing (Khaola, Musiiwa & Rambe, 2022).

3. Benefits of integrating SM in economics education

The integration of SM in education has numerous benefits, including increased engagement and motivation among learners (Asarta, 2023), improved communication and collaboration among teachers, and access to diverse resources and tools (Yang, Zhou & Chiu, 2022). SM platforms provide a space for teachers to connect with professionals, share best practices, and enhance teaching strategies (Hashim, Masek, Abdullah, Paimin & Muda, 2020). Research shows that SM integration leads to higher learner engagement (Hamadi et al., 2021), as learners feel more comfortable contributing in digital spaces (Güney, 2023). Platforms like Twitter and Instagram enable real-time communication and collaboration (Sivakumar et al., 2023), increasing learners' sense of belonging and motivation (Tarigan, Harahap, Sari, Sakinah & Ausat, 2023). SM facilitates collaborative learning, global connectivity, and interactive engagement (Mutambara & Tsakeni, 2022). Studies found that SM-based learning activities improve learner motivation and participation (Khaola et al., 2022) and increase accessibility and flexibility for learners with diverse learning needs (Ripki, Wulandari & Arifannisa, 2024; Zulfiqar et al., 2022). Overall, strategic SM integration enhances student learning outcomes and academic experience (Jogezai, Baloch, Jafar, Shah, Khilji & Bashir, 2021), creating a rich, inclusive, and dynamic learning environment.

4. Challenges for integrating SM in economics education

Despite the potential benefits of SM in education, critics argue that it can be a significant source of distraction for learners. One of the primary concerns is that learners may spend excessive time on SM for non-academic purposes, leading to procrastination and poor time management (Hashim, Masek, Abdullah, Paimin & Muda, 2020). Studies have shown that learners who frequently use SM tend to have lower academic performance due to the time spent on these platforms (Mutambara & Tsakeni, 2022; Güney, 2023). The spread of misinformation on SM can undermine learners' ability to critically evaluate sources and engage in meaningful academic discourse (Ripki, Wulandari & Arifannisa, 2024). For example, a student researching a historical event may come across conflicting accounts or inaccurate information on SM platforms (Hamadi et al., 2021). Without proper guidance on how to evaluate sources, the learners may incorporate misinformation into their academic work, leading to flawed conclusions (Yang, Zhou & Chiu, 2022). Empirical studies have highlighted distractions and decreased attention span as major concerns, with the majority of learners reporting frequent SM use during lectures (Maitri et al., 2023). Moreover, research has shown that disparities in digital literacy and technology access can exclude marginalized learners, with learners from low-income families lacking internet access at home (Jogezai, Baloch, Jafar, Shah, Khilji & Bashir, 2021). Evaluating online source credibility also poses challenges, as learners struggle to identify biased or misleading information (Zulfiqar et al., 2022). Cyberbullying and online safety concerns are additional challenges; some learners experience online harassment (Khaola et al., 2022). Technical issues and lack of institutional support further frustrate SM-based learning initiatives, and teachers cite technical difficulties as a significant barrier (Azzaakiyyah, 2023).

5. Theoretical Framework

The study adopted SM integration as the theoretical framework guiding the study (Kumar & Sharma, 2016). The SM Integration Framework (SMIF) has evolved significantly over the years, with various proponents contributing to its development (Bandura, 2001; Garrison et al., 2000; Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010; Barnes & Bohringer, 2009). In the educational context, Kumar and Sharma (2016) proposed the SM Integration Framework (SMIF), integrating SM into education. The SMIF is a conceptual model that guides the effective integration of SM into educational settings (Kumar & Nanda, 2019). Proposed by Kumar and Sharma (2016), SMIF aims to enhance teaching, learning, and student engagement. The framework takes into consideration that teaching can be segregated into four parts that are interlinked with each other, namely pre-classroom, in-classroom, post-classroom, and administration (Kumar & Nanda, 2019). In the pre-classroom phase, learners are provided with online resources and materials before attending lectures. SM platforms such as YouTube and Facebook groups are utilized to share video recordings, presentations, and readings (Kumar & Sharma, 2016).

The pre-classroom phase allows learners to engage with course material at their convenience, promoting flexibility and accountability (Kumar & Nanda, 2019). Learners complete pre-class assignments to prepare for in-class discussions, which cover the lower levels of cognition, according to Bloom's revised taxonomy (Kumar & Sharma, 2016). The in-classroom phase involves interactive teaching methods, such as Think-Pair-Share pedagogy (Kumar & Nanda, 2019). Learners discuss pre-recorded videos and engage in content-curation activities. Virtual guest lectures, blogs, virtual field trips, and classroom podcasts are also integrated (Kumar & Sharma, 2016). SM platforms like Instagram facilitate capturing and sharing classroom activities. While in the after-classroom phase, learning continues through SM engagement. Learners access assignments and lecture notes on Learning Management Systems (LMS) and participate in discussion forums (Kumar & Sharma, 2016). Twitter and Pinterest enable learners to share information and collaborate on group projects. Alumni and peer support are also accessible through SM (Kumar & Nanda, 2019). The administration phase leverages SM for tasks such as evaluation, feedback, and communication with parents (Kumar & Nanda, 2019). Teachers record and share learner progress, upload marks on LMS, and track performance. Administrators generate reports and analytics to inform decision-making. SM platforms enable teachers to record video of a particular student's performance and share it with parents (Kumar & Nanda, 2019). According to Kumar and Sharma (2016), knowledge of technology alone is not sufficient unless the application is done in the right manner. Learners nowadays want to respond through their feelings and insights promptly (Sivakumar et al., 2023). SM learning can increase the grasp of content and offer new channels for learners to learn (Zulfiqar et al., 2022). Social networking sites are being used extensively by college learners regularly. Learners see the use of relevancy-based digital tools, content, and resources as a key to driving learning productivity, not just about engaging learners in learning (Kumar & Nanda, 2019). A framework has been proposed keeping in mind the activities undertaken by the teachers before they go inside the classroom, once the teacher is inside the classroom, and also post-classroom activities.

6. Method

6.1 Research Design and Data Collection

The integration of SM in South African economics education was investigated in this study using a systematic literature review methodology. Relevant scientific works on social media-based learning in economics education were found, chosen, and analyzed using a strict process. First, a thorough search of electronic databases, such as Google Scholar and Scopus, was conducted using pertinent keywords like "social media," "economics education," "social media learning," and "South Africa" to find relevant publications. The data collection process involves searching for relevant scholarly articles using Scopus, ResearchGate, and Google Scholar from 2020 to 2024. A systematic review of literature on the role of social media (SM) in education was conducted using the PRISMA 2020 framework. The selection process is shown in Table 2 below:

Table 2. PRISMA Table of Study Selection Process

Stage	Process description	Number of records
Identification	Records identified through database searching (Scopus, ResearchGate, and Google Scholar)	n = 80
	Additional records identified through hand-searching and reference chaining	n = 10
	Total records identified	n = 90
Screening	Records after duplicates removed	n = 15
	Records screened by title and abstract	n = 75
	Records excluded based on screening	n = 20
Eligibility	Full-text articles assessed for eligibility	n = 55
	Full-text articles excluded with reasons:	n = 10
Included	Studies included in the final synthesis	n = 45

During the identification stage, 90 relevant records were retrieved from database searches and manual sources. These included journal articles, conference papers, and institutional reports focusing on SM use in learning, engagement, communication, and academic performance. The aim was to capture a comprehensive understanding of how SM is influencing education in various settings, such as higher education, K–12, and online learning environments. In the screening stage, 15 duplicate records were removed, and 75 titles and abstracts were assessed. Of these, 20 studies were excluded for reasons such as lack of empirical data, irrelevance to the educational context, or focus on commercial applications of SM rather than its pedagogical use. The eligibility stage involved a full-text review of 55 articles, where 10 were excluded due to weak methodologies, conceptual redundancy, or failure to directly address educational outcomes. The remaining studies met criteria including empirical grounding, relevance to learner-centered outcomes, and publication in peer-reviewed outlets between 2019 and 2024. This resulted in 45 studies being included in the final synthesis. These selected articles examined a wide range of themes, such as enhanced student engagement, improved understanding, real-time data analysis, collaborative learning, information overload, distractions, the digital divide, and intellectual property concerns. Some studies also addressed challenges such as misinformation, privacy concerns, and the spread of disinformation through social bots. Overall, applying the PRISMA protocol ensured a rigorous and transparent review process, allowing for a nuanced and evidence-based understanding of how SM is reshaping educational practices, particularly in the context of digital and blended learning environments.

6.2 Data analysis

The study's systematic literature review followed Braun and Clarke's (2006) systematic procedural steps and used thematic content analysis to examine a variety of relevant literature sources. Finding trends and themes in the use of social media in economics education while taking pedagogical and technological factors into account was the main goal of the investigation. A thorough analysis of the advantages, disadvantages, and possibilities of integrating social media into economics education was produced by means of an iterative process of coding, classification, and theme improvement. Information overload, diversions, the digital divide, real-time data analysis, collaborative learning, increased student involvement, better comprehension, and intellectual property issues were among the topics that surfaced. To determine whether the retrieved records were eligible for inclusion in the review, the author independently examined the titles and abstracts. To maintain uniformity and precision in the selection of studies, any disagreements among reviewers were settled by dialogue or contact with a third reviewer. A comprehensive quality assessment was then conducted on a subset of the studies to determine their validity and methodological rigor (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses [PRISMA] checklist and the Critical Appraisal Skills Programme [CASP] tool for qualitative research were used to modify quality appraisal criteria from pre-existing recommendations (Pillay, 2024). Based on standards pertinent to its research methodology, data analysis, study design, and reporting quality, each included study underwent a rigorous evaluation. While studies that were judged to have biases or methodological limitations were not disregarded, they were taken into account when synthesizing data and interpreting them with the proper disclaimers (Pillay, 2024). In order to provide detailed material for this study, 45 papers were ultimately chosen and subjected to a thorough review.

7. Findings and discussion

The current study evaluated the use of SM in economics education, focusing mainly on the benefits and challenges that both instructors and learners face. It adopted the integrative method of analysis, where results are presented thematically. The themes for this study are enhanced learner engagement, improved understanding, real-time data analysis, collaborative learning, information overload, distractions, the digital divide, and intellectual property concerns. Thematic analysis of the reviewed articles resulted in the themes in Table 3 below:

Table 3. Thematic analysis of social media integration in economics education.

Theme	Theme description
Theme 1	Enhanced student engagement
Theme 2	Improved understanding
Theme 3	Real-time data analysis
Theme 4	Collaborative learning
Theme 5	Information overload
Theme 6	Distractions
Theme 7	Digital divide
Theme 8	Intellectual property concerns

7.1 Theme one: Enhanced student engagement

The literature revealed that SM can increase learner participation and motivation, particularly among underserved populations (Alalwan, 2022). SM provides unlimited opportunities to expand communication networks within the educational environment (Azzaakiyyah, 2023), which includes learners, teachers, parents, and administrative staff (Cahyono et al., 2023). SM also presents opportunities for parents to actively engage in their children's educational activities, even when they are physically distant (Subagja, Ausat & Suherlan, 2022). Research by Khaola et al. (2022) found that learners who used SM for academic purposes reported higher levels of engagement and motivation compared to those who did not. Similarly, a study by Alalwan (2022) discovered that SM-based learning activities increased learner participation, interaction, and overall satisfaction with courses. The empirical findings highlight the effectiveness of specific SM platforms in promoting learner engagement (Zulfiqar et al., 2022). For instance, a study by Yang et al. (2022) found that online discussion forums increased learner engagement and critical thinking skills. Another study by Amiruzzaman and Amiruzzaman, M. (2022), reported that Twitter-based learning activities improved learner engagement, particularly among introverted learners. These studies suggest that strategic SM integration can enhance student engagement, motivation, and overall learning experiences (Kolhar et al., 2021). Parents can participate in live streaming sessions, webinars, or virtual meetings organized by schools, fostering greater involvement and offering a chance for direct participation in their children's learning processes (Tami, 2022). Platforms such as Google Classroom or Microsoft Teams have opened up opportunities for teachers and learners to interact in real-time (Sivakumar et al., 2023), share learning resources, and even collaborate on joint projects (Azzaakiyyah, 2023). Not only does this increase learner engagement in the learning process (Zulfiqar, Gull & Bashir, 2022), but it also facilitates the exchange of ideas and the development of social skills that are vital in the context of an evolving society (Lottering, 2020). This allows them to disseminate information, garner support, and promote education-related activities, creating a more open and connected environment for all parties involved in the education process (Rwodzi, De Jager & Mpofu, 2020).

7.2 Theme two: Improved understanding

The literature revealed that interactive SM tools can facilitate complex economic concept comprehension (Zulfiqar, Gull & Bashir, 2022). SM is an online platform that allows users to engage, exchange content, and establish connections in a virtual environment (Mutambara & Tsakeni, 2022). It enables learners to create personal profiles, exchange messages, share multimedia content, and participate in communities centered around specific interests or objectives (Azzaakiyyah, 2023). Leading SM platforms like Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and LinkedIn, along with messaging apps such as WhatsApp and Telegram, serve as central hubs for digital interaction (Maitri et al., 2023). The strategic use of SM can significantly enhance learners' understanding of economics content by providing real-world examples, interactive simulations, and current event analysis (Ripki et al., 2024). Research by Güney (2023) found that SM-based learning activities

improved learners' comprehension of complex concepts. Similarly, a study by Mutambara and Tsakeni (2022) revealed that SM facilitated a deeper understanding of the subject matter, with the majority of learners reporting improved knowledge retention. Specifically, SM platforms such as YouTube, Twitter, and blogs have been shown to enhance learner understanding of content through interactive simulations, real-world examples, and multimedia resources (Middleditch et al., 2022). The empirical findings highlight the effectiveness of SM in improving learner understanding across various disciplines. For instance, a study by Kolhar et al. (2021) found that Twitter-based discussions improved learners' understanding of economic concepts. Another study by Purnama and Asdlori (2023) reported that SM-based case studies enhanced learners' comprehension of business principles. Overall, these studies suggest that strategic SM integration can improve student understanding, knowledge retention, and overall academic performance (Hashim et al., 2021). SM platforms, such as Twitter and YouTube, offer access to economists, financial experts, and news outlets (Hamadi et al., 2021), enabling learners to engage with economic concepts in context (Rwodzi et al., 2020). Research has shown that SM-based learning activities improve learners' comprehension of economic principles, such as supply and demand, inflation, and globalization (Ohara, 2023). For instance, a study by Ausat (2023) found that learners who used SM to explore economic case studies demonstrated increased critical thinking and problem-solving skills. Moreover, SM facilitates collaboration and discussion among learners, promoting a deeper understanding of economic concepts through peer-to-peer interactions (Ansari & Khan, 2020). By leveraging SM, teachers can create an immersive and interactive learning environment that bridges the gap between theoretical economics and practical application (Sivakumar et al., 2023).

7.3 Theme three: Real-time data analysis

SM platforms provide access to up-to-date economic data, enabling learners to analyze and apply theoretical concepts (Tami, 2022). The literature revealed that through SM platforms specifically dedicated to school-parent interaction, there is an opportunity for parents to obtain up-to-date information (Zulfiqar et al., 2022) about the curriculum, assessment, and extracurricular activities organized in the school environment (Purnama & Asdlori, 2023). Through the use of online discussion groups or forums, learners can actively exchange experiences, explore complex concepts, and provide support to each other (Ripki, Wulandari & Arifannisa, 2024). Research by Amiruzzaman and Amiruzzaman (2022) found that SM outlets such as Twitter and YouTube offered instant access to economic news, data, and analysis, facilitating real-time learning. Similarly, a study by Ansari and Khan (2020) revealed that SM platforms provided learners with up-to-date economic data, improving their ability to analyze and interpret economic trends. The empirical findings highlight the effectiveness of SM in providing access to economic data across various disciplines. For instance, a study by Subagja et al. (2022) found that SM-based learning activities increased learners' access to economic data, improving their understanding of economic principles. Another study by Alalwan (2022) reported that SM facilitated collaboration among learners, enabling them to share and analyze economic data in real-time. These studies suggest that SM can bridge the gap between theoretical economics and practical application, providing learners with timely and relevant economic data (Azzaakiyyah, 2023). These platforms not only facilitate real-time updates on educational developments (Subagja, Ausat & Suherlan, 2022) but also serve as interactive spaces where parents can actively participate in discussions (Sivakumar et al., 2023), workshops, and collaborative initiatives, fostering a dynamic and enriching educational environment for their children (Azzaakiyyah, 2023). According to Ansari and Khan (2020), SM helps learners retrieve information in real-time, interact with others about shared materials' content, and increase learner engagement (Maitri et al., 2023; Tarigan et al., 2023). Therefore, teachers can leverage these platforms to provide timely updates on a child's development, event schedules, and progress reports (Rwodzi, De Jager & Mpofu, 2020). In doing so, parents can stay informed without the necessity of attending physical meetings at the school, thereby affording greater flexibility to those with hectic schedules (Hollister, Nair, Hill-Lindsay & Chukoskie, 2022). The instantaneous nature of SM communication ensures that parents are promptly informed about important matters, fostering a real-time connection between economics education teachers and parents (Ohara, 2023).

7.4 Theme four: Collaborative learning

SM facilitates peer-to-peer interaction, fostering a community of learners and promoting collective understanding (Ripki, Wulandari & Arifannisa, 2024). The literature revealed that SM provides opportunities for learners to expand their knowledge networks (Zulfiqar et al., 2022) and deepen their understanding of the concepts being taught (Ripki, Wulandari & Arifannisa, 2024), while strengthening their social connections within the educational environment (Tami, 2022). Collaboration involves task allocation, pooling of resources,

and effective coordination and interaction among team members or participants (Subagja, Ausat & Suherlan, 2022). In the educational context, communication and collaboration are key to facilitating interactive learning, expanding learners' understanding, and fostering social skills and cooperation (Hamadi, El-Den, Azam & Sriratanaviriyakul, 2021). Research by Ansari and Khan (2020) found that SM platforms facilitated collaboration, communication, and teamwork among learners, leading to improved learning outcomes. Similarly, a study by Yang et al. (2022) revealed that SM-based group projects increased learner engagement, motivation, and collaboration. Specifically, SM tools such as wikis, blogs, and discussion forums enable learners to share resources, ideas, and feedback, promoting peer-to-peer learning (Rwodzi et al., 2020). Empirical findings highlight the effectiveness of specific SM platforms in promoting collaborative learning. For instance, a study by Chen and Xiao (2022) found that Twitter-based discussions increased student engagement and collaboration, particularly among introverted learners. Another study by Tarigan et al. (2023) reported that Facebook-based group projects improved learner collaboration and teamwork skills. Overall, these studies suggest that strategic SM integration can foster collaborative learning environments, promote learner-centered learning, and enhance academic achievement (Ding et al., 2023). Research indicates that when learners use SM as a learning aid, they are collaboratively engaged with their peers and instructors in the learning process (Khaola et al., 2022). This allows learners to interact with more people and engage with multimedia content, thus increasing engagement (Azzaakiyyah, 2023). Especially economics learners, who need to communicate more with their classmates and instructors concerning global business knowledge (Hamadi et al., 2021) and the culture of individual countries, need to use SM for study-related content (Hashim, Masek, Abdullah, Paimin & Muda, 2020). Therefore, SM has become a platform for economics learners to interact and communicate.

7.5Theme five: Information overload

Learners may struggle to discern credible sources amidst the vast online information landscape. The literature revealed that the risk of inaccurate or unverified information may influence parental decisions (Ripki, Wulandari & Arifannisa, 2024). Therefore, a prudent approach in presenting and filtering information is essential to ensure that parents receive accurate and beneficial information (Ho, Chan & Chiu, 2022). The abundance of information on SM platforms, while providing a wealth of resources, also requires a discerning eye to distinguish between credible and misleading content (Rwodzi, De Jager & Mpofu, 2020). Research by Azzaakiyyah (2023) revealed that the majority of learners struggled to distinguish between credible and unreliable sources online. Similarly, a study by Zulfiqar et al. (2022) found that learners often relied on superficial cues, such as website design or popularity, to assess credibility. Moreover, a study by Azzaakiyyah (2023) discovered that learners' critical thinking skills were compromised when evaluating SM content (Sivakumar et al., 2023), leading to increased susceptibility to misinformation. Specifically, the majority of learners reported difficulty in identifying biased or misleading information on SM (Hashim, Masek, Abdullah, Paimin & Muda, 2020). However, studies have also shown that SM can be used to teach critical thinking and media literacy skills, enabling learners to discern credible sources (Hashim et al., 2020). For instance, a study by Ripki et al. (2024) found that SM-based learning activities improved learners' ability to evaluate online sources. Empirical findings highlight the effectiveness of specific SM platforms in promoting critical thinking and credible source evaluation. For example, a study by Amiruzzaman and Amiruzzaman (2022) found that Twitter-based discussions increased learners' critical thinking skills, particularly when evaluating news sources. Another study by Mutambara and Tsakeni (2022) reported that Facebook-based learning activities improved learners' ability to identify bias and misinformation. These studies suggest that strategic SM integration can enhance learners' critical thinking skills, enabling them to discern credible sources and navigate the complexities of online information (Smith et al., 2022). These findings underscore the need for teachers to explicitly teach critical thinking, media literacy, and source evaluation skills to empower learners to navigate the complexities of SM-based learning (Khaola, Musiiwa & Rambe, 2022). To address the challenges of misinformation and digital literacy, teachers must take an active role in teaching learners how to navigate the digital landscape effectively (Ansari & Khan, 2020). This includes providing instruction on how to evaluate the credibility of sources, recognize bias, and fact-check information (Subagja, Ausat & Suherlan, 2022).

7.6 Theme six: Distractions

SM can divert attention from academic tasks. The literature revealed that economics learners were more likely to be tempted to surf the Internet, chat with friends, and browse various social networking sites (Sivakumar et al., 2023) than to focus on browsing study-related content via SM (Kolhar, Kazi & Alameen, 2021). Research by Ausat (2023) found that learners who used SM during lectures reported decreased academic motivation. Similarly, a study by Roberts and David (2022) discovered that learners who multitasked on SM while completing homework experienced decreased cognitive performance and reduced retention of information. Moreover, a study by Khaola et al. (2022) revealed that SM notifications alone can distract learners, leading to decreased focus and productivity. Specifically, the majority of learners reported checking SM during class, resulting in decreased engagement and understanding of course material (Hashim, Masek, Abdullah, Paimin & Muda, 2020). These findings suggest that unregulated SM use can hinder academic achievement and undermine the effectiveness of SM-enhanced learning initiatives (Sivakumar et al., 2023). The empirical findings highlight the effectiveness of specific strategies for avoiding distractions on SM. For example, a study by Hollister et al. (2022) found that implementing "tech-free" zones or times in the classroom reduced SM-related distractions. Another study by Roberts and David (2022) reported that using website blockers or productivity tools, such as Freedom or Self-Control, helped learners stay focused on academic tasks. Furthermore, research by Ho (2022) showed that providing learners with training on effective SM use and time management skills reduced distractions and improved academic performance. Overall, these studies suggest that strategic SM integration, combined with clear guidelines and support, can minimize distractions and promote effective learning (Lottering, 2020). Further, Zulfiqar et al. (2022) mentioned that the decrease in academic performance is one of the most critical consequences of learners' excessive social network use. In addition, Ripki, Wulandari, and Arifannisa (2024) confirmed that SM temptation reduces learners' motivation to learn, leading to a more negative learning experience, reduced study time, and decreased quality of learning. Moreover, excessive SM use can cause learners to lack sleep time and make them harder to concentrate on their studies (Rwodzi, De Jager & Mpofu, 2020), potentially causing a reduction in grades and overall academic performance (Subagja, Ausat & Suherlan, 2022). Therefore, learners need to do a mental calculation before using SM to reduce excessive use of SM to eliminate all the distractions that affect their study time, physical health, and emotions (Hamadi et al., 2021).

7.7 Theme seven: Digital divide

Unequal access to technology and internet connectivity can disadvantage certain learners. The literature revealed that access to technology and internet connectivity poses significant challenges to effective SM integration in education (Zulfiqar et al., 2022). The digital divide, a persistent issue, disproportionately affects learners from low-income backgrounds, rural areas, and marginalized communities (Hashim, Masek, Abdullah, Paimin & Muda, 2020). This is what Khaola et al. (2022) put forth: that not all learners have equal access to mobile devices or reliable Internet connectivity, which can create disparities in learning opportunities (Gelashvili, Martínez-Navalón & Gómez-Borja, 2024). This implies that not all devices can handle the demands of remote learning in some locations since connectivity is difficult (Ansari & Khan, 2020). Moreover, it encourages learners to participate in all learning activities when they can connect conveniently (Sivakumar et al., 2023). Some learners may come from poor families that cannot afford ICTs, that is, buying data to connect to the Internet (Azzaakiyyah, 2023). This becomes a challenge for them when assignments are uploaded onto the Internet, and they must search for information to complete such assignments (Hamadi et al., 2021). Unlike other student-teachers, these student-teachers believe that when their learning is negatively impacted by accessibility, SM lowers their efficacy and motivation (Rwodzi, De Jager & Mpofu, 2020). This echoes the statement made by Ausat (2023) that certain underprivileged schools in South Africa lack resources and that their student-teachers do not migrate to digital platforms (Jogezai et al., 2021) because they do not have access to ICT infrastructure, such as the Internet. Empirical studies have highlighted the existence of disparities in access to devices, internet connectivity, and digital literacy skills (Roberts & David, 2022). For instance, a study by Ripki, Wulandari, and Arifannisa (2024) found that the majority of learners in the rural areas lacked access to a computer or tablet at home. These disparities can exacerbate existing inequalities in education, limiting opportunities for learners to engage with SM-based learning activities (Subagja, Ausat & Suherlan, 2022). Research has shown that learners without reliable internet access struggle to complete online assignments, participate in online discussions, and access digital resources (Subagja, Ausat & Suherlan, 2022). Furthermore, inadequate digital infrastructure can hinder teachers' ability to integrate SM into their teaching practices, undermining the potential benefits of SM-enhanced learning (Rwodzi et al., 2020). Addressing these challenges requires targeted interventions, including investments in digital infrastructure, affordable internet plans, and digital literacy programs (Kolhar et al., 2021).

7.8 Theme eight: Intellectual property concerns

The literature revealed that the utilization of SM also requires a careful and responsible approach to address the various challenges and risks associated with it. Therefore, it is imperative to pay attention to security and privacy aspects in the use of SM in the context of education (Khaola et al., 2022). Schools should prioritize efforts to ensure that learners' data (Gelashvili et al., 2024) and other sensitive information are optimally protected from potential unauthorized access or misuse by irresponsible parties (Azzaakiyyah, 2023). This requires educational institutions to adopt policies and best practices in data management, including the implementation of robust data protection systems and effective monitoring mechanisms (Ulven & Wangen, 2021). Ensure proper citation and respect for copyrighted materials (Zulfiqar et al., 2022). However, the open nature of SM platforms and their susceptibility to content that is not in line with ethical standards and educational objectives raise concerns about data security and privacy (Hajli, Saeed, Tajvidi & Shirazi, 2022). Therefore, schools should formulate careful and detailed policies to regulate the use of SM, including procedures for monitoring uploaded content and protecting users' privacy (Subagja et al., 2022). Research by Ausat (2023) found that teachers' lack of awareness about copyright laws and fair use guidelines led to unintentional intellectual property violations on SM. Similarly, a study by Smith et al. (2022) revealed that learners' sharing of copyrighted materials on SM platforms compromised intellectual property rights. However, studies have also shown that educating learners and teachers about intellectual property laws and best practices can mitigate these concerns (Zulfiqar et al., 2022). The empirical findings highlight the effectiveness of specific strategies for avoiding intellectual property concerns on SM. For example, a study by Sivakumar et al. (2023) reported that using Creative Commons licensed materials and open educational resources (OERs) minimized intellectual property violations. Another study by Gelashvili et al. (2024) found that using SM platforms with built-in copyright protection features, such as YouTube's Content ID system, reduced intellectual property concerns. These studies suggest that proactive measures, education, and awareness can minimize intellectual property concerns and ensure responsible SM use in educational settings (Ohara, 2023). In addition, it should be emphasized that an approach based on educating learners about SM etiquette is also an important step to shape awareness of the risks associated with online interactions (Roberts & David 2022). Thus, the implementation of a holistic and integrated strategy in managing the use of SM in educational settings can help reduce potential risks and maximize its benefits in supporting the learning and communication process (Hashim et al., 2020).

8. Conclusions

SM has the potential to revolutionize economics education by providing interactive, real-time, and collaborative learning experiences. By embracing best practices and addressing challenges, teachers can harness SM's power to enhance learner engagement, understanding, and learning outcomes. As SM continues to evolve, its integration into economics education will remain a vital area of research and innovation. This study aimed to evaluate the possible integration of SM in economics education. It also discussed the implications that the adoption of mobile learning can have on both teachers and learners. The study identified that mobile learning can be individualized in that learners can freely access the information online, read this information, share it, and even communicate it to others. This can happen without the confinement of time and place. This enhances education and increases the motivation of these teachers to continue using their mobile devices to learn. It was also identified that mobile learning is interactive because teachers can communicate with each other and interact in other aspects. However, the study identified some challenges in economics education. This includes unclear ICT policy, where plans for mobile SM are only strategized but not incorporated into the curriculum content, making it difficult to implement. SM has also been found to cause distraction in class due to the notifications and other information received during class. SM can also be misused by learners by using it for other purposes during class, causing others to lose focus in class and pay attention to the noise. Technical training and support are another challenge found to impede effective SM. If all these issues regarding mobile learning are properly addressed, negative implications could be avoided in economics education. Therefore, future research should assess the ICT policies in higher education to ensure that curriculum content entails the components of SM, allowing its smooth implementation and use.

8.1 Recommendations

The study recommends that an ICT policy must be in place to manage and control SM learning for effective adoption. Schools must formulate explicit ICT policies that incorporate SM learning into the curriculum and allocate resources for dependable SM tools. Novice teachers and learners must undergo consistent technical training to proficiently employ SM platforms, while appointed mobile learning advocates can offer peer assistance. It is imperative that teachers and learners undergo training in appropriate SM usage, digital literacy, and self-regulation techniques to mitigate distractions. A dedicated school support team should establish a help desk to assist teachers and learners in integrating various SM learning platforms, along with providing regular software updates and maintenance.

8.2 Declarations

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