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Utilizing Digital Public Relations to Promote Empowerment Strategies for Talented Youth: A Case Study of "Lamea" National Project

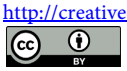
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Abstract

The paper aims to explore the role of digital media in promoting youth empowerment strategies. It analyzes empowerment strategies communicated through the Lamea Project's digital content. The research is based on Zimmerman's Empowerment Theory (2000). The researcher uses content analysis to examine the digital empowerment strategies used on the Lamea Association's Instagram. The results reveal that Lamea Association uses various strategies to empower Bahraini youth. First, (24.375%) of the posts employed a competition strategy, followed by mentorship and leadership connection (21.875%), partnership and collaboration strategy (20%), recognition and visibility of talented youth (16.25%), training and knowledge development (10%), and connection to community & humanity values (7.5%). The results show that 51.875% of the posts indicate "government/leadership" as a key empowerment actor, followed by peer-to-peer empowerment (29.375%) and private sector partnership (18.75%). The results demonstrate that the project has implemented various levels of empowerment. The results show that 55.625% of posts focused on organizational empowerment, followed by 23.125% of posts focused on psychological empowerment, while 21.25% of posts focused on community empowerment. The findings reveal that digital communication has established a highly interactive relationship with the audience via "likes" at 100%, followed by "mentions" at 99.375%, "reposts" at 80.625%, and "comments" at 78.125%. The study finds significant differences (0.001) in the use of the Lamea Instagram account across forms of digital content, themes of digital content, empowerment strategies, empowerment actors, and empowerment levels. Since the research focuses on the "process" of employing empowerment strategies by Lamae's Project, further studies should expand the findings by exploring the "outcomes" of this process for youth empowerment. Moreover, the study recommends that future studies should take a collective approach by integrating empowerment strategies across different

cultures using a multi-level empowerment model.

Keywords

Digital Media, Youth Empowerment, Talented Youth, Public Relations, Strategic Communication

1. Introduction

The youth demographic serves as the cornerstone of development within any society. Thus, developing youth's potential and talents is crucial to developing society. Firestone et al. (2021) emphasized that "Empowerment" is an overused concept in health promotion, yet it is an important process that can be used in developing the capacity and capability of young people for creating social change to improve healthier lives. Martinez (2022) defined "Empowerment" as an expanded, multi-domain paradigm containing distinct new operationalizations: *environmental empowerment* (the education and activation of communities to protect their immediate ecosystems) and *digital empowerment* (the structural provision of digital resources, tech literacy, and bridging the systemic digital gap).

According to UNESCO, youth empowerment is an individual and collective psychological and social-relational process that takes place in interaction with the environment in which youth grow. It transitions young people from passive recipients of adult care and control toward becoming crucial actors, leaders, and partners who actively fight inequality and contribute to sustainable development (UNESCO, 2026). This definition aligns with the older definition of empowerment as "a construct that links individual strengths and competencies, natural helping systems, and proactive behaviors to social policy and social change" (Rappaport, 1981; 1984).

2. Research Problem

2.1. The Significance of "Youth Empowerment"

According to the Information & eGovernment Authority in the Kingdom of Bahrain, Bahraini youth (aged 15 to 35) represent 33.1% of the total citizen population, amounting to 245,102 individuals. Including children and adolescents under 15, the figure rises to about 62% of the Bahraini population under 35 (452,625 people), highlighting the Kingdom's predominantly young and vibrant demographic profile (Information & eGovernment Authority, 2025).

These statistics underscore the significance of the government's initiatives that aim to empower Bahraini youth to develop their talents. Oloo Ong'ong'a (2025) argued that Youth-driven innovation has emerged as a topic of significant debate in recent times, reflecting the dynamic role that young people play in driving societal progress. However, there is a lack of studies that highlight the empowerment strategies used by youth initiatives in Bahrain. Thus, this paper aims to explore

the role of digital media in promoting youth empowerment strategies at various empowerment levels used in Lamea, the national project for talented youth empowerment.

The National Project Lamea is Bahrain's flagship platform, launched in 2021 to discover, upskill, and spotlight elite young talent to build a highly capable leadership pipeline for the Kingdom of Bahrain (Lamea Association, 2026). Derived from the Arabic word meaning "bright" or "shining," the initiative operates under the patronage of His Highness Sheikh Nasser bin Hamad Al Khalifa, Representative of His Majesty the King for Humanitarian Works and Youth Affairs. The project is managed by Lamea Association under the umbrella of the Bahrain Ministry of Youth Affairs. H. E. Shaikha Dwa bint Khalid Al Khalifa is the Chairperson of the Board of Directors of Lamea Association. The initiative aims to identify and nurture a new generation of exceptional youth, motivating them to elevate their performance and potential both professionally and personally. It also aims to empower them to participate in various training activities and projects (Ministry of Youth Affairs, 2026).

Although youth empowerment is a significant research topic, few studies explore youth empowerment strategies in the Arab Gulf in general and in Bahrain in particular. Moreover, empowering talented youth is still an under-researched topic, despite its significance to the socio-economic development of the country.

Furthermore, based on Grunig's two-way symmetrical communication model, this research aims to explore the role of social media in establishing an open-access environment where talented youth can interact with Lamea's empowerment strategies. This aligns with Grunig's Excellence Theory (2008), which stresses the value of public relations in facilitating mutual relationships with stakeholders. Hence, the contribution of this research is that it is the first study that provides a comprehensive analysis of youth empowerment strategies used in the digital media of the Lamea National Project in Bahrain. Moreover, the research aims to study the role of digital public relations in employing empowerment strategies at different levels.

2.2. Research Aims

The paper seeks to achieve the following aims:

- To analyze the empowerment strategies used in the Instagram account of Lamea Association.
- To compare the differences in the use of the Instagram account in terms of the forms of digital content.
- To analyze the themes of digital empowerment used in the Instagram account of Lamea Association.
- To analyze the key digital youth empowerment strategies used in the Instagram account of Lamea Association.
- To analyze the key empowerment actors used in the Instagram account of Lamea Association.
- To analyze the empowerment levels employed in the Instagram account of

Lamea Association.

- To analyze the forms of interaction of the audience with Instagram's posts.

2.3. Research Questions

The research aims to answer the question: "How was digital media used to promote youth empowerment strategies on Lamea's Instagram account?"

To answer this question, sub-questions were raised:

- What are the differences in the use of the Instagram account in terms of the forms of digital content?
- What are the differences in the use of the Instagram account in terms of themes of digital content?
- What are the differences in the use of the Instagram account in terms of youth empowerment strategies?
- What are the differences in the use of the Instagram account in terms of the empowerment actors?
- What are the differences in the use of the Instagram account in terms of the empowerment levels?
- What are the differences in the use of the Instagram account in terms of forms of interaction?

2.4. Research Hypotheses

Based on the research questions, several hypotheses are raised as follows:

Hypothesis 1: There are statistically significant differences in the use of the Instagram account in terms of the forms of digital content.

Hypothesis 2: There are statistically significant differences in the use of the Instagram account in terms of themes of digital content.

Hypothesis 3: There are statistically significant differences in the use of the Instagram account in terms of youth empowerment strategies.

Hypothesis 4: There are statistically significant differences in the use of the Instagram account in terms of empowerment actors.

Hypothesis 5: There are statistically significant differences in the use of the Instagram account in terms of empowerment levels.

3. Theoretical Background

The study is based on Zimmerman's Empowerment Theory (2000). Zimmerman's Empowerment Theory provides a structured principle for how individuals, organizations, and communities gain mastery and control over their lives and environments (Zimmerman, 2000; Perkins & Zimmerman, 1995; Zimmerman et al., 1992). The theory suggests that actions, activities, or structures may be empowering, and that the outcome of such processes results in a level of being empowered. Both empowerment processes and outcomes vary in their outward form because no single standard can fully capture its meaning for all people in all contexts (Zimmerman, 2000).

The theory states three levels of empowerment as follows:

- Psychological Level: This level describes how individuals perceive their ability to influence their social and political realities. Zimmerman divides psychological empowerment into three interlocking components. It includes the intrapersonal component (i.e., personal control and self-efficacy), the interactional component (critical awareness of empowerment actors), and the behavioral component (participation in collective activities) (Zimmerman, 2000; Perkins & Zimmerman, 1995; Zimmerman et al., 1992).
- Organizational Level: Zimmerman (2000) notes that organizations can act as the structural vehicle for individual and collective transformation.
- Community Level: At the highest tier, community empowerment shifts from individual psychology to collective environmental systems. An empowered community provides accessible infrastructure, resource availability, and collective coalitions and partnerships (Zimmerman, 2000; Perkins & Zimmerman, 1995; Zimmerman et al., 1992).

This theoretical framework reinforces the relationship between individual, organizational, and community empowerment. Furthermore, the study relates Zimmerman's Empowerment Theory (2000) to Grunig's Excellence Theory (2008), which stresses the value of public relations in facilitating mutual relationships with stakeholders. Based on Grunig's two-way symmetrical communication model, this research aims to explore the role of social media in exposing empowerment strategies to establish two-way dialogue with talented youth. The research focuses on the "process" of employing empowerment strategies through social media and how the audience interacts with them rather than studying the "outcomes" of empowerment strategies.

4. Methodology

4.1. Research Method

The researcher uses content analysis to analyze the digital empowerment strategies employed by the Lamea Association. The researcher develops a coding scheme to categorize content based on thematic elements. Based on Zimmerman's empowerment theoretical framework (2000), the research coding includes the following:

1) Forms of Digital Content: Photos/Images, Videos, Infographics.

2) Digital Content Themes: Talent attraction, Leadership Empowerment and Spotlighting, Partnership & Institutional Collaboration, Community Visits & Initiatives, Skill development & Training, Expansion & New Programmes.

3) Empowerment Strategies: Competition Strategy, Mentorship & Leadership Connection, Partnership & Collaboration, Recognition & Visibility, Training and Knowledge Development, Connection to Community and Humanity Values.

4) Empowerment Actors: Government/Leadership, Private Sector Partnership, Peer-to-Peer Empowerment.

5) Empowerment Levels: Psychological Empowerment, Organizational Em-

powerment, Community Empowerment.

6) Forms of Interaction: Likes, Mentions, Reposts, Comments.

The researcher developed a systematic codebook to analyze the data (Table 1).

Table 1. A systematic codebook of the content analysis.

Variable Category	Nominal Variable	Operational Definition	Observable Indicators
Forms of Digital Content	Photos/Images	Static camera captures.	Single static photo frame or multiple photographs (carousel).
	Videos	Content incorporating motion and sound.	Active video progress bar, interviews, or Instagram Reel.
	Infographics	Digitally designed instructional figures.	Graphic or data charts.
Digital Content Themes	Talent attraction	Recruitment, selection of new team members, and application outreach.	Mentions of "Apply now," "Join the project," "Registration link," "Deadline," or application instruction countdowns.
	Leadership Empowerment & Spotlighting	Association of the youth with governmental leaders or elites.	Association with leaders in government and private sectors to spotlight the youth as important figures.
	Partnership & Institutional Collaboration	Formal connections with governmental and private organizations.	Strategic meetings with external government or private entities, or captions tagging institutional sponsors.
	Community Visits & Initiatives	Social engagement with community visits.	Outdoor field trips, engagement with society, or volunteer social responsibility initiatives.
	Skill development & Training	Active learning and training sessions.	Classrooms, training sessions, bootcamps, or workshops.
	Expansion & New Programmes	Introducing new versions of the project.	Posts announcing new initiatives: i.e., "Launching New edition," "Lamea Junior".
Empowerment Strategies	Competition Strategy	Performance rankings, jury evaluation panels, and filtering challenges.	Mentions of "The top candidates," "Jury panel evaluation," "Finalists," "Winning candidate," or selection and competition process.
	Mentorship & Leadership Connection	Bridging youth with elite leaders.	Mentions of interactive roundtables, leaders, mentors, or government leaders.
	Partnership & Collaboration	Formal ties with governmental and private organizations.	Posts about government and private partnerships or emphasizing partner-backed resources and internships.
	Recognition & Visibility	Highlighting the youth public profile through ceremonial accolades, rewards, and public praise.	Medals, certificate-handing ceremonies on a public stage, or proud public validation captions ("Honoring our youth", "Selected talented youth").
	Training & Knowledge Development	Transferring functional skills to participants.	Post about training workshops, or images of candidates taking active lecture notes.
	Connection to Community & Humanity Values	Association of the youth with community service and social responsibility values.	Framing leadership alongside expressions of "Ethical choices," "Community values," "Bahraini identity," or "Humanitarian aid."

Continued

Empowerment Actors	**Government/ Leadership**	Public sector state representatives.	Ministers, royal figures, directors, formal Bahraini national attire, or official governmental figures.
	Private Sector Partnership	Commercial or industrial organizations.	Corporate CEOs, business suits, private corporate buildings, or prominent corporate logos (e.g., local banks, private corporations).
	Peer-to-Peer Empowerment	Youth participants collaborating symmetrically through group work and horizontal learning.	Collaborating teams of young applicants, youth-led presentations, or peer group work.
Empowerment Levels	**Psychological Empowerment**	Internal shifts in individual self-efficacy, confidence, and self-esteem.	Narrative focusing on inner qualities like "Self-belief," "Confidence," "Overcoming challenges".
	Organizational Empowerment	Organizations act as the structural vehicle for individual and collective transformation	Captions detailing "Strategic planning," "Managing team dynamics," "Project proposal structures," or "Organizational paths," or posts about organizational aid and support.
	Community Empowerment	Providing resources and support for collective good, civic duty, and the national progress of Bahrain.	Mentions of "Bahrain Economic Vision 2030" and youth engaging with local civilian populations.
Forms of Interaction	**Likes, Mentions, Reposts, Comments**	Quantitative digital response metrics.	Numerical totals pulled directly from engagement metrics. • Likes (heart shape) • Mentions (with the "@" symbol) • Reposts (at the top header of the post indicating co-authorship) • Comments (the total numerical counter located under the posts).

4.2. Research Sample

The research uses a purposeful sample of Lamea Association's Instagram account for several reasons. First, Lamea Project was intentionally selected for its unique goal of using technology to empower talented Bahraini youth. Besides, it is a national project that was supported by both governmental and private sectors in Bahrain. Moreover, the project has achieved regional acclaim, winning the award for the "Best Arab Government Project for Youth Empowerment" received at the Arab Government Excellence Award (November 2024) in recognition of the project's outstanding role in youth empowerment. Additionally, it received the Community Excellence Medal in September 2026 in recognition of its strong results in qualifying and empowering Bahraini youth and increasing their national participation. Furthermore, it offers a data-rich environment for exploring the use of youth empowerment strategies.

The research uses a purposive sample of the feed posts published during a full

calendar year from October 1st, 2025, to September 30th, 2026, on the project's Instagram account (Lamea_association). The content analysis's sample consists of all 160 feed posts published on Lamea's Instagram in the last year. The decision to analyze the Instagram feed posts in a full calendar year was to ensure the results' accuracy and to avoid bias. For every retrieved entry, the process extracts the unique post publication date, format type, and public engagement metrics (likes, reposts, mentions, and comments). Instagram Stories are excluded due to their 24-hour ephemeral nature, which prevents standard engagement tracking. To ensure data accuracy, actions by the organization itself (@lamea_association) were completely excluded in the coding process. Any mentions or reposts created by the Lamea Association did not count. A "Mention" was only counted when an audience member wrote an @username tag in the comment section. Similarly, a "Repost" only counted when the audience shared the post onto their own profiles or stories.

4.3. Research Reliability

Several procedures were used to enhance research reliability. First, the coding sheet was developed based on the theoretical framework of Zimmerman's Empowerment theory (2000). Then, the coding sheet was revised based on academic peer feedback. Next, a pilot test was conducted using a second coder to test the categories on a sample of posts.

This process involved a second coder applying the coding categories to a sample of posts. To achieve structural objectivity, the coders worked completely independently and in isolation during the evaluation process. From the total census pool of 160 eligible posts retrieved from the @lamea_association account, a pilot sample of 30 posts (representing 18.75% of the total dataset) was extracted using a random sampling method executed via a digital random number generator. Based on Holsti's formula, the pilot test reveals the following variable-specific consistency rates:

- **Forms of Digital Content:** Holsti's CR = 0.96 (High consistency)
- **Digital Content Themes:** Holsti's CR = 0.88 (High consistency)
- **Empowerment Strategies:** Holsti's CR = 0.84 (High consistency)
- **Empowerment Actors:** Holsti's CR = 0.91 (High consistency)
- **Empowerment Levels:** Holsti's CR = 0.81 (High consistency)
- **Forms of Interaction:** Holsti's CR = 1.00 (High consistency)

The findings yield an overall average consistency rate of 90% across all dimensions. Since all the dimensions exceed the standard academic threshold of 0.80 for Holsti's formula, this demonstrates the reliability of the results.

4.4. Research Limitations

The research focuses on analyzing quantitative data of the Lamea Project's strategic communication on the Instagram account during one academic year rather than demonstrated empowerment outcomes or participant reception. Thus, a crit-

ical distinction must be made between the communicated empowerment strategies observed in this research and the actual demonstrated empowerment outcomes experienced by the youth. This study is limited to analyzing "the youth empowerment strategies" used on Instagram and the youth interaction metrics (likes, reposts, mentions, and comments), not "the outcomes" of this process. Hence, future research should expand the research findings and explore the "outcomes" of empowerment strategies on Bahraini youth.

5. Literature Review

Various Studies have explored different aspects of youth empowerment. Fernández-Carrasco et al. (2026) examined how youth empowerment is addressed beyond the psychological level, with a focus on group and community dimensions. Following PRISMA-ScR guidelines, the researcher conducted a systematic search in Scopus and Web of Science. This search identified 32 empirical studies involving adolescents aged 10 to 18. It focused on psychosocial interventions and outcomes beyond psychological empowerment. The findings show that at the group level, empowerment is associated with social support, collective learning and participation in decision-making. At the community level, it is reflected in civic engagement, co-design and shifts in power relations and public recognition. However, most studies continue to prioritise psychological outcomes. The results indicate that group and community dimensions remain underdeveloped and highlight the need for approaches that better capture empowerment as a multi-level and relational process.

Corbella et al. (2026) explored the vision of social and educational professionals regarding their contribution to each of the dimensions of youth empowerment, and to determine how personal factors influence this vision. They used a self-administered questionnaire completed by a validated sample of 696 social and educational professionals. The results show that specialised and varied training and empowered professionals are key factors contributing to youth empowerment. Finally, the study develops recommendations regarding the training of social and educational professionals and the intervention practices and dynamics themselves.

Schlicht et al. (2026) partnered with 70 adolescents to examine how youth social media expertise can improve prosocial digital campaigns across consumer, creator, and strategist roles. Ultimately, leveraging adolescents' firsthand insights as co-experts allows organizations to design more resonant digital development campaigns. The findings demonstrate how adolescents' social media expertise can inform more collaborative and potentially resonant prosocial campaigns for youth.

Diaz et al. (2025) highlighted the significance of Youth Participatory Action Research (YPAR) to empower adolescents as co-researchers to tackle social issues. They conducted a rapid review of 85 sources from 2003 to 2023, comparing YPAR projects in North America and Latin America across theory, methodology, youth

roles, and socio-political contexts. The study revealed that North American projects typically focus on individual empowerment, institutional reform, and structured school or health settings. Conversely, Latin American projects prioritize collective action, decolonial theory, and grassroots community struggles. The authors conclude that combining North America's institutional access with Latin America's grassroots activism could significantly strengthen YPAR's global transformative potential.

Iroegbu, Ezeah & Ifegwu-Mbonu (2025) utilized a mixed-methods approach—guided by the Uses and Gratifications and Social Influence theories—to examine how social media influencers act as pivotal public relations (PR) agents in engaging and empowering Nigerian youth across platforms like Facebook, TikTok, and Instagram. The research highlights that while influencers deploy highly effective digital strategies to build trust and shape youth perceptions, influencer-driven PR is actively hindered by challenges like misinformation, a lack of authenticity, and over-commercialization. To address these hurdles and foster sustainable community development, the study recommends strategic collaborations between PR professionals and influencers, alongside updating higher education curricula to include influencer relations and marketing for future PR professionals.

Oloo Ong'ong'a (2025) analyzes how Kenyan media, specifically the *Daily Nation* and *The Standard Digital*, covers youth-driven innovations. Utilizing qualitative content and discourse analysis, the research reveals that media coverage heavily prioritizes economic empowerment, job creation, and digital content monetization over environmental sustainability or political influence. It highlights that young innovators face economic hardships and prioritize basic needs like food security over civic engagement, yet they challenge stereotypes by demonstrating high risk tolerance and financial prudence. The study recommends that media outlets balance their coverage to eliminate biases, ensuring equal visibility for all types of youth innovations to improve Kenya's socio-economic development.

Zhao, To & Chan (2025) explored how youth and practitioners in Hong Kong SAR perceived and practiced youth empowerment within a three-year community-based project. They developed an ecological systems framework, incorporating temporal, relational, and contextual aspects. They used purposeful sampling to recruit 89 youth and 104 practitioners for focus-group interviews. Findings showed that relationships among youth, practitioners, and community centers are vital for successful empowerment; additionally, time and contextual factors significantly influence understanding and practice of youth empowerment; finally, the temporal, relational, and contextual dimensions are interconnected in shaping how youth and practitioners understand and exercise youth empowerment.

Ouko, Ogola, Ng'on'ga & Wairimu (2022) addressed the persistent cycles of poverty and unemployment among rural Kenyan youth by evaluating the potential of youth Agricultural entrepreneurship to drive sustainable economic growth. The study found that engaging young people in agribusiness can significantly

boost food production, eradicate poverty, and combat rural unemployment while aligning with Kenya's Vision 2030 and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The study highlights a critical need for tailored entrepreneurial training, alongside government-backed initiatives like developmental funds, start-up capital for graduating students, and the establishment of agricultural incubation centres.

Khan (2022) examines how multicultural youth leadership programmes for migrant and refugee youth in Australia offer civic and vocational training, yet risk reinforcing white institutional worlds by burdening participants with unexpected cultural labour. By emphasizing individual achievement under a broader discourse of neoliberal nationhood, these programmes make young migrants responsible for their communities while simultaneously obscuring those communal ties. Rather than shaping productive youth potential to fit normative national ideals, the research argues that programmes should be reorientated toward the creative capacities of migrant youth. Utilizing co-production strategies can empower young people to share their expertise flexibly, fostering collective cultural citizenship that challenges, rather than affirms, the dominant white institutional frameworks governing them.

Ratriyana, Setiawan & Yudarwati (2022) examined the use of development communication for youth empowerment in renewable energy projects in Indonesia. This study finds that communication development is oriented primarily towards finalising infrastructure development and fails to consider active participation. Meanwhile, although youth groups hope to be involved in designing and furthering the use of renewable energy, they feel that their elders are hesitant to involve them in the projects; trust and power distance issues reduce them to passive participants. This study suggests that development communication in rural communities should be planned carefully, and that local values should be incorporated into the process. Although development communication may not result in youth empowerment, it may nonetheless shed light on power gaps and trust issues in youth-elder interactions.

Firestone et al. (2021) conducted a pilot study to examine the secondary outcomes and pragmatic usefulness of the Youth Empowerment Program (YEP)—which aimed to empower 15 youth (18 - 24 years) to lead healthier lives—by utilizing focus groups and mobile-mentary approaches to capture the youths' understanding of the program. Through thematic analyses, the study identified three major themes: Knowledge (education and awareness of healthy living and understanding how wider social health issues compound the health complexities of obesity), youth as catalysts for change (viewing themselves as agents of social change), and transformation (recognizing themselves as catalysts who can positively transform communities into action). Ultimately, this study contributes insights into how an empowerment program can strengthen individual capacity to mobilize social change for the betterment of the whole community, particularly among indigenous Pasifika population groups.

Avelino et al. (2020) conceptualized the mechanisms of empowerment from a

social psychology perspective and empirically explored how people are empowered through both local and transnational linkages. The study provides an empirical analysis of trans local networks that work with social innovation both at the global and local levels. A total of five networks are analyzed: *FEBEA*, *DESIS*, *the Global Ecovillage Network*, *Impact Hub*, *and Slow Food*. The embedded case-study approach allows an exploration of how people are empowered through the transnational networking while also zooming in on the dynamics in local initiatives. In conclusion, conceptual and empirical insights are synthesized into a characterization of the mechanisms of trans local empowerment, and challenges for future research are highlighted.

Ile & Boadu (2018) delineate the context of Local Enterprise and Skills Development Programme (LESDEP) by focusing on the extent to which the youth were empowered to play active roles in the decision policy processes which goes beyond the rhetoric. This study challenges the common belief that youth empowerment in targeted programs can successfully resolve the problem of exclusion. By drawing inferences directly from the concept of empowerment, it establishes a new framework to rethink how we debate and design empowerment initiatives for young people. The study highlights the urgent need for youth empowerment to help them participate in broader national policies. Yet, when evaluated via the empowerment perception index (EPI), the study showed a negative deviation, proving that minor consultation and marginal involvement in decision-making do not amount to empowerment at any level. Given how vital these findings are for implementing youth policies at both national and subnational levels, the paper offers strategic pathways to ensure authentic youth empowerment in Ghana's youth-oriented programmes.

Úcar Martínez, Jiménez-Morales, Soler Masó & Trilla Bernet (2017) present a systematic analysis of how empowerment has been conceptualized over the past 15 years and has been applied to young people. A systematic search of the major databases filtered by relevance provided 297 bibliographical references. The results confirm the ambiguous nature of the concept and the imprecision with which it is used, although they do link its use to three common concepts: power, participation and education. The concept of youth empowerment needs to be defined in order to highlight any nuances that distinguish it from the generic use of the term. The main dimensions associated with youth empowerment have been identified as: 1) that of growth and well-being; 2) relational; 3) educational; 4) political; 5) transformative; and, finally, 6) emancipative.

Eisman et al. (2016) tested empirically a multidimensional, higher-order model of psychological empowerment (PE), guided by Zimmerman's conceptual framework including three components of PE: intrapersonal, interactional, and behavioural. They investigated whether psychological empowerment (PE) is associated with positive and negative outcomes among a diverse sample of 367 middle school youth aged 11 - 16, coming from schools with 61% - 75% free/reduced lunch students. Statistical analysis confirmed that the three latent factors for PE compo-

nents successfully loaded onto a higher-order PE factor (X^2 = 32.68, df = 22, p = 0.07; RMSEA = 0.04, 95% CI: 0.00, 0.06; CFI = 0.99). While the higher-order PE factor was found to be positively associated with prosocial engagement, the study ultimately found no association between PE and aggressive behavior (though an initial second-order factor model showed a negative association). The authors suggest that empowerment-focused programs should integrate all three components of PE: intrapersonal (how youth think of themselves in relation to social contexts), interactional (understanding social and material resources needed to achieve goals), and behavioral (actions taken to influence outcomes) to effectively promote prosocial involvement.

Blanchet-Cohen & Brunson (2014) explored staff practice in the context of a multisite initiative designed to engage marginalized youth in social change through youth-led grants. Interviews with youth workers and managers revealed practices at multiple ecological levels. Individual-level practices supported youths' capacities to participate. Group-level practices fostered social interactions and activities that actualized the youth-led approach. Setting-level practices created structures that supported and protected group activities, while organization-level practices promoted a favourable environment for youth leadership. Analysed from an ecological and activity settings perspective, these results contribute to understanding the multifaceted and complex nature of youth work in power-sharing practice models. Practice implications include identifying training needs to help practitioners navigate across multiple ecological levels and suggesting reflection questions for practitioners.

Jennings, Parra-Medina, Hilfinger-Messias & McLoughlin (2006) aim to develop a critical social theory of youth empowerment which emphasizes collective efforts to create sociopolitical change. The study draws upon analysis of four youth empowerment models, and upon findings from a participatory research study which identified key dimensions of critical youth empowerment: a welcoming, safe environment, meaningful participation and engagement, equitable power-sharing between youth and adults, engagement in critical reflection on interpersonal and sociopolitical processes, participation in sociopolitical processes to affect change, and integrated individual- and community-level empowerment. It concludes with a discussion of the measurement of outcomes and the challenges and opportunities for empowerment in youth organizations.

To sum up, the literature review emphasizes the significance of addressing collective levels of empowerment rather than focusing on the psychological level of empowerment. Moreover, the literature review has revealed a considerable gap in the literature, as there is a lack of research that addresses the role of digital media in promoting empowerment strategies for talented youth in the Arab region. Thus, the contribution of this research is that it provides a systematic analysis of the use of different empowerment levels and strategies on the digital account of Lamea, the National Youth Empowerment Project, to empower Bahraini talented youth.

6. Findings

6.1. Content Analysis

This section offers content analysis of Lamea's Instagram account to explore its role in empowering Bahraini youth.

To start with, the analysis of the forms of posts used by the Lamea project on Instagram (Table 2) indicates a strong preference for photos/images (64.375%), followed by videos (34.375%), and infographics (1.25%). The emphasis on photos/images reflects the nature of Instagram, where emphasis is placed on visual elements. Moreover, the use of videos demonstrates the aim of the project to engage the youth with its interactive content. The limited percentage of infographics reflects the planners' awareness of the young target audience's preference for interactive media content.

Table 2. Forms of digital content.

Number	Forms of Digital Media	Frequency	Percentage
1	**Photos/Images**	**103**	**64.375%**
2	**Videos**	**55**	**34.375%**
3	**Infographics**	**2**	**1.25%**
	Total	**160**	**100%**

The results of Lamea's Instagram content analysis (Table 3) show that 25% of the posts focus on youth talent attraction, (20.625%) of the posts focus on leadership empowerment and spotlighting, (20%) focus on partnership and institutional collaboration, (15.625%) of the posts focus on community visits and initiatives, (12.5%) focus on skill development and training, and (6.25%) focus on expansion of new programmes. The focus on talent attraction demonstrates that empowering Bahraini youth to showcase their talents is a top priority for Lamea Association. Moreover, integrating various empowerment themes on digital media reflects the ongoing empowerment "process" adopted by Lamea Association.

Table 3. Themes of digital content.

Number	Themes of Digital Content	Frequency	Percentage
1	**Talent Attraction**	**40**	**25%**
2	**Leadership Empowerment & Spotlighting**	**33**	**20.625%**
3	**Partnership & Institutional Collaboration**	**32**	**20%**
4	**Community Visits & Initiatives**	**25**	**15.625%**
5	**Skill Development & Training**	**20**	**12.5%**
6	**Expansion & New programmes**	**10**	**6.25%**
	Total	**160**	**100%**

The content analysis of Lamea's Instagram (Table 4) indicates that the project uses various strategies to empower Bahraini youth. First, (24.375%) of the posts employed a competition strategy, followed by mentorship and leadership connection (21.875%), partnership and collaboration strategy (20%), recognition and visibility of talented youth (16.25%), training and knowledge development (10%), and connection to community & humanity values (7.5%). The use of multiple strategies highlights the role of digital media in empowering youth. The priority of the competition strategy reflects targeting the nature of the youth who prefer competition and challenge. Leadership connection and partnership strategies reflect the collective nature of the Bahraini society. Moreover, the use of other collective strategies such as partnership & collaboration, training & knowledge development, and connection to community and humanity values reveals that the project has addressed various psychological and collective empowerment strategies.

Table 4. Empowerment strategies.

Number	Empowerment Strategies	Frequency	Percentage
1	**Competition strategy**	**39**	**24.375%**
2	**Mentorship & Leadership Connection**	**35**	**21.875%**
3	**Partnership & Collaboration**	**32**	**20%**
4	**Recognition & Visibility**	**26**	**16.25%**
5	**Training & Knowledge Development**	**16**	**10%**
6	**Connection to Community & Humanity Values**	**12**	**7.5%**
	Total	**160**	**100%**

Table 5 shows that 51.875% of the posts highlight "government/leadership" as the main empowerment actor, as the project's activities are conducted under the patronage of His Highness Sheikh Nasser bin Hamad Al Khalifa, Representative of His Majesty the King for Humanitarian Work and Youth Affairs. Moreover, H. E. Rawan bint Najeeb Tawfiqi, Minister of Youth Affairs, H. E. Ayman bin Tawfeeq Almoayed, Secretary General of the Supreme Council for Youth & Sports, and H. E. Shaikha Dwa bint Khalid Al Khalifa, Chairperson of the Board of Directors of Lamea Association, are key government empowerment actors. Moreover, 29.375% of the posts employ peer-to-peer empowerment, followed by 18.75% of the posts that focus on private sector partnership through cooperation with large private institutions in Bahrain. These findings indicate that several actors have played a significant role in youth empowerment.

Table 5. Empowerment actors.

Number	Empowerment Actors	Frequency	Percentage
1	**Government/Leadership**	**83**	**51.875%**

Continued

2	Peer-to-Peer empowerment	47	29.375%
3	Private Sector Partnership	30	18.75%
	Total	160	100%

Table 6 demonstrates that the project has implemented various levels of empowerment. The results show that 55.625% of the posts focused on organizational empowerment, 23.125% of the posts focused on psychological empowerment, and 21.25% of the posts focused on community empowerment. These findings emphasized that the project used multiple empowerment levels to address the needs of the Bahraini youth. This aligns with Zimmerman's Empowerment Theory (2000), which stressed the need for multiple levels through the empowerment process.

Table 6. Empowerment levels.

Number	Empowerment Levels	Frequency	Percentage
1	Organizational empowerment	89	55.625%
2	Psychological Empowerment	37	23.125%
3	Community Empowerment	34	21.25%
	Total	160	100%

Table 7 shows that the audience mostly interacted with the Instagram account via "likes" at 100%, followed by "mentions" at 99.375%, "reposts" at 80.625%, and "comments" at 78.125%. These high interaction results indicate that digital communication has established a highly interactive relationship with the audience.

Table 7. Forms of interaction.

Number	Forms of Interaction	Frequency	Percentage
1	Likes	160	100%
2	Mentions	159	99.375%
3	Reposts	129	80.625%
4	Comments	125	78.125%

6.2. Hypothesis Testing Analysis

Because this study analyzes a structured sample of 160 posts rather than the entire historical archive of the @lamea_association account, inferential testing via Chi-Square is methodologically required. The 160 analyzed posts serve as an empirical sample representing the account's total content. Inferential testing is mathematically necessary to determine if the observed patterns in the sample can be confidently projected to the entire historical population of posts on the Lamea Associ-

ation profile. Moreover, utilizing the Chi-Square test allows the researcher to mathematically establish whether the dominating communication themes and strategies found in the data reflect systematic institutional priorities. Thus, to verify the validity of the research hypotheses, the Chi-square test was used for differences between frequencies, as shown in the following tables in this section.

Hypothesis 1: There are statistically significant differences in the use of the Instagram account in terms of the forms of digital content.

The results in Table 8 show statistically significant differences (0.001) in the use of Lamea's Instagram account in terms of the forms of digital content.

Table 8. Analyzing differences in the use of Lamea's instagram account in terms of the forms of digital content.

Number	Forms of Digital Media	Frequency	Percentage	Chi-square	Significance Level
1	Photos/Images	103	64.375%	95.71	0.001
2	Videos	55	34.375%		
3	Infographics	2	1.25%		
	Total	160	100%		

Hypothesis 2: There are statistically significant differences in the use of the Instagram account in terms of themes of digital content.

The results in Table 9 show statistically significant differences (0.001) in the use of Lamea's Instagram account in terms of the themes of digital content.

Table 9. Analyzing differences in the use of Lamea's instagram account in terms of the themes of digital content.

Number	Themes of Digital Content	Frequency	Percentage	Chi-square	Significance Level
1	Talent Attraction	40	25%	21.43	0.001
2	Leadership Empowerment & Spotlighting	33	20.625%		
3	Partnership & Institutional Collaboration	32	20%		
4	Community Visits & Initiatives	25	15.625%		
5	Skill Development & Training	20	12.5%		
6	Expansion & New programmes	10	6.25%		
	Total	160	100%		

Hypothesis 3: There are statistically significant differences in the use of the Instagram account in terms of youth empowerment strategies.

The results in Table 10 show statistically significant differences (0.001) in the use of Lamea's Instagram account in terms of youth empowerment strategies.

Table 10. Analyzing differences in the use of Lamea's instagram account in terms of empowerment strategies.

Number	Empowerment Strategies	Frequency	Percentage	Chi-square	Significance Level
1	Competition strategy	39	24.375%		
2	Mentorship & Leadership Connection	35	21.875%		
3	Partnership & Collaboration	32	20%		
4	Recognition & Visibility	26	16.25%	21.72	0.001
5	Training & Knowledge Development	16	10%		
6	Connection to Community & Humanity Values	12	7.5%		
	Total	160	100%		

Hypothesis 4: There are statistically significant differences in the use of the Instagram account in terms of empowerment actors.

The results in Table 11 show statistically significant differences (0.001) in the use of Lamea's Instagram account in terms of empowerment actors.

Table 11. Analyzing differences in the use of Lamea's instagram account in terms of empowerment actors.

Number	Empowerment Actors	Frequency	Percentage	Chi-square	Significance Level
1	Government/Leadership	83	51.875%		
2	Peer-to-Peer/ Self-empowerment	47	29.375%		
3	Private Sector Partnership	30	18.75%	27.46	0.001
	Total	160	100%		

Hypothesis 5: There are statistically significant differences in the use of the Instagram account in terms of empowerment levels.

The results in Table 12 show statistically significant differences (0.001) in the use of Lamea's Instagram account in terms of empowerment levels.

Table 12. Analyzing differences in the use of Lamea's instagram account in terms of empowerment levels.

Number	Empowerment Levels	Frequency	Percentage	Chi-square	Significance Level
1	Organizational empowerment	89	55.625%		
2	Psychological Empowerment	37	23.125%	35.86	0.001
3	Community Empowerment	34	21.25%		
	Total	160	100%		

To sum up, Pearson's chi-square tests were used to examine whether the observed frequencies across the coded categories differed from an equal-proportions distribution. Under the null hypothesis, each category was assumed to have an equal probability of occurrence, with expected frequencies calculated as $E_i = N/k$, where $N = 160$ and k is the number of categories. This equal-proportions distribution served as a reference benchmark rather than an assumption that Instagram content is distributed equally across categories. The test statistic was evaluated against the chi-square distribution with $k - 1$ degrees of freedom. Thus, the findings reveal 2 degrees of freedom for forms of digital content, empowerment actors, and empowerment levels, and 5 degrees of freedom for themes of digital content and empowerment strategies. All expected frequencies exceeded five. Statistical significance was assessed at $\alpha = 0.05$. Because the research employed a purposive sample of one year of the Lamea's Instagram account, the findings reflect the characteristics of the selected sample and its specific context. They cannot be generalized to all Instagram posts or users. Any application of the findings to other posts, accounts, or time periods should be conducted cautiously, considering the sampling criteria, data-collection period, and independence of observations.

7. Discussion & Conclusion

Based on the research results, the researcher develops the following themes.

7.1. A Collective Approach to the Concept of Youth Empowerment

The research findings suggest a collective approach to address youth empowerment. The findings underscore the interrelated psychological, organizational and community empowerment strategies used by Lamea Project. These findings are consistent with Zhao, To & Chan's (2025) argument that group and community dimensions should be addressed by looking at empowerment as a multi-level and relational process. The findings demonstrate that the Lamea Project has used various strategies at multiple levels of youth empowerment. The findings reflect "empowerment" as a "process" shaped by the collective efforts of the youth through peer-to-peer empowerment, the government through providing leadership sup-

port in addition to training workshops, and the community partnership. These results align with the study of Avelino et al. (2020), who conceptualized empowerment as the "process through which actors gain the capacity to mobilize resources to achieve a goal". It supports the recommendation of Zhao, To & Chan (2025) that the temporal, relational, and contextual dimensions are interconnected in shaping how youth and practitioners understand and exercise youth empowerment. Consequently, future initiatives for youth empowerment must adopt a collective framework, viewing empowerment as an ongoing process driven by strategic partnerships and collaborative stakeholder engagement.

7.2. Empowerment as a Multi-Level Process

The results indicate that the project has implemented multiple levels of empowerment. The results show that 55.625% of the posts focused on organizational empowerment, followed by psychological empowerment and community empowerment. This aligns with Zimmerman's Empowerment Theory (2000), which stressed the need for multiple levels through the empowerment process. Although past research criticized the youth initiative's focus on psychological empowerment through personal control and self-efficacy, the Lamea project has succeeded in combining psychological, organizational, and community levels of empowerment. It is remarkable that organizational-level empowerment comes in first place, which reflects the role of organizations in empowering youth as a "structural vehicle for individual and collective transformation" (Zimmerman, 2000). Moreover, collective-level empowerment is essential to provide the youth with sufficient resources. Lamea Project has established collaboration and partnerships with various governmental and private institutions in Bahrain. This finding supports the recommendation of Fernández-Carrasco et al. (2026) to shift from individual empowerment outcomes to a multi-level process. Based on Zimmerman (2000), empowerment theory suggests that actions, activities, or structures may be empowering, and that the outcome of such processes results in a level of being empowered. Since the research focuses on the "process" of employing empowerment strategies on Lamea's Instagram account, future studies should examine the "outcomes" of this collective process on youth empowerment.

7.3. The Role of Digital Media in Youth Empowerment

The findings reveal high interaction with the digital content of the Lamea Project via "Likes", "Mentions", "Posts" and "Comments". This high interaction positions "youth empowerment" as an outstanding issue in digital media. Oloo Ong'ong'a (2025) argued that despite the significance of Youth-driven innovation, these innovations often fail to garner adequate attention within the media landscape. The results indicate that digital communication has established a highly interactive relationship with the audience. The powerful impact of social media was stressed by Schlicht et al. (2026), who emphasized that social media has played a central role in adolescents' lives and influenced their emotions, thoughts, and behaviours.

Thus, to achieve youth empowerment, more attention should be given to developing strategic digital media campaigns and projects to target the youth. Leveraging digital platforms offers new opportunities to develop youth empowerment strategies. Additionally, these findings reveal how digital media can support more collaborative, multi-level youth empowerment campaigns and projects. Furthermore, based on Grunig's two-way symmetrical communication model, this research highlights how social media has shifted public relations from traditional, one-way press agentry toward direct, real-time dialogue between organizations and youth. This modern interactive landscape aligns with the Excellence Theory, which Grunig (2008) notes establishes the value of public relations by focusing on socially responsible management and development of quality stakeholder relationships.

7.4. The Participatory Role of the Youth in the Empowerment Process

The findings emphasized that the youth play a considerable role in youth empowerment. Digital media employment transforms youth from passive recipients into active actors. The findings reveal that 29.375% of the posts used peer-to-peer empowerment, which reflects the role of the youth in the empowerment process. Furthermore, digital media enables the youth to participate in the empowerment process through various interaction forms (likes, reposts, mentions, and comments). This finding is consistent with Ile & Boadu's (2018) argument that to achieve inclusiveness in any social intervention programme, the policy process should be all-embracing, sharing knowledge and active stakeholders' participation, which includes the youth. Moreover, the findings support the discussion of Ratriyana, Setiawan & Yudarwati (2022) that during development, youths can be agents of social change and drivers of development. Hence, youth empowerment initiatives should enable target youth to become active empowerment actors by providing resources and employing digital media to establish interactive, participatory relationships. Hence, future research should focus on the "outcomes" of this interactive process from the perceptions of youth.

7.5. The Role of Training and Knowledge Development in Innovation Empowerment

The findings highlight the role of training and knowledge development in innovation empowerment through providing psychological and collective resources for talented youth to develop their talents. This finding goes along with Bhaat & Kim's (2017) recommendation for the need for expert teachers and innovation in teaching and learning practices, as applying innovative and advanced education is the foremost requirement for today's generation. Moreover, Ouko, Ogola, Ng'on'ga & Wairimu (2022) highlighted a critical need for tailored entrepreneurial training, alongside government-backed initiatives like developmental funds, start-up capital for graduating students, and the establishment of agricultural in-

cubation centres. The findings stress the need for national projects that would employ multiple empowerment strategies for talented youth across different cultures. Hence, tailored youth training programmes should be developed to advance youth talents as part of a collective youth empowerment approach.

7.6. Recommendation for Further Research on Empowerment Strategies

The findings highlight the immediate need for further research that explores collective approaches to youth empowerment. Moreover, future studies should integrate empowerment strategies across different cultures using a multi-level empowerment model. This aligns with the recommendation by Eisman et al. (2016) to utilize theoretical models of empowerment. Besides, Khan (2022) argued that utilizing co-production strategies can empower young people to share their expertise flexibly, fostering collective cultural citizenship that challenges, rather than affirms, the dominant white institutional frameworks governing them. In addition, future studies should shift from focusing mainly on health empowerment to multiple socioeconomic issues related to youth empowerment. Furthermore, the research recommends developing interdisciplinary studies that connect youth empowerment research to strategic communication and public relations scholarship. Additionally, future investigations should explore the role of digital media in developing creative empowerment strategies at multiple levels of empowerment. Moreover, further studies should expand research findings by exploring the "outcomes" of the empowerment "process" from youth's perspectives.

Conflicts of Interest

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

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