

Usage Trend and Patterns of Google Meet as an e-Leadership Tool: An Evidence from Malaysian Public Organisations

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Abstract

Video conference technology (VCT) is a multimedia application that enables sound and image transmission, as well as real-time, duplex, and data communication. It facilitates communication between people in different places by using a camera, microphone, and monitor. In Malaysia, the use of this technology is rather recent and the spike usages of it were seen during the outbreak of Covid-19 in 2020. Organisations were fast to adopted VCT in order to facilitate the organizational communications as employees were away from the office. In Malaysian public organisations, the Government have introduced the use of Google Meet as their main VCT tool. However, not all employees in the organisations were ready to adopt the technology and even some are still refusing it. Driven by the noted disparities in preparedness to embrace this technology, the study attempts to identify the variables impacting Google Meet's usage for leadership communication through an examination of usage patterns and demographic traits. Overall, the paper examines the demographic characteristics of 353 survey participants, their responses regarding Google Meet usage trends in a leadership communication context, and substantiates the widespread utilization of Google Meet for official purposes by managers in Malaysia through the presentation of data using charts and tables. The study also explores the subtle aspects of usage, including trends, frequency, and types of activities that supervisors, subordinates, and coworkers engage in on Google Meet. It is interesting to note that managers in Malaysian public organisations prefer to utilise Google Meet as an e-leadership tool, and they have expressed interest in using it going forward. The study's conclusions offer compelling new perspectives on how things work of this communication channel. Moreover, understanding the preferences of managers on e-leadership tools able to help to the development of policies that align with organizational goals. For this, the findings of this study can be used for policy

makers in strategic decision-making within organizations, helping leaders tailor their approaches to technological integration.

Introduction

To improve the efficacy and efficiency of its services and operations, the Malaysian government has been a strong advocate for digitalization. The Multimedia Super Corridor (MSC) concept was implemented in 1996 as the initial step (Lee, 2022). Since then, numerous plans of action and strategies have been created to support and maintain the digitization of service delivery. The digital revolution has completely changed the way people connect and work, with remote and hybrid work becoming more and more common. The concept of remote work is a common concept in most developed countries. However, in developing countries, the concept has just gained attention after the Covid-19 pandemic outburst in 2020.

The good side of the evolvement of digital communication tools is that it has allowed many organisation to participate in more flexible work arrangements, including public organisations (Ali et al., 2022). In Malaysia, this concept has been accepted well by many employees as highlighted by a study done in 2020, 69 percent of employees hoping for working for home concept to be implemented post pandemic (KPMG, 2020).

Richter (2020) indicated that the increased use of digital skills by people who work and collaborate remotely requires leaders to modify their leadership approaches when leading distributed teams. Most importantly, the absence of regular informal contact means that leaders need to develop new communication techniques and tools (Newman & Ford, 2021). For this, it is critical to have a reliable communication channel in place to guarantee that objectives and goals are communicated in a clear and concise manner (Darics, 2020). A leader who is able to find and use suitable tools and techniques to boost their communication can be especially beneficial as a supplement and enhancer of direct supervision for virtual teams (Newman et al., 2020a).

Among the available communication technologies, VCT is the most effective method for establishing communication to support daily work activities among geographically distributed team members (Parasian & Yuliati, 2020). VCT initially began in the 1960s and is now commonly utilised in the corporate world, as it is regarded as an efficient tool that allows organisations to save time and money. It enables communication between two or more users who are physically separated via the live display of video and audio content (Putranti et al., 2021). By carefully and correctly utilising the VCT technology, organisations can maintain employee relationships and establish effective communication for the benefit of the organisation (Parasian & Yuliati, 2020). In Malaysia, VCT become more popular with platforms like Google Meet, Webex, Microsoft Team, and Zoom, reporting an increase in use (Wong & Tan, 2021). In the context of Malaysian public organisations, the Government of Malaysia has implemented the MyGovUC 2.0; a centralised communication and collaboration platform that provides twelve services including VCT via Google Meet application (MAMPU, 2020).

Given the relatively new usage of this technology, especially in the public sector of Malaysia, the goal of this study is to identify the current usage pattern of Google Meet platform among managers in Malaysia's public sectors in enhancing their leadership roles. Understanding managers' preferences in e-leadership tools is crucial in making decisions regarding policies that aligned with organizational goals, and the study's findings can be pivotal for policymakers and leaders in strategically integrating technology within organizations.

Literature Review***Leadership Communication and Technology***

The growth of the internet and mobile Information Communication Technology (ICT) has led to exponential innovations in the way people use digital technology and exchange information (Jan et al., 2019). A recent study on ICT use and access in Malaysia highlighted a significant increase in internet usage, rising from 89.6% in 2020 to 96.8% in 2021, a 7.2% increase in a single year. In addition, the percentage of households with access to the Internet has also increased by 3.8% from 91.7% in 2020 to 95.5% in 2021 (Department of Statistics Malaysia, 2022). The study has also confirmed that the Internet has been a critical instrument for social contact, with text messaging and visiting social networking sites ranking as the most popular activities among Internet users (96.5% and 85.6%, respectively).

In the context of organisations, the use of the internet allows for the creation of a universal network in the workplace. Organisations that leverage internet have an edge over those that do not because the internet aids organisations in improving productivity, enhancing performance, facilitating communication, and strengthening the organisation's image (Koay, 2018). The role of ICT has significantly impacted organisational activities, especially leadership practices. These technological advancements have transformed the relationships between leaders and followers, reducing the need for face-to-face interactions. Furthermore, as technology continues to advance, individuals and machines can seamlessly connect in virtual environments, enabling effective cross-border and time-zone operations (Schmid & Dowling, 2020). However, due to the nature of virtual teams, leaders are unable to physically observe or read team members' facial expressions (Wyllie, 2021). Thus, leading a virtual team requires the leader to exert control over their team's actions in the absence of physical presence.

In the context of public sector organisations, the global digitalisation and the threat of new crises are putting significant pressure on public sector leaders to adapt and evolve their leadership approach to effectively address these challenges (Toleikienė et al., 2020). Leaders who were used to operating in a routine manner must keep up with the changes in technology to effectively serve the public. Information technology improves administrative efficiency and accountability, encourages public communication channels, and facilitates access to relevant information and services from both public and private sector organisations (Kalu, 2019). Leaders who fail to recognise the impact of ICT on their organisation risk organisational inefficiency. Additionally, leaders must be able to assist team members in adopting new technology, which includes understanding the technology's purpose and how it is programmed to execute functions within the team (Staňková, 2020). Hence, e-leadership in the public sector is becoming increasingly important as digitalization and crises continue to reshape society and organisations (Toleikienė et al., 2020).

In term of communication, technologies certainly have help leaders to improved the way their communicate with their team members. In an organisational setting, clear and concise communication is essential for supporting informed decision-making, aligning interests among stakeholders, and guaranteeing that everyday contacts engage, align, and communicate effectively (Saputra, 2021). The evolving technological innovation landscape has redefined leadership and creative leadership, giving rise to the concept of e-leadership, which is characterized as a leading process influenced by digital communication and networks, leading to changes in behaviors, attitudes, thoughts, and performance due to advancements in information technology within both immediate and remote contexts (Wang & Wang, 2022).

Various digital tools are now available to facilitate communication in an organization and several studies have examined the various communication methods currently used in workplaces, and the internal feedback system for improved performance and communication includes a wide range of tools, including email, video conferencing, and the intranet (Roman et al., 2019). In improving leadership performance in this digital era, it is important for leaders to choose wisely the right communication tools (Braun et al., 2019).

One of beneficial digital communication tool that has become an increasingly popular means of communication is VCT, which have been utilised by a wide range of end-users in diverse contexts to meet a variety of performance-related requirements (Hyché, 2018). Studies have also identified the potential of VCT as substitute for conventional forms of communication in the future (Byrnes et al., 2021). The strengths of VCT include its ease of use for managers to host or join meetings, data and file sharing, whiteboard for note-taking, customisable meeting rooms, features like polls and quizzes, real-time collaboration with Office apps, and recording capabilities (Archibald et al., 2019; Collins, 2020; Parasian & Yuliati, 2020; Yade et al., 2020). However, VCT is susceptible to technical difficulties, privacy and security concerns, and limitations in reading nonverbal cues and building relationships, particularly if managers lack e-leadership skills (Gray et al., 2020; Park et al., 2023; Steenkamp & Ziaei, 2021). Despite these weaknesses, there are many opportunities for the continued growth and advancement of VCT. Opportunities for VCT include the growing demand for remote work and distance learning, advancements in technology to improve the VCT experience, and adoption in various industries for efficient cost, time, and resource use (Gray et al., 2020; Karis et al., 2016; Mohamad et al., 2020).

Nevertheless, there are also several threats, including the lack of standards in ICT policy, competition from other forms of communication, cybersecurity threats, and dependency on internet connections (Alexei & Alexei, 2021; Kagan et al., 2020; Singh & Awasthi, 2020). Google Meet, Zoom, and Microsoft Teams are some of the few options that consumers can select from with most of this platforms offer similar function with different features (Singh & Awasthi, 2020).

Google Meet

Google Meet is a VCT or online meeting service launched by Google (Musa & Abdillah, 2021). Google offers a video conferencing tool called Google Meet that was once exclusively for organisations, but it is now free for all users. It can be accessed via the internet, as well as Android and iOS smartphones and tablets. Google Meet features a unique and functional interface with a lightweight and fast design, emphasizing efficient and user-friendly management that can be followed by all participants. A study by Sawitri (2020) has highlighted some of the features available on Google Meet such as:

- a. Whiteboard feature that allows users to write and use words on the whiteboard to help on visual explanations, including drawings or numbers, which can be challenging to convey verbally.
- b. Google Meet provides HD (High Definition) video display and support for various smartphone resolutions, resulting in clearer visuals.
- a. Google Meet is user-friendly as one only needs a Google account to sign up for the application, without the need for additional steps to use it.
- b. Google Meet enable video encryption service to safeguard user data, reducing concerns about data theft or unauthorized access.

- c. Google Meet provides multiple appealing display option that allows users to customize the video conference layout to their preferences, enabling a comfortable and attractive interface for a pleasant user experience.

A study by Al-Marooof et al. (2021) confirmed that Google Meets has few advantages over other forms of communication, as it can easily access through both smartphones and laptops, the reusability of the meeting link allows for easy connectivity between meeting participants throughout the day and it helps to make one feel less nervous and increases their confidence.

Google Meet Usage as an e-Leadership Tools by Managers in Malaysian Public Sector Organisations

In an effort to enhance the quality and productivity of public service delivery, the Government of Malaysia has implemented MyGovUC 2.0, a centralised communication and collaboration platform that offers twelve services, including videoconferencing via the Google Meet application (MAMPU, 2020). MyGovUC 2.0 is implemented as a cost savings measure to ensure that Government communication and collaboration services are managed centrally by Malaysian Administrative Modernisation and Management Planning Unit (MAMPU) for use by all agencies in the public sector.

MyGovUC 2.0, which uses the Google Meet platform, supports the following VCT features:

- a) Online conference services with security features, user-friendly functionality, seamless operation, and high quality are implemented using the existing infrastructure within the agency. These services can be accessed from different locations.
- b) Provides a web conference scheduling feature that allows users to choose and invite participants.
- c) Supports screen sharing, allowing both organisers and meeting participants to share their screens during the conference.
- d) Allows one-to-one and one-to-many communication formats for users.
- e) It supports up to 500 users attending the conference simultaneously.
- f) All communications during online conference are "encrypted" while being transmitted over the internet as a cyber security measure.
- g) The optimal level of online conferencing performance depends on the performance of the network used.

Research Methodology

To achieve the goal of this study, quantitative methods and online questionnaire surveys for data collecting were used. Researchers can prevent duplicate responses by turning on cookies in the survey application, which makes the online survey approach appropriate for descriptive studies where it can be completed affordably (Nayak & Narayan, 2019). The target respondents were all managers working in Malaysian public organisations. The systematic random selection technique was found to be the most suited to ensure that every manager in the ministry was fairly represented in the study (Rahi, 2017). The online survey link was given to respondents via email. A total of 353 responses were collected from various ministries that participated in the study. Further, this study employed SPSS to achieve the research objectives.

Data Analysis

Demographic Details of Respondents

This section discusses on the demographic characteristics of the respondents and summary of the analysis tabulated in Table 1.

a) Gender

This study was participated by 211 male respondents that is equivalent to 59.8% of total respondents and 142 female respondents that is equivalent to 40.2%.

b) Race

A closer look at the distribution of race revealed that each group was fairly represented, with 81.9% of the population of government personnel being Malay, 4.2% being Chinese, 5.1% being Indian, and 8.8% belonging to other racial backgrounds.

c) Age

The age range of the majority of respondents (51.6%) was 40 to 49. The next group of respondents, including 36.8% of those aged between 30 and 29, is this. In particular, the age group 50 years and older had the lowest representation in this study since individuals from this age group typically work in government organisations in top management roles rather than managerial positions.

d) Grade Level

Regarding grade level, 33.4% of the participants were in Grade 48, 24.4% were in Grade 44, 19.9% were in Grade 41/42, 16.7% were in Grade 52, and 6.5% were in Grade 54.

Table 1

Demographic Profile of Respondents

Demographic Variable	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Gender		
Male	211	59.8
Female	142	40.2
Race		
Malay	289	81.9
Chinese	15	4.2
Indian	18	5.1
Others	31	8.8
Age Group (years)		
20 - 29	27	7.6
30 - 39	130	36.8
40 - 49	182	51.6
50 and above	14	4.0
Grade Level		
41/42	67	19.9
44	86	24.4
48	118	33.4
52	59	16.7
54	23	6.5

Descriptive Analysis of Google Meet Usage

A few questions were given to gain an understanding of the respondents' basic internet and Google Meet usage in addition to gathering basic demographic data. The findings of the frequency analysis of each question on the respondents' past, present, and future use of Google Meet and the Internet are shown in this section. In each designated part, the response patterns are explained using the corresponding percentage.

Patterns of Internet usage

Table 2 demonstrates that 93.8 percent of respondents use the internet daily, compared to just 3.5% who use it several times a day, 2.0% who use it occasionally few times in a week, and 0.8% who use it only few times in a month.

Table 2

Frequency distribution of Internet's Usage (n=353)

	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Frequently everyday	331	93.8
Several times a day	12	3.4
A few times a week	3	0.8
A few times a month	7	2.0

Patterns of Google Meet usage

Table 3 shows the results of respondents' Google Meet usage patterns. In terms of the length of usage, the majority of respondents have been using Google Meet for 1-2 years. 25.8% of respondents have been using it for 3-4 years while 2.5% of them have been using it for 5-6 years. Only 1.1% of respondents has been using it for more than 7 years. Respondents were also asked whether they used Google Meet for work or personal related activities. Most respondents confirmed that they used Google Meet for work-related purposes at least once a week (47.6%), with only 3.7% using it more than 3 times a day. In terms of personal usage, the majority (57.8%) use it about once a month, and interestingly, 32.9% have never used Google Meet for personal purposes.

Table 3

Frequency distribution of Google Meet's Usage (n=353)

	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Length of Usage		
1 – 2 years	249	70.5
3 – 4 years	91	25.8
5 – 6 years	9	2.5
Over 7 years	4	1.1
Work-related Usage		
More than 3 times a day	13	3.7
Once a day	23	6.5
Once a week	168	47.6
About once a month	149	42.2
Personal-related Usage		
More than 3 times a day	4	1.1

Once a day	3	0.8
Once a week	26	7.4
About once a month	204	57.8

Google Meet Usage as an e-leadership tool

The use of Google Meet by managers as an e-leadership tool prior to and during the pandemic epidemic, as well as their plans to use it going forward, are detailed in Table 4 below. Just 6.2% of the respondents had used Google Meet prior to the pandemic outbreak, compared to 93.8% who had never used it. After the pandemic, 91.2% of them used Google Meet, and just 8.8% did not use it as a tool for e-leadership. In addition, 96.9% of the participants responded that they will use Google Meet as an e-leadership tool going forward.

Table 4

Frequency distribution of Google Meet as an e-leadership tool before, during and in the future

	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Before pandemic		
Yes	22	6.2
No	331	93.8
During pandemic		
Yes	322	91.2
No	31	8.8
In the future		
Yes	353	96.9
No	11	3.1

Additionally, respondents were asked to choose the e-leadership activities they carry out using Google Meet. As can be seen in Figure 1 below, the respondents engage in four activities on a regular basis. The most prevalent activity is holding meetings (38.4%), which is followed by training (27.3%), talks (24.4%), and interviews (9.9%).

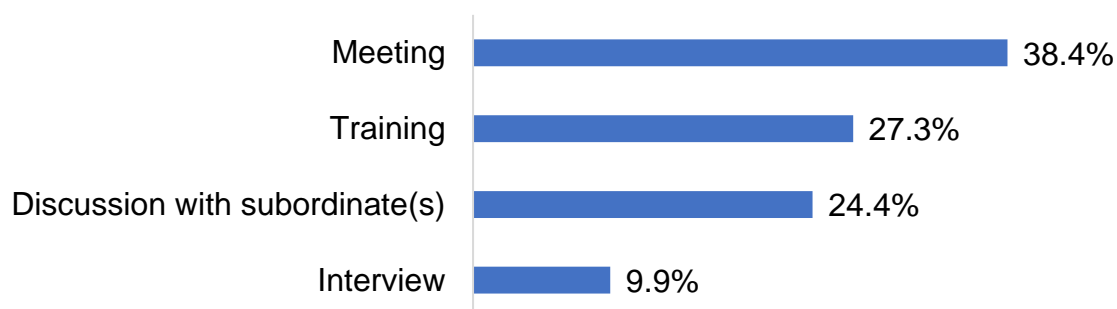


Figure 1: Activities performed through Google Meet as an e-leadership tool

Preferred Communication Channel for Work-Related Purposes

Table 5 illustrates the favored modes of communication for professional purposes among the surveyed individuals. When engaging with superiors, the most preferred means is face-to-face interaction (42.2%), succeeded by instant messenger (24.3%), Google Meet (13.8%),

email (11.7%), with telephone communication being the least preferred (8.0%). For interactions with subordinates, instant messenger takes precedence (47.9%), followed by face-to-face communication (22.2%), email (12.1%), and the least preferred being Google Meet (7.6%). In conversations with colleagues, the preference is for face-to-face communication (43.0%), trailed by telephone (21.2%), instant messenger (18.5%), Google Meet (9.4%), and email (8.0%). The overall preferred communication channel for work-related purposes is predominantly face-to-face interaction (41.0%), followed by instant messenger (21.3%), telephone (14.3%), email (12.2%), and Google Meet (11.2%).

Table 5

Preferred Communication Channel for Work-Related Purposes

	Percentage (%)
With superiors	
Google Meet	13.8%
Email	11.7%
Telephone	8.0%
Face to face	42.2%
Instant Messenger	24.3%
With subordinates	
Google Meet	7.6%
Email	10.3%
Telephone	12.1%
Face to face	22.1%
Instant Messenger	47.9%
With colleagues	
Google Meet	9.4%
Email	8.0%
Telephone	21.2%
Face to face	43.0%
Instant Messenger	18.5%
Overall preferred communication channel	
Google Meet	11.2%
Email	12.2%
Telephone	14.3%
Face to face	41.0%
Instant Messenger	21.3%

Discussion and Conclusion

The study conducted a descriptive analysis of Google Meet usage, focusing on internet and Google Meet usage patterns, the use of Google Meet as an e-leadership tool, and preferred communication channels for work-related purposes. In terms of internet usage, it was found that the majority of respondents (93.8%) reported using the internet every day, indicating a high level of internet connectivity among the surveyed population. This suggests a strong reliance on the internet for various activities in their daily lives.

Regarding Google Meet usage patterns, most respondents (47.6%) reported using Google Meet for work-related purposes at least once a week. This indicates that Google Meet is

widely adopted for organisational use, with a small percentage (1.1%) having extensive experience with the platform. However, it is notable that a significant portion of respondents (32.9%) have never used Google Meet for personal purposes, suggesting a clear demarcation between its professional and personal utility.

The study also investigated Google Meet's role as an e-leadership tool, both before and after the pandemic. Before the pandemic, the majority of respondents (93.8%) had not used Google Meet for e-leadership, but after the pandemic, this shifted significantly, with 91.2% of respondents using it for e-leadership purposes. This shift may be attributed to the necessity of remote leadership during the pandemic. Additionally, an overwhelming majority (96.9%) expressed their intention to continue using Google Meet as an e-leadership tool in the future, highlighting its potential as a long-term solution for leadership and collaboration.

The preferred communication channels for work-related purposes were also explored. The study found that face-to-face interaction was the most preferred communication channel when communicating with superiors (42.2%) and colleagues (43.0%). In contrast, instant messenger was the preferred choice when communicating with subordinates (47.9%). Interestingly, Google Meet was among the preferred channels for interactions with superiors (13.8%) but less favored for communication with subordinates (7.6%). Overall, face-to-face communication dominated as the preferred channel for work-related purposes (41.0%).

In conclusion, the study's descriptive analysis revealed that the surveyed population heavily relies on the internet and has widely adopted Google Meet for leadership communication purposes, particularly as an e-leadership tool. The COVID-19 pandemic played a pivotal role in accelerating the use of Google Meet for remote leadership, with the majority of respondents intending to continue its use in the future. This suggests that Google Meet has become an integral part of e-leadership practices. Additionally, while face-to-face communication remains a preferred choice for work-related interactions, digital channels like Google Meet and instant messenger have also gained significance in the evolving landscape of leadership communication.

Google Meet, like other VCT platforms has proven its ability to facilitate remote team engagement, enhanced communication, and overcome geographic barriers between team members. It also gives opportunity for organisations to promote flexible working that will lead to better work-life balance among employees. A study by Rusilowati (2022) has confirmed that flexible work arrangement help employees feel appreciated, which in turn affects how well they perform on the job and make it easier for them to strike a balance between work and personal obligations.

In the era of remote work and digital leadership, Google Meet has emerged as a versatile and indispensable tool for leaders. Its features enable remote teams to connect, collaborate, and excel, regardless of their geographic locations. By embracing Google Meet, leaders can navigate the complex digital landscape and drive their organizations toward success. In the era of digitalization, leaders need to quickly adjust and actively cultivate an innovative culture inside their organisations in order to promote better teamwork, increased creativity, and quick reactions to their subordinates' rapidly changing technological landscapes (Ismail et al., 2023).

E-leadership tools like Google Meet will continue to be at the forefront as remote and hybrid work patterns continue to impact the future of work. Effectively utilizing this platform is not only essential, but also a competitive advantage that may help organisations reach new levels of success. Newman et al (2020) assert that in this age of digitalization, leaders who are

unable to recognise and effectively employ digital tools for communication will face significant challenges. Furthermore, for effective leadership in digital era, leaders must navigate recent changes such as ubiquitous connectivity, open-source technology, mobile devices, and personalization, necessitating a dynamic integration of thought patterns, behaviors, and skills to transform the organizational culture through technological support, while concurrently guiding and trusting subordinates to utilize digital technology for exploring their learning needs, ensuring all individuals acquire the essential skills for future success (Gaffar, 2021).

In conclusion, Google Meet empowers leaders to bridge the gap in the virtual teams and establish a strong, cohesive work environment. As e-leadership tools evolve, it is essential for leaders to stay current and embrace the opportunities these tools offer to adapt and thrive in a changing world. This study establishes a baseline for comprehending technology adoption patterns in a particular setting, which paves the way for further investigation on other emerging communication technologies for organisations can be guided by this baseline.

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