

## EXAMINING THE IMPACTS OF SOCIAL MEDIA INFORMATION OVERLOAD ON THE BEHAVIOURAL INTENTION OF HEALTH INFORMATION SEEKERS IN SELECTED GOVERNMENT HOSPITALS IN DELTA STATE

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### Abstract

This study explored the impacts of social media information overload on the behavioral intention of health information seekers in selected government hospitals in Delta State. The descriptive study adopted interview for data collection. All the health information seekers that came to the general hospitals in three selected local government areas in central senatorial district of Delta State, Nigeria between July and September, 2024 formed the population of the study. Convenience sampling technique was used for the study. Only one hundred and thirty-six health information seekers participated in the study. The data collected were analysed using descriptive statistics of frequency and percentage. The study found a low level of use of social media for health information among health information seekers. The factors influencing health information seekers' susceptibility to social media information overload include social media engagement, and source credibility assessment. The health information seekers showed willingness to follow medical advice given by health professionals in government hospitals. Social media information overload caused declined behavioural intentions towards health information seeking, and cognitive overload. The strategies for mitigating the negative effects of social media information overload on health information seekers include provision of health literacy and digital literacy education, and incorporation of visual and interactive content. It was recommended that health information seekers should be sensitized through awareness campaign on the appropriate use of social media for health information.

**Keywords:** Behavioural intention, Government hospitals, Health information, Health information seekers, Social media, Social media information, Social media information overload

### Introduction

Governments across all nations are investing enormously in ensuring healthy living by their citizens. Understanding correct and appropriate health information is very vital in promoting public health. It guarantees that health information seekers and communities are educated concerning preventive measures, treatment options, and emerging health risks, thus enabling people to make knowledgeable decisions concerning their health (World Health Organisation

[WHO], 2021). Besides, accessible health information stimulates transparency, builds confidence in public health institutions, and promotes compliance with medical advice and public health policies (Smith et al., 2020). The behavioural intention of health information seekers is very vital in using health information, especially in the face of social media information overload, The onus is therefore on health information seekers to make appropriate use of social media for enhanced access and use of health information.

In the current digital era, social media has been recognised as an inseparable part of life of the people, transforming how people use information. Social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Thread, WhatsApp, Telegram, Instagram, WeChat, and YouTube, among others, are vital sources of health information because of their wide user base and ease of content dissemination (Dizon et al., 2019). Social media platforms are prominent for health information seeking, providing users the avenue to access and share health information. The spread of social media has changed how health information is sought and consumed in society.

Social media platforms provide people the opportunity to seek health information, connect with colleagues/associates, and interact with healthcare professionals (Lee et al., 2019). Other benefits of social media platforms include easy access to information, ability to communicate with colleagues and associates, at low cost. However, these platforms pose a great challenge in the form of information overload.

Information overload means the excessive quantity of information available online, which can cause misperception, ambiguity, and a lack of confidence in trustworthy sources of health information (Zhang et al., 2020). Information overload can have a substantial influence on the behavioural intention of health information seekers as they strive to circumnavigate the massive

series of information available online. The effects of social media information overload on the behavioural intention of health information seekers are of great concern to library and information science professionals and public health providers. These include declined behavioural intentions towards health information seeking, cognitive overload, and information quality concerns. Because of this, there has been a considerable interest among librarians to address the role of social media in promoting access and use of health information precisely to information seekers in Delta State.

Hospitals are expected to provide health information seekers the actual information they need. However, personal examination by the researcher indicates that the excessive availability of information on social media to health information seekers in government hospital in Delta State causes confusion regarding the reliable information to use. This study, therefore, aims to examine the impact of social media information overload on the behavioural intention of health information seekers in selected government hospitals in Delta State.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Social media is a vital tool for disseminating health information in the current digital era. Nevertheless, the usually unregulated flow of information on social media platforms has resulted to information overload as people are exposed to an irresistible quantity of information, making it difficult to effectively evaluate and use information. Information overload can have great effects on health information seekers, possibly influencing their behavioural intentions. More so, information overload makes it difficult for health information seekers in Delta State to identify the authentic information to use. This may result to relying on misleading health information by health information seekers. Failure to address social media information overload may have capricious effects on health information seekers. This study therefore aims to provide insightful

strategies for unpacking the effects of social media information overload on the behavioural intention of health information seekers in selected government hospitals in Delta State.

### **Objectives of the Study**

The major objective of the study is to examine the impact of social media information overload on the behavioural intention of health information seekers in selected government hospitals in Delta State. The specific objectives are to:

1. investigate the prevalence of social media usage among health information seekers in selected government hospitals in Delta State;
2. find out the factors influencing health information seekers' susceptibility to social media information overload;
3. examine the behavioural intention of health information seekers;
4. explore the impact of social media information overload on health information seekers
5. map out strategies for mitigating the negative impact of social media information overload on health information seekers

### **Research Questions**

The following research questions guide the study

1. What is the level of prevalence of social media usage among health information seekers in selected government hospitals in Delta State?
2. What are the factors influencing health information seekers' susceptibility to social media information overload in selected government hospitals in Delta State?
3. What is the behavioural intention of health information seekers in selected government hospitals in Delta State?

4. What is the impact of social media information overload on health information seekers in selected government hospitals in Delta State?
5. What are the strategies for mitigating the negative effects of social media information overload on health information seekers in selected government hospitals in Delta State?

## Literature Review

### Prevalence of Social Media Usage among Health Information Seekers

Social media is the buzz of the moment, it is an interactive information link designed for human communication and connectivity. Adekoya (2021) referred to social media as an innovative information network and information technology that people use to communicate and interaction among people. Social media platforms are digitally-mediated interactive technologies which help in forming and circulating information, opinions, and different manners of expressions via online networks (Obar & Wildman, 2015).

There is an increasing utilisation of social media platforms for news and health information nowadays (Adepetun, 2020). However, most of the health information available on the social media platforms are neither evidence-based nor authenticated by health organisations (Brennen et al., 2020). These days, people are dazed by the information they got via social media platforms which include Telegram, WhatsApp, and YouTube, among others (Adekoya & Fasae, 2022) concerning health issue. This leads to the use of social media for information about current epidemics, causes of ailments, how to prevent outbreak of diseases, use of drugs, effects of drug abuse, effort of governments and health organisations in curbing outbreak of diseases, among others. Most of the health information seekers in hospitals are pregnant women, victims of

accidents and those who specifically come to treat ailments (Jin, 2020). However, there is no social media platform whose focus is specifically to provide health information.

There is a significant use of social media for seeking health information these days. People are making effective use of diverse social media platforms to access, share, and deliberate on health-related issues. The reason is that social media platforms provide a wide series of health-related content, ranging from general health tips and information to discussions concerning particular medical conditions and treatments. Health information users have the opportunity of accessing content shared by reliable health organisations, healthcare professionals, and peer support groups (Othman et al., 2018).

Studies have shown great use of social media for health information because of the belief that social media can have significant influence on health information seekers' perceptions and decisions about their health. For instance, a study by Wang et al. (2018) found that social media posts about diet and exercise can influence the attitudes and behaviours of people towards healthy lifestyles. Among the major elements motivating the prevalent use of social media for health information seeking is the accessibility and ease-of-use it provides. The use of the Internet enables people to access health information on their smartphones or computers at any time and from any location (Paige et al., 2018). This accessibility expedites swift and easy access to health information without visiting hospitals. Social media platforms such as peer support group stimulates the formation of online health communities in which people encountering related health conditions can join, share experiences, and provide emotional support.

Peer support groups make the use of social media information very prevalent among health information seekers. It is of common knowledge that peer support groups occupy a robust position in health information seeking. Peer support groups offer a safe avenue for people to ask questions, ask

for advice, and get encouragement on health-related contents. Health-related content on social media can stimulate health behaviours and transform way of life. Reliable health organisations and individuals employ social media platforms for disseminating evidence-based health information, awareness campaigns, and behaviour change interventions (Dizon et al., 2019). Social media equally supports the extensive spread of health-related messages, getting to a broad audience. Social media influencers play a significant role in health information seeking. Health influencers can share own health expeditions, product examinations, or lifestyle tips, possibly impelling their admirers' health-related attitudes and behaviours (Kelders et al., 2020).

### **Factors Influencing Individuals' Susceptibility to Social Media Information Overload**

The massive quantity of information available on social media platforms has led to social media information overload. Social media information overload is the proliferation of information in a particular area or issue propagated through the internet. It is a situation in which there is too much information concerning a specific item or topic on the internet (Karr-Wisniewski & Lu, 2010). A number of factors are responsible for social media information overload. These include individual characteristics, usage patterns, and platform design. Among individual characteristics is individuals' cognitive load capacity. One factor that may contribute to susceptibility to social media information overload is individuals' cognitive load capacity. Cognitive load capacity is the maximum amount of mental effort an individual can devote to processing information, learning or performing a task. A study by Dizon et al. (2019) has revealed that it is difficult for people who have lower cognitive load capacity to efficiently process large volumes of information, causing feelings of exhaustion and information overload.

Susceptibility to social media information overload can be influenced by the frequency and duration of using social media. Marshall and Weeden (2017) averred that there is possibility for

people who spend more time on social media platforms to experience information overload. This is because too much exposure to a high volume of information. According to Lim and Goh (2019), people who frequently check their social media accounts are more at risk of getting overwhelmed by the persistent influx of updates and notifications. Susceptibility to information overload can also be caused by the design and user interface of social media platforms. Kelders et al. (2020) observed that features which include infinite scrolling, push notifications and algorithmic feeds may cause a sense of information overload by persistently presenting users with new content and updates. Equally, the personalized nature of social media platforms can cause people to look for more information and engage with content that are in line with their interests, possibly enhancing the possibility of experiencing information overload (Dunn et al., 2019).

### **Behavioural Intention of Health Information Seekers**

In the current digital era, the accessibility of health information has greatly influenced the way people manage their health and seek health information. Given the increasing prevalence of online platforms, understanding the behavioural intention of health information seekers is vital for public health communication and healthcare providers. Behavioural intention means an individual's enthusiasm or readiness to perform certain behaviour, usually influenced by attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control (Ajzen, 1991). Several elements influence behavioural intention of health information seekers. These include perceived health concerns, digital literacy, trust in information sources, and cultural norms. According to WHO (2019), people that have a strong craving to manage chronic conditions are more probable to display proactive behaviour in seeking trustworthy health information. Health motivation is highly essential in shaping behavioural intention. People who feel more at risk of a health condition usually seek information actively (Champion & Skinner, 2008). For example, someone



with a family history of diabetes may be more inclined to research dietary recommendations or preventive measures.

Behavioural intention of health information seekers is influenced by perceived ease of access to health information. Some health information seekers are not well-educated. However, with the proliferation of digital technologies, the ease of accessing health information greatly impacts intention. A study by Kim and Park (2012) found that people are more likely to engage in information-seeking behaviour when they perceive platforms as user-friendly and credible. Behavioural intention of health information seekers is shaped by social influences. Fishbein and Ajzen (2010) averred that subjective norms or the perceived expectations of other people guide the behavior of health information-seeking. If peers or family members emphasise the significance of staying informed, people are more likely to follow suit.

### **Effects of Social Media Information Overload on Health Information Seekers**

Social media information overload may cause declined behavioural intentions towards health information seeking because of information fatigue, cognitive overload, and information quality concerns (Kelders et al., 2020). Information fatigue means a situation in which a person is overwhelmed and disconnected because of the excessive quantity of information presented (Lee et al., 2019). Cognitive overload means a condition in which cognitive resources of a person are surpassed by the quantity of information offered, causing a diminished understanding and retention (Lee et al., 2019). Information quality concerns means a condition in which a person is not certain concerning the dependability and correctness of the information offered.

Social media information overload may cause enhanced behavioural intentions towards health information seeking because of social support, social learning, and social influence. Social support means a condition in which a person gets emotional and informational support from their

social network, causing enhanced behavioural intentions towards health information seeking (Othman & Mohamad, 2018). Social learning means a condition in which a person learns from the experiences and behaviours of their social network, causing enhanced behavioural intentions towards health information seeking. Social influence is a condition in which a person is influenced by the notions and philosophies of their social network, causing enhanced behavioural intentions towards health information seeking (Othman & Mohamad, 2018).

In the research carried out by Lee et al. (2019) which surveyed 366 Korean university students, it was found that social media information overload can cause a reduction in intention to seek health information among people. The study further found that too much contact with health information on social media platforms caused people to have less interest in seeking health information in the future because of information fatigue and desensitisation occasioned by information overload. The study similarly found that people who reported greater extents of social media use were more probable to experience information overload and consequent reductions in their behavioural intentions towards health information seeking. A related study by Wang et al. (2018) found that social media information overload can cause people to become more discriminatory in their health information seeking behaviour. The study surveyed 296 Chinese university students and found that people who reported greater extents of social media use were more probable than their colleagues who reported lesser extents to selectively seek health information based on their observed reliability and germaneness to their health issues rather than engaging in more generalized health information seeking behaviour because of irresistible quantity available online through social media platforms (Wang et al., 2018).

A study by Paige et al. (2018) investigated behavioural intention in the perspective of the use of eHealth among older adults. The study found that attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived

behavioural control significantly predict behavioural intention to use eHealth platforms for health information seeking. In a research by Kim et al. (2019), it found that social media information overload may cause people to become less probable to have confidence in health information sources on social media platforms. The study surveyed 403 Korean university students, and found that students who reported greater extents of use of social media have greater likelihood of experiencing information overload and subsequent declines in their trust in health information sources on social media platforms because of the overwhelming quantity of information available online through social media platforms (Kim et al., 2019).

Regardless of the fact that social media platforms provide wealth of health and health-related information for people seeking health information online, information overload emanating from uncontrollable exposure to information has the capability of leading people towards declined behavioural intentions towards health information seeking. This is because factors which include information fatigue or diminished confidence in health information sources emanate from excessive availability of information (Othman & Mohamad, 2018).

A study by Kelders et al. (2020) found that information overload can cause a reduction in confidence in dependable sources of health information and an enhanced possibility of sharing misinformation on social media platforms. This can have grave effects on public health as dishonest information can cause inappropriate health assessments and adversely affect health outcomes (Marshall & Weeden, 2017). The effects of social media information overload on the behaviour of health information seekers are complex and multifaceted. A research by Yu et al. (2018) found that information overload can cause a diminished engagement with health information, as information seekers get overwhelmed by the great quantity of information available online. Due to this,

information seekers may decide not to take action on health information, which can adversely affect health outcomes.

In addition, information overload can cause an individual to exert much energy in distinguishing between correct and incorrect health information (Kim et al., 2019). In a study by Wang et al. (2018), the researchers found a less likelihood to seek health information and less likelihood to take action on health information by people who experienced information overload. This shows the necessity to tackle the matter of information overload and to encourage the use of dependable sources of health information.

### **Strategies for Mitigating the Negative Effects of Social Media Information Overload on Health Information Seekers**

As excessive information, whether verified or unverified, is available on every subject, there is a likelihood for people to be entangled in the web of the information. As such, it is germane to mitigate the effects of social media overload. Mitigating the adverse effects of social media information overload on health information seekers requires employing and implementing some strategies. These strategies can stimulate effective use of information, improve digital literacy, and expedite access to dependable health information. For example, health literacy and digital literacy education can be promoted. Paige et al. (2018) posited that providing health information seekers with training on health literacy and digital literacy can enhance their ability to circumnavigate social media platforms. Education programmes can teach health information seekers the way to critically assess information sources, confirm the reliability of health content, and use search strategies to locate reliable information.

The negative effects of social media information overload can be reduced by reducing exposure to impertinent and possibly devastating information, tailored recommendations can assist

users manage information overload (Yoo et al., 2021). Also, health organisations and influencers can display verified health content badges on their social media posts (Liang et al., 2021). These badges specify that the information has been scrutinized by reliable sources, enhancing users' trust in the trustworthiness of the content.

Coming up with pragmatic strategies for mitigating the effect of social media information overload is crucial as online information community benefits tremendously from the use of social media. However, information community can as well become overwhelmed with social media information overload. This requires implementation of peer moderation and community guidelines by online health communities to make sure that information shared within the community is authentic and evidence-based (Paige et al., 2018). Representatives of the online communities can render some assistance in filtering out dishonest information and offer additional context to health-related discussions.

Curating content on specific health topics, as well as providing users with dependable and current information by healthcare professionals and health organisations can help reduce social media information overload (Marshall & Weeden, 2017). Curated content can assist users concentrate on vital health information and lessen the danger of coming across deceptive or contradictory content.

Inspiring health information seekers to take an active role in their information use can assist in mitigating information overload (Othman & Mohamad, 2018). Social media platforms can promote the use of filters, sorting options, and search functionalities, permitting users to customize their content feeds based on their preferences. Social media platforms can likewise direct users to offline health resources and trustworthy websites for more in-depth information (Marshall & Weeden, 2017). Health information users can also be encourage to consult

healthcare professionals or reliable health websites for a more complete, detail and balanced opinion of health-related topics.

Visual and interactive content formats, which include infographics and videos, can also be used to boost information knowledge and retention (Moorhead et al., 2013). Visual content can present complex health information in a more reachable and engaging way. This will enable health information users to make knowledgeable and informed decisions and circumnavigate social media platforms more assuredly in their effort to seek health information.

## Methodology

The study adopted a descriptive survey research design, using qualitative data collection methods to collect data from health information seekers in the general hospitals in three selected local government areas in central senatorial district of Delta State, Nigeria. The study targeted a diverse sample of health information seekers across different age groups and demographic backgrounds. The local government areas selected are Ughelli North, Ughelli South, and Uvwie. The three local government have eight general hospitals, namely Orogun Government Hospital, Ughelli Central Hospital, Ewu Government Hospital, Otugeremi General Hospital, Ekpan General Hospital, Nigerian National Petroleum Cooperation Clinic, 3 Battalion Medical Reception State, and Nigerian Navy Hospital Effurun.

The study involved the use of the structured interview to collect data from the 2179 health information seekers that came to the hospitals between July and September, 2024 (Orogun Government Hospital 274; Ughelli Central Hospital 266; Ewu Government Hospital 286; Otugeremi General Hospital 259; Ekpan General Hospital 293; Nigerian National Petroleum Cooperation Clinic 272; 3 Battalion Medical Reception State 261; and Nigerian Navy Hospital Effurun 268). Due to the

large size of the population and that the study involved the use of interview a sample size of 281(10%) was taken from the population of 2179. Convenience sampling technique was used for the study. The researcher personally went to the health information seekers in the different hospitals to interview them. Interview was used because most of the health information seekers could not interpret the content of a questionnaire due to their low level of education. More so, there was a need to interview the health information seekers in their native languages so that they would be at liberty to express their opinions concerning the questions they were asked. The interviewer explained the content of the questions full understanding of the interviewees.

Only 136 health information seekers participated in the study. All the participants answered all the questions in the interview. The data collected were analysed using descriptive statistics of mean, frequency and percentage. The criterion mean for the study was 2.50. Any average that was above the criterion mean was considered high, while the average that was below the criterion mean was considered low.

### Interview Response Rate

**Table 1: Interview Response Rate**

S/N	Name of Hospital	Number Respondents	Percentage (%)
1	Orogun Government Hospital	27	19.9
2	Ughelli Central Hospital	23	16.9
3	Ewu Government Hospital	20	14.7
4	Otugeremi General Hospital	16	11.8
5	Ekpan General Hospital	16	11.8
6	Nigerian National Petroleum Cooperation Clinic	13	9.5
7	3 Battalion Medical Reception State	12	8.8
8	Nigerian Navy Hospital Effurun	9	6.6
	<b>Total</b>	<b>136</b>	<b>100</b>

Table 1 shows the number of health information seekers that responded to the study in the hospitals surveyed. Majority of the participants came to seek health information at the Orogun

Government Hospital 27(1%). This is followed by Ughelli Central Hospital 23(16.9%), Ewu Government Hospital 20(14.7%) Otugeremi General Hospital 16(11.8%), and Ekpan General Hospital 16(11.8%). The least is Nigerian Navy Hospital Effurun 9(6.6%).

**Research Question 1:** What is the level of prevalence of social media usage among health information seekers in selected government hospitals in Delta State?

In this section, the researcher read the question to the respondents and asked them how they used social media platforms to get health information. The respondents were given restricted options from which to choose. The options are Very High Extent, High Extent, Moderate Extent, Low Extent, and Very Low Extent. The responses are then tabulated as follows.

**Table 2: Prevalence of Social Media Usage among Health Information Seekers in Selected Government Hospitals in Delta State**

Social Media Platforms	VHE	HE	ME	LE	VLE	Mean ( $\bar{x}$ )
WhatsApp	27	33	23	41	12	3.2
Facebook	21	44	31	17	13	3.1
X (Formerly Twitter)	19	31	13	36	27	2.6
Instagram	12	15	11	43	55	2.2
Telegram	8	11	9	44	64	1.9
Thread	0	2	1	19	114	1.2
WeChat	0	0	0	0	136	1
<b>Average Mean</b>						<b>2.20</b>
<b>Criterion Mean</b>						<b>2.50</b>

Key: VHE = Very High Extent; HE= High Extent; ME=Moderate Extent; LE=Low Extent;

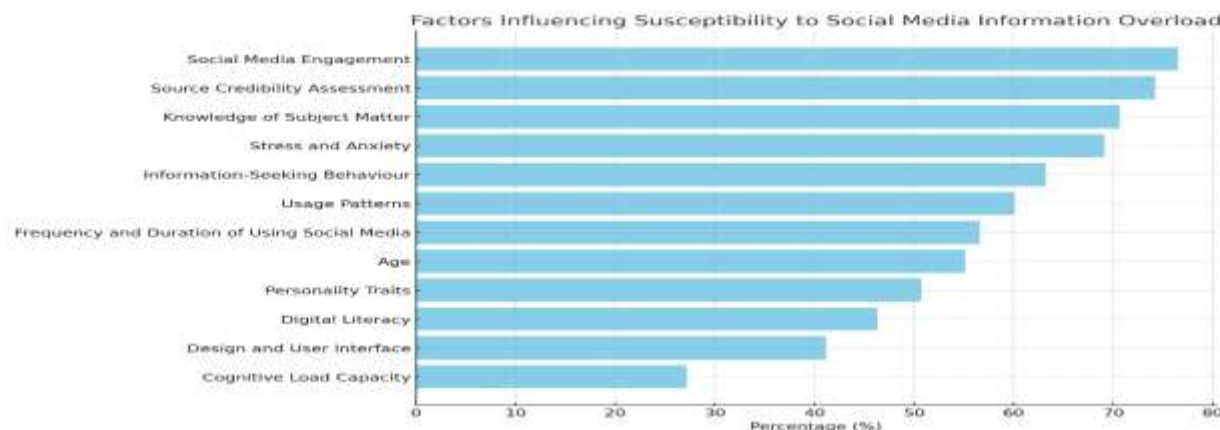
VLE=Very Low Extent

From Table 2, the average mean ( $\bar{x}=2.20$ ) is lower than the criterion mean ( $\bar{x}=2.50$ ). This means there is low use of social media for health information among health information seekers in government hospitals in Delta State.



**Research Question 2:** What are the factors influencing health information seekers’ susceptibility to social media information overload in selected government hospitals in Delta State?

[Responses to this research question is provided in the figure below.](#)



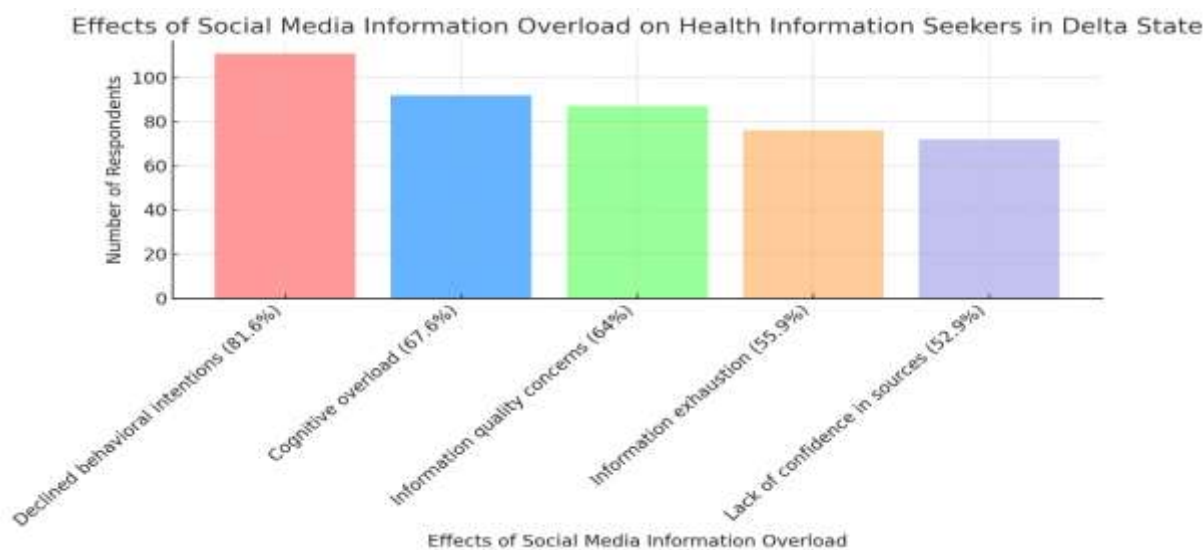
**Fig.1:** A bar chart showing the factors influencing susceptibility to social media information overload in selected government hospital in Delta State

The responses to this section of the interview include: social media engagement 104(76.5%), source credibility assessment 101(74.3%), knowledge of subject matter (issue of discussion) 96(70.6%), stress and anxiety 94(69.1%), information-seeking behaviour 86(63.2%), usage patterns 82(60.1%), frequency and duration of using social media 77(56.6%), age 75(55.1%), personality traits 69(50.7%), digital literacy 63(46.3%), design and user interface of social media platforms 56(41.2%), and cognitive load capacity (maximum amount of mental effort an individual devotes to processing information, learning or performing a task) 37(27.2%). This indicates that most of the factors really influencing health information seekers’ susceptibility to social media information overload in selected government hospitals in Delta State. This indicates all the factors except digital literacy, design and user interface of social media platforms, and cognitive load capacity influence health information seekers’ susceptibility to social media information overload while

**Research Question 3:** What is the behavioural intention of health information seekers in selected government hospitals in Delta State?

The responses to this section of the interview questions revealed that all the health information seekers showed willingness to follow medical advice given by health professionals in government hospitals 136(100%), health information seekers are ready to seek professional health consultations 101(74.3%), and health information seekers are ready to adopt health-promoting behaviours 92(67.6%). This implies that all the factors except health information seekers have positive behavioural intention.

**Research Question 4:** What are the effects of social media information overload on health information seekers in selected government hospitals in Delta State?

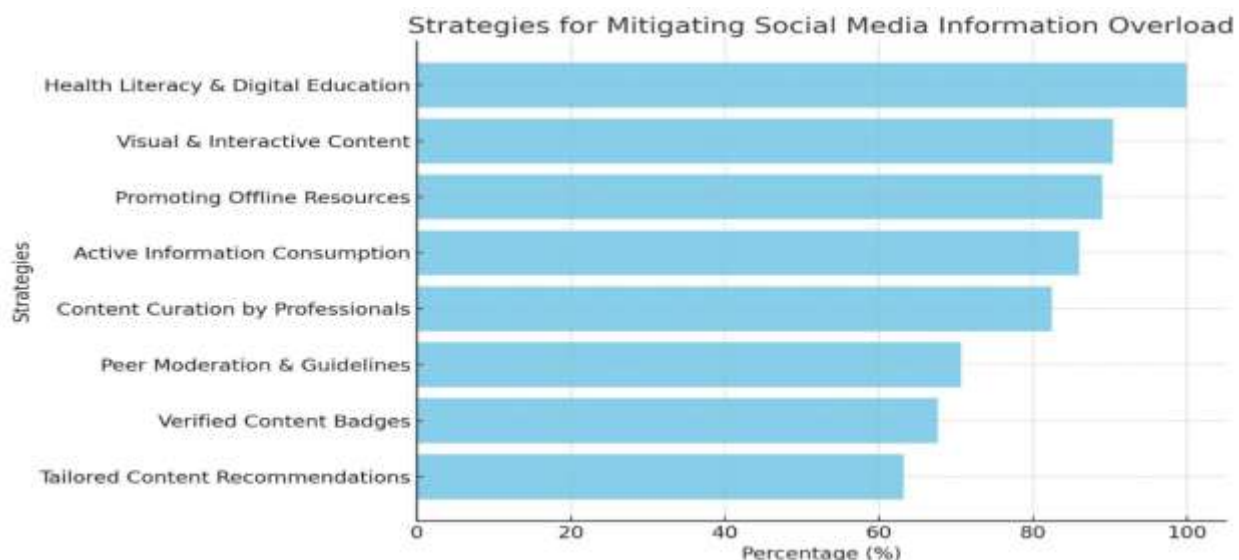


**Fig.3:** Bar chart showing the effects of social media information overload

The responses of the respondents reflect that the effects of social media information overload on health information seekers in selected government hospitals in Delta State include declined behavioural intentions towards health information seeking 111(81.6%), cognitive overload (a condition in which cognitive resources of a person are surpassed by the quantity of information

offered, causing a diminished understanding and retention) 92(67.6%), information quality concerns (uncertain concerning the dependability and correctness of the information 87(64%), Information exhaustion (a condition of being overwhelmed and disconnected because of the excessive quantity of information presented) 76(55.9%), and lack of confidence in health information sources on social media platforms 72(52.9%).

**Research Question 5:** What are the strategies for mitigating the negative effects of social media information overload on health information seekers in selected government hospitals in Delta State?



**Fig. 4:** Strategies for mitigating the negative effects of social media information overload on health information seekers

The strategies for mitigating the negative effects of social media information overload on health information seekers, according to the respondents, are provision of health literacy and digital literacy education 136(100%), incorporation of visual and interactive content (infographics and videos) 123(90.4%), promoting offline health resources for more in-depth information 121(89%), encouraging users to take an active role in their information consumption 117(86%), curation of

content by healthcare professionals and health organisations 112(82.4%), implementation of peer moderation and community guidelines by online health communities 96(70.6%), display verified health content badges on their social media posts of health organisations and influencers 92(67.6%), and offering tailored content recommendations based on users' preferences and interests 86(63.2%).

### **Discussion**

This study found a low use of social media for health information among health information seekers in government hospitals in Delta State. The finding is contrary to that of Wang et al. (2018) who found a high use of social media for health information among health information seekers. This may be because the study was conducted in a country with people that have significant level of health literacy.

The study found that the factors influencing health information seekers' susceptibility to social media information overload include social media engagement, source credibility assessment, knowledge of subject matter (issue of discussion), stress and anxiety, information-seeking behaviour, usage patterns, and frequency and duration of using social media. This supports the positions of some scholars in psychology literature and research which found a high tendency for people experiencing stress and anxiety to yield to information overload. Dizon et al. (2019) posited that people who are highly inclined to experiencing nervousness or stress are more likely to be susceptible to social media information overload, because persistent stream of information and notifications can worsen these deleterious emotions. A study by Yoo et al. (2021) found that susceptibility to social media information overload can be influenced by digital literacy, information-seeking behaviour, personality traits, social media engagement, age, source credibility assessment, and knowledge of the issue of discussion.

The study found that the behavioural intention of health information seekers in selected government hospitals in Delta State include willingness to follow medical advice given by health professionals in government hospitals, readiness to seek professional health consultations, and readiness to adopt health-promoting behaviours. In an examination of factors influencing behavioural intention to seek health information among university students, Othman and Mohamad Nordin (2018) found that attitudes and readiness to seek professional health consultations greatly influenced the intentions of students to seek health information online.

The effects of social media information overload on health information seekers, as found in this study, include declined behavioural intentions towards health information seeking, information quality concerns, information fatigue, and lack of confidence in health information sources on social media platforms. Too much health information available on social media is a significant source of information overload. This is capable of having adverse effect on the behavioural intention of health information seekers (Lim & Goh, 2019). Wang et al. (2018) posited that notwithstanding the benefits the use of social media has brought to health information seeking, there is information quality concerns as the sources of the information are not reliable and verifiable.

This study found that the strategies for mitigating the negative effects of social media information overload on health information seekers include provision of health literacy and digital literacy education, incorporation of visual and interactive content (infographics and videos), promoting offline health resources for more in-depth information, encouraging users to take an active role in their information consumption, and implementation of peer moderation and community guidelines by online health communities. This is in line with the findings of a study by Dizon et al. (2019) which affirmed that information overload, misinformation, and the digital divide

accentuate the necessity for health information literacy which will accentuate disseminating responsible health information on social media. More so, most of the health organisations usually promote health education literacy through their official accounts on social media platforms where they share health tips, news updates, and announcements concerning public health campaigns (Yoo et al., 2021). The ingenuities can assist enhance health literacy among users and stimulate encouraging health behaviours.

### **Conclusion**

Social media information overload is becoming an issue that requires urgent attention as it may have a deleterious effect on the behavioural intention of health information seekers. Based on the findings of the study, it is concluded that there is low use of social media among health information seekers in Delta State. This calls for more enlightenment and health education among the population. Despite the relevance of social media in promoting access and use of health information resources, several challenges hinder its effective use in the study area and have/ could consequently lead to the inability of health information seekers to get the needed health information using social media. There is also a need to address the factors influencing health information seekers' susceptibility to social media information overload by putting in place necessary strategies. More so that the well-being of the citizens is very paramount to governments at all levels in Nigeria, the onus is on government to tackle the issue of social media overload as a way of drifting the behavioural intention of health information seekers towards enhanced health information use.

### **Recommendations**

To promote the use of social media usage among health information seekers, the study recommends that:

There should be sensitisation and awareness campaign on the appropriate use of social media for health information among health information seekers.

1. Health information should exhibit positive behavioural intention towards health information through willingness to follow medical advice from health professionals in government hospitals.
2. Government and other health-related agencies and organisation should provide health literacy to enable health information seekers to use visual and interactive content.

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