

Social Media as A Veritable Tool for Mental Health Support in Nigeria

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Abstract: This study examines social media as a veritable tool for mental health support in Nigeria. The researchers embarked on this study with the intention of achieving four objectives; and based on the intended objectives, four research questions were formulated to serve as a guide for this study. This study is hinged on the Technology Acceptance Model and data was collected using documentation. Findings reveal that mental health issues have been on the rise in Nigeria, and accessing mental health services has always been a significant challenge due to the stigma attached to it. However, with the rise of social media, individuals now have access to mental health services online. Social media platforms have become an essential tool for mental health support in Nigeria. This study also finds out that social media platforms have increased access to mental health support services for Nigerians who may not have had access to them previously due to distance, financial barriers, or lack of mental health services in their communities. The study recommends that social media can be an excellent platform for sharing resources related to mental health support. You can post links to helplines, online support groups, and other resources that people can access when they need help. Encourage others to share these resources with their friends and family members.

Keywords: Mental Health, Social Media, Stigma, Support, Therapy Introduction

I. Introduction

Social media has become an essential part of modern communication, and its usage continues to grow at an unprecedented rate. The social media platform has become a vital tool for people to connect with others, express themselves, and share ideas. However, social media is not just a platform for entertainment; it has become a veritable tool for mental health support in Nigeria. With the increasing burden of mental health in Nigeria, social media is becoming more important as a means of providing support and resources to individuals who are struggling with mental health problems.

Mental health is an essential aspect of overall health and well-being. Unfortunately, in Nigeria, the burden of mental health problems is significant. The World Health Organization estimates that one in four Nigerians will experience a mental health problem at some point in their lives, and only about 10% of these individuals will receive treatment (World Health Organization, 2017). The stigma associated with mental health problems in Nigeria, coupled with a lack of resources and access to care has contributed to the low rates of treatment seeking.

Lawrence (2019) noted that social media has become a tool for mental health support in Nigeria. The use of social media platforms such as Twitter, Instagram, and Facebook has increased in Nigeria, providing opportunities for individuals to connect with others and share experiences. Social media has allowed individuals to share their mental health journeys, provide support and resources to others, and reduce the stigma associated with mental health problems.

According to Olubunmi (2021), social media provides a space for individuals to share their mental health experiences without fear of judgment. For instance, on Twitter, hashtags such as #MentalHealthMatters and #EndTheStigma are used to create conversations around mental health, share resources and offer support to those in need. On Instagram, mental health advocates share their stories, provide resources and create a community where individuals can connect and share experiences.

Social media has also provided a platform for mental health professionals to offer support and resources to individuals who are struggling with mental health problems. Mental health professionals in Nigeria are leveraging social media platforms such as Twitter and Facebook to offer online counseling, mental health resources, and support groups for individuals who need it. For instance, the Nigerian Psychological Association offers online counseling services on their website, and mental health professionals such as Dr. Gbonjubola Abiri offer online counseling services via Twitter.

Furthermore, social media has provided a platform for mental health organizations to share resources and create awareness about mental health problems. Mental health organizations such as Mentally Aware Nigeria Initiative (MANI) and She Writes Woman have used social media to create awareness about mental health issues, provide resources and support to individuals who are struggling with mental health problems.

With an estimated 20% of the population affected by some form of mental illness, the need for mental health support has never been more pressing. Social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and WhatsApp offer a platform for mental health advocates to raise awareness, challenge stigma, and provide support to those in need.

One way in which social media has been used for mental health advocacy in Nigeria is through the sharing of personal stories. Many people with mental health disorders have taken to social media to share their experiences and to encourage others to seek help. These stories help to challenge the stigma associated with mental illness and show that mental health disorders are common and treatable.

Social media has also been used to raise awareness about mental health and to provide education on mental health disorders. Mental health advocates and organizations have used social media to share information on the signs and symptoms of mental health disorders, the importance of seeking treatment, and the available resources for mental health support. This information is crucial in ensuring that people are equipped with the knowledge and tools to identify and manage mental health disorders.

Another way in which social media has been used for mental health advocacy in Nigeria is through online support groups. Many mental health support groups have been created on social media platforms, providing a safe space for people to share their experiences and to offer support to others. These support groups have been particularly useful for people who may not have access to mental health professionals or resources in their local communities.

In addition, social media has been used to advocate for better mental health policies and resources in Nigeria. Mental health advocates have used social media to raise awareness about the inadequacies in the mental health system and to call for better policies and resources to support those with mental health disorders.

Statement of the Problem

Mental health disorders are a growing concern in Nigeria, with an estimated 20% of the population affected by some form of mental illness. Unfortunately, mental health is still largely stigmatized in Nigeria, and many people with mental health disorders do not receive the necessary support and treatment.

Social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and WhatsApp have become ubiquitous in Nigeria, and they offer an opportunity to provide mental health support to those in need. However, the potential of social media as a veritable tool for mental health support in Nigeria has not been fully harnessed.

One major challenge is the lack of regulation and oversight of mental health information on social media. The absence of a regulatory framework for mental health content on social media means that misinformation, stigmatization, and harmful advice can easily be disseminated, leading to negative outcomes for individuals seeking help.

Another challenge is the limited availability of mental health professionals and resources on social media. While there are some mental health professionals who offer online counseling services, there are still not enough mental health professionals available to provide support to the large number of people who need it.

Finally, the digital divide in Nigeria is another challenge. While social media has become widespread in Nigeria, many people, particularly those in rural areas and low-income communities, still do not have access to the internet or digital devices, making it difficult for them to access mental health support online. However, several literatures on mental health abound but none has adequately dealt with the use of social media as a veritable tool for mental health support in Nigeria; this is the gap this study hopes to fill.

In light of these challenges, it is important to explore ways to maximize the potential of social media as a veritable tool for mental health support in Nigeria. This may involve developing regulatory frameworks for mental health information on social media, increasing the availability of mental health professionals and resources online, and finding ways to bridge the digital divide to ensure that all Nigerians have access to mental health support.

Objectives of the Study

The objectives of this study are as follows;

- i To determine how social media platforms are being used for mental health support in Nigeria.
- ii To determine the benefits and limitations of social media as a tool for mental health support in Nigeria.
- iii To ascertain the perceptions of mental health professionals and individuals with mental health problems on the use of social media for mental health support in Nigeria.
- iv To determine how social media can be leveraged upon to improve access to mental health services in Nigeria.

Research Questions

Based on the objectives of this study, the following research questions were formulated to serve as a guide for this study;

- i How are social media platforms being used for mental health support in Nigeria?
- ii What are the benefits and limitations of social media as a tool for mental health support in Nigeria?
- iii What are the perceptions of mental health professionals and individuals with mental health problems on the use of social media for mental health support in Nigeria?
- iv How can social media be leveraged to improve access to mental health services in Nigeria?

II. Literature Review

Definition of Social Media

When we talk of social media, we mean those Internet-based tools and services that allow users to engage with each other, generate content, distribute, and search for information online. In other words, the social media are interactive web-based media platforms that offer citizens opportunity and place to connect, share opinions, experiences, views, contacts, knowledge, expertise, as well as other things like job and career tips. They belong to a new genre of media that focuses on social networking allowing users to express themselves, interact with friends and share information with greater freedom as well as publish their views on issues on the World Wide Web. Chatora (2012) observes that “it is this interactive or collaborative nature of these tools that makes them social”.

Mayfield (2008) describes these media as “online platforms that promote participation, openness, conversation and connectedness”. Nation (2010) sees them as “social instruments of communication which are different from the conventional instruments like newspapers or magazines. Adibe and Odoemelam (2012) noted that they are online content created by people using highly accessible and scalable publishing technologies to disseminate information across geographical boundaries, providing interaction among people. They support democratization of knowledge and information, thereby making the people both information producers/and consumers.

Social media emerged with the advent of the internet and the World Wide Web. They are usually associated with the term “web 2.0” which is used to describe websites that provides opportunity for a user to interact with the sender of a message. Nwabueze (2012) observes that “Web 2.0” refers to the state of the web from 2004 till date; a period when interactive websites emerged as opposed to “web1.0” which describes the state of the web prior to 2004. Web-based communities, social networking sites video-sharing sites, Wikis, and blogs, are among examples of web 2.0 sites (Allen, Ekwugha and Chukwulete, 2011).

The social media provide means for users to interact over the internet, most times through the use of email and instant messaging. Social networking sites allow users to share ideas, activities, events, and interests within their individual networks. Most of the information of the social networking sites can be retrieved by thousands who have access to the internet connection (Okunna and Omenugha, 2012)

Gevertz and Greenwood (2010) conceptualized social media as information that is disseminated through highly accessible publishing techniques (web and mobile), that transform people from content consumers into content producers. Social media is a change from a unidirectional model of communication to a multidirectional model of communication, where audience members are actively engaged in the communication and are not just receivers of information (Thackeray and Neiger, 2009). Those who access social media can be both consumers and producers of media, or what Bruns (2009) has termed “producers.” This concept refers to “user-led”, collaborative processes of content creation.

According to Spurgeon (2008), social media are considered the most interactive of all communication media, because it is engineered to support all modes of interpersonal, mass and computer-mediated communication. Spurgeon further notes that interactivity is a major criterion of comparison between “old” mass media and “new” digitally networked media and the more interactive a communication system is, the more flexible the system is in terms of the types of communication and exchange such a system can support.

Typical examples of social media platforms include websites such as Facebook, Twitter, Flickr, YouTube and the interactive options on these websites, such as the “retweeting” option on Twitter. These instruments are referred to as media because they are tools which can also be used for the storage and dissemination of information, however unlike the traditional media like television and radio, most of the social media tools allow their users to interact as “re-tweeting” as it is on Twitter and “comment” as the options on Facebook.

According to Dominick (2009), Web 2.0 is the idea of a second generation Internet that is highly participatory, allowing users to improve it as they use it. Social media contents are primarily written and published by their users and not owners or employees of the site. For instance, most adverts, videos and pictures on Facebook and Twitter are uploaded by visitors of the sites. Jenkins (2010)

observe that Web 2.0 has been growing tremendously as it facilitates the production and dissemination of information, allows for the involvements in participatory culture to share individual expressions or creations and bring people with similar interests and goals to connect with each other on blogs, social networking sites and others.

Concept of Mental Health

Mental health has been a topic of concern for scholars and researchers for decades, with various definitions that reflect the different perspectives and approaches to understanding the complex nature of mental health. The World Health Organization (2014) defines mental health as a state of well-being in which an individual realizes his or her own abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to his or her community. This definition emphasizes the importance of a positive state of mind and the ability to function in daily life.

Another definition of mental health is offered by the American Psychological Association (2015), which defines mental health as a state of successful performance of mental function, resulting in productive activities, fulfilling relationships with other people, and the ability to adapt to change and cope with adversity. This definition highlights the importance of mental functioning and the ability to adapt to life's challenges.

A third definition of mental health is offered by the National Institute of Mental Health (2021), which defines mental health as a state of successful performance of mental function, resulting in productive activities, fulfilling relationships with other people, and the ability to adapt to change and cope with adversity. This definition emphasizes the importance of mental function and the ability to cope with life's challenges. Mental disorders are characterized by a clinically significant disturbance in an individual's cognition, emotion regulation, or behavior that reflects a dysfunction in the psychological, biological, or developmental processes underlying mental functioning.

These definitions of mental health reflect the different perspectives and approaches to understanding the complex nature of mental health. While some definitions emphasize the importance of positive mental states and the ability to function in daily life, others emphasize the importance of mental functioning and the ability to cope with life's challenges.

In conclusion, mental health is a complex and multifaceted concept that has been defined in various ways by scholars and researchers. These definitions reflect the different perspectives and approaches to understanding mental health, and they emphasize the importance of positive mental states, mental functioning, the ability to cope with life's challenges, and the identification and diagnosis of mental disorders. A comprehensive understanding of mental health can help individuals to promote their own mental health and seek appropriate treatment and support when needed.

Causative Factors Influencing Mental Health Challenge

Mental health is a complex and multi-faceted issue that can be influenced by a variety of factors. In this essay, we will discuss several of the key factors that can have an impact on mental health, including genetics, environment, lifestyle, and social factors.

One of the most significant factors that can influence mental health is genetics. Studies have shown that certain genes may predispose individuals to specific mental health conditions, such as depression or schizophrenia (Sullivan, Daly, & O'Donovan, 2012). While genetics alone do not determine the development of mental health disorders, they can play a role in the susceptibility of individuals to mental health conditions.

Environment is another significant factor that can impact mental health. Environmental factors can range from physical surroundings to social conditions. Exposure to environmental toxins, such as air pollution, can contribute to mental health conditions such as anxiety and depression (Cui et al., 2020). Additionally, environmental stressors such as poverty or violence can also have an impact on mental health (Krieger, 2017).

Lifestyle choices also play a role in mental health. Factors such as diet, exercise, and substance use can all impact mental health outcomes. A healthy diet, regular exercise, and avoiding substance abuse can all contribute to better mental health outcomes.

Social factors also play an essential role in mental health outcomes. Social support and connectedness can contribute to better mental health outcomes. Conversely, social isolation and loneliness can lead to increased risk of mental health issues (Holt-Lunstad, Robles, & Sbarra, 2017).

Therefore, mental health outcomes are influenced by a variety of factors, including genetics, environment, lifestyle choices, and social factors. While not all of these factors can be easily controlled, understanding the various factors that can impact mental health can help individuals and healthcare professionals develop strategies for prevention and treatment of mental health disorders.

Mental Health Support in Nigeria

Mental health has long been neglected in Nigeria, with limited resources and societal stigma preventing many individuals from seeking support. However, in recent years, there has been a growing effort to address mental health concerns and promote advocacy for those struggling with mental illness. In this article, we will discuss the current state of mental health support and advocacy in Nigeria, including the challenges that still exist and the efforts being made to overcome them.

Mental health support in Nigeria is often limited due to a lack of funding and resources, as well as limited awareness and understanding of mental illness in the general population. According to the World Health Organization, Nigeria has only one psychiatrist for every 1.6 million people, and mental health services are often inaccessible to those living in rural areas (World Health Organization, 2016). This lack of access to mental health care has contributed to the under-diagnosis and under-treatment of mental health conditions in Nigeria.

However, despite these challenges, there are a growing number of mental health support and advocacy organizations in Nigeria working to address these issues. One such organization is the Mental Health Foundation Nigeria (MHF-N), a non-profit organization that provides mental health education, advocacy, and support services to individuals and communities in Nigeria. The MHF-N also works to raise awareness of mental health issues and reduce the stigma surrounding mental illness in Nigeria.

Another organization working to promote mental health support and advocacy in Nigeria is the Nigeria Mental Health Summit (NMHS), an annual conference that brings together mental health professionals, advocates, and policy makers to discuss and address issues related to mental health in Nigeria. The NMHS also aims to promote public awareness and reduce stigma surrounding mental illness.

The Nigerian government has also taken steps to address mental health concerns in the country. In 2013, the National Mental Health Policy was developed to guide the provision of mental health services in Nigeria. The policy focuses on improving access to mental health care and reducing stigma surrounding mental illness.

However, despite these efforts, there are still significant challenges that need to be addressed in Nigeria's mental health sector. One major challenge is the lack of funding and resources for mental health services, which limits the ability of organizations and healthcare providers to provide quality care. Additionally, stigma surrounding mental illness remains prevalent in Nigeria, leading many individuals to avoid seeking help for fear of discrimination or mistreatment.

In conclusion, mental health support and advocacy in Nigeria has come a long way in recent years, but there is still much work to be done. Despite the challenges that remain, the efforts of organizations such as the MHF-N and the NMHS, as well as the Nigerian government's commitment to addressing mental health concerns, offer hope for a brighter future for those struggling with mental illness in Nigeria.

Role of Social Media in Mental Health Support

Social media platforms have become an essential tool for communication and interaction in modern society. One of the critical areas of human life that social media has influenced is mental health. Mental health is a crucial aspect of health that requires support from various sources, including social media platforms. Nigeria, like many other developing countries, has a high burden of mental health disorders. Social media platforms have played a significant role in providing mental health support in Nigeria. Therefore, the following are some of the role of social media in mental support as enumerated by Bayo (2022);

- **Awareness creation:** One of the crucial roles of social media platforms in mental health support is raising awareness. Social media platforms provide a broad audience that can access information on mental health. In Nigeria, social media campaigns have been instrumental in creating awareness about mental health disorders, including depression, anxiety, and bipolar disorder. Social media has increased the awareness of mental health among the Nigerian population.
- **Peer support:** Social media platforms provide an avenue for peer support among individuals with mental health disorders. Peer support refers to the exchange of emotional, informational, and practical support between individuals with shared experiences. In Nigeria, social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, and WhatsApp have been used to create peer support groups for individuals with mental health disorders. Peer support groups on social media have been instrumental in providing emotional support to individuals with mental health disorders.
- **Mental health education:** Social media platforms have played a crucial role in educating the Nigerian population about mental health. Mental health education refers to the provision of information on mental health disorders, their symptoms, causes, and treatment options. In Nigeria, social media platforms such as YouTube, Facebook, and Twitter have been used to provide mental health education to the general population. Social media platforms have been instrumental in providing mental health education to the Nigerian population.

- Professional support: Social media platforms have provided an avenue for professional support for individuals with mental health disorders. Professional support refers to the provision of mental health services by trained professionals such as psychologists, psychiatrists, and mental health nurses. In Nigeria, social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter have been used by mental health professionals to provide counseling and psychotherapy services to individuals with mental health disorders. Social media platforms have been instrumental in providing professional support to individuals with mental health disorders.
- Stigma reduction: Social media platforms have played a significant role in reducing the stigma associated with mental health disorders in Nigeria. Stigma refers to negative attitudes and beliefs towards individuals with mental health disorders. In Nigeria, social media campaigns have been instrumental in reducing the stigma associated with mental health disorders. Social media campaigns have increased the acceptance of mental health disorders among the Nigerian population.
- Crisis management: Social media platforms have been instrumental in crisis management for individuals with mental health disorders. Crisis management refers to the provision of immediate assistance to individuals experiencing a mental health crisis. In Nigeria, social media platforms such as Twitter and Facebook have been used to provide crisis management services to individuals with mental health disorders. Social media platforms have been instrumental in providing crisis management services to individuals with mental health disorders.
- Advocacy: Social media platforms have played a significant role in advocacy for mental health in Nigeria. Advocacy refers to the promotion of mental health policies and programs that benefit individuals with mental health disorders. In Nigeria, social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter have been used to advocate for mental health policies and programs.

III. Theoretical Framework

This study is hinged on the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM). This is a widely recognized model in the field of information systems research that aims to explain how and why individuals accept or reject technology. The model was first proposed by Fred Davis in 1986 and has been subsequently extended and refined by various researchers over the years.

The major tenets of the TAM are based on the assumption that users' acceptance of technology is determined by their perception of the usefulness and ease of use of the technology. The model posits that users' attitudes towards technology are shaped by their beliefs about the technology's perceived usefulness, which is defined as the extent to which the technology enhances an individual's job performance or task completion. Additionally, the model proposes that users' attitudes towards technology are also influenced by their beliefs about the technology's perceived ease of use, which refers to the user's perception of the degree of effort required to learn and use the technology effectively.

According to TAM, the perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use of a technology are affected by various external and internal factors. External factors include the quality of training and support, system design, and the perceived compatibility of the technology with the user's needs and preferences. Internal factors include the user's prior experience and attitudes towards technology.

The proponent of TAM has conducted extensive research to validate the model and its underlying assumptions. Studies have consistently shown that perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use are strong predictors of users' acceptance of technology. Furthermore, research has also shown that external and internal factors can significantly influence users' perceptions of technology.

TAM has been widely applied in various domains, including e-commerce, healthcare, education, and social media. The model has been used to evaluate the acceptance of various technologies such as electronic health records, mobile payment systems, and social networking sites.

The Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) is an information systems theory that models how users come to accept and use a technology. The model suggests that when users are presented with a new

technology, a number of factors influence their decision about how and when they will use it. These include perceived usefulness (PU) and perceived ease-of-use (PEOU).

In the case of social media as a veritable tool for mental health support in Nigeria, the TAM can be applied in understanding the likelihood of acceptance and usage of such platforms.

Perceived usefulness can be applied to how Nigerian users view social media in terms of its ability to provide mental health support. If the users believe that social media can help them cope with their mental health issues, they are more likely to use it. This perceived usefulness may be influenced by a number of factors, such as the presence of professional mental health resources on these platforms, the ability to connect with others experiencing similar mental health challenges, and the availability of accurate and helpful information about mental health issues.

Perceived ease-of-use is also a significant factor. If social media platforms are too complex or difficult to navigate, users may be less likely to use them for mental health support. Conversely, if these platforms are user-friendly and easy to navigate, users may be more likely to use them. This ease-of-use may also be influenced by factors such as the presence of local languages on these platforms, the simplicity of the user interface, and the clarity of information presented.

However, there are also social and cultural factors that may affect the acceptance and use of social media for mental health support in Nigeria. Stigma associated with mental health issues may discourage some people from seeking help through these platforms. Moreover, there may be a lack of trust in the information and support provided through social media, especially if it contradicts traditional beliefs about mental health.

In conclusion, the Technology Acceptance Model provides a useful framework for understanding the potential for social media to be used as a tool for mental health support in Nigeria. It suggests that both the perceived usefulness and ease-of-use of these platforms will influence their acceptance and use. However, it is also important to consider social and cultural factors that may affect this process.

IV. Methodology

This study uses documentation as a method of data collection. Documentation as a method of data collection refers to the process of gathering and analyzing existing written or digital records, materials, and documents to obtain information and insights about a particular subject.

V. Findings

Research Question 1: How are social media platforms being used for mental health support in Nigeria?

Mental health issues have been on the rise in Nigeria, and accessing mental health services has always been a significant challenge due to the stigma attached to it. However, with the rise of social media, individuals now have access to mental health services online. Social media platforms have become an essential tool for mental health support in Nigeria. In this essay, we will examine how social media platforms are being used for mental health support in Nigeria.

Mentally Aware Nigeria Initiative (MANI) is one organization using social media platforms for mental health support in Nigeria. MANI is a non-governmental organization that provides mental health education, advocacy, and support services to young Nigerians. They have a strong online presence on Twitter, Instagram, and Facebook, where they share information on mental health, offer online counseling services, and engage in conversations around mental health-related issues. They also use social media to create awareness campaigns and events aimed at reducing the stigma associated with mental health issues in Nigeria.

She Writes Woman is another organization leveraging social media for mental health support in Nigeria. She Writes Woman is a mental health community organization that provides safe spaces for women living with mental health conditions. They have a significant online presence on social media platforms like Twitter and Instagram, where they share stories of women who have overcome mental health challenges, provide mental health education, and offer support to women who need it. They also provide online counseling services to women who require it.

Social media platforms have also provided mental health professionals with a platform to offer mental health support in Nigeria. Dr. Gbonjubola Abiri is one of such professionals. She is a psychiatrist who uses social media platforms like Twitter and Instagram to educate people on mental health issues, share information on mental health resources, and offer online counseling services. Through her social media platforms, Dr. Abiri provides information on different mental health disorders and how to manage them, as well as answering questions from individuals seeking mental health support.

Furthermore, social media platforms have enabled individuals living with mental health conditions to connect with others going through similar challenges. For instance, social media platforms like Twitter have become a safe space for people to share their experiences with mental health issues and receive support from others who have gone through similar challenges. This has enabled people to connect with others who understand what they are going through, thereby reducing the isolation and stigma associated with mental health issues.

Research Question 2: What are the benefits and limitations of social media as a tool for mental health support in Nigeria?

Social media has become an increasingly popular tool for mental health support in Nigeria due to its accessibility and convenience. However, there are both benefits and limitations to using social media for mental health support in Nigeria. The benefits are as follows;

- **Increased accessibility:** Social media platforms have increased access to mental health support services for Nigerians who may not have had access to them previously due to distance, financial barriers, or lack of mental health services in their communities.
- **Reduced stigma:** Social media has provided a platform for individuals to share their mental health experiences and connect with others who are going through similar challenges. This has helped to reduce the stigma associated with mental health issues in Nigeria.
- **Online support groups:** Social media platforms have enabled the creation of online support groups for people living with mental health conditions. These support groups provide a safe space for people to share their experiences, receive support and advice, and connect with others going through similar challenges.
- **Mental health education:** Social media platforms have provided a platform for mental health professionals and organizations to educate Nigerians on mental health issues, reduce misconceptions, and provide information on available mental health resources.

The limitations include:

- **Inaccurate information:** Not all information on social media is accurate, and some can be harmful, particularly when it comes to mental health. People can easily access information that is inaccurate or misleading, which could result in negative outcomes.
- **Lack of personal interaction:** Social media lacks the personal interaction of traditional mental health services, such as face-to-face counseling or therapy. This lack of personal interaction may limit the effectiveness of mental health support provided through social media platforms.
- **Limited access to care:** While social media has increased access to mental health support services, it cannot replace traditional mental health services. There are limits to the type of mental health support that can be provided through social media platforms, and individuals may still require in-person counseling or therapy.
- **Cyberbullying and trolling:** Social media platforms can be a breeding ground for cyberbullying and trolling. For individuals living with mental health conditions, this can lead to further negative outcomes such as depression, anxiety, and suicidal ideation.

Research Question 3: What are the perceptions of mental health professionals and individuals with mental health problems on the use of social media for mental health support in Nigeria?

Social media has become increasingly popular as a platform for mental health support in Nigeria due to its accessibility, convenience, and anonymity. Mental health organizations and professionals use social media platforms such as Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram to provide information on mental health conditions, share coping strategies, and connect with individuals seeking support.

However, there are also concerns about the use of social media for mental health support in Nigeria. These concerns include the potential for misinformation, the lack of regulation, and the potential for individuals to be misdiagnosed or mistreated by unqualified individuals who may claim to be mental health professionals.

Overall, while social media has the potential to provide mental health support in Nigeria, it is important to use caution when seeking support online and to seek out qualified mental health professionals for diagnosis and treatment.

Research Question 4: How can social media be leveraged to improve access to mental health services in Nigeria?

Social media can be a powerful tool for improving access to mental health services in Nigeria. Here are some ways it can be leveraged:

- **Raising awareness:** Social media platforms can be used to raise awareness about mental health issues in Nigeria. Mental health organizations and advocates can use social media to share information about the signs and symptoms of mental illness, and to promote the importance of seeking help when needed.
- **Providing information:** Social media can be used to provide information about mental health services and resources available in Nigeria. Mental health organizations and advocates can use social media to share information about the different types of mental health services available, how to access them, and what to expect during treatment.

- Offering support: Social media can also be used to offer support to individuals who are struggling with mental health issues. Mental health organizations and advocates can use social media to create support groups where individuals can connect with others who are going through similar experiences.
- Providing teletherapy: With the rise of teletherapy and telemedicine, social media can also be used to connect individuals with mental health professionals who can provide therapy online. Mental health organizations and advocates can use social media to promote teletherapy services and provide information on how to access them.
- Partnering with influencers: Social media influencers can be powerful allies in the fight to improve access to mental health services in Nigeria. Mental health organizations and advocates can partner with influencers who have a large following in Nigeria to promote mental health awareness, share information about mental health services, and encourage individuals to seek help when needed.

Overall, social media can be a valuable tool for improving access to mental health services in Nigeria. By raising awareness, providing information, offering support, providing teletherapy, and partnering with influencers, mental health organizations and advocates can use social media to connect individuals with the help they need.

VI. Conclusion

Social media can be a veritable tool for mental health support in Nigeria. With its widespread reach and ability to connect individuals across vast distances, social media offers a unique opportunity to improve access to mental health services in the country. By leveraging social media platforms, mental health organizations and advocates can raise awareness about mental health issues, provide information on available services, offer support to those in need, provide teletherapy, and partner with influencers to promote mental health awareness.

However, it is important to note that social media should not be viewed as a replacement for traditional mental health services, but rather as a complementary tool that can help bridge the gap between those in need and the available resources. While social media has the potential to reach a wide audience and provide valuable support, it is still important for individuals to seek professional help when needed and for mental health organizations to ensure that the services they offer are of high quality and accessible to all.

In light of the increasing mental health challenges facing Nigeria, the use of social media as a tool for mental health support should be encouraged and expanded upon. By working together to harness the power of social media, mental health advocates, professionals, and organizations can help provide the support and resources that individuals in Nigeria need to achieve better mental health and well-being.

VII. Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations were made;

- Encourage mental health awareness: One of the most important recommendations is to use social media to raise awareness about mental health issues in Nigeria. You can share information about common mental health conditions, symptoms to watch out for, and ways to seek help. By increasing awareness, people may feel more comfortable talking about their mental health and seeking support.
- Share resources: Social media can be an excellent platform for sharing resources related to mental health support. You can post links to helplines, online support groups, and other resources that people can access when they need help. Encourage others to share these resources with their friends and family members.
- Provide a safe space: Social media can also be a safe space for people to share their experiences and feelings. Consider creating a private group where people can share their stories and support each other. You can also use your social media platform to encourage people to share their experiences and provide a non-judgmental space for them to do so.
- Collaborate with mental health professionals: Finally, consider collaborating with mental health professionals in Nigeria to provide support and resources through social media. You can invite experts to participate in live Q&A sessions, webinars, or podcasts to discuss mental health issues and answer questions from the audience. By working with professionals, you can provide reliable and accurate information to those who need it.

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