



## Perception of Social Media Credibility and Health Information seeking Behaviour: A Cross-Sectional Online Survey of Youths in South West Nigeria

NGOZI JOY ONYECHI  
University of Ibadan, Nigeria

**Abstract.** There is a growing need to understand the credibility of social media especially in relation to users' health information seeking behaviour. The social media provide unprecedented level of information on diverse matters, including health, to the youths since they have difficulties accessing traditional health services. This study, therefore, investigated the relationship between perception of social media credibility and health information seeking behaviour among youths in South West Nigeria. The study was anchored on source credibility theory, while adopting a cross-sectional survey and focus group discussion (FGD) as research designs. Non-probability convenient, purposive and snow ball sampling procedures were used in selecting (n=407) respondents who participated in the survey and (n=48) discussants who took part in the FGD. Results revealed that respondents are very active in their search for health information on social media. Results also showed that there is a significant relationship between perception of social media and health information seeking behaviour among youths in South West Nigeria. It is also recommended that relevant government regulatory agencies should develop clear policy frameworks and guidelines that will ensure that both governmental and non-governmental health organizations/institutions leverage on the potentials of social media in their provision of medicare. These are expected to enhance robust medical coverage with better health outcomes for all patients, especially the youths.

**Keywords:** Social media, credibility of social media, youths, health information seeking behaviour, South West Nigeria, perception

### 1. Introduction

The advent of Web 2.0 which features social media sites has altered the global public square of information which hitherto was the exclusive

preserve of the traditional news media. The arrival of digital media precipitated an influx of user-generated contents which seemed to compete with contents from the mainstream media in terms of speed of dissemination, ease of accessibility, ubiquity of use and limitless information (Jack cited in Salaudeen & Onyechi, 2020). Social media platforms have emerged as the leading communication channels, as well as information resources, which allow users to connect and to share information in a ubiquitous and easily accessible manner (Hong cited in Keshavarz ,2020).

Today's youths have grown up with the influence of technology, especially Internet (Fauzi & Kadir, 2015). Generally, youths are considered to be social media savvy and the Nigeria youths are not left out in this social media frenzy. Nche cited by Omotayo and Folorunso (2020:134) succinctly captures it by asserting that "in the manner of a wildfire in harmattan, the phenomenon of social media (networking) has spread to all nooks and crannies of Nigeria, engulfing a large number of her youths and that social media usage has become so common among the youths, that it has become unfashionable for youths not to engage in at least one of the social networking sites." Nnamonu cited by the same authors sees the Internet as the chief host of social media sites, while the youths are the most predominant clients. The prevalence of social media among this cohort is no more in doubt as they continue to be "submerged" in the super high way of technology.

The gratifications people derive from their media exposure will largely determine their future exposure patterns. One of the most frequent information sought on the Internet by youths is health and health related issues (Fauzi & Kadir, 2015). Health information seeking behavior refers to ways through which people obtain information about health,

diseases, health promotion, and health threatening behaviors, such as high-risk behaviors (Lalazaryan, Zare-Farashbandi, Rahimi & Hassanzadeh cited by Esmaeilzadeh, Ashrafi-rizi, Shahrzadi & Mostafavi, 2018). Youths naturally gravitate towards the internet (including social media) since it offers them confidential and convenient access to an unprecedented level of information about a diverse range of subjects, including health (Gray, Klein, Noyce & Sesselberg, 2005, Gray & Klein, 2006). Furthermore, health information seeking behaviour by the youths on the social media might be explained by Gray et al's. (2005) observation of the obvious difficulties this cohort encounter in accessing traditional health services.

Beyond these limitless opportunities, practitioners, scholars and other media stakeholders have continued to express concerns on the issue of fake news, hate speech, misinformation, etc. dominating social media platforms. These concerns call to question the issue of social media credibility. According to Onyechi and Adeitan (2019) media source and message credibility continue to dominate discussions by researchers since the introduction of digital media. For this reason and considering the huge daily patronage by those who forage for news, interrogating the credibility of the sources of information, information itself and medium constitute a fundamental issue or concern (Oyero, 2013, Marco & Pasi, 2017, Osong & Egba, 2020) and this has also assumed new social relevance and historical urgency (Salaudeen & Onyechi, 2020). For instance, the quality and trustworthiness of health information on the internet has been consistently queried (Gray et al., 2005, Marar, Al-Madaney & Almousawi, 2019, Maitz et al., 2020). Maitz et al. (2020) have alleged that commercial sites, discussion lists, online support groups, newsgroups and social media frequently provide, misleading information, poor quality or even false health information.

Despite an increased awareness of the issue of credibility of social media, evidence-based researches to enhance better understanding of youths' perception of social media credibility in their health information seeking behaviour are still lacking. Attention on this cohort is critical since according to Manganello (2008), youths as well as adolescents are at a crucial stage of development and learning skills, they will carry with them into adulthood. This study, therefore, investigated perception of social media credibility and health information seeking behaviour among youths in south west Nigeria.

The source credibility theory propounded by Hovland, Janis and Kelly in 1953 provided the

theoretical underpinning for this study. The theory states that people or receivers are more likely to be persuaded when the source presents itself as credible (Umeogu, 2012). The assumption of the theory is that the more credible a source is the more likely receivers will believe the information and vice versa. This study, therefore, argues that the more credible that youths perceive social media, the more likely they will seek health information from the social media platforms. Furthermore, Hovland et al. identified the factors or elements that positively influence source credibility: perceived expertise and trustworthiness of the source. Hovland et al. described the influence of perceived expertise and trustworthiness on how people process information and create attitudes (Lamm, Owens, Telg, Ricky & Lamm, 2016). Researchers have focused on these and other factors or elements in their studies. For instance, some studies found that the perception of the information source credibility is affected by source expertise and trustworthiness (Fan & Sun, 2012; Luo et al., 2015; Pan, 2014, Levy & Gvili, 2015; Lim & Van Der Heide, 2015; Willemsen et al., 2012 all cited by Ismagilova, Slade, Rana et al., 2020). The study by Hu(2015) found that source credibility is influenced by multi-dimensional factors such as competence, trustworthiness, social tie, attractiveness, dynamism, and technology affordance (Hu, 2015,iii). However, this present study focused on only expertise and trustworthiness in assessing youths' perception of social media credibility as source of health information.

This study addressed the following research questions:

- What is the perception of social media credibility among youths in South West Nigeria?
- What type of health information do youths in South West Nigeria access on social media?
- What is the relationship between perceived credibility of social media and health information seeking behaviour among youths in South West Nigeria?
- Is there any significant relationship between some demographic factors and health information seeking behaviour among youths in South West Nigeria?

## 2. Research Methodology

### 2.1 Study Designs

This study adopted a mixed method that employed both survey and focus group discussion (FGD) approaches. A cross-sectional online survey was adopted in order to easily reach a great and diverse youth population across south west Nigeria. The FGD, a qualitative approach, was also adopted in order to elicit detailed information as well as gain a deep understanding of the issue under investigation.

## 2.2 Participants

The 2019 Nigeria's National Youth Policy definition of youths as young people within the ages of 18 and 35 years. The inclusion criteria are youths who are within the ages of 18 and 35 years and are on social media platforms. The exclusion criterion are youths who meet the age qualification but are not on any social media. Consequently, participants who took part in this study were between the ages of 18 and 35 years old and who are on any social media account. Participation in the study was voluntary. There was no form of compulsion on the participants and their withdrawal right at any point in the course of the study was also respected. Participants were only drawn from the south west part of the country.

## 2.3 Sampling procedure and sample size

Considering that this study is a web-survey, non-probability convenient, purposive and snow ball sampling procedures were employed for the selection of the participants. It was convenient for this researcher to purposively select youths who are on social media platforms. Through the deployment of snow ball sampling approach, this researcher leveraged on her social media contacts and other youth social media groups in selecting those who participated in the study. Those who already filled the questionnaire were encouraged to send the questionnaire to their contacts. In order to discourage multiple entries, submission of completed questionnaire automatically disallowed any further access to the Google form. A total of four hundred and seven (407) responses were received when the instrument was taken down. The total sample size for the survey was 407 while FGD sample size was 48.

## 2.4 Data Collection

The questionnaire was launched online on the 9<sup>th</sup> of September, 2022 and taken down on the 30<sup>th</sup> of September, 2022. Data collection for the survey, therefore, lasted three (3) weeks. The FGD sessions were held at two (2) major cities (Lagos and Ibadan) in south western Nigeria. The selection of the cities was based on the fact that the cities present a good

opportunity to select good representation of the youth population. The researcher used her discretion to arrive at such decision. A total of eight (8) sessions were held while four (4) sessions were held in each city. There were six (6) discussants in each session making a total of forty-eight (48) discussants. Data collection for the FGD lasted for one week in both Lagos and Ibadan.

## 2.5 Method of statistical analysis

In order to analyze the quantitative data, descriptive statistics expressed in simple percentages and frequency counts were adopted. Furthermore, spearman rho and chi square were used in order to establish relationship among the variables. The qualitative data generated from the focus group discussion were transcribed while excerpts that represented the opinions of the discussants were utilized in the analysis of the data.

## 2.6 Measures

In order to generate data for the survey and the FGD, questionnaire and FGD guide respectively were utilized. The FGD guide has a total of eleven (11) questions. The questions on the FGD guide focused on these key issues namely the patterns of social media exposure, online health information seeking behaviour as well as perception of social media credibility. The questionnaire has three (3) sections and a total of twenty (24) questions. These sections are discussed hereunder.

## 2.7 Demographics

Information on their demographics was sought by asking the respondents to respond to their sex, age, level of education and religious affiliation.

## 2.8 Online Health Information Seeking Behaviour (HISB)

To probe into their online health information seeking behaviour, respondents' opinions were sought on the type of health information they access from the social media, frequency of accessing such information, what social media platform they prefer to access the information, social media platforms they seek health information on, preference for sources of health posts. Furthermore, respondents' opinions were sought on trust and usefulness of health information derived from the social media, barriers encountered in accessing such information and the most important reason(s) for searching for health information from the social media.

**2.9 Perception of Social Media Credibility**

In order to investigate their perception of social media credibility, questions asked focused on the trustworthiness and expertise of sources of health information on social media platforms. They were asked, “how much trust do you have in the

information you get from social media?”, “do you sometimes or always confirm with other sources (such as medical personnel, friends, family members, etc) any information from the social media before using it?”, “do you believe most of the information from the social media or careful in believing most of the information?”, “how credible would you describe social media?”.

**3. Data analysis**

**3.1 Socio-Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents**

Table 1 focuses on the socio-demographic information of the respondents and shows that majority of the respondents who participated in the study (n=265; 65.1%) are females, (n=124; 30.5%) were within the age bracket 21-25 years old , (n=229; 56.3%) were HND/BSC holders and (n=360; 88.5%) are Christians.

Table 1: Socio-demographic information of the respondents

Variable	Category	Frequency (%)
Sex	Male	142 (34.9%)
	Female	265 (65.1%)
	Total	407 (100%)
Age range	18 - 20 yrs	103 (25.3%)
	21 - 25 yrs	124 (30.5%)
	26 - 30 yrs	94 (23.1%)
	31 - 35 yrs	86 (21.1%)
	Total	407 (100%)
Level of education	WASSCE	83 (20.4%)
	NCE/OND	23 (5.7%)
	HND/BSC	229 (56.3%)
	MSC/PHD	62 (15.2%)
	B.A in view	1 (0.2%)
	Undergraduate	9 (2.2%)
	Total	407 (100%)
Religious Affiliation	Christian	360 (88.5%)
	Moslem	46 (11.3%)
	Traditionalist	1 ( 0.2%)
	Total	407 (100%)

**3.2 Perception of Social Media Credibility**

Youths’ perception of credibility of social media is low as shown on Table 2. Majority (n=218; 53.6%) of the respondents perceived the social media as having low credibility while (n=189; 46.4) of the respondents perceived the social media as having high credibility. Specifically, their responses point to trust deficit as majority (n=232; 57%) of the respondents have less trust while the remaining (n=175; 43%) have much trust on the information they get from social media. It is not unlikely that because of the trust deficiency, majority of the respondents (n=350; 86.0%) said they are careful in believing most of the information from the social media while the remaining (n=57; 14.0%) believe most of the information from the social media. But what is surprising is that an overwhelming majority (n=392; 96.3%) rarely verifies the information they get from the social media.

**Table2:** Perception of social media credibility among the respondents

Category	Frequency	Percent
low credibility	218	53.6
high credibility	189	46.4
TOTAL	407	100

Majority of the youths who participated in the focus group were categorical in stating that social media credibility is always questionable because of its open access to all users. According to a discussant (20year old male undergraduate):

I won't say it is credible because it is a platform anybody comes to share anything they want to share. There is no way of verifying the authenticity of the information. I won't say it is credible. It is at users' risk.

Another discussant (19year old female undergraduate):

*It is not totally credible. You can't depend on it. You have to verify so you don't fall into the wrong hand. You can't depend on the information you get from the social media platform without verification.*

**3.3 Online health information seeking behaviour (HISB)**

Respondents are very active in their search for health information on social media. Table 3 shows that a total of (n=298;73.2%) are high online health information seekers while (n=105; 25.8%) are average online health information seekers. Only a negligible number (n=4; 1%) are low online health information seekers. On probing further, majority of the respondents(n=329;80.8%) said they will first search for health information on social media when the need arises. Furthermore, the result shows that many of the respondents (n= 323;79.4%) consider health information from the social media platforms somewhat very important while the remaining respondents(n=123;20.6%) believe that health information from the social media platforms is somewhat not very important. It is ironical that youths are very active in their search for health information on social media despite the fact that their perception of credibility of social media is low (as shown on Table 2)

**Table 3:** Online health information seeking behaviour among the respondents

Class	Frequency	Percent
Low information seekers	4	1.0
Average information seekers	105	25.8
High information seekers	298	73.2
Total	407	100

**3.4 Type of health information searched for on social media**

The study probed further into the type of health information they searched for on social media. They were at liberty to select as many as applicable. Result shows that many youths searched for mental, preventive and lifestyle health information on the social media. Specifically, majority (n=176;43.2%), (n=138; 33.9%) and (137; 33.7%) searched for mental, preventive and lifestyle health information respectively. Also sexual/reproductive health (n=130; 31.9%), wellness and nutrition (n=120; 29.5%), dental/oral health (n=86;21.1%) and others (21;5.2%) came in that order in their search for health information. Since earlier finding showed trust deficit, it is, therefore, not surprising that majority (n=267; 65.6%) and (n=104;25.6%) of the respondents found information they got not useful and not very useful respectively while (n=21;5.2%) and (n=15;3.7%) of them found the useful and very useful respectively. Similarly, finding reveals that (n=281;69%) rarely, (n=51; 12.5%) sometimes and (n=75;18.4%) always confirm with other sources (such as medical personnel, friends, family members, etc.) any health information from the social media before using it.

Many discussants identified the type of health information they search for on social media to include wellness, preventive and mental health information. This finding corroborates the result presented above.

**3.5 Reasons for seeking health information on social media**

In order to analyse the result, strongly agreed and agreed were merged together, the same was done for strongly disagreed and disagreed. The result (Table 4) shows that youths searched for health information on social media because it is accessible and convenient. Majority (n=337; 82.8%) of the respondents agreed that accessibility is a reason for searching for health information on the social media. Only a small number (n=37; 9.1%) disagreed that accessibility was a factor for searching for health information on the social media. Similar overwhelming majority (n= 334; 81.9%) agreed that they search for health information on social media because it is convenient. As shown on Table 2, the number of respondents who disagreed and are undecided on the issues of confidentiality and reliability as reasons for seeking health information on social media should not be ignored. A sizable number (n=72; 17.7%) disagreed that confidentiality was a reason for searching for health information on social media, while (n=66; 16.2%) was undecided on the issue. On reliability factor, those who disagreed (n=91; 22.4%) and undecided

(n=100; 24.6%) on the factor of reliability was also high. Large number of respondents (n=300; 73.8%) agreed that they seek information from the social media because response is always timely while only (n=67; 16.5%) disagreed with the statement. Also a large number of respondents (n= 311; 76.4%) said they seek health information from social media because it is easy to understand. Only a small number (n=48; 11.8%) disagreed with this statement. A total of (n=285; 70%) respondents agreed that the cost of seeking health information on social media is cheap.

**Table 4:** Reasons for seeking health information on social media

	Agreed	Undecided	Disagreed
I seek health information from the social media because it is very accessible	337(82.8%)	33 (8.1%)	37(9.1%)
I seek for health information from the social media because it is convenient	334 (81.9%)	32 (7.9%)	41(10.1%)
I seek health information from the social media because of the confidentiality it provides	269(66.1%)	66 (16.2%)	72 (17.7%)
I seek health information from the social media because response is always timely	300 (73.8%)	40 (9.8%)	67 (16.5%)
I seek health information from the social media because the information is easy to understand	311(76.4%)	48 (11.8%)	48(11.8%)
I seek health information from the social media because it is cheap	285(70%)	55 (13.5%)	67 (16.6%)
I seek health information from the social media because it is reliable	216(53.1%)	100 (24.6%)	91(22.4%)

Majority of those who took part in the FGD said that accessibility is a key factor when seeking health information on social media. Other reasons identified by the discussants include privacy, timeliness, speed and convenience.

One of the discussants (22 year old male) in his response summed up some of the reasons this way:

*It is very easy to access like on demand, it's faster, uhm like they've said, it's faster than going to meet a professional or having to schedule a call with a professional and then there is privacy also, uhmm well, even that of the professionals is also private but it is not as private as online because you don't have to speak with anyone or ashamed if it is a kind of sexual or personal related, so you don't have to feel embarrassed when talking about the information or when getting the information, so it is easier to access and then it is faster and it is more private than offline.*

**3.6 Barriers encountered when searching for health information on social media**

Inability to determine the appropriate health information that addresses their health need and absence of appropriate health information addressing their health issue were identified by majority of the youths as barriers encountered when searching for health information. Specifically, (n=167; 41%) were unable to determine the appropriate health information that addresses their health need while (n= 159; 39.1%) said that absence of appropriate health information addressing their health issues was a barrier (see Table 5). A total of (n=97; 23.8%) and (n=97; 23.8%) of respondents said network problem and fear of disclosing their sickness to others respectively constituted barriers to them. Other barriers include language barrier(n=55;13.5%), absence of electricity(n=42;10.3), inability to search for the health information that they need (n=32; 7. 9) and lack of fund to purchase data (n=49; 12%).

**Table 5:** Barriers encountered when searching for health information on social media

Barriers	Frequency	Percentage
Absence of appropriate health information addressing my health issue	159	39.07
Health information is not written in a simple understandable language	55	13.51
Network problem	97	23.83
Absence of electricity	42	10.32
Fear of disclosing my sickness to others	97	23.83
Inability to search for the health information that I need	32	7.86
Unable to determine the appropriate health information that addresses my health need	167	41.03
Lack of fund to purchase data	49	12.04

The focus group discussants identified network problem, fake news/information and information overload (in that order) as the major barriers they encountered when searching for health information on social media. Many discussants first identified network before discussing other barriers. For instance, one of the discussants (22 year old male) said, “you have network issues aside the network issue ...” Another discussant (23year old male) said, “apart from network issues, it is overloading of information”. On the issue of fake news/information, a 20year old female

said “there is so much fake information flying around and most times it is as a result of people that have little learning”.

Discussants expressed a lot of frustration on being bombarded with lots of unsolicited information on social media platform. According to a discussant (26year old female):

*...when you are looking for information, you don't get a precise information. Like, it is not the information that you want and it is not well detailed and when you go back to search for the information, there is an overload of information about the same issue you are talking about or searching for.*

Another discussant (28year old female) said:

*Apart from network issues, it is the overloading of information for example when you see something on fitness or let's say something relating to common disease or infection and let us you say did not bookmark it or save it when you are now going back on social media, you see so many details that you just get lost because when you type the keyword many things just come up. I think there are lots of information that you may not be able to get the correct one or miss the one that is actually true. So that is like the challenge that I face.*

Relationship between perceived credibility of social media and online health information seeking behaviour

Table 6 reveals that the Spearman's rho correlation value is 0.821 and this value is statistically significant at 5 percent level of acceptance. This result shows that there is a significant relationship between perceived credibility of social media and online health information seeking behaviour among youths in South West Nigeria. The implication of this finding is that the more credible youths perceive the social media, the more active they are in seeking online health information. Conversely, the less credible youths perceive the social media, the less active they are in seeking online health information.

**Table 6:** Relationship between perceived credibility of social media and online health information seeking behaviour among youths in South West Nigeria

			online health information seeking behaviour
Spearman's rho	perceived credibility of social media	Correlation coefficient	.821**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
		N	407
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).			

Relationship between socio-demographic factors and online health information seeking behaviour among youths in South West Nigeria

Result on Table 7 shows contingency coefficient values of 0.250, 0.367, and 0.293 for gender, age and level of education respectively. These values are statistically significant at 5 percent level of acceptance. This result shows that a significant relationship exists between some demographic variables (gender, age and level of education) and online health information seeking behaviour among youths in South West Nigeria. Respondents who are females, younger and with more education exhibited higher online health information seeking behaviour than their counterparts who are males, older and with less education. However, the result also shows contingency coefficient value of 0.397 for religious affiliation and this value is not statistically significant at 5% level of acceptance. The implication of this result is that religious affiliation has no correlation with online health information seeking behaviour of youths who participated in this study. Religion is not a determining factor in the way the youth seek online health information.

**Table 7:** Correlation between demographic variables and online health information seeking behaviour among youths in South West Nigeria

Online health information seeking behaviour		Gender	Age	Religion	Level of education
Pearson Chi-Square	Value	20.735**	48.546**	58.483	29.363**
	Contingency coefficient	.250	.367	.397	.293
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.014	.019	.060	.034
	N	407	407	407	407
** Chi square value is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).					

#### 4. Discussion

As confirmed by literature (Gong and Verboord, 2020, Maitz et al., 2020, Akoja & Nwenezi, 2020) the problem of social media credibility has continued to be identified with social media platforms. Youths in this study believe that social media are not credible. The unconventional nature of social media that enables netizens unprecedented access to the social media platforms remains very problematic. Akoja & Nwenezi (2020) point to the alteration that enables amateurs and non-professionals to generate and distribute media content for public consumption, (thereby altering the traditional newsgathering, packaging, and delivery process) hereby eliciting lack of credibility, misrepresentation, disinformation, intrusion of privacy, and other vices. Banda cited by Salaudeen and Onyechi (2020), however, hinged the social media credibility issue on the multiplicity of media organisations and the proliferation of news outlets, which have inundated the users with numerous choices of media platforms and media contents, resulting in wide-spread skepticism about the authenticity of media platforms and the veracity of information they churn out.

This current study shows that respondents are very active in their search for health information on social media. This goes to corroborate much of what is in literature (Marar, Al-Madaney & Almousawi, 2019) concerning the level of activity displayed by youths in their search for health information on social media. Young people have difficulties accessing traditional health services, so they gravitate towards the internet and the social media which offer them confidential and convenient access to an unprecedented level of information about a diverse range of subjects, including health information (Gray et al., 2005).

Although youths' perception of credibility of social media is low (as shown on Table 2), it is rather ironical that majority (n=281; 69%) of them would rarely confirm with other sources (such as medical personnel, friends, family members, etc.) any health information from the social media before using it. Neely, Eldredge and Sanders (2021) in their study also reported that most social media users were unlikely to fact-check what they see on the internet with a health professional, despite the high levels of mistrust in the accuracy of COVID-19-related information on social media. These findings point to a gap in knowledge that needs to be interrogated.

This current study (like Anaeto, Nwokike and Ojo, 2021) also reveals that youths mostly searched for mental, preventive and lifestyle health information on

social media. This finding is very important and may be helpful in articulating health policy statements that are aimed at improving youths' health and wellbeing. Since adolescents and youths exhibit high sexually curiosity (Fauzi and Kadir, 2015), it is surprising that sexual/reproductive health information is not one of the most searched health information on social media by the youths who participated in this study. It is not unlikely that this may be connected to the unwilling tendency in people, including youths, in this clime to shy away from discussing sex and sexually related matters. Sex is traditionally a very private subject in most Nigerian cultures and discussion of sex with teenagers is often deemed as inappropriate (Odigbo, Ugwu & Ekemezie, 2017).

Scholars (Marar, Al-Madaney & Almousawi, 2019; Gong & Verboord, 2020; Adegbilero-Iwari, Oluwadare & Adegbilero-Iwari, 2021; Malik et al., 2022) have alluded to the potentials of social media in granting unrestricted sharing of information, including health information. With a mobile device and data, users can access the social media platform at their convenient time and place. This is highlighted by another finding of this study which shows that youths seek health information on social media based on accessibility and convenience. These factors point to the ubiquitous nature of social media.

If youths are unable to determine the appropriate health information that addresses their health needs, they may run the risk of accessing and utilizing inappropriate health information in their quest to address their health needs. This may have grievous consequences both in the short and long term on the health and wellbeing of the youths of the country. Maitz et al. (2020) have observed that although many children and adolescents (including youths) are surrounded by smartphones, tablets, and computers, very few of them know how to select appropriate information from reliable sources. They warned of the dangers this may pose, especially when health issues are under consideration, where it is vital to identify incorrect or misleading information. This should call for urgent action in order to mitigate any consequential danger or threat to the health and wellbeing of the youths who are the future of any country.

Social media such as Facebook, YouTube, WhatsApp, and Twitter have radically enhanced the public access to health information. Many experts have however questioned their quality and credibility (Gong and Verboord, 2020, Maitz et al., 2020). Commercial sites, discussion lists, online support groups, and newsgroups frequently provide poor

quality or even false health information. (Marar, Al-Madaney & Almousawi, 2019, Maitz et al., 2020). In line with the above, researchers have continued to interrogate the issue of social media credibility vis-a-vis users' online health information seeking behaviour. This current study has revealed that the more credible youths perceive the social media, the more active they are in seeking online health information and vice versa. This finding upholds the key assumption of the source credibility theory that the more credible a source is, the more likely receivers will believe the information and vice versa. This finding has implication for youths' online health information seeking behaviour and points to the urgent need to address the issue of social media credibility.

Previous studies (Demirci, Uğurluoğlu, Konca & Çakmak, 2021, Jacobs, Amuta & Jeon, 2017, Jia, Pang & Liu, 2021) have established a correlation between socio-demographic factors and online health information seeking behaviour. In this current study, gender, age and educational level were found to correlate with youths' online health information seeking behaviour. Women than men, younger than older ones and those with higher levels of education more frequently sought online health information. Since youths have difficulties accessing traditional health services, the younger and female youths may resort to discrete search for health information online. Further, the more educated youths in their search for health information, may not have much difficulties navigating through the social media landscapes.

## 5. Conclusion and Recommendations

Credibility of source of information remains a critical factor in the overall acceptability of an information. Despite the popularity of various social media platforms among users globally, social media credibility appears to be a limiting factor in the information seeking behaviour of users, especially for health and health related issues. The finding of this study revealed that credibility of the social media is a key determinant in the activity of youths in seeking health information from the platforms. The finding has again provided an impetus to strengthen the calls by concerned scholars (such as Marar, Al-Madaney & Almousawi, 2019) and other stakeholders to articulate policy that will sanitize the rule of engagement on social media platforms, especially in the health sector.

Based on the findings of this study, it is recommended that health care providers/practitioners and health care organizations should be more visible on social media platforms by creating health support

groups where accurate information and knowledge will be shared towards achieving better health outcomes for the people, especially the youths. This will address the recurring credibility issue of the social media. Furthermore, adopting this approach will be very beneficial, especially in the areas of preventive care and mental health. A typical example was during the COVID-19 pandemic period that was characterized by fake news, misinformation and disinformation that may have resulted in avoidable deaths of some Nigerians.

It is also recommended that relevant government regulatory agencies should develop clear policy frameworks and guidelines that will ensure that both governmental and non-governmental health organizations/institutions leverage on the potentials of social media in their provision of medicare. These are expected to enhance robust medical coverage with better health outcomes for all patients, especially the youths.

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