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*Social Media  
in Teaching and Learning*

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KAMPUS SEREMBAN





# *The Power of Social Media: Enhancing Learning Experience during the Holy Month of Ramadan*

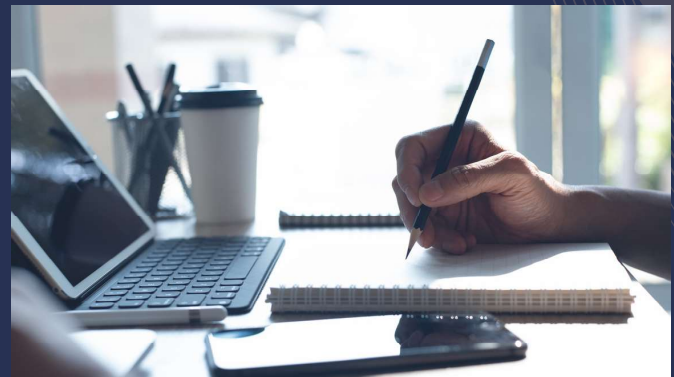
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Ramadan Mubarak or Happy Ramadan! Students are returning to campus and beginning the new semester starting on the 18th of March, 2024. This date marked the 7th day of Ramadan. During this holy month, the experience is frequently intense, with long days, demanding schedules, and limited time to rest at night. Initially, Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM) had scheduled the academic calendar requiring students to return to campus. However, following negotiations, the university has taken measures to facilitate students' experiences by transitioning to online classes.

Most students preferred to study from home for the first three weeks and continue their 'Raya' celebrations at home. Otherwise, there would be problems with starting transport and finances. The learning process for the first three weeks is scheduled to be conducted online, preferably via UiTM's official Learning Management System (LMS), uFuture as the main platform. (Pekeliling Akademik - Bil 01 - 2024 - Pelaksanaan Pendaftaran Pelajar Baharu Dan Perkuliahan 3 Minggu Pertama Sesi Mac 2024.pdf, n.d.). Even so, lecturers are also allowed to use other systems, such as Google Classroom, Microsoft Teams, and others. Generally, the LMS serves as a platform for lecturers to distribute their teaching materials, conduct online activities and assessments, as well as to monitor students' progress and performance.

## **Social Media Platforms for Teaching and Learning**

Although UiTM has stated uFuture as the main platform, lecturers often utilize multiple platforms to accommodate the diverse needs and preferences of students. This approach ensures that students have access to a variety of resources and engagement opportunities, allowing for a more inclusive and effective learning experience.



Besides having a very good LMS (uFuture) with all the learning resources and activities on board, another successful factor for online learning is interaction. Good communication and interaction help active engagement in students' learning process. Social media enhances the capacity for knowledge sharing and makes it easier for students to communicate with lecturers and their peers.

There are many available social media platforms used in teaching and learning activities. For communication purposes, most lecturers prefer to manage their students in a dedicated group created respectively for each class using social media online messaging apps so they can share information and interact easily. The two most widely used cloud-based messaging apps are Telegram and WhatsApp.

Perez, Manca, Fernández-Pascual, & Mc Guckin (2023) examines social media through a theoretical lens, particularly examining research that utilizes theory to help explain the integration of social media as a tool for teaching and learning in higher education. Additionally, this paper summarises four research trends observed over different periods. From 2010 to 2014, studies primarily focused on the role of Facebook as a community of practice, blog, and informal learning tool. From 2014 to 2016, while Facebook remained



relevant, there was an increased emphasis on its use in the educational learning process. The period from 2016 to 2018 saw a peak in studies focusing on social media for education and as an educational tool. Finally, from 2018 onwards, studies shifted towards examining “attitudes”, “influence”, “intention”, “performance”, and satisfaction related to social media use (Perez et al., 2023).

As students focus on their studies, social media platforms serve as useful tools for accessing educational resources, connecting with peers for collaborative learning, and seeking guidance from lecturers and their academic advisors. During Ramadan, students use these platforms not only for learning but also to build a sense of community virtually. Managing academic commitments while observing Ramadan can be challenging among students. That said, the self-discipline practised aligns with the discipline required in the effective use of social media for learning, as students balance their online activities with their religious practices. The connection between social media and the holy month of Ramadan makes online learning even more significant for both learning and community engagement.

Fasting during Ramadan develops discipline and self-control, which can help students to become more focused and increase productivity in academic endeavors. During the online lecture session, students can interact with each other by sharing their Ramadan activities as well as their spiritual reflections. Thus, it will significantly increase motivation to keep on learning while being away from campus. It is hoped that this will also encourage goal-setting and self-improvement.

### Traditional vis-à-vis Online Learning



Resuming classes after Eid would require students to return to campus to complete the remaining eleven weeks outlined in the fourteen-week academic calendar. The learning schedule has been distributed for lecturers accordingly, incorporating both in-person and online classes.

There are mixed feelings among students and lecturers when it comes to conducting lectures fully online. Some appreciate the flexibility and convenience, while others express concerns about the lack of in-person interaction and potential technology challenges. The online education system, previously optional for many institutions, is now mandatory, particularly in higher education (Shoaib et al., 2023). However, according to Shastri & Hogan (2024), face-to-face classes provide benefits such as improved lecture engagement and group collaboration, while remote learners appreciate the flexibility of online formats. Thus, universities should consider integrating aspects of both formats to enhance student satisfaction.



As social media takes its course in reshaping the landscape of education, it has become a powerful tool to smoothen the process of learning, particularly during times of transition. Social media plays a crucial role in ensuring the observance of Ramadan does not hinder students' ability to access education and engage in learning activities.

This article is written based on the authors' observations, supplemented by relevant literature in the field. The authors have additionally combined personal experience and feedback from colleagues to provide insights into the topic.

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