

# Career Development through LinkedIn: A Study on the Impact of Online Groups on Healthcare Administration Students

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## Abstract

Numerous studies have examined the positive impact of social media on career advancement. This research delves into the benefits of a dedicated LinkedIn group for Healthcare Administration students for career readiness. The results of this study contribute to understanding the connections graduate students can make with peers on engagement, career preparedness, and increasing their skills pre- and post-graduation. Members of this private healthcare administration group reported successful outcomes from their participation and how it contributed to their decision-making as early and mid-career professionals. All survey participants were willing to participate and share their insights on being a group member. The study offers insights into the effective use of LinkedIn groups as a supplemental resource to traditional college services, opening doors to additional opportunities through networking with like-minded individuals, experienced professionals, and experts in the field. This study received no financial support from private or public entities, universities, or colleges.

## Keywords

Social Media, Healthcare Administration, LinkedIn, Student Engagement, Higher Education

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## 1. Introduction

Social media is an influential instrument that develops and enhances educational settings (Qureshi et al., 2023). Course-related assignments and peer communication are standard in many students' lives. Faculty and staff are becoming more creative in the various ways they communicate with students; utilizing social

media has become a popular way to do so. Widely embraced as a tool for personal or business purposes, the notion that social media could be effective for educational purposes has received recent attention. At the same time, this developing arena is receiving an increased research interest (Tess, 2013). An area of interest is how to utilize social media to engage students outside of the classroom to help them develop academically and professionally and be prepared for the workforce. This research study will explore how students in a healthcare administration program can be engaged in an online group that will directly impact career development. This research opens the door to investigating various aspects of this impact, including skill development, networking, and job opportunities.

### **1.1. LinkedIn for Career Development**

Social media such as Facebook, LinkedIn, or Twitter make it easier for people to maintain or extend their social networks and increase their social capital (Utz & Breuer, 2019). For this research, we will focus on LinkedIn. LinkedIn is an online platform where users can highlight their professional accomplishments. It is also an online networking platform you can use to connect with people in your chosen field, potential employers, and target organizations/companies (LinkedIn, 2022). The company is the world's largest online job list hub, boasting a substantial user community of 160 million individuals. The United States serves as the primary stronghold for this professional networking service, leading the way in both user engagement and reach. Users can create a profile page highlighting their skills, abilities, education, interests, etc. Included with membership, users can join various groups. Users can also establish their own group based on interests and invite their connections to join the group. While there are numerous benefits that a college student can ascertain from membership, career preparedness is one the most beneficial aspects of using LinkedIn. Many colleges and universities have resources to provide students with career preparedness information. Some colleges have a dedicated career center that provides students with services such as resume preparation, mock interviews, job boards, and workshops. While these services offer universal advantages and effectively support students, there is merit in providing tailored benefits to students within specific academic disciplines. These customized advantages extend beyond the confines of their educational institution, facilitating unique opportunities for students to engage with peers and potential employers within their chosen field. The job search process is no longer linear; it is much more dynamic, given technology and networking (Lee & Patel, 2020). Utilizing a social media platform such as LinkedIn can be a way to create a process that serves this purpose. Stakeholders can develop an external medium for students to develop connections that lead to employment.

### **1.2. Networking Group**

A private group on LinkedIn was developed for Healthcare Administration stu-

dents. The group has more than 180 members at the time of this writing. Members of the group have either been invited by the group's administrator, a friend, or they have found the group amongst the list of groups offered on the LinkedIn site. Joining a group is a great way to share common interests, communicate with peers who may be facing similar challenges, and share ideas with one another. Mutually recognized sharing of identity with others leads to the expectation of sharing a common worldview and cooperation. These transformed social relations form a basis for the group to collectively respond to their challenges (Gray & Stevenson, 2020). Common interests can lead to career opportunities and personal and professional development. These opportunities include job announcements, educational opportunities, webinars, or employer access that are all afforded to members of this healthcare administration group.

## 2. Methodology

A qualitative survey was conducted of the members to ascertain the implications of being in a private group and its impact on career success. The benefits of a qualitative survey include openness and flexibility of survey questions. The wide scope of questions can be useful when the population of interest is large, diverse, or unknown (Braun et al., 2021) or when there is a need to gauge interests from different perspectives. The survey collected data on various aspects of the members' experiences within the group, including the perceived benefits, professional connections established, the relevance and quality of the content shared, and the perceived impact on career preparedness.

The steps below outline the process for implementing and collecting survey data.

### 2.1. Sample and Recruitment

- An announcement within the group introduced the study's purpose and invited members to participate in an online survey.
- Participation in survey participation was voluntary, and all responses were kept anonymous.
- Survey Instrument
- An online questionnaire was developed to collect data on various aspects of the participants' experiences within the group.
- The survey assessed group benefits, professional connections, content relevance, quality, perceived impact on career preparedness, and demographic characteristics.
- The questionnaire consisted of both closed-ended and open-ended questions.

### 2.2. Data Collection

The online survey was administered using a secure survey platform. Participants were provided with a link to the survey and could complete it at their convenience. The survey was available for a specified period, allowing sufficient time for

participants to respond. Reminders were sent periodically to encourage maximum participation and ensure an adequate sample size.

### 2.3. Data Analysis

The collected survey data were imported into statistical software for analysis. Descriptive statistics, such as frequencies and percentages, were used to summarize the participants' responses. Open-ended responses were analyzed using thematic analysis to identify common themes and patterns.

### 2.4. Ethical Considerations

Informed consent was obtained from all participants before they proceeded with the survey. The data collected was securely stored and accessible only to the research team.

## 3. Survey Results

The findings of this study offered valuable insights for healthcare administration students seeking to enhance their career preparedness after graduation, as noted in **Figure 1**.

The findings from the qualitative survey reveal a noteworthy trend, wherein most group members experienced tangible benefits due to their active involvement. Specifically, the weekly provision of information encompassing a spectrum of offerings, such as job postings, scholarly articles, webinars, internship opportunities, and speaking engagements, has proven to be a valuable resource for these individuals. Over 60% of the survey participants expressed their contentment with the overall quality of the group's content and ensuing discussions.

A compelling consensus emerged when participants were surveyed regarding the impact of their involvement within the group on their academic pursuits and career aspirations. Impressively, 80% of respondents affirmed that their participation had facilitated progress in these domains. Furthermore, a noteworthy 60% expressed their inclination to recommend the group to their peers and colleagues,



**Figure 1.** Some of the results from the administered survey in 2023.

underscoring the perceived value of the collective experience.

#### 4. Research Implications

The results of this study hold significant implications for the realm of higher education, particularly in the context of harnessing social media platforms for advancing career readiness among healthcare administration students. These implications encompass several key dimensions:

1) **Enhancing Career Readiness in Healthcare Administration:** This research underscores the potential of dedicated LinkedIn groups to serve as powerful catalysts for career development among healthcare administration students. The positive outcomes reported by group members suggest that such online communities can be instrumental in bridging the gap between academic preparation and workforce readiness. By facilitating access to valuable resources and fostering networking opportunities, these groups can play a pivotal role in equipping students with the skills and connections necessary for success in the healthcare administration field.

2) **Expanding the Role of social media in Education:** The study highlights the evolving role of social media, specifically LinkedIn, in the realm of education. Traditionally regarded as platforms for personal and professional networking, social media channels are now emerging as potent tools for educational enrichment. This research encourages educators and institutions to explore innovative ways of leveraging these platforms to engage students beyond the classroom, enhancing their academic and professional development.

3) **Tailored Career Support for Specific Disciplines:** The findings underscore the value of tailoring career support services to meet the unique needs of students within specific academic disciplines, such as healthcare administration. While universities commonly provide general career services, the study suggests that targeted, discipline-specific groups can offer distinct advantages by connecting students with peers and potential employers with specialized knowledge and insights relevant to their chosen field. This tailored approach can better prepare students for the dynamic and interconnected nature of the modern job market.

4) **Reshaping the Job Search Process:** The conventional job search process has become more dynamic and multifaceted in an era characterized by technological advances and expansive networking opportunities. As exemplified by the healthcare administration group in this study, LinkedIn groups offer an innovative approach to navigating this evolving landscape. These groups can serve as external platforms for students to cultivate connections that can lead to meaningful employment opportunities, aligning with the changing dynamics of job-seeking in the digital age.

5) **Promoting Collaborative Learning and Professional Growth:** The study underscores the importance of collaborative learning and professional growth within dedicated online communities. These communities can create fertile ground

for exchanging ideas, insights, and experiences by fostering a shared sense of identity and cooperation among group members. The implications extend beyond career readiness, encompassing broader personal and professional development goals.

## 5. Limitations

While the study provides crucial insights into the benefits of leveraging LinkedIn groups for healthcare administration students, several limitations should be noted and considered for future research endeavors.

1) Limited Demographics: The participants of this study were limited to members of a specific LinkedIn group for Healthcare Administration students. This demographic limitation may hinder generalizing the study's findings to a broader population, including students from other disciplines or those not engaged in such specialized groups.

2) Qualitative Nature: The qualitative nature of the study provides rich, detailed insights but lacks the objectivity and quantifiable metrics that a mixed-methods or purely quantitative approach could offer.

3) Variability in Participation Levels: The study does not account for varying degrees of participation within the group. Members who are more active may derive various levels and types of benefits than less active members, impacting the study's representativeness and comprehensiveness.

4) Variability in Participation Levels: The study does not account for varying degrees of participation within the group. Members who are more active may derive diverse levels and types of benefits compared to less active members, impacting the study's representativeness and comprehensiveness.

## 6. Recommendations for Future Research

To mitigate the limitations mentioned above and to expand the understanding of the subject, future research could consider the following:

1) Incorporating Mixed-Methods Approach: Utilizing quantitative and qualitative methods could help achieve more holistic and objective insights.

2) Expanding Demographic Range: Including a more diverse range of participants from different academic disciplines and levels of study can enhance the generalizability of the findings.

3) Addressing Variability in Participation: Quantifying and categorizing levels of participation within the group can help understand the correlation between activity levels and derived benefits more explicitly.

4) Longitudinal Studies: Conducting longitudinal studies can help understand the evolving nature, sustained impacts, and long-term benefits of participating in such specialized groups.

## 7. Conclusion

This research endeavor illuminates a promising pathway within the evolving landscape of higher education and career development—a pathway marked by

the synergy of social media, personalized engagement, and collective growth. The journey embarked upon by healthcare administration students within the confines of a dedicated LinkedIn group signifies more than a mere convergence of virtual connections; it epitomizes the pursuit of excellence, the cultivation of specialized knowledge, and the forging of bonds that transcend the digital realm. As we navigate the intricate tapestry of modern education and employment, the insights from this study indicate that we should consider the transformative potential of tailored online communities. These communities, where information flows ceaselessly, ideas resonate profoundly, and shared aspirations are nurtured, hold the promise of preparing students for the workforce and sculpting them into confident, agile professionals. In a world marked by change, these digital enclaves support resilience, where academia converges with practice and students find a home in their shared pursuit of success. It is important to remember that in the interconnected world of healthcare administration and beyond, the bonds we forge can be as transformative as the knowledge we acquire. This research opens the door to investigating various aspects of this impact, including skill development, networking, and job opportunities.

### Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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